The Fleischmann Diaries

The Fleischmann Diaries, Roísín O'Brien (ed.), 2012. http://fleischmanndiaries.ucc.ie/ (Last Accessed: 28.11.2014). Reviewed by Merisa A. Martinez (University of Borås), Merisa.Martinez (at) gmail.com.

Abstract

This is a review of the *Fleischmann Diaries Online Archive*, a digitisation project including a transcription of Aloys Fleischmann Jr's diaries written in 1926 and 1927, as well as over 200 images from the Fleischmann family albums. These materials represent an important piece of Irish cultural heritage. Given the enormity of the task, which was accomplished in one year, the editor has created a beautiful piece of work. As it stands now, this project represents a digital archive with some elements of a digital edition. However, key improvements can still be made to increase this project's usefulness as a scholarly resource, such as increased integration of the editor's related master thesis into the website, enhanced metadata of images and facsimiles, the integration of a search engine, and links with Aloys Fleischmann's compositions, as well as recordings of referenced performances.

Introduction

1   German-born Irish composer Aloys Fleischmann Jr (1910-1992) was a professor of Music at University College Cork from 1934 to 1980, as well as the founder and conductor of the Cork Symphony Orchestra from 1934 until his death. His contributions to the teaching and proliferation of Irish music were profound: In addition to serving as composer for the Cork Ballet Company and chairing the Cork Sculpture Park, he also founded the University Art Society (1930), the Music Teacher's Association (1935), the

Cork Orchestral Society (1938), and the Cork International Choral Festival (1954). He is justly described as a key figure in the patronage of all artistry in Cork (*Cork's great music family*).

2   As a teenager Fleischmann wrote two diaries, one in 1926 and one in 1927 (340 pages and 50 pages, respectively) about his daily life in Ireland. Throughout the two diaries, Fleischmann describes in detail his attempts at musical composition, his courses at school, his interactions with local musicians, artists, teachers, friends, religious and political figures, as well as the work of his Bavarian-born father and Irish-born mother, Aloys Sr and Tilly Fleischmann (née Swertz), who were also musicians. The diaries further provide a description of the immigrant experience in Ireland in the early years of the Irish Free State, a phenomenon that evidently had a deep impact on Fleischmann as he grew older. Fleischmann reflects on the political situation in Ireland and on the European continent. The diaries leave the reader with the impression of Fleischmann as a conscientious, intelligent young man who is aware of the value his diary presents as a record of private and public life in Ireland.

3   The digitisation and creation of the Fleischmann Diaries Online Archive was carried out in 2012-2013 as part of Roísín O'Brien's master's degree in Digital Arts and Humanities at University College Cork. Conceived as a 'how-to' guide for digitisers, the online archive accompanies O'Brien's dissertation, *Digitising the Diaries of Aloys Fleischmann: a prototype for novices* (O'Brien 2013a). Both are published under a CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license. The website for the digital archive was designed and supported using the Wordpress blogging platform and a purchased Wordpress theme, with additional Wordpress plug-ins installed by O'Brien. This is the first published edition of facsimiles and notes of these two diaries in digital form. As such, they add a significant new resource to scholars of Aloys Fleischmann Jr and to those studying the revival of Irish cultural heritage and music during the 20th century.

Selection

4   With only one year to complete the project, O'Brien needed a corpus for her dissertation that was both limited in scope and still relevant to her institution. O'Brien points out that the two Fleischmann diaries were primarily selected because of their specific significance to University College Cork, which, under the direction of university archivist Catriona Mulcahy, houses the Fleischmann Collection, a physical repository of the Fleischmann family's materials (O'Brien 2013a 9). Though it is not made clear on the

website, a close reading of the dissertation shows that these were the only two diaries written by Fleischmann, and are therefore a new and unique choice for digitisation (O'Brien 2013a 31).

5   The 'Introduction' page, beautifully written by Dr Ruth Fleischmann, the eldest daughter of Aloys Fleischmann Jr and author of multiple texts on the Fleischmann family, states that the two diaries selected for digitisation represent 'the sources of [Aloys Fleischmann Jr's] dedicated commitment to the cause of the arts in Ireland', and serve as the impetus for his substantial, life-long promotion of Irish music in particular: 'The 1926 diary reveals that Aloys' decision to make music his profession was taken in the summer of that year [...]. The diaries provide material that explains his choice. Many entries document his pleasure at the music he grew up with: his father at the harmonium preparing for cathedral services, his mother practicing works of the classical and modern repertoire for her piano recitals' (Fleischmann 2013).

