**Report to the Modern Humanities Research Association**

**21/01/18**

**Project Title:** *David Livingstone’s “Missionary Travels”: A Digital Edition*

**Award Holders:** Dr. Justin D. Livingstone and Dr. Adrian S. Wisnicki

**Amount Awarded:** £23,000[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Introduction**

The MHRA Research Associateship grant, awarded to *David Livingstone’s “Missionary Travels”: A Digital Edition*, funded the appointment of a Research Associate on a 0.5 FTE contract for the duration of the 2016-17 academic year. The successful applicant, Dr. Kathryn Simpson, made critical contributions to the project with the result that it is now near completion.

The full transcriptions of the *Missionary Travels* holograph are now available on *Livingstone Online* (available at: [http://www.livingstoneonline.org/in-his-own-words/catalogue](http://www.livingstoneonline.org/in-his-own-words/catalogue?order=Access&access=view&f%5B%5D=dateRangeYear_mi%3A%221857%22&f%5B%5D=genre_ms%3A%22manuscripts+for+publication%22)). These consist of three major volumes and four manuscript fragments, held in the National Library of Scotland and Brenthurst Library, South Africa. Together, they amount to over 1100 manuscript pages accompanied by annotations of key terms. Publication of the full edition is anticipated by winter 2018. In addition to the transcriptions, the complete edition will include various critical essays, a full glossary, outreach materials for schools, and a multi-version viewing option (permitting the manuscripts to be read alongside the published *Missionary Travels*). Much of this work is either complete or at an advanced stage of development.

This report provides a summary of the year of work supported by the MHRA Research Associateship scheme. It describes the process by which Dr. Simpson was appointed, her contributions to the digital edition, and several project-related trips made during the course of her fellowship.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**Appointment process**

The MHRA Research Associate post was advertised in July 2016, with interviews taking place on 19th August. The university received fifty-eight applications, and six candidates were shortlisted for interview. The interview panel consisted of the project directors, Dr. Justin Livingstone and Dr. Adrian Wisnicki, two members of Queen’s University Belfast (QUB) staff from the English subject area, Dr. Daniel Roberts and Dr. Caroline Sumpter, and the MHRA representative, Dr. Anne Holloway (also a lecturer in Spanish at QUB). There were several impressive candidates among those interviewed, but Dr. Simpson’s considerable experience of the digital humanities made her a particularly suitable appointee. Dr. Simpson already had expertise in transcription and TEI encoding (a markup language for representing the integral features of texts: see <http://www.tei-c.org/Guidelines/>), which equipped her very well for some of the major duties of the associateship. Her research interests were also well aligned with the project. As a result of her doctorate, which focused on Rider Haggard’s South African adventure fiction and colonial politics (entitled *H. Rider Haggard, Theophilus Shepstone and the Zikali Trilogy: A Revisionist Approach to Haggard’s African Fiction*), Dr. Simpson was familiar both with the historical period and critical approaches to colonial literature. Through her prior affiliation with *Livingstone Online*, moreover, she also had experience in working with nineteenth-century archival material, particularly the manuscript record of African exploration.

**Work completed during fellowship**

Dr. Simpson took up her post as MHRA Research Associate at the beginning of October 2016. On appointment, the edition directors drew up a work plan outlining the various tasks of the associateship. The work plan was designed in order to achieve a balance between project assistance and Dr. Simpson’s independent research. The plan was divided into categories that encompassed the range of work we aimed to accomplish during the year. These included: encoding and proofing; training; annotating lists; researching essays; delivering presentations; participating in outreach/dissemination; and developing grants. Shared on googledocs, the workplan was a living document that could be updated and revised regularly following team meetings [some confidential material removed].

