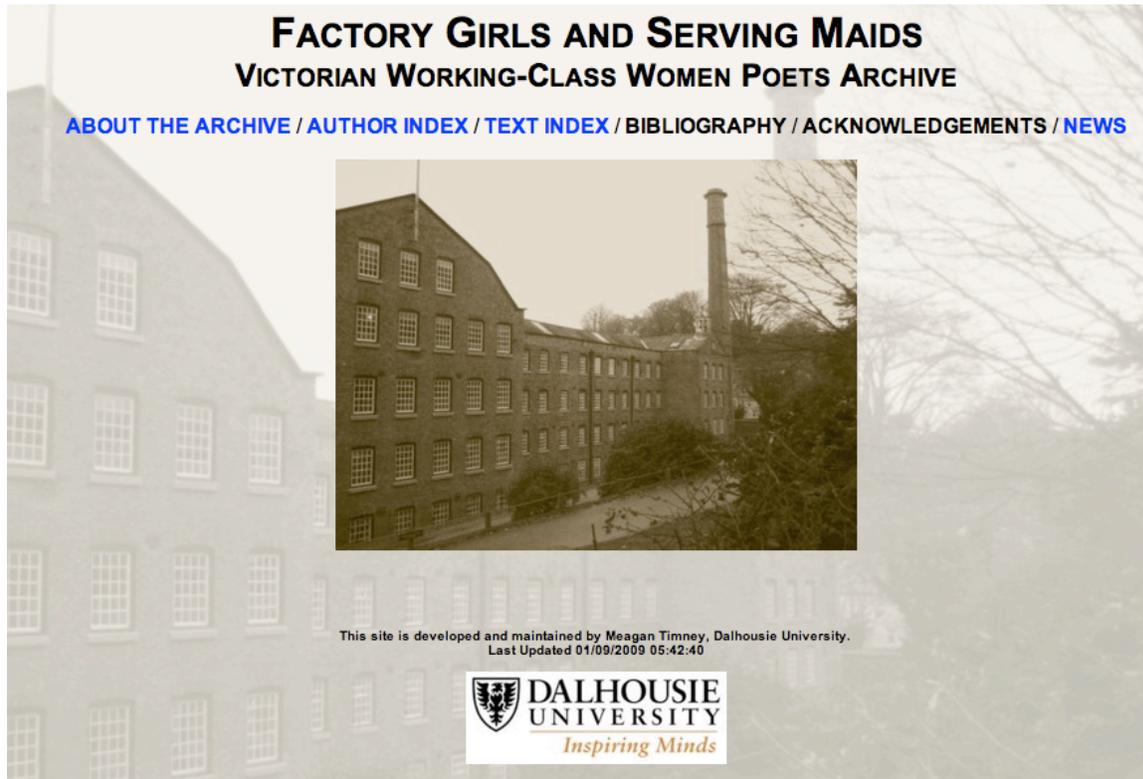


**"The Little Match Girls": Eastgate's Tinderbox
and The Victorian Working-Class Women Poets Archive**



Project Background

In my doctoral dissertation, entitled "Of Factory Girls and Serving Maids: The Literary Labours of Victorian Working-Class Women in Victorian Britain," I examine the poetry of working-class women published from the beginning of the Chartist era to the late-Victorian period. I focus on the ways in which, beginning in the 1830s, working-class women poets participated in the discussion of the major themes of Chartism: working conditions, international cooperation and community, and a socially equitable society, themes which have been up until now viewed by critics as part of a specifically male political agenda.

My current research focuses on researching and developing a model for the digital representation non-canonical literary texts. This research will culminate in the Working-Class Women Poets project, a digital collection of texts, annotations, contextual materials, and scholarly resources relating to the works, historical contexts, and cultural impact of British and North American working-class women writers in the nineteenth century. The developed model will open new research questions in digital textual representation and contribute to research in the interdisciplinary fields of humanities computing and literary scholarship, and allow for concrete and direct ways to mobilize knowledge on working-class literature in the nineteenth century.

