

Impact Report:

Discover How the Gale-ASECS Fellowships Helped Researchers Make New Discoveries with Data

Read How One Fellow Used Digital Humanities Tools to Examine the History of Dueling in Eighteenth-Century Britain



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Gale-ASECS Non-Residential Fellowship

MEET THE SCHOLAR

As one of five researchers awarded a fellowship from Gale and the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies (ASECS) in 2022, Dr. Adam Kozaczka used digital humanities (DH) tools to enhance his research on the history of dueling in eighteenth-century Britain. By examining data from relevant legal issues and documents, Kozaczka sought to create a more accurate picture of dueling's prevalence in Britain and the commentary that surrounded it during the eighteenth century.

All Gale-ASECS Non-Residential Fellowship recipients were granted access to Gale's *Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO)* and *Gale Digital Scholar Lab [the Lab]* for a six-month period of research. *ECCO* is the most comprehensive online historical archive supporting eighteenth-century studies, connecting researchers to every significant English-language and foreign-language title printed in the United Kingdom between the years 1701 and 1800. The expanse of content housed in *ECCO* meets substantial research potential in the *Lab*, an industry-leading, text- and data-mining research environment that removes barriers to digital scholarship.

Fellows received training to use the text- and data-mining tools available in the *Lab* to explore *ECCO* and advance their work using digital humanities methods. Read on to see how Kozaczka used this cloud-based analysis platform to build a robust body of data, run meaningful analyses using digital humanities tools, and make new discoveries.

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FINDING MORE CONTEXT FOR HISTORY

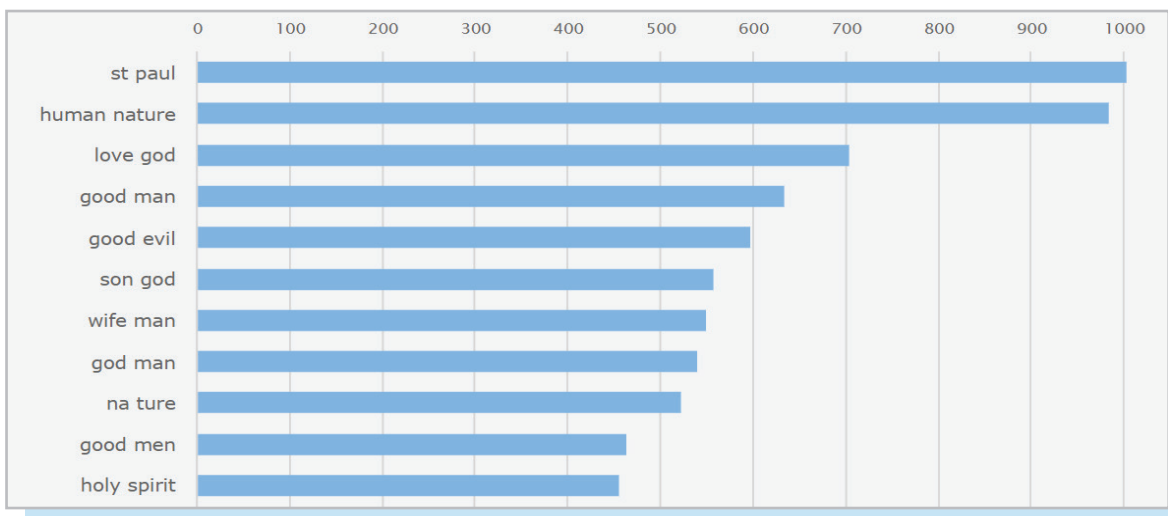
To gain clarity on the history of dueling in eighteenth-century Britain, Kozaczka used his access and training during the Gale-ASECS fellowship to compile and analyze a more complete view of dueling commentary from that period.

According to Kozaczka, “The project’s primary goal was to use the tools contained in the *Lab* to sift through the vast number of *ECCO* items pertaining to dueling in the eighteenth century—in the process testing, broadening, and sharpening the conclusions drawn by historians, literary critics, and legal scholars who have authored landmark studies on dueling without the advantage of digital humanities tools.”

Kozaczka’s research was guided by two essential questions: “Was dueling widespread across Britain or did specific cities or regions see greater incidence of the practice? Who were the authors who commented on the practice in printed polemics, and what sorts of rhetoric did they use?”