*Encoding and proofing*

At the beginning of the year, there were several major transcription tasks outstanding. The first task was to transcribe and encode the third volume of the *Missionary Travels* manuscript. The first two volumes had been critically edited in an earlier phase of the project, but the third volume – which had been digitised more recently – was not yet complete. Dr. Simpson and another project assistant, Mr. Stephen Hall (supported by a small grant from the Strathmartine Trust), transcribed and encoded the volume in TEI following the practices established for the earlier volumes. Once the final manuscripts were transcribed and encoded, the second task was to review the entirety of the project’s transcription data. Dr. Simpson played an important part in this process, which entailed extracting terms tagged in TEI and ensuring the accuracy and consistency of encoding across the various manuscripts [some confidential material removed]. The third major task was to encode the published version of *Missionary Travels*, in order to prepare it for integration into the edition as a parallel text. This involved proofing and correcting the transcription of *Missionary Travels* publicly available on Project Gutenberg, and introducing basic TEI tagging (for page breaks, paragraph divisions, headers etc.). Dr. Simpson took the lead on this part of the project, under Dr. Wisnicki’s supervision, producing a transcription of the published *Missionary Travels* that approximates in appearance to the original book.

*Training*

During the fellowship, Dr. Simpson received training in various technologies, facilitated by Dr. Wisnicki. Dr. Simpson already had considerable expertise in TEI encoding, but she received further training in extracting data from TEI-tagged transcriptions and using “ids” in order to add textual annotations to TEI elements. Dr. Simpson was also trained in Drupal, the content management system used as part of *Livingstone Online*’s Islandora platform; she used this training in creating the page for one of her independent research essays published on the site (see below). Dr. Simpson also took “Code Academy” online courses in HTML and CSS (see <https://www.codecademy.com/catalog/language/html-css>), which was supplemented by additional instruction from Dr. Wisnicki (who also provided training in XSLT). These languages were all involved in styling the edition’s transcriptions to achieve the desired appearance; for instance, they enable various modes of display for textual additions, deletions, distinct textual colours, and the positions in which words appear on the page. During the period supported by the MHRA, work on the online display of transcriptions was completed. This involved adapting and supplementing *Livingstone Online*’s existing stylesheets in order to cater for the particularities of the *Missionary Travels* manuscripts. The skills that Dr. Simpson acquired during her associateship will provide her with a solid basis for future digital projects and for applications to lectureships and research positions in the digital humanities.

*Annotated lists*

A task of Dr. Simpson’s associateship was to review the wide range of material digitised and archived on *Livingstone Online* that relates to Livingstone’s *Missionary Travels* and the transcontinental African expedition (1852-56) on which it was based. This includes an extensive range of letters, hand drawn and printed maps, digital images of ethnographic objects, and other visual material. On the basis of her review, Dr. Simpson prepared two annotated lists of relevant documents. The first identified sources that will contribute to an appendix of associated materials to complement the edition (such as proof illustrations, publisher’s copybooks, and ledgers). The second list identified images that could serve to illustrate the edition’s various critical essays (such as marked-up manuscripts, portraits, and paintings).

*Research essays*

The associateship allowed time for Dr. Simpson to develop independent research, which would result in publications under her own name. The aim was for Dr. Simpson to write two essays under the supervision of the project directors, which would then be peer-reviewed and published on *Livingstone Online*. The topics were of Dr. Simpson’s own devising and emerged from her work on Livingstone’s corpus. In her first essay, Dr. Simpson articulated her developing ideas on the critical value of the digital library and museum. It focused particularly on the ways in which digital tools can be used to extend scholarly revision of established histories of the Victorian exploration of Africa. This essay, entitled “Reading Exploration Through the Digital Library”, has now been published and is available online at: <http://www.livingstoneonline.org/about-this-site/reading-exploration-through-the-digital-library>. Dr. Simpson’s second research essay is on the women who participated in Livingstone’s expeditions as members of his retinue, but who have received little critical attention to date. This piece is still in draft, but is planned for publication later this year.

