

The Literary Dictionary Company

Report on *The Literary Encyclopedia*, 2010

Commercial in Confidence

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Section 1: Growth and Finances

Activity in 2010, and reflections on the direction to be taken in 2011

The Literary Encyclopedia grew substantially in 2010, with an improved interface and more advanced functionality offered to its subscribers: 351 new contributors joined us; 482 articles were published; 458 new articles were commissioned, bringing total outstanding commissions to 1092.

The most substantial achievements of the year are the *new page design*, which looks much smarter and clarifies the relationship of each article to the contextualising features we offer (in the left panel of each article), and the new metadata and indexing scheme for the entire publication. This has fed into the newly-designed *Advanced Search* functionality, and the *Browse* function which allows the listing of all people, works, topics and events, and contributors in our database, by name, date, title or institutional affiliation (as appropriate).

Recommended Reading has grown considerably in the course of 2010, to over 13,000 recommended titles. This is short of our initial target of 20,000 recommendations by the end of 2010, despite sustained efforts to engage all of our contributors in providing such lists. Many colleagues have responded positively to our circular calls, and sent in bibliographies; nonetheless, a substantial number of canonical writers and works, particularly for articles published near the beginning of the last decade, still lack a consistent bibliographical apparatus. Where recommended readings are concerned, remedying this lack will be our major focus in 2011-12 since providing up to date and – whenever possible – annotated bibliographies will evidently be another major attraction to our readers. Hence our new shareholding allocation, which we are currently in process of setting up, will apportion shares for the provision of recommended readings as well.

Our *related articles/groups* interface has also expanded considerably in the second half of 2010, to include over 85 new thematic groups and a variety of other relations from article to article. They are to be found, whenever present, in the left-panel of each published article or stub, thus providing wiki-style links across our site to other articles similar in kind. They provide clusters useful for particular courses (for instance, ‘African American Drama’, ‘Children’s Literature’ or ‘Dystopian and Apocalyptic Fiction’), or simply collect articles which are related in theme, content and subject-matter (e.g. ‘Marxist Theory and Philosophy’, ‘English Romanticism’, ‘Avantgardes’ etc.). As part of the new page design, we now have a dedicated interface displaying all existent thematic groups (see ‘Reference Groups’ under ‘Content’ on the homepage).

We are currently finalising the indexing and annotation of some 5,000 new short historical stubs which will give us a clearer sense of the historical context of literary production. Most of these will have dd-mm-yyyy resolution, providing greater cogency to our author chronologies and historical tables. The first 3700 or so have

already been added to the database, and the rest will follow in the coming months, bringing the total number of entries in our topics and events table to about 15,000. We have also commissioned more *author chronologies* (currently 55 published, 23 commissioned), and would like to focus in particular on mapping the lives and times of those writers who are most frequently studied in university syllabi.

One other small but important facility has also become available in 2010 -- the ability to save articles as pdf files. There are aspects that need improving here, such as the display of certain non-standard html-characters, but this will be resolved later on in 2012 when we plan a major overhaul of the platform to UTF8 (a standard character set which resolves the traditional limitation of HTML font-sets to 255 characters).

Financially, the publication added thirteen new subscribers, and lost three. The impression we receive from our contacts with librarians is that our publication is well-respected and particularly appreciated by students, but of course we are in competition with the prestige and the marketing offices of established publishers who are able to offer seductive bulk deals. Where there is a strong representation from within the institution, we find we have the best chance of achieving our rightful place in the growing portfolio of online resources.

Looking forward, cuts have been announced for UK higher education in 2011-2012, particularly the humanities, which will almost certainly lead to reduced revenues. Globally, however, we may be bolstered by the rapid pace of electronic publishing and appreciation of the scholarly quality and credentials we offer.

