

HPHI 7016: Past Peoples, Present Societies

Fall 2021

Sarah Wolek

Week 1 Task: “Deconstructing” Research Exercise

Work #1: Annals of Dunstable Priory by Harriett Webster

Topic Selection

- The objective of the work is to show how the Annals are a collected work of many contributors and represent the variety of activities and important events happening at the priory and surrounding area. It also highlights the importance people of the 13th century were putting on documentation and record-keeping.

Sources

Primary Source types:

- Three versions of the annals (Cotton Manuscript version in the British Library, Luard’s edition from 1886 & David Preest’s English translation); the manuscript & Luard’s edition being the sources referenced in the paper (per footnote #4)
- Translated versions of other medieval works

Archives:

- Cotton manuscript version of the annals (Tiberius version) from the British Library
- Royal Manuscript from St. Albans Abbey

Online Sources:

- None listed (though I was able to find a digitized version of the Royal MS 13 E. VI on the British library website)

General notes/observations:

- Many more secondary sources than primary sources listed; though it seems when secondary sources are referenced in the body of work, it is as a means to direct the reader more information on the topic at hand or as support to the statement that has been given; the secondary sources don’t seem to be directly quoted or summarized in the body of the work itself
- Manuscripts & archival documents are listed independently in the bibliography from the Primary sources
- From this exercise (the recorded lecture portion), I learned more about the differences between footnotes, end notes and the bibliography and how to cite each. This exercise prompted me to pick up some of my historical books and flip to the end to see how they managed end notes and the bibliography.

Work #2: A Permanent Civilising Effect by Alexander Scott

Topic Selection

- The objective is to assess if Victorian middle class declarations that public museums would have a positive/reformative influence on the working classes was a genuine effort to improve their lives or just a ruse of false charity

Sources

Primary Source types:

- Printed: society meeting documents/proceedings, town council reports, local newspapers, reports from an association related to the subject (museums)

Archives:

- Liverpool Record Office for meeting minutes
- House of Commons for debate records (online source)

Online Sources:

- House of Commons debate records (indicated by the style of footnote, which includes the http address and date accessed)

General notes/observations:

- Secondary resources are mainly from contemporary works of the last 20-30 years and cover the topic from different angles: Museum history, Liverpool history, Victorian culture & Liberalism
- The comment is made that there is little to no first-hand accounts from the working class citizens themselves; the effort to capture their sentiments not being a priority at the time. As a researcher you have to realize that the information you're getting may be through the filter of a different perspective than the one you are studying
- Research for this work may have started with the contemporary newspapers of the day to learn what was being said when, which would help direct the researcher to the right period in the archives. Another approach could have been by looking at secondary sources to get a sense of what has been said of the topic before and what primary sources were used in those works as another route to find primary sources of your own.