I currently hold a SSHRC Doctoral Fellowship, and am in my fourth year of my PhD at Dalhousie University, working under the supervision of Dr. Marjorie Stone. I will defend my dissertation in the spring of 2009. This year, I am presenting papers and chairing panels at a number of conferences in Canada and the United States. I have extensive training in text encoding and editorial theory, and professional training from the NINES (Networked Infrastructure for Nineteenth-century Electronic Scholarship) Summer

Workshop, the University of New Brunswick Fall Digital Humanities Workshop, and the Digital Humanities Summer Institute at the University of Victoria, as well as experience as a web-developer for the Elizabeth Barrett Browning Archives and the SSHRC Cluster Grant Editing Modernism in Canada Project.

Background and Critical Contexts

Given the scholarly advances in the field of working-class studies (and especially in anticipation of the *MLA Options for Teaching Laboring-Class Literature of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century*, to which I am contributing a chapter on "Teaching Laboring-Class Poets as Victorian"), the need for open access to working-class literary texts is a pressing concern for contemporary instructors and scholars. Scholarly interest in this field exists in Canada, USA and the UK, and thus there is an opportunity for this archive to establish itself as a global hub in the field. New-England women factory workers (Lucy Larcom, Harriet Robinson) have achieved a certain critical acclaim in recent years, with the publication of a number of important anthologies (Eisler, Foner), and Carole Gerson has drawn critical attention to Marie Joussey Fotheringham, Canada's "first woman labour poet." Recent scholarship has also established British working-class women poets as an important facet of nineteenth-century literature, whose writings intervene in the debates surrounding women's rights, industrialism, the anti-slavery movement, factory reform, religion, aesthetics, and poetics (Boos, Zlotnick, Forsyth, Robinson). Despite this attention, a great deal of work in making these texts available to scholars, both in print and digital form, remains to be done. John Goodridge and his colleagues have identified 146 British working-class women poets who published between 1700-1900, and among these, the majority published during the nineteenth century ("Bibliography").

Previous print anthologies of working-class literature (Ashraf, Kovalev, Sheckner, Davis) illustrate the critical tendency to ignore women writers. Some anthologies (Kerrigan and Bateman, Leighton, Maidment), and more recently Florence Boos's *Working-Class Women Poets in Victorian Britain: An Anthology* have begun to bring to the forefront a few of the major working-class women poets of Victorian Britain. However, even Boos's anthology concentrates on the more established working-class women writers who published collections of their poetry. Due to the constraints of print editions, many other important working-class women poets (Millicent Langton, and Mary Hutton, for example) have by necessity been left out of these editions. Most existing anthologies and criticism on working-class women's literature have focused on the more established poets (Janet Hamilton, Ellen Johnston) and yet these are unrepresentative poets insofar as most working-class women poets published a handful of poems in newspapers and periodicals (Fanny Forrester, F. Saunderson). Because of the unlikelihood of the publication of a print anthology made up entirely of unknown writers, a digital archive is absolutely necessary; it is the only way in which this material can be made widely available in a comprehensive rather than a selective fashion.

In the case of scholarship on working-class women's writing, the print medium has numerous limitations, which are intensified by the mass of widely scattered published materials (many yet undiscovered), and the multi-faceted problems faced by scholars in this field: recovery, identification, preservation. As Julia Flanders has noted, a digital anthology moves towards a solution to these problems, as it is "a collection of texts assembled primarily (though not exclusively) for the purpose of providing convenient (or perhaps sole) access to materials which are either unavailable in other forms, or which gain value from being collected together." However, recent digital collections of nineteenth-century women writers (Mandell, Flanders) demonstrate the continuing tendency of scholarship to exclude working-class women writers from the literary archive, and to focus solely on women of the middle class. To date, my current Working-Class Women Poets Archive (hereafter WCWP; URL: <http://wcwp.english.dal.ca/>) is the sole online

resource for full-text versions of poetry written by working-class women in nineteenth-century Britain.

