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VICTORIAN JOURNALISM IN PLENTY

By Sally Mitchell

ALTHOUGH THE *OED*'S FIRST CITATION for "journalism" is dated 1833 (it comes from *Westminster Review*), the current dramatic expansion of digital resources suggests that scholarly use of Victorian journals may be reaching a point of transition. In addition, the number, variety, breadth, and depth of recent studies, most of them finished before the new materials went online, is truly remarkable.

Walter E. Houghton's magisterial *The Victorian Frame of Mind* (1957), which drew on the quarterlies and serious monthlies, led him to begin assembling content lists and searching out author attributions for *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals* (5 volumes, 1966–1989). At a University of Toronto conference in November 1966, honoring the first volume's publication, Michael Wolff asserted that "the study of Victorian England has reached a stage in which a new sort of research material is needed and . . . the newspapers and periodicals provide precisely that new research material" ("Charting" 39). The next month, when both MLA and AHA met in New York City, a group of scholars from literature and history decided to form a Research Society for Victorian Periodicals. In light of RSVP's fortieth annual conference (London, 2008), its prize in memory of Robert Colby for the book published in the previous year that most advances the understanding of the nineteenth-century British newspaper and/or periodical press, and the forty-first volume of its journal, now *Victorian Periodicals Review,* it is startling to have read only two years ago in *PMLA* that "a new area for scholarship is emerging in the humanities and the more humanistic social sciences: periodical studies" (Latham 517).

The recent material on journalism falls into five general categories: books using the press for evidence about a topic or issue; books about journalists; books on periodicals themselves (individual magazines or papers, genres, types); books working to theorize periodical studies; and books that provide resources for the next generation of research. The first Robert Colby Scholarly Book Prize, awarded in 2006, was split between two biographies. Peter Morton's *The Busiest Man in England: Grant Allen and the Writing Trade, 1875–1900* studies the writer many Victorianists know only for his notorious novel *The Woman Who Did*. Author of thirty books and hundreds of articles, Allen was, in fact, chiefly interested in science. Morton's book is valuable for analyzing the place of journalism in sustaining a literary career, commentary

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about the networks of writers and editors associated with relatively unfamiliar periodicals, detailed information on journalists' strategies and earnings, and helpful analyses of dailies, weeklies, monthlies and of such forms as leaders, middles, and turnovers. Co-winner Linda K. Hughes, in *Graham R.: Rosamund Marriott Watson, Woman of Letters*, treats a woman whose identity – under several names – had to be unearthed along with her career as poet, reviewer, art critic, contributor to more than a dozen periodicals, editor of the women's monthly *Sylvia's Journal*, and founder of her own *Art Weekly*. Like Morton's, Hughes's scholarship shows the successful literary professional deeply embedded in the business of periodicals and reveals the competing economic and ideological (as well as personal) forces that shaped a journalist's world.

Other recent biographies provide additional insights. *Ella Hepworth Dixon: The Story of a Modern Woman* by Valerie Fehlbaum includes a listing of the journal issues in which Dixon's short stories and essays – and also the serialized *Story of a Modern Woman* – were first published, a listing that shows how much is still not known about the largely unsigned contents of inexpensive and unindexed women's magazines. Rosemary Ashton's *142 Strand: A Radical Address in Victorian London* treats a more familiar figure: John Chapman, who became editor and proprietor of *Westminster Review* (and employer of Marian Evans) in 1851. A richly textured account of publishing in the 1840s and 1850s, the book details *Westminster Review's* politics and economics, the relationships between Unitarian and nonsectarian periodicals, transatlantic publishing arrangements, and the gossip, feuds, and personal conflicts of writers and editors. The subject of Valerie Gray's *Charles Knight, Educator, Publisher, Writer* is most frequently recognized for his connection to the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge and its *Penny Magazine.* With a working life lasting from 1812 (when he was a cub journalist on the London *Globe*) through 1868 (his last contribution, to 1869's *Companion to the Almanac*), Knight saw – and oversaw – major changes in printing, publishing, and the reach of popular journalism.