Income in calendar year 2010 (compared with 2009)

	2010	2009
Subscription income	£61,966.73	£55,532.34
Interest on deposits	£31.94	£547.06
Total Income	£61,998.67	£56,079.40

Revenues in 2010 were in line with predictions. Income from institutions has increased despite the continuing recession and an austere outlook, more than compensating for a fall in single individual subscriptions. The publication gained 13 university subscribers in 2010, and lost 3 (compared to 11 added and 4 lost in 2009):

New Subscribers

Simon Fraser University, Canada
Rosemont College, Pennsylvania, USA
Grinnell College, Iowa, USA
Carleton College, Minnesota, USA
Mount St. Mary's College, California, USA
University of Miami, USA
Durham University, UK
Esher College, Surrey, UK
University of Western Australia
University of Otago, NZ
Dubai International Academy

Rijks Universiteit Groningen, Denmark
University of Florence, Italy

Recently (early 2011), we have also gained:

Monash University in Australia (with campuses in South Africa and Malaysia)
St Patrick's College (of City University Dublin)
Providence College
University of Lancaster
Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, Frankfurt

bringing the total number of new subscribers since the start of 2010 to 18.

Lost subscribers (cancelled in the spring of 2010): University of Calgary, Auburn University, and Bethel University, Minnesota. While eighteen institutions is less than we would have liked to gain, we draw comfort from the small number of cancellations during the worst economic recession in eighty years.

We warmly thank all of our contributors who have given their support in persuading their institutions to consider our offer. With few exceptions (Miami, Grinnell, Esher, Dubai and St Patrick's College), our new subscriptions have materialized due to the active involvement of our colleagues who have persuaded their libraries to subscribe.

The net result is that we had 78 paying institutional subscribers at the end of 2010 (and currently 83); in addition, we have kept 10 complimentary subscriptions in countries with per capita income below the global average. That said, revenues from institutional subscriptions continue to be below what we believe we can and ought to make – JSTOR, for instance, is available at 6000 institutions, a number that we are unlikely to attain in the coming five years, but which can serve as an ideal target. We will challenge ourselves to achieve another 30 subscriptions in 2011, and ideally would like to achieve a total of 150 by the end of 2012. But we cannot do this alone. Since we have no marketing department, we rely entirely on our contributors' support within their institutions – actively recommending our content to their students; involving other colleagues with the project; asking their librarians for a trial. As the recent subscriptions we have agreed demonstrate, our contributors' role is crucial; your involvement can help substantially towards attaining the targets we have set ourselves and increasing revenue in the coming years.

Individual subscriptions in 2010 declined, probably as a consequence of tighter personal budgets and the increasing attraction of Wikipedia for cash-strapped students.

Expenditure in 2010

	2010	2009
Accountancy	1,470.00	2,693.45
Bank charges	156.11	101.64
Computer equipment	28.91	165.90
Editorial staff: casual	2,378.00	4,745.00

Editorial staff: established	28,360.45	24,171.03
Hospitality	410.38	171.33
Interest on loans	3,795.30	3,036.24
Other expenses	528.63	56.00
Prizes	700.00	800.00
Server and internet charges	2,191.31	1,992.54
Software development	8,559.98	5,153.64
Taxes - Payroll	8,793.94	2,896.22
Taxes – Corporation	1,320.62	0
Travel	0	66.50
Total	53,578.22	48,058.49

Note 1: no royalty or wage payments have been made to Directors, Editors or Contributors, all of whom continue to contribute their expertise to the publication in return for proportionate ownership in the whole. The expenditures listed above are almost entirely devoted to increasing the content and software features of the publication; there are very small delivery costs and administrative overheads remain tiny in proportion to the value we are constantly adding to the whole.

Note 2: these accounts are accurate statements of year-on-year performance. The Company account year is from June 1st to May 31st and its accounts are audited by our accountants, Devine and Company of Slough, and presented to Companies House as the final and correct expression of profit-and-loss for legal purposes.