Research Outcomes

Isobel Armstrong has argued that “[d]igital forms transform the questions we can ask of the text” (14). Hypertext mediums enliven scholarly activities because “they depend on the willingness of the reader to navigate and create hypertext actively as installation rather than passively as recipient of information. The poem can expand itself indefinitely across virtual networks of intertext and through the pathways and links of electronically stored archives” (15). My research will also facilitate a global dispersion of research activities allowing for insight into the (1) transatlantic connections between working-class women poets in the nineteenth century, and thus contribute to not only (2) humanities computing research, but also open discussions to the importance of the (3) representation of cultural documents, and contribute (4) to historical and cultural research on the working classes in Britain and America and the study of English literature. This project has dual significance in its attention to original research in both humanities computing and in terms of its literary and cultural importance. The research and development of the digital collection will allow me to publish a number of research papers on the creation of digital archives and the electronic reproduction of rare and fragile texts, microfilm, and texts found solely in the nineteenth-century periodical press, as each medium presents its own particular challenges and methods for reproduction. Furthermore, the articles and conference presentations that are developed out of this project will serve as preliminary work towards the development of a monograph on the topic of nineteenth-century literature and digital textuality.

Theoretical Approach: Project Purpose and Goals

John Unsworth describes humanities computing as “a practice of representation, a form of modeling[...].the need for efficient computation on the one hand, and for human communication on the other” (“Humanities Computing”). My research will be guided by the following questions: 1) How can we best digitally represent non-canonical literary texts in a way that is both meaningful to scholars and representative of the writings of “minor” authors? 2) How can we adequately preserve fragile texts in digital media formats? 3) Can we locate literary texts digitally within their inter- and multidisciplinary contexts (art, history, philosophy)?

The project has two main goals: 1) Producing a model for the digital representation of non-canonical English literary texts; 2) designing and implementing a fully searchable database and digital archive that will house over 600 poems published by working-class women in Britain and North America during the long nineteenth century. The current WCWP Archive registers over 100 hits a month from academic internet service providers, notably from North America, the UK, Germany, Russia and the Netherlands. The development of this bare-bones archive into a fully-searchable database of nineteenth-century working-class writers will facilitate academic study and research around the globe. It will also allow for multidimensional comparisons, both literary (Romantic/Victorian) and cultural/geographic (United Kingdom/North America).