*Presentations*

Dr. Simpson presented widely on project-related material during her associateship. On 18th October 2016, she was an invited speaker at the University of Glasgow’s Information Studies department, where she lectured on “Digitally Recovering the Writings of David Livingstone: Through and Beyond the Book”. On November 18th, shortly after her appointment at Queen’s, Dr. Simpson had the opportunity to speak to university staff at a *Livingstone Online* event hosted by the School of Arts, English and Languages (see more below). Dr. Simpson’s talk was entitled “A Brief History of Spectral Imaging within Livingstone Online”, and discussed the application of imaging technology to recover faded handwriting in Livingstone’s field diaries. In the New Year, Dr. Simpson delivered papers that began to explore the ideas that she would develop further in her research essay. On 13th January 2017 she attended a one-day conference at the University of Edinburgh, “Tracing the trace: What is an archive?”, where she examined the digital archive of exploration in a paper entitled “David Livingstone in the Digital Age”. Dr. Simpson had the opportunity to expand on these ideas in a longer guest lecture – “Recovering David Livingstone in the Digital Archive” – delivered on 10th April to the Nineteenth-Century Studies Group and Centre for Digital Research in the Humanities at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL). In addition to project-related presentations, Dr. Simpson also gave a paper on “Critical Authorial Networks” at the “Robert Louis Stevenson: New Perspectives” conference (5th-8th July 2017, Edinburgh Napier University) and participated in a roundtable discussion at the University of Glasgow’s “Victorian Impacts” conference. In April, she was invited to Israel as a result of her expertise in TEI editing to lead a two-day workshop on “TEI Best Practice with Digital Editions” at Ben-Gurion University.

*Outreach/dissemination*

In addition to disseminating project-related research at conferences and workshops, Dr. Simpson also developed three outreach sheets for schools which will be freely available for download from the project website. Dr. Simpson ensured that the worksheets, like *Livingstone Online*’s other educational materials,aligned with the Scottish Government’s “Curriculum for Excellence”. She also designed them in accordance with the “Areas of Learning” framework of the Northern Ireland Curriculum. The worksheets provide short passages from Livingstone’s *Missionary Travels*, and are accompanied by several questions and suggested activities.[[3]](#footnote-3) Targeting the 9-13 age group, each worksheet is available in two levels of complexity in order to cater for the junior and senior ends of the age range. Dr. Simpson also participated in dissemination by writing a post for the *Livingstone Online* blog. This piece discusses the *Missionary Travels* manuscripts, the prospective features of the edition, and outlines her role on the project during her time as an MHRA Research Associate (<https://livingstoneonline.wordpress.com/2017/12/22/missionary-travels-from-page-to-screen/>). Dr. Simpson also participated in meetings discussing strategies for dissemination on social media, to be implemented when the edition is published. She took photographs at key events throughout her associateship and will contribute any relevant documentation to the final project history.

*Grant development*

During the year of the MHRA Research Associateship, Dr. Wisnicki and Dr. Livingstone also held an International Collaboration Award from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. This award provided seed money to develop a larger grant application focussing on David Livingstone’s Zambezi Expedition (1858-64). This phase of Livingstone’s travels is the only major journey not currently covered by *Livingstone Online* projects. Dr. Simpson assisted in this application by investigating potential funding agencies and identifying particular themes and calls relevant to the planned application. She contributed comments to a draft of the grant narrative and participated in the “environmental scan” by reviewing the websites of some major digital projects. Dr. Simpson is a named researcher in the grant application, which has now been submitted to the National Endowment for the Humanities.

*Teaching*

In addition to her role on the project, Dr. Simpson availed of the opportunity to take up some remunerated teaching while at QUB. In the second semester, she tutored two groups on the level one undergraduate module, “English in Context: An Introduction to Contemporary Fiction”.

**International visits**

During the period of the MHRA award, there were three occasions in which Dr. Simpson and both directors spent extended periods together working on the *Missionary Travels* edition and planning new projects. In 2016-17, Dr. Wisnicki paid two visits to Queen’s University Belfast, while Dr. Livingstone and Dr. Simpson travelled to the U.S. to visit the University of Nebraska-Lincoln once. These trips provided opportunity for focussed work on particular project issues, and to engage in knowledge exchange at both institutions