Content

6   The online archive consists of high-resolution color JPEG images of each page (originally shot in raw format with a Nikon D5200 and an 18-55 mm lens; f/3.5-5.6) and transcriptions presented side by side in a fixed, 'page-by-page' view. However, options to zoom, rotate, or otherwise manipulate the images are not available, and there is no complete zip file of raw or TIFF images available for download (though the JPEGs can be individually downloaded with the normal browser functions). O'Brien notes that this approach was intentional: 'The replication of the artefact's non-digital physicality was envisioned as the first layer of creating an aura' (O'Brien 2013a 14). Fleischmann Jr's handwriting is quite clear, which makes the artefact (mostly) easy to read without the accompanying transcription. O'Brien did note that lighting presented an issue in the digitisation process, but the pages of the diary are still somewhat dark, forcing the user to brighten the entire screen in order to read from the images directly (O'Brien 2013a 52).

7   O'Brien also made use of the Wordpress 'Footnotes' plug-in, which comes with a hover-over and a 'back arrow' function allowing users to jump back to the line previously stopped at to read the footnote. Some diary entries include footnotes that explain places or persons mentioned in the diary. However, in many cases these footnotes contain references to other websites. These references are not hyperlinks and hence cannot be used to navigate to the referred website; it is unclear whether this was an editorial choice or a restriction of the Wordpress plug-in.

8   The archive also includes a curated gallery of about 200 images taken from Tilly Fleischmann's family album held by the Fleischmann Collection at University College Cork. These images provide pictures of places and people mentioned in the diaries. There are three distinct image galleries: 'Glimpses of Aloys Fleischmann's life through family albums', '1926 Gallery', and '1927 Gallery' (O'Brien 2013b 'Gallery 2'). The photographs in the 1926 Gallery lack basic metadata, and there are no links to diary entries where specific characters are mentioned, making it difficult to transition back and forth between persons mentioned in the diaries and the photos themselves. Links to and from the images as well as simple metadata would resolve this issue.

9   Instead of a separate 'Credits' page, the individual work of the site's contributors is noted on 'The Digitisation Process' page, available from the drop-down menu 'Project Information.' Dr Ruth Fleischmann created transcriptions, annotations and indices of the diaries (Fleischmann 2010). TEI P5 guidelines were used to, in O'Brien's words, 'lightly encode' the 1927 diary only, and no reason is stated on the website as to why these standards were not applied to the 1926 diary (O'Brien 2013b 'The Digitisation Process'). Dr Fleischmann also provided substantial background information in the 'Introduction' page of the site about the role the Fleischmann family has played in invigorating Irish musical heritage in Cork. Max Fleischmann, grandson of Fleischmann Jr, digitised the 1927 materials, and Roísín O'Brien carried out the digitisation of all of the 1926 materials. The website is hosted by University College Cork and is maintained by the Webmaster of the Electronic Publishing Unit, Peter Flynn. In the 'Digitisation Process' page, O'Brien notes her plans to update the site continually. Server support at UCC for the master files of the project was 'only available for the duration of the Masters Degree project […] as there is no recognized facility for the long-term preservation of data', so O'Brien is now making use of the Cork Open Research Archive, or CORA, for an archive of her master files as well as the published dissertation (O'Brien 2013a 62).

10   The XML transcriptions are available as separate downloads at the bottom of the 'Digitisation Process' page. Making these files more visible would enhance the value of the resource and make it easier for researchers to analyze the editing choices used for the encoding, especially as this justification was not provided in the dissertation or on the website. Another issue is that the XML transcriptions can only be downloaded from the Dropbox service as single files for each diary. This increases the potential for problems with the availability of these important files. As a general rule, it is always advisable to keep the number of different services as low as possible, and since the project's master

files are stored on the CORA server anyway, it is hard to see why the XML transcriptions are not stored on this server, too. Also, a simple internet search proved that the transcriptions of the diaries by Dr Ruth Fleischmann are available in PDF format from the Cork City Central Library website (Fleischmann 2010), but are not available from the Fleischmann Diaries Online Archive.

11   As well as lacking a bibliography for information mentioned in the introduction and the annotations, the site also lacks links to Fleischmann Jr's music, previously published materials or other digital collections related to his work or the legacy of his music in Ireland. If O'Brien intends to continue expanding and improving the website, this could provide an area for future consideration, as these collections do exist, most notably in the form of the [Cork City](#) [Central](#) [Library's](#) [Aloys Fleischmann website](#). The only link to the Cork City Libraries website is in the 'Contact' page (where it is used as the way to contact the Fleischmann family), though it seems fitting to provide this link on the 'Digitisation Process' page as well. This site in particular would be a useful resource to link to from the Fleischmann Diaries Online Archive because it is the largest digitisation effort of Fleischmann materials to date and is co-authored by Dr Ruth Fleischmann. Several recordings of Fleischmann's music are also freely available from the Irish Composer's Project, a digital archive designed and housed by the [Contemporary Music Center of Ireland's website](#).

