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BRITISH AND IRISH WOMEN'S LETTERS AND DIARIES 1500-1900



British and Irish Women's Letters and Diaries

“Outstanding Academic Title 2008” –CHOICE

“A valuable niche tool for students and researchers.” –Library Journal

“This database is an excellent example of how an electronic resource can enhance discovery of important research. . . This is an outstanding tool for students and researchers of women's studies as well as other disciplines related to history and the social sciences.” –Reference Reviews

British and Irish Women's Letters and Diaries is an online collection that spans more than 400 years of personal writings, bringing together the voices of women from England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales.

A complement to Alexander Street's *North American Women's Letters and Diaries*, the database lets researchers view history in the context of women's thoughts—their struggles, achievements, passions, pursuits, and desires. Extending back to the 1500s, the collection shows the various shapes and formats of the diary as it evolved, including the travel diary, offering detailed accounts of journeys and descriptions of places; the daily personal diary, in which women reflected more broadly on aspects of their lives; letter diaries, wherein a daily dated letter to a recipient served simultaneously as a diary entry; and other forms.

Contents

British and Irish Women's Letters and Diaries includes 100,000 pages of material assembled from numerous bibliographies and newly conducted research. Alongside the published material are 4,000 facsimile pages of previously unpublished manuscripts. Because the project captures materials that are written contemporaneously, readers see the honest, often stark perspective of the moment, as opposed to the self-censored attitudes that can appear in a memoir.

All forms of diaries—religious, travel, and journalistic—enrich the content of the collection. The mix of topics includes Australia, actresses, China, convent life, courtesans, court life, criminals, families, festivals and fairs, hospital work, literary society and life, missionaries, Palestine, political life, educators, railroads, scientists, social reformers, voyages, world tours, women soldiers and sailors—to list just a few. Other materials include writings licensed from The Imperial War Museum in London, including the unpublished letters and diaries of women who served during both world wars.

Both the famous and the unknown populate the collection. The lives and thoughts of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, George Eliot, Mary Shelley, Queen Victoria, Frances Kemble, Queen Elizabeth, Mary Wollstonecraft, Christina Rossetti, Florence Nightingale, and Maude Gonne can be compared with the experiences and ideas of ordinary women from all walks of life. The result is a collection that brings to life the thoughts, observations, habits, pastimes, and daily habits reflecting the collective consciousness of women from the 16th to the 20th centuries. Only here do these women's writings exist together, in electronic form and deeply indexed, allowing scholars to access, compare, and question as never before.

Alexander Street's Semantic Indexing

A thesaurus of terms, created specifically for this project, together with Alexander Street's semantic indexing lets researchers easily find answers that, until now, have been impossible to uncover:

- Show me all passages that mention childbirth between 1820 and 1840.
- Find all discussions of etiquette in the presence of the British royal family.
- What materials were written from September 17 to September 25, in years from 1730 to 1780?
- Identify letters sent from women living in London to men in Ireland.
- Find “murder” discussed in Jane Carlyle's letters and diary.
- Show me all writings by Welsh women.
- In Fanny Burney's diary, find all descriptions of King George III.
- Find diary entries written in Scotland by Queen Victoria that mention John Brown.
- Did children younger than 12 years keep diaries in the 19th century?

Publication Details

British and Irish Women's Letters and Diaries is available on the Web, either through one-time purchase of perpetual rights or through annual subscription. It contains 100,000 pages of writing, including at least 4,000 pages of previously unpublished manuscript material. Libraries that purchase perpetual rights will also receive an archival copy of the data.

Editorial advisors include Melissa Hardie, Hypatia Trust, Cornwall, England; Elizabeth Heckendorn Cook, University of California, Santa Barbara; Tamara Hunt, Marymount Loyola University; and others.



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