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Muri, Alison, dir. The Grub Street Project. Other

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effort to offer an inclusive experience, upon which it can only build, and serves as a model of accessibility toward which we should all strive in our scholarly output. Finally, many web projects have a feeling of finality to them, but this one promises to thrive with the addition of more content and possibly even more maps.

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**Muri, Alison, dir.**

**The Grub Street Project. Other.**

Digital Research Centre, University of Saskatchewan, 2005. Accessed 5 May 2021.

[grubstreetproject.net](http://grubstreetproject.net).

The Grub Street Project describes itself on its home page, ambitiously, as a “digital edition of eighteenth-century London.” A claim like that requires a bit of explanation: what might it mean to create an edition of a city? In practice, the bulk of the project consists of digitized maps of London, some of which are digitally annotated with specific locations cross-referenced to contemporary texts. The project’s title indicates its particular interest in print culture of the eighteenth century. The home page further notes that the project seeks to offer a way to understand the city as a “social text” and to understand “print culture as a distributed social network.” Following the link from “social text” takes us to a page that gives an example beginning with a place name in a literary text (Fleetditch in Pope’s *Dunciad*) and shows how that term might be linked by a pop-up menu to maps, people, events, publications, and so on. Theoretically, according to the example, a user could move from the original text to several different maps showing the named place, and again from those maps to other literary texts mentioning the same place, to paintings depicting it, and to relevant people or events. Following the link from “distributed social network” takes us to a page with an excerpt from Alison Muri’s 2006 essay on the project, articulating how a decentralized network model offers a better way to understand the production and circulation of texts than does a centralized

network model.<sup>1</sup> Taken together, these two pages suggest that the site's ultimate goal is to map that decentralized network of print in eighteenth-century London so that users can explore how various texts, places, people, and events connect.

Such a comprehensive resource would be wonderful. It may also be impossible, given the scale of what it sets out to do. Given that resources like the *English Short Title Catalogue* (ESTC) are known to be incomplete and that digital text databases like Early English Books Online (EEBO) and Eighteenth-Century Collections Online (ECCO) do not include every text catalogued in the ESTC, it is extremely unlikely that another project would be able to capture and index all eighteenth-century texts mentioning places in London. Even getting all the available relevant digital texts into this project would require enormous labour. So, it is no real criticism to point out that the site, in its current state, does not yet meet its vast goals.

By the same token, because the project specifically aims to represent eighteenth-century London, it is not really a criticism to note that the site has limited usefulness for scholars of the early modern period. As of this writing, two of the nine texts integrated into the project date from before 1700, and while all but two of the fourteen people for whom the site offers some biographical information were born in the seventeenth century, most of them were active in the eighteenth century. The situation for early modern scholars is somewhat better when it comes to the maps themselves. Thirty-six maps and views of London are included in the project, and twenty-two of them represent London before 1700. Other information available on the site includes pages on the history of the city, as well as of London more broadly, and a page listing the various guilds and fraternities of London. The search feature produces links to any maps on the site in which a place name has been linked, as well as a series of textual excerpts from reference works about London. This feature requires exactness in search terms. Searching for "theatre," for example, generates eleven results but does not find the Globe. Searching for "Globe" gets seven results, the last of which links the Globe theatre to four maps. Early modern scholars can thus use the site either by exploring a specific map or by performing a search for a particular London location.

1. Alison Muri, "The Technology and Future of the Book: What a Digital 'Grub Street' Can Tell us about Communications, Commerce, and Creativity," in *Producing the Eighteenth-Century Book: Writers and Publishers in England, 1650–1800*, ed. Laura Runge and Pat Rogers (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2009), 235–50.

As might be expected, the maps have not all received the same level of annotation, and the eighteenth-century maps have received the most thorough annotation. The earlier maps, though, still have a good deal to offer. A listing of all the maps available can be accessed from the project homepage by clicking on “Maps and Views of London” in the left-hand menu, and from there it is simple to select a map to view by clicking on its name or on the thumbnail image. The map then appears in the window’s main frame, with an accordion-style menu on the left that offers “Maps and Views of London,” “Details about this Image,” “Layers,” and “Tours.” “Maps and Views” allows users to switch directly to a different map, while “Details” provides information about the map’s original publication, the source of the image, and often some brief critical discussion of the map itself. The “Layers” tab shows the greatest variation in contents: for the majority of the early modern maps, only a general “Place Index” is provided, while for a few of these maps, specific types of places are grouped together. These subcategories usually include “Buildings, Built Structures, Markers,” “Places of Worship,” and “Streets, Roads, Thoroughfares, Public Markets, Places.” Two maps also indicate “Clubs, Coffee & Chocolate Houses, Bagnios, Taverns, Inns” and the map showing only Whitehall indexes “Residents, Royal Household, Offices & Officers”—a category not generally needed on the other maps. This variation in the layers available obviously indicates that more work has been done for some maps than for others.

Further, clicking on a specific layer produces different results in different cases, sometimes even on the same map. For example, on the site’s digital version of the “Agas” map, clicking the “Buildings” layer causes small circles of several different colours to appear on the map; hovering over a circle causes a small label with the place name to appear. Clicking a circle produces a pop-up window with further information about that place (these pop-ups appear to have the same information that appears in the search function). Clicking the “Clubs” layer does the same thing, although there are only three locations highlighted as such in this particular map. But the other two layers here behave differently when clicked: circles of the same colour appear on the map (“Places of Worship” are all yellow), and a list of specific places also appears below the layer name. Users can scroll through this list and select a specific one to get the map to highlight and zoom to the circle, thereby marking it on the map. Specific information about the circle is still available by clicking the circle. When the layer provides a list of specific place names, it’s obviously much easier to find a specific location than if

the user has to click each circle to find out what it is. There are occasional errors on the map: the circle at Covent Garden on the Agas map is linked to the pop-up for Charing Cross. The unevenness of this information is likely because work is ongoing, but it does limit what can be done.

Only one of the early maps includes a “Tour.” The idea of these “tours” seems to be to allow users to explore a group of sites connected to a specific person or text: the single early modern “tour” offered is of Shakespearean playhouses. As with the layers, clicking the name of the tour in the left-hand sidebar produces a group of coloured circles on the map. As usual, each circle provides a pop-up with specific information. An information icon usually appears next to the tour name, and clicking that produces a pop-up with the complete tour text.

So what can The Grub Street Project do for a scholar of the early modern period? It has a good deal to offer in teaching the eighteenth century: it can help students of that period see something of what the city looked like and what it might have been like to move through the city spatially. Because its main focus is the eighteenth century, its usefulness for early modern work is somewhat limited. Additionally, it is difficult to tell how quickly progress is being made on various elements of the project. It was first established in 2005, and the site’s “About” page lists students who have contributed over the years. But the most recent date on that page is 2017. Individual elements of the site do not indicate when they were added, so at present there is no way to tell what work is ongoing. Ideally, of course, the project is still being updated and added to. If so, it is to be hoped that the early modern portions of the site will eventually be as detailed as the later portions. Even in its present state, the project can enable new possibilities in teaching literature of the early modern period with connections to London. Using the site to walk students through various of ways of depicting London, to show them a route from one place to another, or even just to have them look at locations in relation to each other could have real impact. Bringing multiple maps together and making them searchable is itself valuable. And if the project continues working toward its lofty goals, it can only become more useful.

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