The Gale-ASECS fellowship gave Kozaczka the opportunity to find a wealth of data relevant to his research and analyze it using powerful digital humanities tools.

“This deep dive into *ECCO* was facilitated by the sense of play and experimentation encouraged by the *Lab*.”



Bigrams in “Dueling (polemics)” content set.

MAKING NEW DISCOVERIES WITH DATA

In his research, Kozaczka sought to settle ongoing disagreements about the history of dueling in eighteenth-century Britain. He detailed in his report, “Social historian Donna Andrew’s work on eighteenth-century dueling done from the 1980s into the early 2010s describes an ongoing and equally weighted debate in print between anti-dueling activists and proponents of dueling as a practice. . . . Andrew cites enough pro-dueling pieces to suggest that this was a two-sided battle, and at some points she plays up the pro-dueling side.”

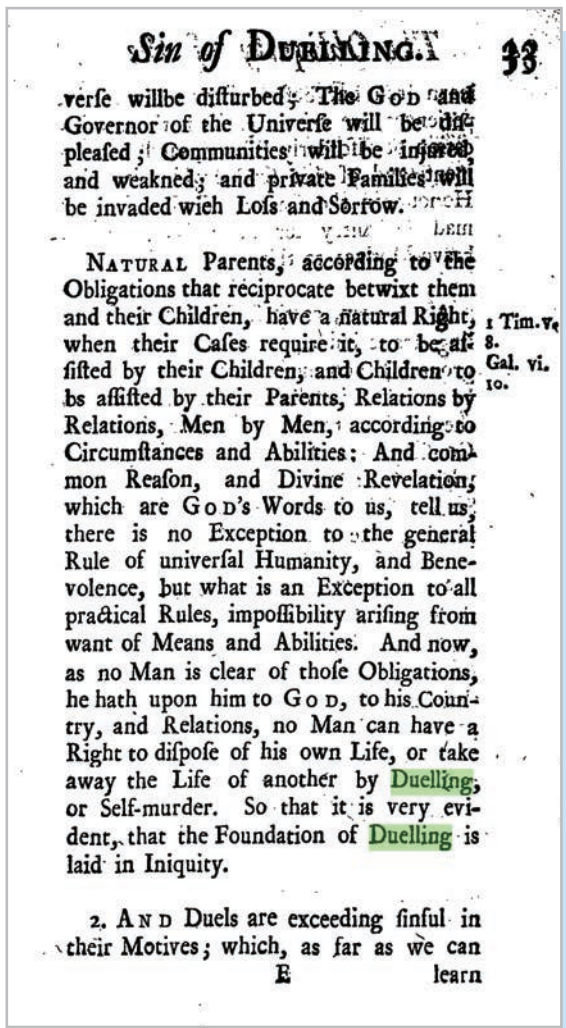
However, the data Kozaczka compiled while researching in the *Lab* led him to a new discovery. “Sifting through *ECCO* using the *Lab*’s tools provides significantly different results,” he said.

“To begin with, religion is paramount: in my content set, labeled ‘Dueling (polemics),’ that contains texts presenting opinions on dueling (as opposed to legal treatises on dueling or factual reports pertaining to actual duels or dueling trials), the most frequently occurring unigram was ‘god,’ appearing over 32,000 times,” noted Kozaczka. “The most frequently occurring bigram was ‘St Paul’ with over 1,000 instances, and among the top five were also included ‘love god,’ ‘human nature,’ and ‘good man,’ showing us that texts ostensibly about dueling were spending more time on religious and moral language than they were with legal terms.”



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Christian essays upon the immorality of uncleanness and duelling, *Deliver'd in two sermons Preach'd at St. Paul's.*
By Anthony Holbrook, Rector of Waltham Parva in Essex, 1727, ECCO.

UNEARTHING OVERLOOKED NARRATIVES

Investigating this data further, Kozaczka discovered, “When I followed the unigrams and bigrams back to the texts, I found that nearly all of them were anti-dueling. Those authors whom I was able to track down, moreover, tended to be Dissenting ministers, or at least to have published tracts on other, often unrelated, religious topics. We thus start getting an image of a broad, multi-issue pursuit of social justice in which those who denounce the practice of dueling are also writing against other issues—notably slavery—and as we know, the British abolition movement was largely driven by the Dissenting side of Protestant controversy.”