Consolidated Debt and Cash-on-Hand

The Company's consolidated debt to Robert Clark and Marianne Majerus stands at £78,367.62. At the date of writing, *The Literary Dictionary Company* has cash reserves of just over £37,000 underpinning its continued development. Total earnings by the publication from its inception to 31 December 2010 stood at £265.930, and investments at £108,367.

Financial Anticipations for 2011

The global recession produced a plateau in our income growth, but no fall, and we are continuing to build content and enhance the scholarly and pedagogical value of the publication (see below), while devoting as much staff time and energy as is available to persuading institutions to take out trials and eventually subscribe. This is a time-consuming process and we rely heavily on our editors and contributors to make the case for subscription in their own institutions. It is this active engagement of scholars, after all, that makes our publication stand out in comparison with the competitor products of established commercial publishers and which enable us to offer one of the top reference resources for English-reading humanities students around the world. We generally find that the librarians in subscribing institutions are most impressed with this aspect of our endeavour and therefore urge all contributors to pester their library subject representatives on our collective behalf. Nearly every institution in which our colleagues work will have an online budget in the millions (of dollars, euros, pounds ...) and we believe we can readily justify a small fraction of that expenditure.

The commissioning of our ‘editorial desks’ application (at long last!) will enable us to offer our editors ‘hands-on control’ over their own areas of expertise, and thus the possibility of generating an ‘edited wiki’. We hope this will encourage greater editorial development than has been possible thus far and enable the publication to take a step-change in esteem and in the rate of publication. Much of our effort across the summer and autumn will be devoted to recruiting many more editors, and if any colleague is interested in undertaking this work we would be pleased to hear from them.

A further major focus in 2011 will be on developing our sister-site, *MappingWriting* (which may become by the time of its unveiling *LiteraryTopographies*), prior to its public release circa 1 October 2011. Since the site will be ‘free to air’ we it will bring increased visibility and presence to *The Literary Encyclopedia* by making available literary maps of the kind explored in the work of Franco Moretti and others (see below).

Payments to Contributors

Since we made a small net profit in 2010 we are now anticipating the possibility of distributing royalties to contributors and are exploring with our accountants the legal implications of doing so. Since the tax authorities in many nation states (notably USA and EU) require rights-payers to deduct withholding tax, such distributions are likely to be more complex than anyone would wish. We are looking for a path with a view to setting up the possibilities for disbursements when the Company decides the time is right. However, shareholders should be aware that for significant payments to be made we will need a radical growth in subscriptions and that our best means of achieving this is spreading word about the merits of the publication.

Section 2: Administrative Matters

Statements of Shareholding

As part of the process of setting in place the possibility of paying royalties, and establishing systems of voting on Company policy, we have commissioned an addition to our Contributor portal which will provide each contributor and editor with a clear statement of their own investment in the publication, and which will enable this statement to be printed as a pdf. We anticipate this will appear in June-July and there will then be a period of several months during which we will invite all shareholders to check their statements and report any perceived errors to us.

Voting on Company Policy

Once we have shareholder statements we will be able to ask shareholders to vote on policy issues (with each shareholder’s vote being proportionate to their investment), and on the election of a management committee. We hope this will be ready in July along with the Statements of Shareholding.

Management, governance and company administration

As noted above, we have commissioned software to enable contributors to vote for the election of a Management Committee. We anticipate inviting electoral statements during the late summer, and then holding our first online election in October. The Committee will be asked to advise the Managing Editor and Editorial Director on all aspects of the development of the publication, and to assist in reporting activity to the Company's shareholders.