Michael Slater treats another person often mentioned but seldom studied in *Douglas Jerrold: 1803–1857* (the only previous books about Jerrold were written by his son in 1859 and his great-grandson in 1914). As a writer of radical and sensational melodramas, principal contributor to *Punch* in its earliest years, and editor of *Douglas Jerrold's Shilling Magazine* and *Douglas Jerrold's Weekly Newspaper*, Jerrold offers an interesting counterpoint to Charles Knight, in personal experience as well as politics. *Florence Fenwick Miller: Victorian Feminist, Journalist and Educator* by Rosemary VanArsdel outlines the life of a woman who trained at a Ladies' Medical College unable to offer degrees, served as elected member of the London School Board, and earned her living as lecturer and journalist. Between 1895 and 1899 she edited the feminist *Woman's Signal* (now available in two digital collections) and – more startlingly – was for thirty-two years the Filomena whose "Ladies' Notes" in the *Illustrated London News* managed to slip in information about women's employment, their success at Oxford and Cambridge, dress reform, and militant suffrage (her daughter was among the first group of London women arrested in 1906) amid the fashion commentary, social notes, food, fads, and celebrities of a weekly women's column. (The massively heavy volumes of *Illustrated London News* are hard to use even when a library has them; but a news release in January 2008 announced that its new owners plan to digitize the archive.)

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George Newnes and the New Journalism in Britain, 1880–1910: Culture and Profit by Kate Jackson bridges the gap between books that focus on journalists and those about journals. Both historiographical and theoretical, with a nuanced analysis of class and an emphasis on technical and marketing innovations, the study touches on a dozen periodicals established by Newnes, from *Tit-Bits* and the *Strand* to *Westminster Gazette* and *Country Life.* George J. Worth's *Macmillan's Magazine, 1859–1907* and Andrew King's *The London Journal, 1845–83* concentrate on single titles. Worth describes his book as a "more traditional" (xi) study drawn from correspondence, publishers' records, and careful reading of the journal's issues. King, in a more theoretical mode, treats the *London Journal* "not as a material body but as a discursive entity" (xii); he also supplies admirable research about its complicated ownership, editorial history, and staff. This information is especially timely because the *London Journal*, which used to be very hard to find, is now part of ProQuest's British Periodicals series and therefore apt to be seen by people not familiar with penny weekly journalism. *Print Culture and the Blackwood Tradition, 1805–1930,* edited by David Finkelstein, won the RSVP's Colby Prize for 2007. An exemplary essay collection, well edited to use individual authors' expertise yet create a satisfactory whole, the book includes two especially revealing contributions, Michael Michie's demonstration of the political control – and the interplay between authors and editors – revealed in the contents of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* and "Editing *Blackwood's*; or What Do Editors Do?" by Robert L. Patten and David Finkelstein.

The largest proportion of recent volumes are topical studies. The British Empire (or one of its constituent parts) provides the motive questions for several titles written or edited by scholars in disciplines ranging from political history to media studies. Simon J. Potter's *News and the British World: The Emergence of an Imperial Press System, 1876–1922* concentrates on organization and economics, drawing evidence from a breathtaking number of sources that include personal papers, press associations or agencies, and public records from archives in Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the US as well as from the papers themselves. The book thus provides essential contexts for anyone using newspapers to examine events, influence, or public opinion. *Imperial Co-Histories*, edited by art historian Julie Codell, takes much of its focus from journalism's visual materials. *Negotiating India in the Nineteenth-Century Media*, edited by David Finkelstein and Douglas M. Peers, draws on a range of less-familiar periodicals: military and medical journals, women's magazines, boys' story papers, Urdu publications, and the nonfiction Kipling produced as a working journalist in India.

Gender is another topic reframed and reinvestigated through Victorian journalism. Kelly Boyd's *Manliness and the Boys' Story Paper in Britain: A Cultural History, 1855–1940* has a bibliography of periodicals that runs to ninety-five titles, of which thirty-four begin with *Boy's, Boys,* or *Boys'*. It also draws on a dozen or so earlier studies of penny and halfpenny boys' papers, making it a useful introduction for newcomers to the field. Marysa Demoor's *Their Fair Share: Women, Power, and Criticism in the Athenaeum,* examines women as reviewers for the weekly magazine. Demoor worked on the index of *Athenaeum* reviews and authors between 1830 and 1870 which was based on editors' marked copies now at City University London. This index (online at http://athenaeum.soi.city.ac.uk/home.html) is important because ProQuest's digital edition of the *Athenaeum* has not added authors' names. The index, for example, lists dozens of reviews by Geraldine Jewsbury; none of them will be found with a name search on "Jewsbury" in the digitized file.

