British Library Labs
Experiment with our digital collections

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Alas September he attacked the leak the shark. #bldigital

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British Library Labs Awards (2016)

The annual BL Labs Awards, introduced in 2015, recognises outstanding and innovative work that has been carried out using the British Library's digital collections and data. The Awards for 2016 commended work in four key areas:

- **Research** - A project or activity which shows the development of new knowledge, research methods, or tools.
- **Commercial** - An activity that delivers or develops commercial value in the context of new products, tools, or services that build on, incorporate, or enhance the Library's digital content.
- **Artistic** - An artistic or creative endeavour which inspires, stimulates, amazes and provokes.
- **Teaching / Learning** - Quality learning experiences created for learners of any age and ability that use the Library's digital content.

The BL Labs Staff Award was also introduced in 2016, which recognises an outstanding British Library staff member or team who have produced a transformative project using the Library's digital content.

BL Labs Research Award 2016

- **Winner: Scissors and Paste, by M. H. Beals.** Scissors and Paste utilises the 1800-1900 digitised British Library Newspapers, collection to explore the possibilities of mining large-scale newspaper databases for reprinted and repurposed news content. The project has involved the development of a suite of tools and methodologies, created using both out-of-the-box and custom-made project-specific software, to efficiently identify reprint families of journalistic texts and then suggest both directionality and branching within these subsets. From these case-studies, detailed analyses of additions, omissions and wholesale changes offer insights into the mechanics of reprinting that left behind few if any other traces in the historical record.
- **Runner up: Nineteenth-century Newspaper Analytics, by Paul Fyfe and Qian Ge.** The project represents an innovative partnership between researchers in English literature, Electrical & Computer Engineering, and data analytics in pursuit of a seemingly simple research question: How can computer vision and image processing techniques be adapted for large-scale interpretation of historical illustrations? The project is developing methods in image analytics to study a corpus of illustrated nineteenth-century British newspapers from the British Library's collection, including *The Graphic*, *The Illustrated Police News* and the *Penny Illustrated Paper*. It aims to suggest ways of adapting image processing techniques to other historical media while also pursuing scholarship on nineteenth-century visual culture and the illustrated press. The project also exposes the formidable technical challenges presented by historical illustrations and suggests ways to refine computer vision algorithms and analytics workflows for such difficult data. The website includes sample workflows as well as speculations about how large-scale image analytics might yield insights into the cultural past, plus much more: http://ncna.dh.chass.ncsu.edu/imageanalytics

BL Labs Commercial Award 2016

- **Winner: Curating Digital Collections to Go Mobile, by Mitchell Davis.** The project involved a collaboration between BiblioLabs and the British Library in the development of BiblioBoard , an award-winning e-Content delivery platform, and online curatorial and multimedia publishing tools to support it. These tools make it simple for subject area experts to create visually stunning multi-media exhibits for the web and mobile devices without any technical expertise. The curatorial output is almost instantly available via a fully responsive web site as well as through native apps for mobile devices. This unified digital library interface incorporates viewers for PDF, ePub, images, documents, video and audio files allowing users to immerse themselves in the content without having to link out to other sites to view disparate media formats.
- **Runner up: Poetic Places, by Sarah Cole.** Poetic Places is a free app for iOS and Android devices which was launched in March 2016. It brings poetic depictions of places into the everyday world, helping users to encounter poems in the locations described by the literature, accompanied by contextualising historical narratives and relevant audiovisual materials. These materials are primarily drawn from open archive collections, including the British Library Flickr collection. Utilising geolocation services and push notifications, Poetic Places can (whilst running in the background on the device) let users know when they stumble across a place depicted in verse and art, encouraging serendipitous discovery. Alternatively, they can browse the poems and places via map and list interfaces as a source of inspiration without travelling. Poetic Places aspires to give a renewed sense of place, to bring together writings and paintings and sounds to mean more than they do alone, and to bring literature into people's everyday life in unexpected moments.

BL Labs Artistic Award 2016

- **Winner: *Hey There, Young Sailor*, written and directed by Ling Low with visual art by Lyn Ong.** Hey There, Young Sailor combines live action with animation, hand-drawn artwork and found archive images to tell a love story set at sea. Inspired by the works of early cinema pioneer Georges Méliès, the video draws on late 19th century and early 20th century images from the British Library's Flickr collection for its collages and tableaux. The video was commissioned by Malaysian indie folk band

The Impatient Sisters , and independently produced by a Malaysian and Indonesian team

- **Runner up: Fashion Utopia, by Kris Hofmann (Animation Director) and Claudia Rosa Lukas (Curator).** The project involved the creation of an 80 second animation and five vines which accompanied the Austrian contribution to the International Fashion Showcase London, organised annually by the British Council and the British Fashion Council. Fashion Utopia garnered creative inspiration from the treasure trove of images from the British Library Flickr Commons collection and more than 500 images were used to create a moving collage that was, in a second step, juxtaposed with stop-frame animated items of fashion and accessories.

