Imagining London in Eighteenth Century Literature  
Emily Mumford, Class of 2017

This summer I worked as a Gibbons Fellow with Professor Ann Kibbie and Professor Crystal Hall preparing for a new fall course offering, Imagining London in Eighteenth-Century Literature. The premise of this course is to integrate the literature of the Georgian period with London’s physical environment during that period. As a Gibbons Fellow, I worked with creating data from eighteenth century literary sources and evaluating a variety of mapping systems, as well as preparing other resources for the class.

I primarily focused on the literary sources of James Boswell’s *Boswell’s London Journal*, a diary of the young gentleman’s stay in London in 1762 and 1763, and Daniel Defoe’s *Moll Flanders*, a work of fiction that gives insight into London’s world of crime. Forming the data for each work involved generating categories related to each place that would be useful in analyzing the different ways that London was experienced, such as whether a place was connected to a positive or negative experience, whether it was visited alone or with others, and the time of day of the visit. Data also included the geographic coordinates for each mentioned location. To get latitude and longitude coordinates for the individual locations, I experimented with both GoogleMaps and GPS Visualizer, but ultimately found GoogleMaps to be a better tool in finding coordinates for highly specific locations like individual buildings. Recording the page number on which each location was mentioned allowed for chronological mapping of the two works and visualization of the movement of characters around London through time.

I worked with several different mapping programs, trying to find software that was easy to learn but still offered room for customization and quick analysis. One desired customization was the addition of a historic eighteenth-century map by John Rocque as an image overlay so that data could be mapped on a backdrop that more closely resembled the world in which the literature was set than the standard modern street map basemap. After completing a two-day course in ArcGIS I was able to georeference the historic Rocque map and add data from a map included in *Boswell’s London Journal*—however, while ArcGIS offered the best georeferencing capability, it was simply not a user-friendly option. Considerable knowledge was required to be able to use the program and data management was more difficult. Therefore, we sought out other mapping software and websites, including Google Earth, GoogleMaps, ArcGIS online, and more. The ease of sharing maps with others was another important factor that would allow multiple students to collaborate using a single map. I found GoogleMaps to be the easiest to use and share, and therefore used it the most in mapping. However, this was still an imperfect system, as the free version was limited by both the size and number of layers it allowed, and did not allow users to import image overlays.

Additionally, I learned some basic WordPress for building a course website. Its current state is a repository of links to external information and scanned historical maps and images. However, it is also ready for use by members of the class in comments and discussions.

I have learned so much about London this summer, as both the city in its present form and in its rich history. (And I am now filled with the desire to explore and navigate these streets and locations myself!) The project has deepened my skills and understanding in mapping and in the broader realm of data visualization, and I hope that the class will find their experience to be equally rewarding.

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