From his search of the expanse of documents from *ECCO* in the *Lab*, Kozaczka found, “My ‘Dueling (polemics)’ content set collects documents containing such arguments, and barely a handful of these turned out to have anything positive to say about dueling as a practice. This reveals that Andrew’s work, based on decades of going issue by issue through microform versions of eighteenth-century periodicals (she describes the process as such and was presumably unable to search for terms), used only a few representative sources from each side of the debate.”

Kozaczka concluded, “The much wider reach of my content set meant that I could immediately see the disparity between the two sides that has remained unacknowledged in scholarship until today.”

“The opportunity to use the *Lab* caused me to dive much more deeply into *ECCO*’s resources than I had previously thought possible.”

EXPANDING RESEARCH POSSIBILITIES WITH DH METHODS

After compiling his data and making his initial discoveries, Kozaczka noted, “The Analyze functions in the *Lab* allowed me to get even more out of this content set.

“The benefits of the *Lab* cannot be overstated, given that all six Analyze tools make Digital Humanities methodologies accessible to scholars who do not possess the hard skills (coding, for example) that once set DH scholars apart from from what—for lack of a better term—I will call the general population of scholars, or perhaps traditional scholars,” he said.

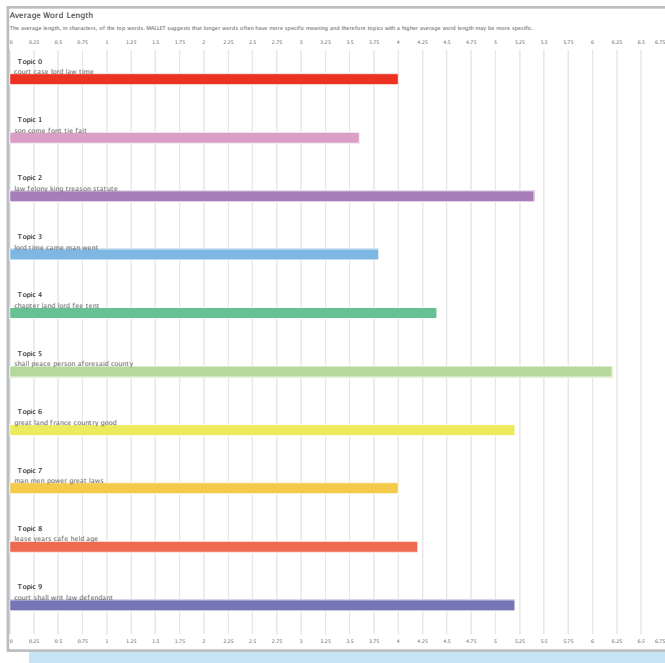
Kozaczka’s experience demonstrates the strides digital humanities tools like the *Lab* have made to remove barriers to digital scholarship for novice and seasoned researchers, allowing them to find and analyze more-relevant data to conduct more-meaningful research.

“The *Lab* is an early example of the next generation of Digital Humanities platforms that adds DH methodologies to every scholar’s toolbox.”



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“Chance Medley” content set—topic modeling results.

FINDING NEW INSIGHTS WITH ANALYSIS TOOLS

When expanding on the digital humanities tools he used to enhance his research, Kozaczka focused primarily on ngrams and topic modeling.

“The extent to which each tool was beneficial was highly specific to the content set in question,” he noted. “My content sets ‘Dueling (polemics),’ ‘Dueling (periodicals),’ and ‘Dueling (creative writing),’ got a lot out of ngrams.

“The ‘Chance Medley’ content set, on the other hand, produced topically integrated topic modelling results because ‘chance medley’ is a highly specific legal phrase,” Kozaczka elaborated. “So the word tends to come up in trial reports and most often in legal treatises (as opposed to ‘duel’ or ‘duellist,’ which come up all over the place), meaning that the items in the ‘chance medley’ content set share a vocabulary, while the items in the ‘Dueling’ content sets do not. Topic modeling with the ‘Chance Medley’ set resulted in extremely helpful topics, such as ‘treason case statute felony king,’ helping me find specifically political trials and reports.”

BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH & INSTRUCTION

Kozaczka’s research during the Gale-ASECS fellowship led him to build an expansive dataset to support both future instruction in his classes and further research into eighteenth-century dueling.

