

Building the *Women in Book History Bibliography*, or Digital Enumerative Bibliography as Preservation of Feminist Labor.

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Abstract

This article articulates a digital adaptation of enumerative bibliography and argues for its recuperative potential in feminist literary history. Digital enumerative bibliography uses bibliographical structures within a relational database that allows researchers to track more relevant metadata such as geographical location of subject matter, language, and time period. Whereas traditional enumerative bibliographies use a hierarchy of textual data, a relational database creates a nexus that facilitates new kinds of research queries. As an example, we offer our digital project the *Women in Book History Bibliography* and use its 1,550 citations as a dataset to trace what is women's book history. We then advocate for digital enumerative bibliography as a form of feminist recovery efforts that recovers not only primary texts but scholarship about them.

Digital Enumerative Bibliography as Preservation of Feminist Labor

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In 2014, Michelle Levy asked, "Do Women Have a Book History?" She continues that Robert Darnton's [Darnton 1982] influential communication circuit is "silent on the question of gender" and "too rigid to capture the full range of women's involvement in the production and dissemination of literary writing even during the print era" [Levy 2014, 297; 300]. This question is one that resonates more widely, especially for feminist book historians who encounter a wide range of literature that is rich in its history of production processes, readings of bibliographic objects, and histories of circulation and reception, but largely "silent" about gender. Levy's question is indicative of the key issue with women's book history: despite significant work in the field, there is no narrative, no central theses or arguments that join together the diverse body of work on women's work and labor. The phrase "women's book history" is itself rare, as it appears less than ten times in the scholarship that we have located. This had led many to believe that the answer to Levy's question might be "no," or perhaps "not yet."

In response, we began to gather data in the form of secondary source citations in an enumerative bibliography on the intersection of women's lives and book history. In 2016, this became the *Women in Book History Bibliography* (WBHB). The WBHB is an open-access bibliography that, in its earliest iteration, used lists generated in Zotero to create listings of sources which intersected with our definitions of women and book history, which were clustered in established subfields like authorship, manuscript studies, reading, and the book trades. We began this project because, similarly to the question that motivated Levy's article, we had an issue with a lack of a clear disciplinary history to pull from in our dissertation research on early modern English print culture. We hoped that by sharing secondary sources we could help others as we helped each other. Thanks to a generous grant from what is now the Center of Digital Humanities Research (CoDHR) at Texas A&M University, in 2017 we transitioned the bibliography to a MySQL database with a front end written in Django. We capitalized on the capabilities of a relational database to include filters that allow users to isolate sources by tags including geographic location, language, year, author, and a more robust list of subfields that includes archival studies, digital media, LGBTQ+, critical race theory, and indigeneity.

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WOMEN IN BOOK HISTORY BIBLIOGRAPHY

WOMEN'S WORK AND LABOR IN CONTEXT

HOME OUR MISSION THE BIBLIOGRAPHY RESOURCES CONTACT US

Alphabetical by Author

1. 3M Corporate Art Program. *Women in Print: Prints from 3M by Contemporary Women Printmakers: An Exhibition Held at the Concourse Gallery, 3M Center, St. Paul, Minnesota, July 7-August 24, 1993, and Circulated to Various Colleges, Museums, and Art Centers*. St. Paul, MN: 3M Corporate Art Program, 1995.
2. Adams, Kate. "Built Out of Books: Lesbian Energy and Feminist Ideology in Alternative Publishing." *Journal of Homosexuality* 34, no. 3-4 (1998): 113-41.
3. Adams, Kathryn Tracy. "Paper Lesbians: Alternative Publishing and the Politics of Lesbian Representation in the United States, 1950-1990." PhD Dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 1994.
4. Albertine, Susan. *A Living of Words: American Women in Print Culture*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995.
5. Alexander, David. *Caroline Watson & Female Printmaking in Late Georgian England*. Cambridge: Fitzwilliam Museum, 2014.
6. Alkan, Alphonse. *Les Femmes Compositrices d'Imprimerie Sous La Revolution Française En 1794*. Paris: Dentu,

Figure 1. The WBHB as first displayed in 2016.



Back to main site

Filter by person, location, language, publisher, field, or period.

Search:

Export

Title	People	Publisher	Language	Country	Field	Period
"On Behalf of the Printers": A Late Stuart Printer-Author and Her Causes	Paula McDowell (Author), Sabrina Alcorn Baron (Editor), Eric N. Lindquist (Editor), Eleanor F. Shevlin (Editor)	University of Michigan Press	English	England, Europe	Book Trades	17th Century (1600-1700 C.E.)
(Re)framing Eliza Haywood: Portraiture, Printer's Ornaments, and the Fashioning of Female Authorship	Sarah Creel (Author)		English	England, Europe	Book Trades, Professional Writing and Publication, Single Figure or Text Studies	18th Century (1700-1800 C.E.)
A Slight Diversion: On being a Single (Quasi-Attached) Female Printer	Gloria Stuart (Author)	Imprenta Glorias	English	North America, United States of America	Book Trades	20th Century (1900-2000 C.E.)
A Voice of her Own: Jerónima de Gales, a Sixteenth-Century Woman Printer	Maria del Mar Vega Fernandez (Author), Dru Dougherty (Editor), Milton M. Azevedo (Editor), Jerónima de Gales (Subject)	University of California Press	English	Europe, Spain	Book Trades	16th Century (1500-1600 C.E.)
Anais Nin: Diarist as Letterpress Printer	Emily Larned (Author)		English	North America, United States of America	Book Arts, Professional Writing and Publication,	20th Century (1900-2000 C.E.)

Figure 2. The WBHB's searchable interface, 2019.