*U.K. trip 1 (18th-25th Nov)*

Dr. Wisnicki visited Belfast in November 2016 with members of the David Livingstone spectral imaging team (another *Livingstone Online* project). This was part of a wider tour of U.K. institutions, to report on the findings of the second phase of the Livingstone Spectral Imaging Project at the end of its funded period (2013-17). The team of scholars and imaging scientists gave a lecture to Queen’s University Belfast staff on “Spectral imaging, Material History, and David Livingstone’s Notes from the Field” (18th November 2016). Dr. Simpson had participated in an earlier phase of the spectral imaging project and contributed to this one, and so joined the four other speakers in presenting at the event. Following the lecture, Dr. Wisnicki remained in Belfast to work on *David Livingstone’s “Missionary Travels”: A Digital Edition*. Over the course of the week, Dr. Wisnicki provided training in Drupal, XSLT, CSS, and HTML and we began work on the stylesheets that would transform our XML transcriptions for online viewing. During this period we made major inroads while also identifying several issues which would require further work over the following months. Dr. Wisnicki’s first visit to QUB also provided the opportunity to have preliminary discussions about the new project on the Zambezi Expedition.

*U.S. trip (7th-17th April)*

In April, Dr. Livingstone and Dr. Simpson visited Dr. Wisnicki’s home institution in the United States, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Dr. Livingstone’s visit was supported by the UNL International Collaboration Award, while Dr. Simpson’s was covered by her associateship; the MHRA permitted funds from the award that were not committed to salary expenses to be made available to Dr. Simpson for research and travel. This ten-day venture to the U.S. provided another opportunity for training and for further work on outstanding issues in the edition’s stylesheets (most of which were resolved during the trip). While at UNL, Dr. Livingstone and Dr. Simpson participated in one of Dr. Wisnicki’s undergraduate classes, and lectured to students and staff (from the Nineteenth-Century Studies Group and Center for Digital Research in the Humanities) on Livingstone’s manuscripts and digital editing. In addition to visiting UNL, Dr. Wisnicki, Dr. Livingstone, and Dr. Simpson travelled to Oberlin College, Ohio, which holds important documents relating to Livingstone’s Zambezi Expedition. This visit provided opportunity to liaise with librarians and investigate archival material. Other *Livingstone Online* scholars, Ms. Mary Borgo (Indiana University) and Ms. Heather Ball (St. John’s University), joined us in Oberlin for an intensive period developing plans for the prospective grant application. Together, we also led a guest seminar for Dr. Amy Margaris’s senior Anthropology class, “Culture Contact and Colonialism”.

*U.K. trip 2 (May 14th-27th May 2017)*

Dr. Wisnicki visited Belfast again in May 2017, where he delivered a workshop to graduate students and faculty on “Introducing Digital Humanities Methods into your Research”. The purpose of this U.K. trip was primarily to develop the Zambezi application and to visit collaborating institutions. Dr. Simpson (again supported by MHRA funds) joined Dr. Wisnicki, Dr. Livingstone, and other project members in a trip to the U.K. mainland to scope archival material and meet with curators and archivists at the Royal Geographical Society, National Library of Scotland, National Museum of Scotland, David Livingstone Centre, and University of Glasgow. During this trip, the team reviewed other successful digital humanities projects, refined ideas for the application, and began to draft several sections of the grant narrative.

**Dr. Simpson’s current activities**

Following her period as MHRA Research Associateship, Dr. Simpson moved to Edinburgh Napier where she is a zero-hours lecturer on several modules: “Global Literatures of Conflict”, “Literature and Adaptation”, “Case Studies in Cultural Studies”, and “Literature of Empire”. She has also had several interviews for posts in the digital humanities. Dr. Simpson is currently the Assistant Editor of two journals: the *Journal of Stevenson Studies* and the Scottish journal for Tagore Studies, *Gitanjali and Beyond*. Dr. Simpson is in the process of applying for funding from the Nehru Centre (as a Senior Research Fellow of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)) to support her research towards a book on Rajah Ram Mohun Roy.

1. For details on expenditure, see the Research Project Life Report (Appendix A). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For further details on how we fulfilled promises made in our MHRA grant application, see the project Compliance Matrix (Appendix B). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See our Sample Worksheet for Schools (Appendix C). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)