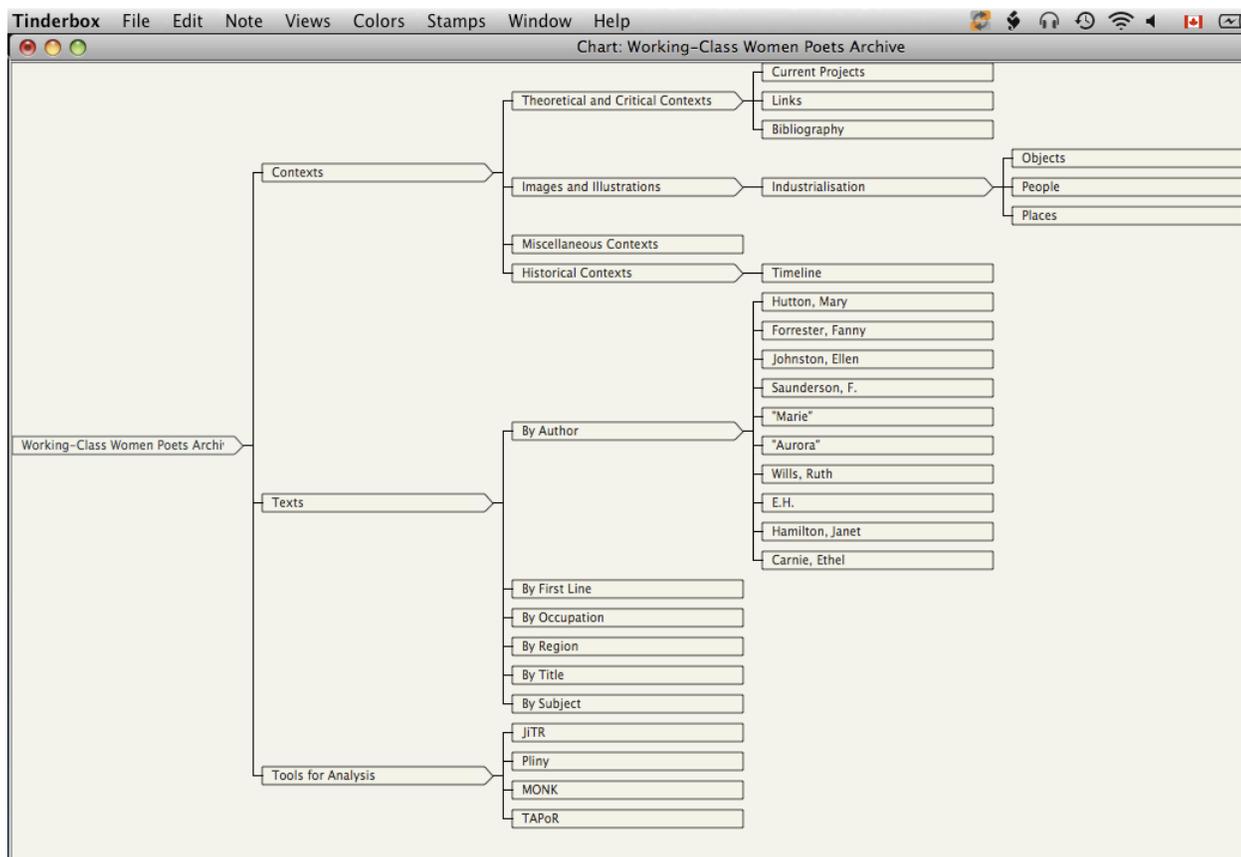
The choice to collect poems published between 1800 and 1900 will allow for a thorough investigation of working-class literature from the nascent industrial age to modernity. The collection of poets from British “Romantic” and “Victorian” traditions, alongside American and Canadian writers, will provide insight into the connection between female working-class writers in both Britain and North America. Furthermore, by housing both British and North American texts together, this collection will provide ample opportunity for scholars to identify transatlantic connections between working-class women writers in the nineteenth century. This will open up five important research questions; (1) How does the investigation of women’s

working-class poetry challenge the existing categories of nineteenth-century literature? (2) What insights does working-class women's poetry provide into the underlying mechanisms of working-class politics in Britain and North America? (3) How does working-class women's literary production relate to nineteenth-century ideologies of femininity as they emerged from the middle of the nineteenth century, and as they coalesced into the "New Woman Question" and suffragism? (4) How do British working-class women poets differ from their North American counterparts in their representations of "work"? (5) What are the formal aspects of British and North American working-class women's poetry: do these poets use differing poetic forms, or adapt the same forms in differing ways?