This platform promotes ongoing work in women's book history by making scholarship and resources on women's writing and labor visible. Collecting data, making this work "count" by writing it into the historical record, is a feminist act that preserves the past while shaping the future. When we first launched the site, we were not prepared for the enthusiastic response, nor that this project was a visible indicator of a growing pushback against what one might think of as "traditional" bibliography, the field that grew from the work of W.W. Greg, Fredson Bowers, and G. Thomas Tanselle.

Bibliography as a discipline has its origins in studies on the Bible and Shakespeare, and has, historically, not focused on women's experiences nor those of other under-represented subject positions and genres. Considering the development of women's book history alongside black bibliography, queer bibliography, the postcolonial and indigenous book, and the global book suggests that one future of digital and material studies is as an activist discourse with deep ties to critical theory.

To explore the latter possibility, this essay uses the example of our digital enumerative bibliography to demonstrate that feminist approaches to digital humanities and book history have much to offer the recovery of women's literary history and promote its ongoing construction. They work together to create new methodologies and revise existing structures to correctly position women's contributions to textual production in a historically and materially accurate context. While our larger concerns are on the history of the book, this article's primary focus is on bibliographic methods for feminist intervention. We use bibliography's epistemological work as a revisionist methodology that counteracts patriarchal structures as it reorganizes itself around feminist ones. Secondly, we look at the larger implications of data gathering on the epistemology of book history and draw conclusions about what a feminist historiography reveals about women's history and studies on the book. Lastly, we touch on the structural implications of working on marginal subjects while being precariously employed. This dual precarity adds an urgency to the responsible preservation of digital literary recovery efforts, and we provide a roadmap for thinking through these issues.

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Digital Enumerative Bibliography

Our feminist approach to revising the narrative of book history centers on bibliography. It is an important ancestor to book history, as one aspect of the field grew from debates in textual and historical bibliography in the 1970s and 1980s [Howsam 2006]. Similarly, Amy E. Earhart [Earhart 2015] argues that digital humanities pulls from bibliography in its methods and some of its more conservative ideologies that have prioritized work on white male literary subjects.^[2] Intervening within these narratives allows us to repurpose bibliography in both material and digital iterations of the book history [Ozment 2018].

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The *WBHB* began as a simple enumerative bibliography, as this was the most familiar tool to solve a common problem — finding and organizing sources around a central topic. Enumerative bibliographies are accessible for both creators and users. Every scholar has experience with them as references at the end of articles and books. They not only let a researcher collect data, but present it in a hierarchy that suggests importance and the relationships of textual data [Harmon 1989, 47]. Enumerative bibliography is a deceptively simple form that can seemingly be done with little critical thought: adopting a common citation style and plugging information into a reference manager can generate a bibliography in seconds. These lists are simple, but they are powerful. They are the tools “for which the non-bibliographer breathes a silent prayer of thanks whenever beginning a new research project” [Pionke 2013, 6]. Its influence on field-building and encouraging future scholarship is substantial. For example, in the early twentieth century African-American literary scholars like Dorothy B. Porter used enumerative bibliography to establish the field as a legitimate discourse [Porter 1945]. In short, bibliographic lists become the first step towards canon development, and from there to actual disciplinary creation.

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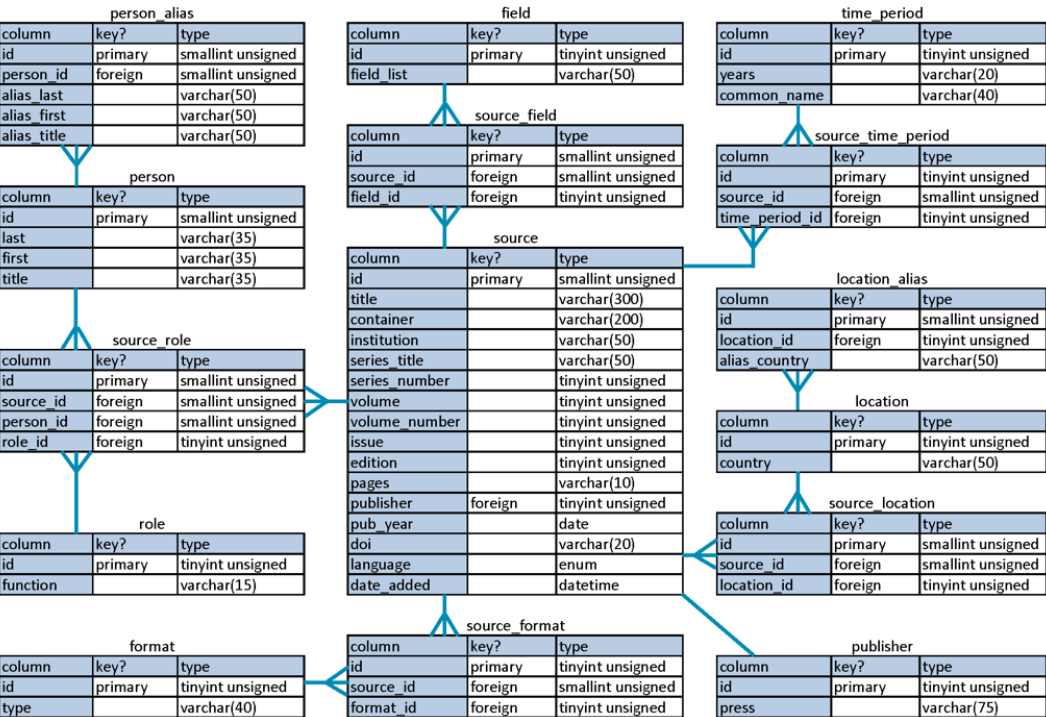
Our project pulls directly from this tradition, but it uses a digital format to create a dynamic and adaptive version of static numbered lists that we refer to as *digital enumerative bibliography*. Similarly to projects like *The Science Fiction and Fantasy Research Database* and the *World Shakespeare Bibliography*, the *WBHB* takes the foundational basics of organization from enumerative bibliography but presents it in a digital format through a relational database, with additional search functions and the ability to organize objects by relevant metadata. Enumerative bibliography's print-focused history is not erased in this process but reimagined around one of bibliography's key concepts: purpose. Gregson Bowers argues that bibliography is intimately connected to data's imagined purpose. He believes that to collect information for the sake of itself would only make bibliography “a limited science” [Bowers 1949, 8]. To meet users' needs of referencing material that is otherwise uncollected, we still use the visuals of a printed bibliography on the front end to help users encounter data in familiar ways. We have also retained the taxonomies of a print-based bibliography as an organizational structure by using the same fields that a citation generator like Zotero would use: author, title, publisher, and year.