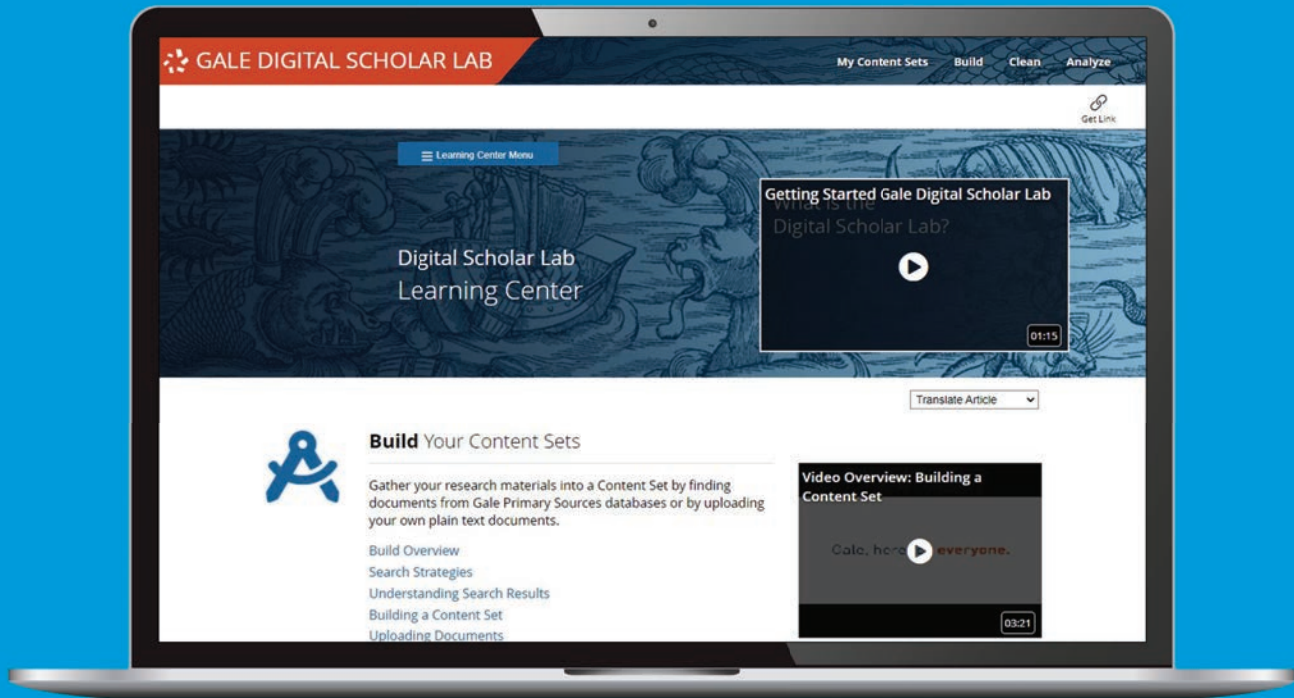
“I have numerous screen captures of my project’s results, and will find a way of showing these to my students during lectures,” Kozaczka said. “I have found that digital humanities is exciting to twenty-first-century students who sometimes (unfairly) consider the humanities to be the ‘softer’ side of collegiate education. Students who take technology seriously and yawn at Shakespeare can get very excited about a DH project, and I think that the *Lab* is both emblematic and easy-to-showcase enough to get their attention.”

Kozaczka noted, “I intend to further explore the digital humanities using some of the information I gathered during this fellowship.

“Having downloaded the OCR [optical character recognition] text of most of the items in my content sets, it is my intention to put all of that text together and run it through Python to try to further isolate information,” Kozaczka said, outlining the next steps for his research. “Perhaps more significantly, many of the results I have gleaned during the project will make their way into a chapter in a law and literature monograph that I am currently working on,” he concluded.

“The work done during this fellowship will continue to influence my pedagogy and scholarship for some time to come.”





Get an Inside Look at Powerful Research Tools

Want to learn more about the resources Kozaczka used to enhance his research and develop his digital humanities skill set?

Discover the possibilities of *Gale Digital Scholar Lab* at gale.com/digital-scholar-lab

Find more information about *ECCO* at gale.com/ECCO

Interested in learning more about ASECS?



Find more details about the ASECS, including the society's initiatives and events, at asecs.org