Aims and objectives

12   The 'About' page of the website (available under the drop-down menu labeled 'Project Information') describes the objective of the archive as 'a freely available digitisation prototype for scholars and non-practitioners, providing them with a reproducible model.' This page goes on to state that 'future expansion will consist of metadata development, which will transform the site into an enhanced scholarly resource.' Further clarification is provided by O'Brien's dissertation, to which a link is provided on the website from the same drop-down menu under the title 'Dissertation,' and which outlines the specific aim as the development of 'a toolbox of methods for electronic reproduction by an individual' (O'Brien 2013a 7). As such, the page entitled 'The Digitisation Process' explains the procedures for researchers interested in creating a similar project.

13   Given that the mission of the site was to provide a 'reproducible model', it is surprising that more of the content and objectives outlined in the dissertation did not find

their way into the online archive. Indeed, O'Brien's discussion of the role of an online archive in 'closing the gap between private and public space and placing the content in a social context' is a thoughtful one, and would be a welcome addition to the 'Introduction' or 'About' page (O'Brien 2013a 59-60). Also lacking on the website is a justification of the digitisation methodology, which is described to some extent in the dissertation itself.

14   In her dissertation, O'Brien notes that the roles and responsibilities with regard to workflow developed organically over time (O'Brien 2013a 18-20). However, neither a description of these practices nor an analysis of their success or failure is mentioned in the online archive at all. The development of a community of practice, in which each member completes specific tasks, is an integral part of any scholarly digital edition. It provides context not only for the selection of materials, but also for the selection of contributors. This gives the user a specific sense of the value and expertise each contributor brings to the project – something this edition lacks.

15   What is enlightening to see is the collaborative efforts of Dr Ruth Fleischmann and Roísín O'Brien to engage in a critical digitisation process of the photographs included in the online archive. In contrast to including every picture from Tilly Fleischmann's family albums, pictures were curated to provide specific meaning and context to the diaries. A discussion of this selection would be a welcome addition to the 'Digitisation Process' page. By carefully selecting images based on their relevance to the project, Fleischmann and O'Brien were able to save time and financial resources while still achieving an engaging and helpful collection. These photographs, as stated above, could benefit from more enhanced metadata, but as of now they do still provide visual texture to the diaries.

Presentation

16   The purchased Wordpress theme is clean and beautiful: a simple color scheme of red, white, grey and black prevents the pages from looking too busy. As O'Brien states in her dissertation, the design and visual organization of the Fleischmann archive is based on the [Diary of Mary Martin project at Trinity College Dublin](#) and the [Robert Graves Diaries at the University of Victoria](#) (O'Brien 2013a 25). What is missing is a discussion about how the XML was transformed for the web view. This information is invaluable for researchers attempting to replicate the steps of the project, so it is crucial for O'Brien to consider adding this information to the 'Digitisation Process' page.

17   The diaries are broken down by year and then by month, making browsing easy. However, the visual layout of the index is somewhat overwhelming, as it is presented horizontally rather than vertically, in small grey script, and without the benefit of parsing by attributes such as places, people, and events. These additions would make the indices much easier to navigate.

18   The licensing and copyright information is noted at the bottom of every page, and the drop-down menus are, for the most part, well organized and easy to navigate. A separate page for 'Alternate Formats', including the XML transcriptions and a sitemap would be appreciated, as would a simple search engine for the site. The presence of an 'Acknowledgments' page makes the reader look for credits, so some clarification, perhaps in the presence of a separate 'Credits' page would be useful for scholars, and a standard addition for those looking to use this source as a reproducible model.

19   As mentioned above, one feature that could enhance the value of this project for scholarly use would be a focus on linking this site with others of a similar nature (some of which have been previously mentioned). The ability to listen to the music of Fleischmann, as well as the music that inspired him, by clicking on a pop-up link would enhance the interactivity of the site. As stated above, many such audio files are freely and publicly available. A 'Further Reading' page might also facilitate further engagement with the material, and would promote the linking of the Fleischmann Diaries Online Archive with other, similar resources.