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Digital enumerative bibliography moves beyond these organizational structures, however. It allows us to think about historiography as data. The underlying infrastructure of a relational database shifts the framework from Harmon’s bibliographic hierarchy to a nexus of interconnected data that surrounds a core organizing function — the title of a secondary source. As Stephen Ramsay writes, databases cover a wealth of “fascinating problems and intellectual opportunities” [Ramsay 2004] that are of interest to bibliographers:

The inclusion of certain data (and the attendant exclusion of others), the mapping of relationships among entities, the often collaborative nature of dataset creation, and the eventual visualization of information patterns, all imply a hermeneutics and a set of possible methodologies that are themselves worthy objects for study and reflection. [Ramsay 2004]

Digital enumerative bibliography incorporates these possibilities into the existing epistemological work of disciplinary lists. Databases can supplement standard bibliographic data by tracking information that is normally latent rather than explicit in common citation styles, such as format of publication; a citation format will change based on if it is a journal article or book, but most humanities citation styles do not explicitly include format. Our database’s taxonomy does. There is consequently a shift in thinking about bibliographic data’s use beyond pointing to sources for further reading. It allows us to ask questions about our field by what language we use to title our sources and where, when, and in what format we publish. Further, databases allow for extraction of these individual pieces of data as they meet changing criteria based on users’ interests, which a static list does not. This means that digital enumerative bibliography facilitates new kinds of research than print-focused versions.



Historiography choices in the *WBHB* are expressed through those sources we go out of our way to find and what subfields we index in and by what criteria. As Daniel V. Pitti observes, it is difficult to reduce the complexities of historical and material documents to the constraints of database design [Pitti 2004, 476]. However, queries plugged into a well-designed database can “reveal intellectual relations between unique entities, but also between categories or classes of entities based on shared characteristics” [Pitti 2004, 477]. We designed the *WBHB* to uncover “intellectual relations” in the shared characteristics of language, geography, subject, and time period for our sources. For example, analyzing sources in the database that focus on manuscript or print shows that there is a distinct shift in scholarly emphasis from manuscript to print in the English Renaissance. This is an important tool for the feminist book historian studying English literature, as a point of interest is that the rise of print was a shift toward a form of textual production that favored male writers for many years [Ezell 2003]. As another example, sorting the database by the LGBT+ tag shows that most of the

sources we have located in this area focus on late-twentieth century periodicals in the United States, and there is a dearth of pre-modernist scholarship in English on queer identities and the material book or a queered production of the book. While one must be careful about making broad arguments based on an artificial construction of sources, these searches nevertheless indicate that expanding enumerative bibliography to the full relational potential of a database allows scholars to ask dramatically more expansive questions about our field and how it is practiced.

Gathering sources around an idea for which there is no critical consensus is a deeply ideological act that can influence how users will conceptualize the field moving forward. All of our subfield editorial choices are political, even more so than the explicit idea of a bibliography that is focused on women. By asking questions like *what field is this a part of?* we are imagining audiences' interests and shaping the kinds of research we would like to facilitate on our website. Our choices are intentionally intersectionally feminist. And because users can download the database and run their own analyses, the data can be used in ways we have not yet imagined as well. Thus, the most exciting avenue of research in digital enumerative bibliography is that users can reinterpret the data through queries and outputs that the static hierarchy of a list might otherwise prohibit.

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Tracking a Women's History of the Book

Just as the *Database of Early English Playbooks* facilitates different research questions than W. W. Greg's *A Bibliography of the English Printed Drama to the Restoration* [Greg 1939–59], the digital database of the *WBHB* allows users to ask new questions about studies of the book and implicit values. These queries reveal trends, patterns, and overlaps about both book history (as a digital and material practice) and feminist literary studies. This section details what we found by analyzing data in the *WBHB* and suggests that a feminist collection of scholarship on the material and digital book challenges the idea of book history as separate from gender.

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A feminist approach to cataloguing information on women's interactions with the book is necessary because most major publications in book studies neglect these experiences. For example, women's work is poorly or narrowly represented across book history companions and readers. The massive *Oxford Companion to the Book* [Suarez and Woudhuysen 2010] has no space — or entries — for “Gender,” “Women,” “Race,” “Sex,” nor does its mass-market counterpart *The Book: A Global History* [Suarez and Woudhuysen 2013]. As these books are not exceptions but representative examples, it is clear that too many studies in the field of book history reiterate its oldest sins in emphasizing the experiences and works of white, Anglo-European, cis-het men.

