Graves Diaries: Elizabeth Grove-White

**What research questions does your project want to ask**

**or answer?**

Although I have more than a passing interest in Irish writers and modernism, my main research interests focus on genre; I am particularly interested in ways that digital editors might mark-up texts from the full range of textual genres to help scholars develop more precise generic ontologies.

This is, of course, a lifetime’s work. When the opportunity arose through Chris Petter of UVic’s Special Collections to work on an exemplary digital edition of a diary, I was intrigued by the opportunities diurnally-organized genres (like diaries and letters) present to digital humanists. The diary genre is much under-estimated, and I was curious to see what might happen when we embarked on the kind of analysis needed to design the editorial and digital apparatus for the work.

In general terms, I wanted to understand how those celebrated “scholarly primitives” as John Unsworth has described them—**Discovering,** **Annotating,**

**Comparing**, **Referring,** **Sampling,** **Illustrating, and** **Representing—**would work in the context of a digital edition of a diary. I believe we were able to experiment with all these activities in our digital edition, and the treatment of attachments and of the diary interface broke new ground.

Specifically, I wondered if a temporal, time-organized coding hierarchy would allow us to move beyond one of the most significant challenges digital humanities projects have so far failed to address—the limitations of boutique software, customized for every individual digital humanities project, that currently prevent the kind of big-data aggregation and analysis that would offer genre scholars new methodologies and insights. Once again, as a pilot project for interoperability, our partnership with Susan Shreibman and her colleagues at the National Archives of Ireland on the Letters 1916 project was a resounding success. The UVic database worked flawlessly for a completely different purpose—providing proof of concept that such shared software was possible, at least for these time-organized texts.

Finally, in common with Special Collections librarians, I was eager to make the diary as widely available as possible, particularly for scholars and biographers interested in the lives and collaborations of Robert Graves and Laura Riding. I have described the biographical and historical controversies that resulted in the accompanying PDF, “The Graves Diaries: A Controversial Mystery.” This particular line of inquiry led to a recognition of the limitations of digital editions and a recognition also texts—even diaries—cannot be understood as unmediated bundles of content, and that textual materiality and genre cannot be abstracted from their signification.

What data and functions make it possible to answer

those questions? What are your project assets?

Data: The diaries themselves, high-quality scans of each page and attachment, the transcriptions by Graves’s second wife Beryl, the many annotations elucidated through the help of Graves’ friends and family members.

Summary abstracts.

Functions:

Search functions, by date and by keyword

Representation: clear, functional, user-friendly screen design that aggregates different sources.

What do we lose if we don¹t preserve the project?

If the project were to vanish, twentieth-century modernist scholars would lose easy access to this unique record of the lives of Graves and Riding in their self-imposed exile, initially in Mallorca and following the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, in France and England.

What are the challenges in preserving the project?

Upgrading the TEI to archival standards.

Editorial considerations?

Complete annotations

Revise Preface and editorial apparatus