20   It is clear from the intentions outlined in the 'About' page, the 'Digitisation Process' page, and O'Brien's dissertation that further developments, particularly concerning metadata, are being considered for this project. With the focus on digital preservation outlined in the dissertation, it is evident that O'Brien at the very least intends to keep the site viable as a scholarly resource for those who wish to use the materials in their facsimile form (even without enhanced transcriptions or footnotes). However, the choice of the Wordpress platform may present future issues with the long-term preservation of the materials. O'Brien notes that '[e]ach Fleischmann digital image and transcription was uploaded individually to the portfolio section of the Wordpress dashboard and published' (O'Brien 2013a 63). This presents a problem: if there is a breakdown within the Wordpress image repository itself, the integration of the images into the website might break down, in which case each file would have to be manually

uploaded and inserted into the right place again. O'Brien might, therefore, consider other more stable platforms for digital dissemination of the archive.

Conclusion

21   While the Fleischmann Diaries Online Archive provides a new resource for scholars in the form of Aloys Fleischmann Jr's 1926 and 1927 diary facsimiles and transcriptions, it is somewhat difficult to identify the website as either an online archive or a scholarly digital edition. I would venture to determine that, at the moment, it is an online archive with some elements of a digital edition. Although it provides critical engagement with the corpus, the project lacks easily accessible documentation of the textual tradition chosen, as well as transparency of the editorial decisions made (such as the decision to encode the 1927 diary, but not the 1926 diary). Further, the website does not include a bibliography for the footnotes provided, and does not adequately situate itself or its corpus in the historiography of other, similar resources. The website is promoted as a digital *archive*, specifically setting out to provide a digital preservation prototype for digitisers, and not for scholarly editors – at least not yet. The encoding of the 1927 diary, as well as its facsimiles and explanatory footnotes, make it possible, though, to see this project as a digital scholarly edition. However, several improvements must be made in order for this archive to be equally useful to scholarly editors and digitisers.

22   As a prototype for digitisers, the online archive is largely successful. Overall, it is easy to use, and the digital imaging is of very high quality. The clean functionality of the Wordpress theme places the artefacts as the highlights of the archive. It is clear that considerable care went into the planning stages of the digitisation, as is evidenced by the extensive discussion in the accompanying dissertation. Increased integration of the dissertation text into the site is necessary for practitioners; at present one must endure jumping back and forth between the downloaded dissertation and the website in order to elucidate points not mentioned in the online archive.

23   In short, my main suggestions for improvement are as follows:

- More integration of the dissertation text into the website.
- Increased focus on the decisions made in the image selection process.
- Theoretical basis for the encoding of the 1927 diary, and encoding of the 1926 diary.
- Editing the layout of the indices to make them more user-friendly.

- Increased links between footnotes and gallery images.
- A search engine.
- An image-viewer with zoom functionality.
- Metadata improvements for images as well as the diaries themselves.
- A separate 'Alternate Formats' page with XML files, a sitemap, and more information about the technical architecture of the website, including how and by whom the XML was transformed for the web view.
- Links or embedding of audio clips of Aloys Fleischmann Jr's music to increase context.
- A visualization of relationships between key players in the diaries.

With these improvements, the Fleischmann Diaries Online Archive has the potential to become a distinct, key resource for scholars of 20th century Irish cultural heritage, with material independent from previously available digital collections.[1]

Notes

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References

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The%20Fleischmann%20Diaries%20Online%20Archive.
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O'Brien, Roísín. The Fleischmann Diaries Online Archive. University College Cork, 2013. [2013b] Last accessed 31.7.2014.
http://fleischmanndiaries.ucc.ie.

Factsheet

Resource reviewed	
Title	The Fleischmann Diaries
Editors	Roísín O'Brien
URI	http://fleischmanndiaries.ucc.ie/
Publication Date	2012
Date of last access	28.11.2014

Reviewer	
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Documentation		
Bibliographic description	Is it easily possible to describe the project bibliographically along the schema "responsible editors, publishing/hosting institution, year(s) of publishing"? (cf. Catalogue 1.2)	yes
Contributors	Are the contributors (editors, institutions, associates) of the project fully documented? (cf. Catalogue 1.4)	no
Contacts	Does the project list contact persons? (cf. Catalogue 1.5)	yes
Selection of materials		
Explanation	Is the selection of materials of the project explicitly documented? (cf. Catalogue 2.1)	yes
Reasonability	Is the selection by and large reasonable? (cf. Catalogue 2.1)	yes