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In contrast to this absence, the 1,550 sources in the *WBHB* make a convincing case that while work on women in book history may be discursively marginal, it is not meager in number. Analyzing this dataset allows us to isolate two challenges to the male-centric state of book studies. First, we can interrogate with more accuracy and force the assumption of our subjects' marginality. The sources in the *WBHB* suggest that while women are on the margins in comparison to the wealth of information on male subjects and their texts, it is less clear that they were marginal *historically*. Rather than reflecting historical accuracy, our modern scholarship is driven by the implicit value of male-driven authorship and production as reflected in the Oxford editions. The *WBHB* data instead allows us to revise some of our key arguments about women and textual production, even those that grow from a feminist desire to conceptualize this experience. As an example, Leslie Howsam wrote in her groundbreaking 1998 article:

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It is important ... to remark on something that is concealed by thematic theoretical models: most of the women whose work in the book cycle has been so painstakingly discovered by researchers have been atypical individuals, outstanding anomalies in a cultural field dominated by men. Most publishers and editors have been men; the majority of writers of scholarly, legal, and theological and political works were men; printing trade workers at all levels were almost always men ... For the most part, what [Lucien] Febvre and [Henri-Jean] Martin called “the little world of the book” has been a male domain. [Howsam 1998, 1]

Howsam's essay reflects a field that was still recovering women writers, much less women's labor in roles like hawking that were less valued than property-owning members of the trade like booksellers [Maruca 2007]. Since 1998, projects like the *Perdita Manuscripts*, *Orlando*, and the *Women Writers Project* have added to our knowledge of women's writing

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and textual production, and a significant branch of scholarship has grown from these resources. In the years since Howsam's essay was published, much more has been discovered about textual production in general and about women's roles specifically, and long-standing scholarship has been brought back into the light. As an example, Bell [Bell 2014], Smith [Smith 2012], and Coker [Coker 2017] have troubled the male-dominated narrative of the early modern book trades, instead painting a picture of women's involvement in all aspects of print production. Women's labor is harder to identify than the booksellers whose names appear on title pages, but it nevertheless exists. Printers' wives and daughters managed shops and were bookkeepers [Mitchell 1995], and widows ran powerful businesses. But women were not just wives and widows [Biggs 1980]. They were feminist activists, printing as a way to reclaim agency [Cadman et al. 1981] and building on a culture of women printers [Bookmaking on the Distaff Side 1937] [Barlow 1976]. They used print to give voice to marginalized communities [Smith 1989] [Enszer and Beins 2013] [Enszer 2015].

This brief account of feminist book history scholarship falls short of the breadth and depth of the field, as it is largely limited to women and print in early modern England and the United States, the area where we primarily focus and which the sources in the *WBHB* database best represent. Yet even this limited case study makes visible an important revision. It is no longer certain that women were historically marginal in that they were a group so small they were hardly worth mentioning. Rather, they were continually present in the making, writing, and reading of books. Women have been, as Howsam phrases it,

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identified at every node in the cycle and at all periods in history, from the printers' widow operating independently in the circuit guilds of early modern Europe to the avid readership of romance novels, not to mention a strong tradition of women's writing ... Others perform the invisible but essential services of publishers' readers, translators, designers, copy-editors, and indexers. [Howsam 1998, 1]

This is a point that has been reiterated by Helen Smith [Smith 2012], Bell [Bell 2014], and Levy [Levy 2014] — that women have always been physically present if not always leaving material traces that are as easily identifiable. What the sources in the *WBHB* emphasize is that women's experiences are much harder to grasp and more likely to slip by as invisible labor.

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This is a position that women share with other subjects on the margins and in between categories, and it may then be possible to use digital enumerative bibliographies to fill in gaps and silences in parallel ways to those who reconstruct lost voices in the archives. As Lauren F. Klein demonstrates with James Hemmings [Klein 2013], data visualization and mapping can capture lost histories and combat the forces of erasure that leave important histories behind. What the *WBHB* suggests is that the visualization and analysis of secondary sources can also uncover important trends about how scholarship on marginal figures slips in and out of our value systems. Often "recovery efforts" begin with the assumption that something is lost only to discover it was just overlooked, hiding in plain sight. Collecting and analyzing secondary sources on women and the book has shown us this is the case with book history.

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Consequently, the second contribution that analyzing a database of secondary sources on a marginal topic yields is that we can identify *how* these subjects became marginal in contemporary discourses. To challenge our own conceptions of the field, we approach sources through a generous taxonomy and metadata structure. If the scholarly source is about women or women-identifying subjects in a substantial way, and intersects with areas of interest to book historians (categorized through the "Fields" section of the database), it is included. While there are still value judgments in this process, they are more transparent when one strips away obscuring language and the heavy weight of what is "really" book history. Often work that is within book history in its methods or approach does not use the phrase "book history," just as work that is interested in racial power structures does not always signal itself as "critical race theory." By looking at what a source *does* instead of how it positions itself, we have found many more items than anticipated and consequently have had to rethink our definitions of such seemingly concrete ideas as *women*, *the book*, *textual production*, and *authorship*. Because of its generous approach to source indexing, the *WBHB* connects sources on women printers in Renaissance Italy to the feminist zines of the late twentieth century in the U.S. to contemporary fantasy print culture in Korea, because all of it is produced by women. The sheer variety and depth of scholarship in this area sits in sharp contrast to how little the field considers the diversity of sources in its major narratives.

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In other words, to find information on women and the book we had to adjust our assumptions from a field-specific approach to a labor-specific approach. As a result, the data this approach yields suggests one reason that women are difficult to identify in general book history scholarship is a byproduct of the field's methodological and discursive practices. Anglo-American men are the numerical majority of subjects and are more likely to have their experiences recorded in accessible ways: papers in archives, surviving letters, published memoirs. Since book history itself privileges these documents, men's experiences dominate how the field is understood. Furthermore, the language of book history, by design, obscures the subject in favor of the object of study and the process by which the object came into being [Williams and Abbott 2009, 2]. The unintentional result of this practice is that it is easy to overlook what kinds of subjects are privileged and how the objects of study may be more queered, gendered, and raced than is generally acknowledged. 20

