# Research as Data

The goal of this exercise is to think about ways traditional research approaches and products can be transformed into data and data visualizations and how that data can serve to further extend and enhance original research.

## Materials Needed

* This activity uses the information and data visualizations found on [The Woman's Literary Club of Baltimore Archive](https://wlcb.github.io/archive/) as well as the home page to the site. Specifically:
  + [Data](https://wlcb.github.io/archive/data.html)
  + [Timeline](https://wlcb.github.io/archive/timeline.html)
  + [Authors Word Cloud](https://wlcb.github.io/archive/subjects.html)
  + [Projects](https://wlcb.github.io/archive/projects.html), specifically:
    - [Where they lived](https://wlcb.github.io/archive/mapping.html)
    - [Katharine Pearson Woods Exhibit](https://timemapper.okfnlabs.org/anon/dgust7-kpwoods)
* Tablets and laptops for students, or guided exploration by the instructor via a computer and projector, will be necessary.

## Preparatory Work

* The instructor should familiarize themselves with [The Woman's Literary Club of Baltimore Archive](https://wlcb.github.io/archive/) site, specifically the pages under the [Materials Needed](#_Materials_Needed) section and the home page.

## Instructions

* Based on your background preparatory work, provide students with a brief overview of [The Woman's Literary Club of Baltimore Archive](https://wlcb.github.io/archive/) site to understand the context of the visualizations they will be examining*.*
* Have students examine the home page and any or all of the visualizations on the pages listed under the [Materials Needed](#_Materials_Needed) section to gain a general understanding of the breadth of data visualizations on the site.
* Break students into groups and assign them a particular page or visualization and ask them to become the “five-minute expert” on their page or visualization—i.e., look at the page and share with the rest of the class what their page or visualization is all about. This instruction is intentionally vague to allow students to gravitate toward the aspects of the page or visualization that is compelling to them and to allow to instructor opportunity to be responsive to them.
* After each group shares a brief overview of their section, ask students to delve into the visualizations and information more deeply, exploring the rest of the site as needed to answer the following questions:
  + What data is being summarized or visualized?
  + Where did the data come from?
  + Who gathered the data?
  + What do the data visualizations tell us about the underlying data?
  + Is the visualization making an argument or telling a story? If so, what is that argument or story?
* After examining what is present, ask students to consider what isn’t visible on the data visualizations.
  + What information do you think should have been included that was not included to further your understanding of the underlying data, specifically in terms of content and context?
  + Are there other ways the underlying data could have been visualized? How would that have changed how you understand the underlying data?
  + What can we learn from looking at a single underlying piece of data, whether it’s a text or information about a person, versus a data visualization that may display information about many texts or information?
* When we examine any research using historical resources, we are only examining the resources that survived to be used and researched in the present day—all of these are chance occurrences that are impacted by societal values and biases about what works have value. When we examine these visualizations, those resources are being further interpreted through the creator of the visualization and the visualization type itself. Ask students to consider:
  + Is there any information not present or omitted from your visualization? Would we know if anything was omitted? How does that impact how we understand the visualization?
  + Can you rely on the person who accumulated the data and created the data visualization to be accurate and ethical?
* If desired, you can continue to zoom out from the subject further:
  + Do these data visualizations present information in a way that is accessible to individuals other than scholars?
  + Are there other methods that you might want to engage with the materials underpinning these visualizations? If so, how are those methods different, and are those differences necessarily better or worse?

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