Archiving of the data	Does the documentation include information about the long term sustainability of the basic data (archiving of the data)? (cf. Catalogue 4.16)	no
Aims	Are the aims and purposes of the project explicitly documented? (cf. Catalogue 3.1)	yes
Methods	Are the methods employed in the project explicitly documented? (cf. Catalogue 3.1)	yes
Data Model	Does the project document which data model (e.g. TEI) has been used and for what reason? (cf. Catalogue 3.7)	yes
Help	Does the project offer help texts concerning the use of the project? (cf. Catalogue 4.15)	yes
Citation	Does the project supply citation guidelines (i.e. how to cite the project or a part of it)? (cf. Catalogue 4.8)	no
Completion	Does the editon regard itself as a completed project (i.e. not promise further modifications and additions)? (cf. Catalogue 4.16)	no
Institutional Curation	Does the project provide information about institutional support for the curation and sustainability of the project? (cf. Catalogue 4.13)	yes
Contents		
Previous Edition	Has the material been previously edited (in print or digitally)? (cf. Catalogue 2.2)	no
Materials Used	Does the edition make use of these previous editions? (cf. Catalogue 2.2)	no
Introduction	Does the project offer an introduction to the subject-matter (the author(s), the work, its history, the theme, etc.) of the project? (cf. Catalogue 4.15)	yes
Bibliography	Does the project offer a bibliography? (cf. Catalogue 2.3)	no
Commentary	Does the project offer a scholarly commentary (e.g. notes on unclear passages, interpretation, etc.)? (cf. Catalogue 2.3)	yes

Contexts	Does the project include or link to external resources with contextual material? (cf. Catalogue 2.3)	no
Images	Does the project offer images of digitised sources? (cf. Catalogue 2.3)	yes
Image quality	Does the project offer images of an acceptable quality? (cf. Catalogue 4.6)	yes
Transcriptions	Is the text fully transcribed? (cf. Catalogue 2.3)	yes
Text quality	Does the project offer texts of an acceptable quality (typos, errors, etc.)? (cf. Catalogue 4.6)	yes
Indices	Does the project feature compilations indices, registers or visualisations that offer alternative ways to access the material? (cf. Catalogue 4.5)	yes
Documents		
Types of documents	Which kinds of documents are at the basis of the project? (cf. Catalogue 1.3 and 2.1)	Diary
Document era	What era(s) do the documents belong to? (cf. Catalogue 1.3 and 2.1)	Modern
Subject	Which perspective(s) do the editors take towards the edited material? How can the edition be classified in general terms? (cf. Catalogue 1.3)	History
Presentation		
Spin-offs	Does the project offer any spin-offs? (cf. Catalogue 4.11)	Mobile
Browse by	By which categories does the project offer to browse the contents? (cf. Catalogue 4.3)	Dates, Persons, Places
Search		
Simple	Does the project offer a simple search? (cf. Catalogue 4.4)	no
Advanced	Does the project offer an advanced search? (cf. Catalogue 4.4)	no
Wildcard	Does the search support the use of wildcards? (cf. Catalogue 4.4)	not applicable

Index	Does the search offer an index of the searched field? ([cf. Catalogue 4.4](#))	not applicable
Suggest functionalities	Does the search offer autocompletion or suggest functionalities? ([cf. Catalogue 4.4](#))	not applicable
Helptext	Does the project offer help texts for the search? ([cf. Catalogue 4.4](#))	not applicable
Aim		
Audience	Who is the intended audience of the project? ([cf. Catalogue 3.3](#))	Interested public
Typology	Which type fits best for the reviewed project? ([cf. Catalogue 3.3](#) and [5.1](#))	Facsimile Edition
Method		
Critical editing	In how far is the text critically edited? ([cf. Catalogue 3.6](#))	Commentary notes
Standards	([cf. Catalogue 3.7](#))	
XML	Is the data encoded in XML?	yes
Standardized data model	Is the project employing a standardized data model (e.g. TEI)?	yes
Types of text	Which kinds or forms of text are presented? ([cf. Catalogue 3.5.](#))	Facsimiles
Technical Accessability		
Persistent Identification and Addressing	Are there persistent identifiers and an addressing system for the edition and/or parts/objects of it and which mechanism is used to that end? ([cf. Catalogue 4.8](#))	none
Interfaces	Are there technical interfaces like OAI-PMH, REST etc., which allow the reuse of the data of the project in other contexts? ([cf. Catalogue 4.9](#))	none
Open Access	Is the edition Open Access?	yes
Accessibility of the basic data	Is the basic data (e.g. the XML) of the project accessible for each part of the edition (e.g. for a page)? ([cf. Catalogue 4.12](#))	no
Download	Can the entire raw data of the project be downloaded (as a whole)? ([cf. Catalogue 4.9](#))	no

Reuse	Can you use the data with other tools useful for this kind of content? (cf. Catalogue 4.9)	no
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Declared	Are the rights to (re)use the content declared? (cf. Catalogue 4.13)	yes
License	Under what license are the contents released? (cf. Catalogue 4.13)	CC-BY-NC-ND
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Editors	Roísín O'Brien	
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