Working within and against these discursive practices has an impact on scholars who research women and the book. Looking at the *MLA International Bibliography*, one can get a sense of some of these issues. We selected two popular subjects as test cases: the book trades and authorship. To keep the numbers at a manageable rate, we also added "England" as a search term for both. On the *MLA*, searching for the "book trade" and "England" yields 314 results.^[3] Adding in the search term "women" narrows the number down to 16, not all of which are about women subjects. If one replaces "women" with "men," there are nine sources, even fewer than that of women. This leaves 290 sources that are unmarked by gender. One finds something similar with authorship. "Authorship" and "England" yields 323 results, which is narrowed to 49 by including the search term "women." An additional 19 are indexed with "men." Alternative search terms such as "gender" do not add to these numbers in significant ways. In both cases, a small proportion of sources are indexed by gender of any presentation. 21

Looking through the remaining sources that are not indexed by the gender of their subject leads to inevitable fatigue. Rarely do women appear in general histories, as the Oxford editions emphasize, and while men's experiences can be very enlightening for studies on women, they are only occasionally written in a way that acknowledges the limitations of their conclusions. That is, without the presence of non-male subjects, it is uncommon to find an interrogation of the various levels of privilege and authority historical subjects experience that could indicate how women and other minorities fit into these narratives. 22

This may be true for many fields, but it seems a particularly apt characterization of how book history discusses its subjects. The sources we have found on women and the book indicate that when faced with this reality, work on women tends to flag itself as participating in an alternative discourse — it includes the words "women," "women's," or "gender" in the title or as a keyword. More than 60% of the sources in the *WBHB* are marked by this language. In book history scholarship, to tell the story by women is to *position* it as the story of women. The same cannot be said of scholarship on male subjects, which, as the *MLA* examples demonstrate, rarely identifies itself as only about men. It seems that women are either gendered or ignored. As more information is uncovered about women's roles in the history of the book, this positioning may be less useful than it has been. Future studies of women's book history may be able to locate with more authority and nuance where the gender of their subjects is and is not a factor in the production of text, as well as when it is a hindrance versus when it is a boon. And as our current society interrogates the usefulness of gender and sex as categories, it is likely that these characterizations will increasingly be assigned to performative categories rather than human features, a further de-evolution from the author-centric model of textual studies.^[4] 23

The examples from the *MLA* replicate a common experience for many researchers, but they also point to a different issue of access: access to the secondary sources. There is a large set of issues surrounding access to secondary work that mimic the challenges of primary sources: paywalls and database subscriptions, the high cost of limited run academic books, and the complicated ethics of services like *Academia.edu* that tentatively facilitate sharing of information. Another is just finding the sources one is looking for to begin with. This is especially true when comparing what is on the *MLA* with what actually exists in the field, especially when that field's definition and values are still unformed. As an example, we compared the sources in the *MLA* to what we have been able to collect in the *WBHB*, and the difference is marked. Since all our sources include women, we filtered by "England" and the subject. For the book trades, our filters yield 178 sources. Compared to the 16 sources that researchers are assured of having from the *MLA*, 24

this is a significant improvement. Filtering by authorship yields a similar result: while the *MLA* offered 49 sources for women’s authorship in England, the *WBHB* has 356.

Search Terms	MLA International Bibliography	WBHB Database
Book Trade AND England	314	--
Book Trade AND England AND Men	9	--
Book Trade AND England AND Women	16	178
Authorship AND England	323	--
Authorship AND England AND Men	19	--
Authorship AND England AND Women	49	356

Table 1. Numbers are current as of July 2019.

It is true that no database, including the *WBHB*, is perfect in its comprehensive surveillance of its intended topic, despite its best efforts. It is also true that the ways in which the *MLA* indexes sources inhibits visibility when it comes to English women and the book trades and authorship. The disparity between the *WBHB* and the *MLA* suggests a key difference in indexing practices. According to its online guidelines, the *MLA* employs a very broad vocabulary of 68,000 words used by a team of professional indexers and selected field bibliographers [FAQ n.d.]. The *MLA* also appears to not retroactively allow keywords to change (nor can we imagine many authors would find value in re-indexing dated scholarship). These are practical decisions, but they mean that listed sources do not always reflect how current scholarship is categorized and understood. Book history is an interdisciplinary field, so it is logical that authors and indexers may not always select the same terms that would link together studies that are truly on the same topics. Scholars may be participating in studies of book history implicitly rather than explicitly (as noted above), or pieces may have been published in an emerging discourse that now goes by another name. Since book history is a relatively new term for a broad and complicated field, it is not wholeheartedly embraced by its practitioners who may see the term as a needless derivative of historical bibliography, limited in its emphasis on the “book” as a printed codex, oddly fetishizing the material in an increasingly digital world, or less precise for a dozen other reasons. In short, what the field lacks is a set of values that is reflected in a lack of a centralized taxonomy.

This reality is one that book history shares with other “newer” disciplines and those that are built on the shifting but powerful interpretations that come from cross-disciplinary work, such as the digital humanities and critical theory. Scholars posing new or differently organized inquiries must do the work of field-building, they must make their own roadmaps, and their own “citational chains” [Ahmed 2017, 8]. These “citational chains” are historical, but they are also formative and impact the perception of the field moving forward. The *WBHB* suggests that digital enumerative bibliography can incorporate the kind of flexible and adaptable indexing practices to address access issues, as well as those that hide women’s work in generalized language. The centralized taxonomy of the “Fields” list requires subjective editorial intervention, which opens the project up to the murkier areas of bibliographic science. However, users’ ability to filter by empirical data as well as complete full-text searches should ameliorate issues introduced by organizational choices.

One project cannot fully alleviate the issues of looking for women in studies that often neglect their histories, and our dataset has its own blind spots, specifically our disciplinary backgrounds and focus on white women in England. However, we do believe that there is power in being counted if for no other reason than it eliminates the perception of work on women and the book as a small and marginal discourse. This points to one of the biggest contributions that digital enumerative bibliography offers fields in formation: the recovery of a history hiding in plain sight. To collect it is to “acknowledge the debt to those who came before; those who helped us find our way when the way was obscured because we deviated from the paths we were told to follow” [Ahmed 2017, 15–16].