BL Labs Teaching / Learning Award 2016

- **Winner: Library Carpentry, founded by James Baker and involving the international Library Carpentry team.** Library Carpentry is software skills training aimed at the needs and requirements of library professionals. It takes the form of a series of modules that are available online for self-directed study or for adaption and reuse by library professionals in face-to-face workshops. Library Carpentry is in the commons and for the commons: it is not tied to any institution or person. For more information, see http://librarycarpentry.github.io/

- **Runner up: The PhD Abstracts Collections in FLAX: Academic English with the Open Access Electronic Theses Online Service (EThOS) at the British Library, by the FLAX research team.** The project presents an educational research study into the development and evaluation of domain-specific language corpora derived from PhD abstracts with the Electronic Theses Online Service (EThOS) at the British Library. The collections, which are openly available from this study, were built using the interactive FLAX (Flexible Language Acquisition flax.nzdl.org) open-source software for uptake in English for Specific Academic Purposes programmes (ESAP) at Queen Mary University of London. The project involved the harvesting of metadata, including the abstracts of 400,000 doctoral theses from UK universities, from the EThOS Toolkit at the British Library. These digital PhD abstract text collections were then automatically analysed, enriched, and transformed into a resource that second-language and novice research writers can browse and query in order to extend their ability to understand the language used in specific domains, and to help them develop their abstract writing. It is anticipated that the practical contribution of the FLAX tools and the EThOS PhD Abstract collections will benefit second-language and novice research writers in understanding the language used to achieve the persuasive and promotional aspects of the written research abstract genre. It is also anticipated that users of the collections will be able to develop their arguments more fluently and precisely through the practice of research abstract writing to project a persuasive voice as is used in specific research disciplines.

BL Labs Staff Award 2016

- **Winner: LibCrowds, led by Alex Mendes.** LibCrowds is a crowdsourcing platform built by Alexander Mendes. It aims to create searchable catalogue records for some of the hundreds of thousands of items that can currently only be found in printed and card catalogues. By participating in the crowdsourcing projects, users will help researchers everywhere to access the British Library's collections more easily in the future. The first project series, Convert-a-Card, experimented with a new method for transforming printed card catalogues into electronic records for inclusion in our online catalogue Explore, by asking volunteers to link scanned images of the cards with records retrieved from the WorldCat database. Additional projects have recently been launched that invite volunteers to transcribe cards that may require more specific language skills, such as the South Asian minor languages. Records matched, located, transcribed or translated as part of the crowdsourcing projects were uploaded to the British Library's Explore catalogue for anyone to search online. By participating users can have a direct impact on the availability of research material to anyone interested in the diverse collections available at the British Library.

- **Runner up: SHINE 2.0 - A Historical Search Engine, led by Andy Jackson (Web Archiving Technical Lead at the British**

Library) and Gil Hoggarth (Senior Web Archiving Engineer at the British Library). SHINE is a state-of-the-art demonstrator for the potential of Web Archives to transform research. The current implementation of SHINE exposes metadata from the Internet Archive's UK domain web archives for the years 1996- 2013. This data was licensed for use by the British Library by agreement with JISC. SHINE represents a high level of innovation in access and analysis of web archives, allowing sophisticated searching of a very large and loosely-structured dataset and showing many of the characteristics of "Big Social Data". Users can fine-tune results to look for file-types, results from specific domains, languages used and geo-location data (post-code look-up). The interface was developed by Web Archive technical development alongside the AHRC-funded Big UK Domain Data for the Arts and Humanities project. An important concept in its design and development was that it would be researcher-led and SHINE was developed iteratively with research case studies relating to use of UK web archives.

- **Special Mention: 3D modelling and printing of Chinese oracle bones and Hebrew items, involving digital curator Adi Keinan-Schoonbaert.** The Hebrew Manuscripts Digitisation Project (HMDP) provides free online access to Hebrew manuscripts from the British Library's collection. The project employed 3D photogrammetry, modelling and printing of the Hebrew collection, making these items available in a new way and enhancing the level of engagement with readers, as well as exploring new possibilities for sharing such resources.

The BL Awards (2015) winners and runners up also produced a remarkable and varied collection of innovative projects.