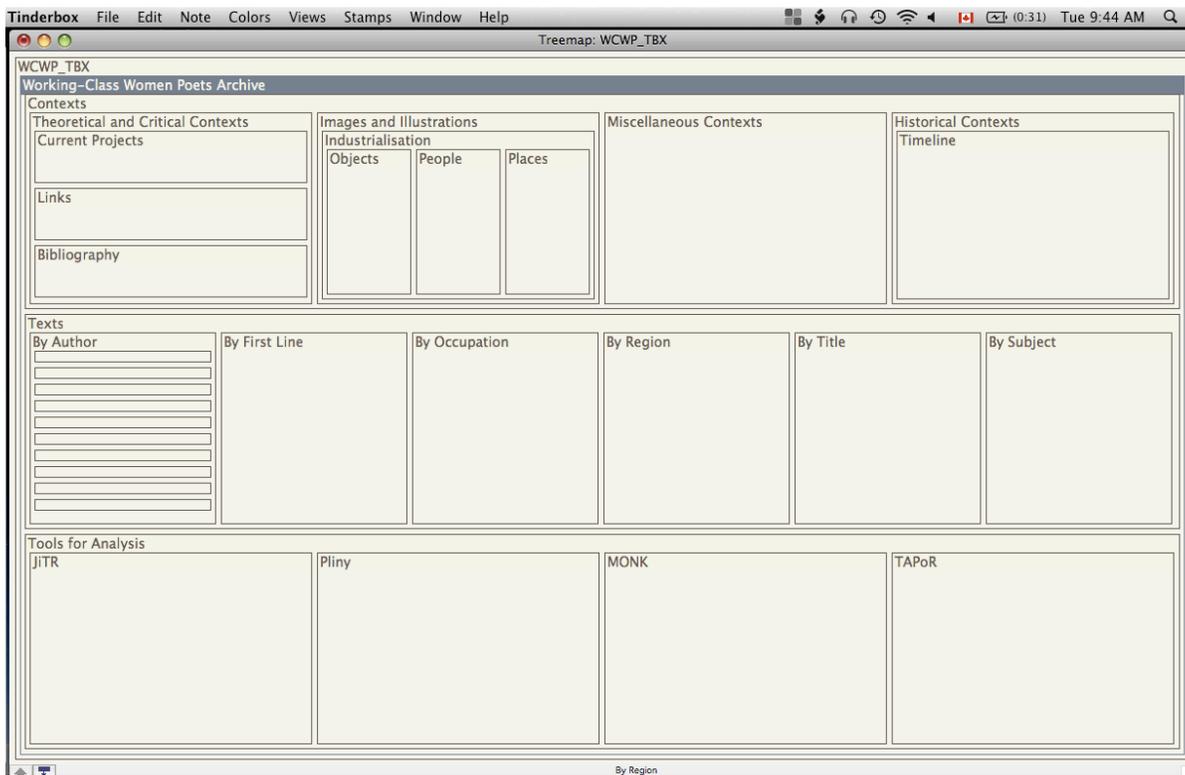
Methodology: Eastgate's *Tinderbox*

My first proposed article will emerge from my use of Eastgate's note software, *Tinderbox* (<http://www.eastgate.com/Tinderbox/>). The software allows for the creation and organization of notes, but its efficacy lies in its powerful ability to search, collate, organize, mindmap, prototype, design, and export to xml, thus engendering new methodologies for the creation of hypermedia archives. While the current WCWP site was built on a basic HTML/CSS framework, the most recent incarnation relies on *Tinderbox* for the construction of the site infrastructure and design. The Chart View and Tree Map (see Fig 1.1 and 1.2) provide visual feedback for the archive material, and search Agents automatically gather material within specified search criteria—enabling scholars to build a prototype for a fully-searchable database. The common words function also allows for the creation of "wordmaps" for information organization (see figure 1.3).