Precarious Histories and Labor

Collecting secondary sources reveals trends about both our primary subjects and our scholarly treatment of them, our

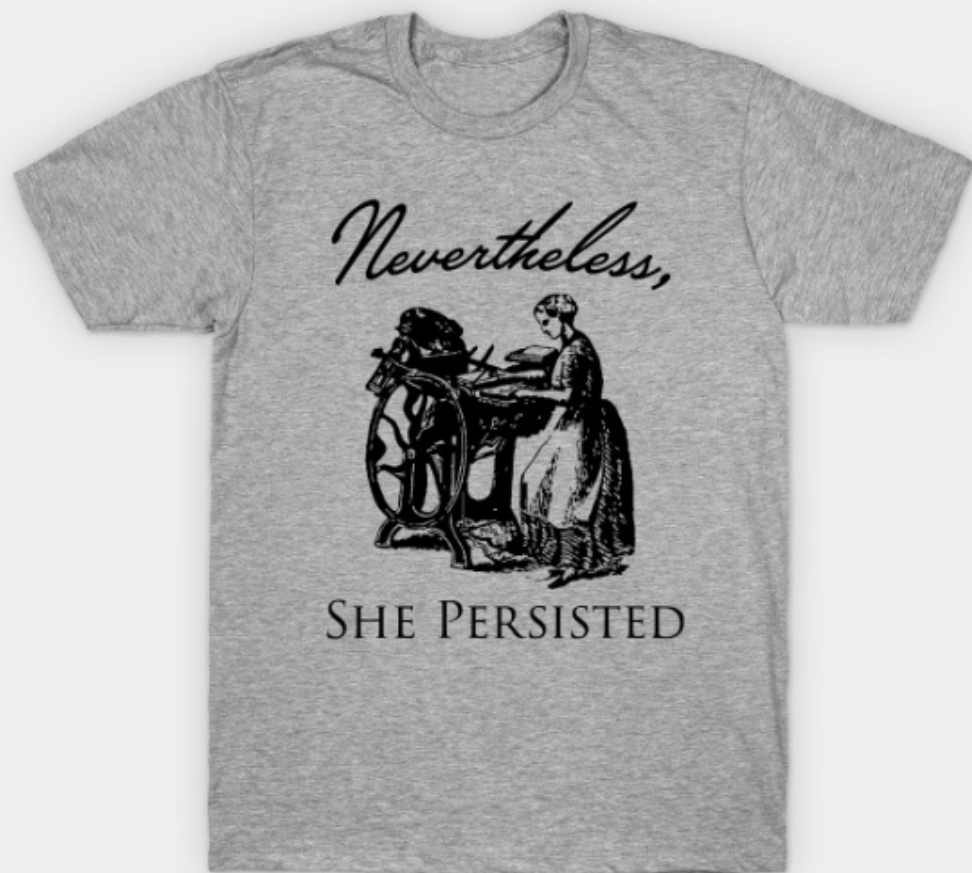
historiography. This project has also foregrounded that issues of access and precarity are not just limited to the sources we index, but the larger infrastructure of digital bibliographic research on marginal subjects and texts. 28

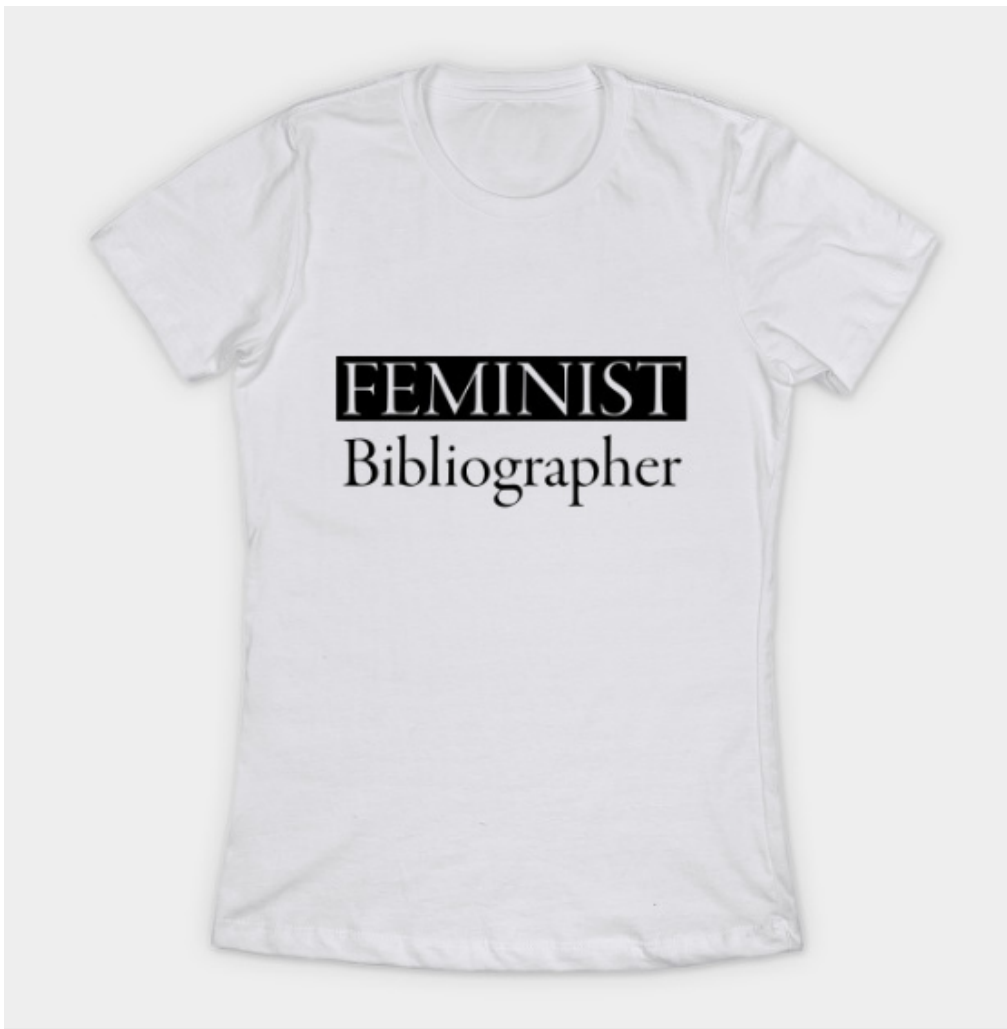
The *WBHB* has also made clear that issues of access are central to this work, specifically access to secondary sources. While Mandell, Earhart, and others correctly argue that digital recovery efforts are essential to the establishment of minority authors in the literary canon, our project suggests that another step in the digital recovery process, beyond access to primary sources, is greater access to secondary sources. Scholarship becomes discourses, discourses become emergent narratives in monographs and anthologies. Without including secondary sources in recovery efforts, what work there is remains a silent niche rather than a sub-field or even a discipline in its own right. Dominant dialogues remain in place and are functionally re-canonized [Earhart 2015]. This is particularly relevant given the culture wars in academe that have likewise been ongoing since the 1980s and revolve around what constitutes the canon inside the classroom. Canon upholds values of scholarship, and the traditional — until recently, at least — exclusion of writers that are not dead white men has been a crux for both professors and students. While our focus in this essay and elsewhere has been on women writ large (where applicable, we adhere to a constructionist view of female identities), it must not be overlooked that much of the work that has been done so far has been limited to America and Europe. While book history is beginning to look beyond Anglo-European print culture, we particularly want to look forward to studies that genuinely encompass a global perspective rather than giving lip-service to a particular set of strictures and structures. 29