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Barbara Onslow's *Women of the Press in Nineteenth-Century Britain* surveys women's opportunities in journalism; a brief biographical appendix supplies information about a hundred Victorian women journalists. *Women Making News: Gender and Journalism in Modern Britain* by historian Michelle Elizabeth Tusan treats women's advocacy publications between 1856 and 1930. Enlightening reproductions of selected front pages reveal changes in both printing technology and editorial sophistication; an appendix records the dates, frequency, price, and publishers of some 150 women's advocacy journals, ranging from the *Alexandra Magazine* to the *Zenana Missionary Herald,* along with their locations and microfilm availability. Susan Hamilton's *Frances Power Cobbe and Victorian Feminism* analyzes the influence of a writer who seldom published in the women's press because she needed an income from journalism. Hamilton concentrates on the rhetoric and intent of Cobbe's work in *Fraser's Magazine* and *Contemporary Review* as well as her unsigned leaders in the *Echo* from 1868 to 1875. Molly Youngkin's revealing exercise in literary criticism, *Feminist Realism at the Fin de Siècle: The Influence of the Late-Victorian Woman's Press on the Development of the Novel,* draws on the reviews of both male and female novelists published in feminist periodicals, especially *Shafts* and *Woman's Herald*. Youngkin argues that the reviewers created a consistent literary aesthetic which she calls "feminist realism" and espoused narrative techniques that led towards the development of modernist fiction.

A newer topic – one which has been little discussed, probably due to the separation of British from American history and literature in academic departments – is the comparison and cross-fertilization of the periodical press across the Atlantic. In *Educating the Proper Woman Reader*, Jennifer Phegley refines the ongoing discussions about women's reading by examining literary criticism in monthly magazines of the 1860s. Treating three British journals – *Victoria Magazine*, *Belgravia* (edited by Mary Elizabeth Braddon) and *Cornhill* – and, from the United States, *Harper's New Monthly Magazine,* she argues that these journals "led the way for women to participate in professional critical discourse as both consumers and producers of literary culture" (2).

In other transatlantic studies, the six Victorian essays in *Anglo-American Media Interactions, 1850–2000,* edited by Joel H. Weiner and Mark Hampton, compare British and US publications in areas such as war reporting and sporting news, and highlight the importance of speed in getting out the news. Duncan Andrew Campbell's *English Public Opinion and the American Civil War,* although more traditional in topic, draws not only on the *Times* and major journals but also on titles running from *All the Year Round* and *Bee-Hive* to *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* to discover a public opinion thoroughly divided, contingent, and complex.

SciPer (Science in the Nineteenth-Century Periodical) at http://www.sciper.leeds.ac.uk, a searchable electronic index of the science content in sixteen general periodicals ranging from the comic to the weighty and from juvenile magazines to religious monthlies, has generated three essay collections: *Science in the Nineteenth-Century Periodical, Science Serialized* (both edited by Geoffrey Cantor and others), and *Culture and Science in the Nineteenth-Century Media* (Louise Henson and others). An unrelated but neatly complementary analysis in the history of science, Aileen Fyfe's *Science and Salvation: Evangelical Popular Science Publishing in Victorian Britain,* uses the Religious Tract Society's archives to investigate its monthly series that explained science in Christian terms. James Mussell's *Science, Time and Space in the Late Nineteenth-Century Periodical Press: Movable Types* is what he describes

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as an "intervention at the theoretical level" (6) in questions of time and space as embodied by the material form of the periodical press and its new digital incarnations.

The study of poetry as journalism is quite new. Walter Houghton decided against including verse in the *Wellesley Index* because, as he wrote in the first issue of *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter,* "its general level is so low and its volume so large" (13). Generations of researchers using *Wellesley* as an entry point to periodical studies have often failed even to notice that the journals printed poems. The most recent (2008) winner of the Colby Prize is Katherine Ledbetter's *Tennyson and Victorian Periodicals: Commodities in Context*, which engages two issues: poetry's value for periodical editors and its contingency of meaning. A Tennyson poem encountered in a volume of poetry or a literature textbook differs in both readers and meanings from the same poem seen by Victorians in a serial that had a certain format and editorial stance, illustrations commissioned for the journal, and contexts created by the surrounding matter. In chapters devoted to Tennyson's early publication in literary annuals, his political poetry, and his performances as Poet Laureate, Ledbetter supplies close readings of poetry inflected by its journalistic role.