1.1 WCWP Chart View



1.2 WCWP Treemap



1.3 Tinderbox common words function

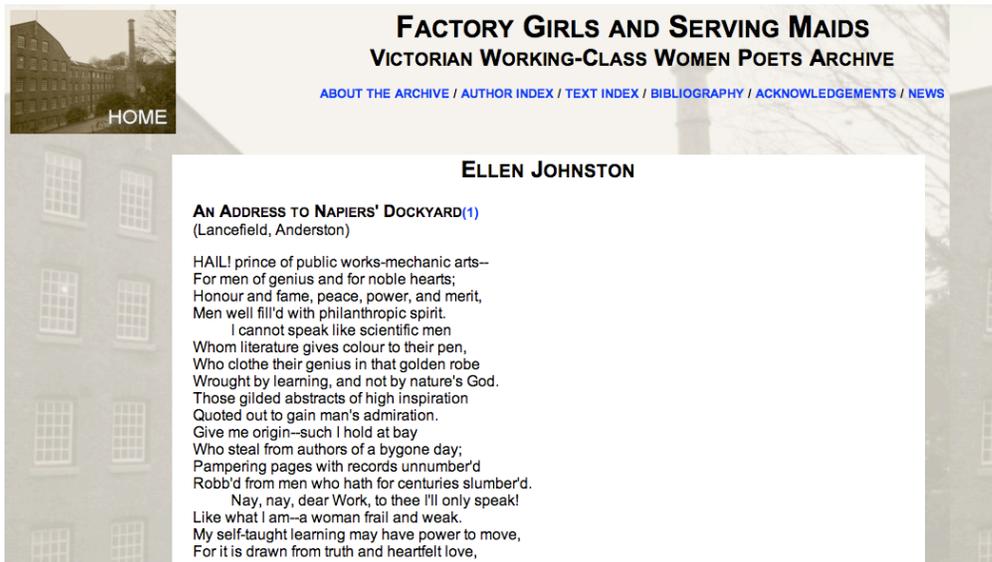


My article, "The Little Match Girls: Tinderbox and the Victorian Working-Class Women Poets Archive," will discuss the methodologies for the creation of the Working-Class Women Poets Archive, and show that Eastgate's *Tinderbox* is a valuable and essential resource for this particular facet of digital humanities. The discussion of a specific piece of software will also attempt to provide for scholars an exciting new tool for research.

Development Model and Textual Representation

Materials to be mounted on the site include an annotated index of working-class women authors and their works, an extensive critical introduction, a database of more than 600 full-text poems written by working-class women in the nineteenth century (including Fanny Forrester, Marie Jousaye Fotheringham, Mary Hutton, Millicent Langton, Lucy Larcom, and Ruth Wills), a full bibliography of scholarship, reviews, and textual materials that will provide both historical and literary contexts (e.g. reviews from editors in nineteenth-century periodicals, brief biographies of authors, such as Ben Brierley's biography of Fanny Forrester in *Ben Brierley's Journal*), and serve as a portal to contemporary critical contexts. This fully-searchable database will include headnotes and annotations for each poet. Other materials will include a Wiki, which will document the design and editorial practices of the site, to augment the construction of a prototype model for other sites, and a web forum, which will allow for critical discussions of the texts themselves, humanities computing and the digital representation of non-canonical texts, as well as open discussions of hypertext editions and their function as systems of "information engineering" (Flanders).

The WCWP Archive will be prototyped, organized and developed using *Tinderbox*, and will also use the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) conformant eXtensible Markup Language (XML), with metadata formatted according to the Networked Infrastructure for Nineteenth-century Electronic Scholarship (NINES; <http://www.nines.org/>) Resource Description Framework (RDF). The NINES RDF metadata scheme will provide new means of accessing and employing materials in conjunction with other NINES refereed websites, and integration of the site into the NINES collection of critical editorial tools (Juxta, Ivanhoe and Collex). The NINES RDF will also allow for comparison both across the collection and also potentially between other collections (Flanders, Mandell). I will be using the oXygen text editor for TEI Markup, including verification, design, maintenance, and programming.



The screenshot shows the website's header with the title "FACTORY GIRLS AND SERVING MAIDS" and "VICTORIAN WORKING-CLASS WOMEN POETS ARCHIVE". A navigation menu includes "HOME", "ABOUT THE ARCHIVE", "AUTHOR INDEX", "TEXT INDEX", "BIBLIOGRAPHY", "ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS", and "NEWS". The main content area displays the name "ELLEN JOHNSTON" and the title of her poem, "AN ADDRESS TO NAPIERS' DOCKYARD(1)", with the location "(Lancefield, Anderston)". The poem's text is as follows:

HAIL! prince of public works-mechanic arts--
 For men of genius and for noble hearts;
 Honour and fame, peace, power, and merit,
 Men well fill'd with philanthropic spirit.
 I cannot speak like scientific men
 Whom literature gives colour to their pen,
 Who clothe their genius in that golden robe
 Wrought by learning, and not by nature's God.
 Those gilded abstracts of high inspiration
 Quoted out to gain man's admiration.
 Give me origin--such I hold at bay
 Who steal from authors of a bygone day;
 Pampering pages with records unnumber'd
 Robb'd from men who hath for centuries slumber'd.
 Nay, nay, dear Work, to thee I'll only speak!
 Like what I am--a woman frail and weak.
 My self-taught learning may have power to move,
 For it is drawn from truth and heartfelt love,