Building and maintaining the *WBHB* also reveals that digital bibliography on precarious subjects can be compounded by the precarity of our own labor. Establishing a digital project while precariously employed creates a substantial set of hurdles, even if these are experiences we share with many other digital humanists [Boyles et al. 2018]. When the *WBHB* was launched in 2016, we were both doctoral candidates in English at Texas A&M University with little access to the funding and long-term support that digital scholarship, like any scholarship, needs. Due to timing, neither of us was able to incorporate the project explicitly into our dissertations, leading us to produce dissertations *and* several iterations of a digital project with all the associated headaches and challenges. Until spring 2018, when one editor secured stable employment, it was unclear if the *WBHB* would outlast our graduate student statuses; we were unable to imagine affording the site maintenance and the time it takes to add sources while adjuncting or doing repeated runs on the job market. 30

As Christina Boyles, Anne Cong-Huyen, Carrie Johnston, Jim McGrath, and Amanda Phillips argue, the labor of digital humanities is by its nature precarious, built on short-term grants and hope that assessment accurately takes into account digital work in a monograph-driven tenure system [Boyles et al. 2018, 693]. The *WBHB* is no different. The initial project cost a few hundred dollars to buy the domain and the associated costs to run the website for one year. We sorted and produced citation lists through Zotero, which is open-access software. One editor received unexpected supplemental income through the Beth Qualls Endowed Fellowship, which she was able to divert toward the creation of the site. Without the generosity of this donor and the luck of winning this fellowship, the website probably would not exist. Even a couple hundred dollars a year is significant for a graduate student stipend where one is balancing reimbursement, tuition fees and other university costs, and irregular summer funding. Paying out of pocket was not a system we would be able to maintain, especially when one considers the cost of the coding classes and software subscriptions that are necessary to advance beyond Zotero. 31

There were no mechanisms at the time to ask for funding from our home university, since maintenance costs do not fit neatly into any pre-existing category of graduate student funding.^[5] Unable to think of traditional means of securing funding, we took an unconventional approach: selling themed merchandise. Through a link on the site and social media accounts, we promote a digital storefront that sells items on a third-party website, from which we receive \$2–\$5 depending on the cost of the item. The designs were donated by a generous partner. 32





Beyond our expectations, these sales have generated enough funding to pay for site fees in 2018 and 2019, meaning that we have funded our digital humanities project through t-shirts, coffee mugs, and tote bags. Initially, we had some reservations about the appearance of potentially monetizing the site, as well as admitting we had not secured a prestigious line of funding that was common on comparable and aspirational projects. However, we soon found that fellow scholars were not only glad to contribute to our crowdfunding through purchases, but proud to do so: we have observed academics both familiar and unknown, at national and international conferences, sporting our t-shirts, putting our stickers on their phones and laptops, and writing in our notebooks. Women's book history is not only an emerging field, it is a community that signposts its goals and affiliations through material goods as well as scholarship.

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This process may not be iterable for those without a handy graphic designer and a generous social media following, but the challenges that prompted our move to crowdfunding are ones that tend to be shared amongst those who begin digital humanities projects without access to institutional support. Beyond the challenges of acquiring skills and finding the time to build a project that may not be assessed on the same level as a journal article, there are legitimate reservations about making visible funding sources that are less than prestigious. Projects that do this reveal their own precarity, and there is value that we culturally and professionally place on sources for funding that can affect tenure and promotion, reputation, and respect. Further, crowdfunding and other non-traditional funding sources can exacerbate the lack of stability that Boyles et al. identify. This position has real consequences. As Laura C. Mandell demonstrates, the "do-it-yourself" model of digital humanities work has yielded a list of dead links and half-finished projects from the 1990s on women writers [Mandell 2016, 590]. These sites are cautionary tales of project planning and maintenance management.