Other recent books will provide support for new research and analysis. In *The Mass Image: A Social History of Photomechanical Reproduction in Victorian London*, Gerry Beegan reveals many things I had not known about technology. Captions describe the illustrations republished in the book as, for example, "photorelief halftone print from retouched photograph," "photorelief halftone print from pencil original," "photorelief line print from pen-and-ink drawing," "wood engraving on photograph," and "photorelief halftone print from retouched photograph with extensive hand engraving on the block." (The latter certainly makes me think again about photographs in a magazine such as the *Strand*.) The technical information is integrated with explanations of the differences in training and labor conditions and the reason for an increasing use of drawings in the age of photography: "sketches could depict subject matter that would have been unacceptable if shown in photographic halftones. The photograph was considered too direct and too detailed to show poverty, carnage, or sex . . . the sketch [was seen] as a radical new art form able to portray contemporary life directly to a modern audience" (131). The identification of thriving periodicals with certain reproduction techniques and the discussion of physical and ideological advantages of various forms make this a book that should be read before creating extended "images of" arguments based on periodical illustrations, and especially if the source is used in digitized form.

Mike Ashley's *The Age of the Storytellers: British Popular Fiction Magazines 1880–1950* surveys the magazines that published popular (as opposed to literary) fiction and supplies succinct information about titles, publishers, editors, comparable magazines, locations, descriptions, and changes over time. It would be an invaluable road map for anyone working on the short story (still an understudied area of British literature). The anthology *Victorian Women's Magazines*, edited by Margaret Beetham and Kay Boardman, categorizes the types of journal that flourished during the period and includes a bibliography of 319 titles, with dates, prices, and other information when known. Another valuable resource is *English Socialist Periodicals, 1880–1900: A Reference Source* by Deborah Mutch, an index and finding list for the fiction, poetry, drama, articles, children's columns, cartoons, reviews, letters to the editor, manifestos, and advertisements in thirty-nine socialist periodicals published in England during the century's final two decades. Merely flipping through the lists of serialized fiction, for example, suggests that one answer to a question I have often pondered

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(where are women writers' stories about working women?) may be "in the *Yorkshire Factory Times*."

The major issue looming over this review of recent literature on Victorian journalism is the explosion of electronic resources. When Michael Wolff explored periodicals' value for historians in 1966, he reported that it was "difficult for researchers to use this material properly" and also hard to locate sources that would make "newspapers and periodicals not only physically available" but also "bibliographically more available so that scholars could more readily find out what they might want to use" ("Charting" 38).

The same problem now takes new forms. To begin with, although access has dramatically improved for the "haves," it has become even more difficult for the "have nots." That is, for people using research libraries that can afford a wide range of database subscriptions, the riches are almost unimaginable. Especially in the realm of newspapers (the British Library has announced the upcoming closure of Colindale; bound newspapers will be moved to Boston Spa, and microfilm – with enough readers to make it usable? – will go to St. Pancras), Gale has produced not only the full-text London *Times* (1785–1985) but also the newer Nineteenth-Century British Library Newspapers, with forty-eight titles that include many provincial papers as well as *Cobbett's Political Register,* the *Daily News*, the *Examiner*, the *Graphic*, the *Morning Chronicle,* the *Pall Mall Gazette*, *Reynolds's Newspaper*, and the *Illustrated Police Gazette*. For weekly, monthly and quarterly publications, the two series of ProQuest's British Periodicals already have over 400 titles from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with others promised, and their Periodicals Archive Online has quite a few more. (The organization of ProQuest's title lists as of August 2008, when this is being written, does not make the number easy to discover.) In addition, the Gerritsen Collection of Women's History Online offers twenty British nineteenth century periodicals, and the JSTOR holdings in my library appear to include twenty-two Victorian titles. The first series of Gale's Nineteenth Century UK Periodicals, entitled New Readerships, has ninety magazines in four categories: Women's, Children's, Humour, and Sports; many of them were both very popular and, until now, much harder to find in libraries than bound volumes of the major journals covered in *Wellesley.* The second series, Empire, is due to go online late in 2008, and three further collections are in preparation.

