About “Poe’s Magazines: Glimpses of Antebellum Culture”

This project reconstructs Poe’s career as a magazinist and opens a window on antebellum print culture by building a digital collection of every issue of all four principal magazines that Poe helped to edit. We present page images as well as searchable, corrected OCR scans from the *Southern Literary* *Messenger* (1835-1837), *Burton’s Gentleman’s* Magazine (1839-1840), *Graham’s Magazine* (1841-42), and the *Broadway Journal* (1845-46). Author profiles (using EAC-CPF standards) help to elucidate the network of contributors upon which each journal depended. In addition, we provide issue previews that identify significant contents and that offer commentary on the “cultural threads”—distinctive features of antebellum American culture—that can be discerned in the issue. These threads are a starting point, a testing ground for ways to produce more computationally-derived key features of each issue. That more expansive searchability will emerge as we place OCR-corrected digital files and embedded metadata behind the page images now usable.

All of the magazines in our archive can be located in some form in other online databases, but nowhere else are they connected together seamlessly, enabling a user to explore the deeply interesting connection between Poe’s remarkable poems, tales, essay, and reviews, on the one hand, and, on the other, the range of subjects that typified antebellum American experience. This resource illuminates the turbulent decade of nation-building between the mid-1830s and mid-1840s, when conflicts over slavery and territorial expansion complicated cultural nationalism and fueled notions of US “Manifest Destiny.” “Poe’s Magazines” exhibits periodical fare from four magazines representing three cities (Richmond, Philadelphia, and New York) and four distinct historical moments (each corresponding to a different presidential administration). In the articles, essays, tales, poetry, reviews, and illustrations promulgated in these magazines, one acquires a rich sense of the issues and controversies that engaged the denizens of Jacksonian America as well as the literary and aesthetic modes that defined popular taste.

Currently, our prototype features one month’s material from each of our four journals: the January 1837 *Southern Literary Messenger*, the September 1839 *Burton’s*, the May 1842 *Graham’s*, and the five weekly issues comprising the November 1845 *Broadway Journal*. We selected these issues because they showcase original publications of Poe’s work and highlight important periods in his tenure as editor or on editorial staff.

“Poe’s Magazines” forms part of the digital collection Poe’s Republic of Letters, which is itself part of a projected mosaic of linked sites devoted to Antebellum Print Culture. The team at Louisiana State University that is now constructing “Poe’s Magazines” consists of faculty in English, History, Philosophy and Religious Studies, Library and Information Sciences, Design, and Computer Science, as well as key staff members from the LSU Libraries, the Center for Computing Technology, and a cohort of graduate students in English, History, Library and Information Sciences, and Design.