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As Mandell's analysis emphasizes, the experience of the *WBHB* does not suggest that crowdfunding should replace traditional, institutionally funded projects because of the associated stability that tends to come with supported scholarship. Instead, it argues that institutions and scholars with secure employment must extend those protections to

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new digital humanities projects if they encourage their students to pursue such work. What helped the *WBHB* move from Zotero lists to a database was the support of full-time faculty at Texas A&M who used their influence to secure us practical training, server space, and mentoring. Through a technical assistance grant in 2017, Mandell and the Center of Digital Humanities Research (CoDHR) provided a programmer to convert the database from a MySQL shell into the front end we now use. CoDHR also pledged server space, which alleviated one of the biggest issues projects face and more than anything else ensured the database would continue to survive.

Without senior scholars advocating for their students and graduate programs providing long-term support, more projects will not make the transition from graduate student work to sustainability. A sea of new dead links may appear in articles from 2019. When these links are, as Mandell points to, connected to activist scholarship that recuperates marginalized histories and made by precariously employed scholars, the likelihood of this possibility exponentially increases. These dead links will match the sea of dissertations from scholars who were unable to find secure employment and thus never built on such work, a generation of brain power lost to the adjunct crisis. As the academic job market in library sciences and literary studies continues to decline and the future of the National Endowment for the Humanities remains uncertain, the burden is on individual institutions to invest long-term support in projects to keep this data and labor from being lost as much as we have called on them to ethically support their graduates' employment.

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Disrupting institutional systems of precarity and access is not the work of a single project, but digital enumerative bibliography can, when managed correctly, disrupt historiographies and recover some of the feminist history lost to the sea of dead links. The historiography we are uncovering in these sources has distinct activist roots; it largely comes from the work of second-wave and third-wave feminism and feminist literary recovery efforts. Of the 1,550 sources currently in the database, around 95% are from 1970 forward, when these movements began to gain traction and produce substantial amounts of scholarship on women and gender. While we hope to find more sources from earlier in the twentieth century, it will involve reimagining, somewhat, our mission of collecting primarily scholarly criticism. Women subjects were less common in the "canon" of literary criticism, which was challenged through the feminist movement. And prior to the later twentieth century, the number of women scholars in universities was drastically lower. Since the vast majority of the authors in our database are women-identified, it is statistically unlikely we will find the kind of sources we look for before 1930. We may have to adjust our methods of accounting.

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Feminist literary recovery sought to "bring long-lost women writers and their works to light, to bring them into scholarly discourse, and to make their works available to students and scholars" [Marsden 2002, 657]. The work in the *WBHB* is from all three of these foci, especially the last which spawned sustained discussions of feminist textual editing and canon formation. Collecting sources from feminist literary recovery has allowed us to get a picture of the methods and values of this movement as it intersects with material culture. Just as Ezell's *Writing Women's Literary History* [1993] took seriously the impact of feminist literary criticism, this project demonstrates that preserving and analyzing this data can point to the contributions and absences of the movements. The data proves some of the assumed biases of studies in material culture, including the privileging of print over manuscript, public writing over domestic, and what is defined as literary over technical or vocational.

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Quantitative confirmation of gaps and silences reiterates that even recovery efforts can be limited in scope by ideological barriers. Lillian S. Robinson describes one such obstacle as the desire to recover women's writing only of a certain sort — what could be described as proto-feminist or maps onto contemporary feminist values. Robinson wonders "Is there a place for research — criticism and scholarship — on women's literature that, while not being explicitly anti-feminist, nonetheless is not explicitly feminist either?" (emphasis original). Robinson argues that given the widespread prejudices against women writers in both curriculum and in the scholarship, the answer had to be "yes" on the grounds that just working on a woman writer was a feminist act in and of itself. We can extend this philosophy to advocate for more work on women's writing in manuscript, in private, and in non-literary genres. But it also reaches women on the margins of textual production, those who perform occasionally unremarkable but nevertheless universal labor. For instance, "mercuries" was the gendered term for women distributing pamphlets in the eighteenth century, and while such a trade role may not be labor that necessarily resonates with contemporary feminism, it is still labor whose recovery is a feminist act. Similarly, we cannot safely characterize women in the print house as feminist exceptions, but if we want to recover a historically accurate account of women's writing and labor, it is to these sites and practices to

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which we must return.

The *WBHB* is an example of digital enumerative bibliography as recuperation — to put the pieces together of a story that has far-reaching implications and powerful resonances. But it is also an attempt to collect sources beyond simple posterity. Feminist recovery requires a shift in the underpinnings of the academic industrial complex, and the data we have collected reveals a pattern of one step forward with two steps back, progress met with backlash. In what Mandell characterizes as “Cycles of Forgetting” [Mandell 2016, 589], digital feminist recovery projects pop up and then quickly lay dormant; an array of teaching anthologies of women poets go out of print with no readily available alternatives; editorial apparatus to texts conspicuously focus on scandalous lives rather than on successful professional careers; close studies of women’s writing bypass bibliographic accuracy. Until this mindset shifts, women are in danger of being “forgotten” again, and Mandell argues that digital recovery is the best method of disrupting this process [Mandell 2016, 590]. Within this philosophy, the *WBHB* makes it harder to forget all the groundbreaking work that has been done on women who now fill anthologies, not just the historical subjects themselves. Even when this scholarship falls out of print, through responsible indexing it is not forgotten.

Notes

[1] Our thanks to the 2017 conference of the North American Society for the Study of Romanticism for their feedback on an early draft of this essay. Funding for this project was provided by the Beth Qualls Endowed Fellowship and what is now the Center of Digital Humanities Research at Texas A&M University. Special thanks to Laura Mandell and Bryan Tarpley.

[2] See also [Boyles 2018], [Liu 2012].

[3] This search was completed on July 23, 2019.

[4] For this observation, we are indebted to informal conversations with Laura C. Mandell and Kathleen Walkup.

[5] CoDHR has since implemented grants for project startup and maintenance.

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