The downsides to this extraordinary digital richness for the fortunate are two: first, that most site licenses restrict access to people associated with the institution and, second, that many libraries have moved their collections of bound periodicals to remote storage. The "have nots" are even more disadvantaged than they were. No longer can people from smaller schools go to a research university and use journal files on open shelves; at many libraries, the ability to call resources from offsite storage, as well as to log on to subscription databases, is restricted to people attached to the institution. The generous guest privileges for students and faculty from other schools are, it appears, no longer affordable.

A very small number of non-subscription materials are on the public web. The Nineteenth-Century Serials Edition (http://www.ncse.ac.uk/index.html) contains ten years (1880–90) of the weekly book-trade magazine *Publishers' Circular* and complete runs of five other titles: the *Monthly Repository of Theology and General Literature* (1806–37), the Chartist *Northern Star* (1838–52), the mid-century political weekly *Leader* (1850–60), the monthly *English Woman's Journal* (1858–64), and *Tomahawk* (1867–70), a weekly satirical paper with elaborate full-page cartoons. The Internet Library of Early Journals (http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/ilej/) has short runs of the *Annual Register* (1758–78),

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Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine (1843–63), *The Builder* (1843–52), *Gentleman's Magazine* (1731–50), *Notes and Queries* (1849–69), and *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* (1757–77). And two long-running UK newspapers are available at a modest fee. The Scotsman Archive (http://archive.scotsman.com) contains Edinburgh's *The Scotsman* from 1817–1950 (it was first a weekly and subsequently a daily). Searches can be saved; reading the full text requires payment. The Guardian and Observer Digital Archive (http://archive.guardian.co.uk), which holds the weekday *Guardian* (1821–1990) and Sunday *Observer* (1791–1990), has a similar arrangement: free search, relatively inexpensive timed pass for reading and printing. And of course assorted and erratic volumes of periodicals show up in full text on Google Books, at least for those of us in the United States; Google is apparently less certain about copyright policies and therefore overly restrictive on much nineteenth-century material for people using computers in other countries.

For those who do have access, different issues arise. Searchable electronic texts can reveal multiple sources for a topic as well as the use of certain terms. (Indeed, one friend has reported that a phrase search in Google Books sometimes works like Turnitin for Victorian authors.) Electronic texts are wonderful for locating small pieces of information. When I was trying to put dates on Frances Power Cobbe's letters, I spent a great many hours tediously searching *Times* microfilm for things she had seen "in today's newspaper." I could probably have done it in a single day with the full-text database. On the other hand, looking only at the hits, I would not have learned nearly so much about the context of Cobbe's experiences and the issues that engaged politically active people in her society. Digital searching can also destroy our sense of a periodical's distinctive nature; without seeing the journal as a whole we miss both pleasant surprises about its contents and general impressions gleaned from its overall look and tone.

Once scholars in the 1950s and 60s began to realize periodicals' usefulness, the problem of bibliographical control became urgent. Is this title the same magazine or a different one? Where was it published? Under whose auspices? What did it cost? Even more difficult was discovering the names lost to anonymous authorship. Those of us who began during the 1960s to use our libraries' bound journals for reviews of fiction and essays that shed light on a novel's context remember how eagerly we waited for the next volume of *Wellesley*, the one that would finally reveal who wrote an especially virulent phrase we wanted to quote or provide the hard-to-locate background information about a journal's editorship and reputation. The ease of keyword searches raises the danger of snatching one provocative paragraph and introducing it with that maddening undergraduate favorite, "the Victorians believed . . . ."

So, what do we now need in order to move forward?