Section 3: Servers, Software, Forthcoming Developments

Server-side: Speed and Reliability

The Literary Encyclopedia experienced occasional server failures in 2005-9 which we considered unacceptable but which are a regular feature of most commercial server provision. Given that 99% in our view is not good enough, only 100% reliability will do, we transferred our hosting to Amazon cloud in August 2009 and are delighted to say that their service has proved robust and very economical. The only downtimes we have experienced were in December 2010 and our own fault (due to a rather mysterious log rotation code which took us some time to identify), and recently in April 2011, which was resolved swiftly (due in large measure to the sustained effort of our engineers). In March 2011 we have moved our email circulation system to Amazon as well and expect similar gains in reduced cost and improved efficiency, despite some initial difficulties in setting it up.

We have, however, noted some slowness of response in recent months and diagnosed the cause in the complexity of searches across three different tables. Improvements in code have enabled us to reduce the processor demands, and we have also decided to invest in a speedier server and a reserved instance. As a result, speed is now almost what we would wish and further improvements in the coming months will ensure even greater efficiency.

Recommended Reading and Weblinks search functionality

Currently in progress, this application will be finished around the end of summer and will make available sophisticated search and browse options for the recommended readings listed and the recommended weblinks.

Homepage design

We will continue the improvement to the new homepage and interface, potentially include a Newsreel on the right side of the homepage and various other visually-exciting features.

Editions and Translations

While we should have liked to move faster on this aspect of the publication, it looks likely that work on editions and translations can only start in 2012. *The Literary*

Encyclopedia will be separating a 'work' from any particular edition of the work. This will enable us to distinguish first performances, first manuscript circulation, first printed editions, first translation, first printings in different countries. We will be seeking your help with some of the listings when we have the software in place - this will increase the sophistication and accuracy with which we can display historical experience, and will complement our emphasis on literary and cultural mapping.

Mapping Writing

Mapping Writing (at www.mappingwriting.com) seeks to display and explore *places of origin, places lived, and places described* in verbal cultural representations.

Mapping Writing will also constitute a research network of cultural historians and geographers who will explore and encourage intellectual and scholarly research into all aspects of cultural geography. It is a subsidiary of *The Literary Encyclopedia* and entirely owned by it since it draws its technical expertise and its core scholarly information about canonical writers and global historical events from the rich store in *The Literary Encyclopedia*. However, *Mapping Writing* will be a free site that can be augmented by contributions from librarians, archivists, devoted students and amateurs under scholarly supervision.

The platform uses sophisticated databases to map information about writers, writing and other cultural representations onto Google maps and Ordnance Survey maps. Much of the software for *Mapping Writing* has already been developed, including means of correlating places with GIS information.

Planning for the site has been carried out by Robert Clark of the University of East Anglia working with Kirsti Bohata and the Centre for Research into the English Literature and Language of Wales at the University of Swansea. They have been joined by Ian Gregory and David Cooper of the University of Lancaster, who have developed *Mapping the Lakes* (www.lancs.ac.uk/mappingthelakes/) with Sally Bushell, and by Rachel Hewitt of Queen Mary University of London who has recently published *Map of a Nation: A Biography of the Ordnance Survey* (Granta). Peter Childs of the University of Gloucestershire and David Higgins of the University of Leeds have also joined us in this project.

We would like to encourage other contributors with an interest in literary and cultural geography to become part of the development team and welcome all scholars with an interest in cultural and historical geography to become associates in our research network.

We have recently opened the site to public view, with an input interface and a first work that has been mapped (*Robinson Crusoe*, by Robert Clark), by way of example. If you wish to invite anyone to have a look at Mapping Writing, please send them the following:

The map of *Robinson Crusoe* is now complete and can be viewed at www.mappingwriting.com.

Guests can use the following: 'WinterGuest2010' and 'quijote1605' (case-sensitive)

>select works
>select Crusoe
>select works -> "view all chronologies"

There are some more software improvements in train, notably the display of the names of those responsible for making and editing the maps.

We hope to have a good display for Jane Austen and on Welsh writing by the end of the summer, plus more on Defoe, notably the *Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain*. We are aiming to make the site freely available to the public in September. Any contributor who would like to map works or lives for this site will be most welcome.

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