



Bibliographic Exercise: Domesday Book

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Domesday Book is a set of manuscripts which detail the results of a survey conducted in 1085-86, at the request of King William I. The survey was conducted to understand who held land across England¹ and what the value of their estates were. The purpose of the survey is still under debate, although the majority of historians agree the purpose was fiscal in nature and was conducted with the aim of raising taxes.

Domesday Book is a collective term encompassing two separate bodies of text. "Little Domesday" is the smaller but more detailed of the two books, covering Essex, Norfolk, and Suffolk. "Great Domesday" is the physically larger book of the two and covers (most of) the rest of England. Domesday Book is kept at the National Archives, although does occasionally travel to various places around England.

In order to identify ten editions of the text for this assignment, I accessed the National Archives website² to both gain a basic background on the topic and to find out more about the printed and online editions of the text. I also used the Wikipedia article entitled *Publication of the Domesday Book*³ as a jumping-off point, which led me to a book called *A Bibliography of Domesday Book* by David Bates⁴, available in full on archive.org. I also used the online search engine DuckDuckGo to search for online databases and websites. One of these websites, the Hull Domesday Project, contained an extensive bibliography⁵ which listed many sources. Using these resources, I was able to compile the bibliography below of ten published editions of the Domesday Book.

Domesday Book Bibliography

Farley Edition

Domesday-book, seu, Liber censualis Willelmi Primi regis Angliae, inter archivos regni in domo capitulari Westmonasterii asservatus: jubente rege augustissimo Georgio Tertio praelo mandatus typis, ed. A. Farley, 2 vols (London, 1783)

This transcription of the original text was created by Abraham Farley, and for over 200 years was the only edition of the text available in full – and remains now the only full-text copy of the original Latin. Farley chose to omit marginalia from his edition, focusing on the core text, and there are no explanatory notes. The publication lacked supplementary material and an index, and this remained so until the early 1800s when they were added to later editions.

The expense of producing this document is well recorded (Henry James later estimates the cost at £38,000 – approximately £2.3 million today) and because of that it is likely that it is aimed entirely at a scholarly audience -though the novelty of having such a text transcribed and available for (limited) publication for the first time may have attracted wealthy antiquarian and institutional collectors as well.

¹ A few locations in Wales are also included, mostly settlements along or close to the Wales-England border.

² <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/domesday-book/>

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Publication_of_Domesday_Book

⁴ <https://archive.org/search.php?query=external-identifier%3A%22urn%3Aoclc%3Arecord%3A1357504353%22>

⁵ <https://www.domesdaybook.net/bibliography/alphabetical-list-of-works/primary-sources>

Photozincographic Editions

(For example) *Domesday Book, or the Great Survey of England of William the Conqueror AD MLXXXVI : facsimile of the part relating to Norfolk*, ed. H. James (Southampton, 1862)

In 1862, Colonel Henry James published photozincographic editions of Domesday book, separated by county. He initially worked on the Cornwall segment of the book before receiving government authorisation to proceed with all other counties. Because it was published county by county, it may have been of interest to local councils and courts – as well as academics who would have been able to view at least some of the text in photographs for the first time. The cost was substantially lower than the Farley edition, potentially opening it up to wealthier members of the public too. However, as no translation was provided (other than a small example translation at the start of the book), knowledge of Latin would have been required to read it.

Victoria County History Editions

(For example) *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of Devonshire in Five Volumes, Volume 1*, ed. W. Page, 5 vols (London, 1906)

The Victoria County History books are part of a still-ongoing project to publish comprehensive multi-volume histories of English counties, beginning in 1899 and continuing to this day. In each of the county books, there is a translation of the relevant county pages from the Domesday book. In the earlier stages of this project, this would mark the first ever publicly available translation of the text which would have increased accessibility. However, the work is still incomplete, with some counties only having partial histories published, if any at all.

Phillimore Editions

(For example) *Domesday Book, Yorkshire, Part One*, ed. J. Morris, M.L. Faull, M. Stinson, 2 vol. (Chichester, 1986)

Published county-by-county between 1975 and 1992, this marks the first time the text had been available in both the original Latin with an English translation in a parallel-text format. However, the translation has been critiqued by some scholars as being “unhelpfully modern”⁶.

Alecto Editions

(for example) *Great Domesday Book: a facsimile*, ed. A. Williams, R.W.H. Erskine, G.H. Martin, 6 vol (Library Edition), 31 vol (County Editions) (London, 1986-1992)

From 1986 to 1992, Alecto published limited edition facsimile of the text, which required new photography. The Penny Edition was limited to 250 copies and was printed on cotton sheets which mimicked vellum, whereas the later Millenium Edition used calfskin binding and was limited to 450 copies. Both were multiple thousands of pounds to purchase, making them

⁶ <https://archive.org/details/bibliographyofdo0000bate/page/34/mode/2up>

inaccessible to most people (Although some libraries did obtain copies). A translation version was also created, which was later published by Penguin (below).

Penguin Translation

Domesday Book: A Complete Translation, ed. A. Williams, G.H. Martin (London, 2003)

The first single-volume translation of the text, available from a mass-market publisher. This is completely in modern English, with no Latin text present. It is still widely available today.

E-Resources

Various projects have attempted to create databases of Domesday Book, allowing people to easily look up information or to view the original manuscript pages. Most of these websites also offer a lot of background information on the Domesday Book and medieval life:

Domesdaybook.co.uk

'The Domesday Book Online' <<https://www.domesdaybook.co.uk/index.html>> [Accessed 30 November 2024]

A somewhat dated website, but likely the earliest one aimed at laypersons.

OpenDomesday.org

'Open Domesday' <<https://opendomesday.org>> [Accessed 30 November 2024]

A very easy to understand modern website, aimed at both academics and laypersons.

Domesday Explorer⁷

'Hull Domesday Project' <<https://www.domesdaybook.net/home>> [Accessed 30 November 2024]

A search engine which allows perusal of the Phillimore editions of the Domesday Book. Initially created as a downloadable programme, it is now available online.

PASE

'The Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England (PASE)' <<https://pase.ac.uk/domesday/>> [Accessed 30 November 2024]

A comprehensive but complex website to navigate; likely aimed at researchers.