In practical terms, for teachers, graduate students, independent scholars, and other researchers, we need some arrangements for more equal access to digitized resources; institutions need to explore possibilities for creating consortia and/or for allowing visitors in the library to access their subscription databases at some reasonable fee. Then we need a constantly updated union list of digitized resources in order to figure out which periodicals are in what collections. One early project improving access to print resources, carried out largely by members of RSVP and edited by Richard Fulton and C. M. Colee, was a union list of Victorian serials in North American libraries, which made it possible to locate the journals one wanted to use. If arrangements for guest use of some libraries' databases become possible, we will require a comparable tool. It should also specify dates of the digitized run. Problems

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and duplications are already evident: the *Englishwoman's Review of Social and Industrial Questions* is in both ProQuest's Gerritsen Collection and Gale's Nineteenth-Century UK Periodicals; Gerritsen, however, covers more years. Three journals in recent subscription collections are also on the non-subscription NCSE. Information about the nature of digitized texts should be made clear. ProQuest's American Periodicals Series Online includes the complete run of *St. Nicholas* (1873–1907). The years 1873 to 1884 are also in Gale's 19th Century UK Periodicals. The Gale holding is said to have been sourced from the British Library – but was there a different edition, with different content added in England, or was the "London edition" of this distinctively American periodical identical to the New York edition? (The British Library's own catalogue description is "Scribner's illustrated magazine for girls and boys. Conducted by M. E. Dodge. New York.") If one were using the material in a digitized "UK Periodicals" series to make inferences about (say) the socialization of British children, its provenance would matter. Of course the same question arises when using an American library's New York edition of British journals such as *Nineteenth Century,* but the title or contents page of a bound volume, which often answers the question, is not always included – or easy to find – in an online collection.

The bibliographic description of periodicals is, in the words introducing Fulton and Colee's 1985 *Union List*, "a swamp" (xvii). Title changes, volume numbers, new series, variations in format, frequency, publisher and, sometimes, institutional sponsorship, indeed questions about whether or not a frequently-cited title ever actually existed, continue to plague efforts at certainty. Author identifications emerge erratically and are nowhere collected. Even the number of Victorian periodicals remains in doubt. Michael Wolff's first attempt to make a list yielded 12,000 titles ("Victorian" 14). The current state of knowledge about all of these matters is found in John North's descriptive *Waterloo Directory of English Newspapers and Periodicals, 1800–1900.* Now online by subscription and in twenty print volumes with roughly 50,000 entries, it is expected eventually to reach fifty volumes covering 125,000 titles. The bibliographies in Tusan, Mutch, Boyd, and comparable books also demonstrate what a small fraction of significant material is ever likely to be digitized.

Additional tools of responsible scholarship include Rosemary VanArsdel's bibliography of sources for the study of periodicals and Eileen Curran's ongoing additions and corrections to the *Wellesley Index*, both on the Victoria Research Web at http://victorianresearch.org. Patrick Leary's essay on periodicals, at the same site, has links to additional online resources. The *Wellesley Index* prints the full table of contents for each issue of forty-five important monthly and quarterly reviews and – its major accomplishment – provides author attributions with supporting evidence. The *Waterloo Directory* has information about a vastly greater number of periodicals – editors, publishers, sponsorship, reputation, general character, price, frequency – and briefly mentions important contributors, but does not, of course, supply complete indexes or contributor identifications for its 50,000 titles.

The *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism* (DNCJ) edited by Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoor should be published by the end of 2008; it will have more than 1,500 entries on journals, journalists, illustrators, printers, and topics. Back issues of RSVP's *Victorian Periodicals Review* (initially *Newsletter*), with forty years of essays, notes, queries, suggestions, and bibliographies, will be on JSTOR in 2010; those published since Spring 2005 are currently accessible through Project MUSE.

The initial typed and mimeographed issue of *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter* (January 1968) had, among other things, a list of suggested projects. Some have been accomplished;

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some not then foreseen are under way; others seem to be in limbo. We still lack basic finding aids for significant journals that remain unindexed and unscanned. One major gap is a way to access material in the influential newsprint weeklies *Spectator* and *Saturday Review.* Even without author identification (though a partial list for the nineteenth century is in handwritten exercise books at the *Spectator's* busy London office), simply a listing of contents, week by week, would help when one must call volumes from remote stacks or get microfilm through interlibrary loan. Although the digital transition may well provoke an even greater outpouring of scholarship, the ways to approach Victorian journalism, the topics to explore, and the resources to be found are at the present time in no danger of exhaustion.

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