of the content. Unique and rare holdings make Victorian Popular Culture a truly delightful resource.

JORDEN SMITH
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When it was first started at Indiana University in 1995, the Victorian Women Writers Project (VWWP) was intended as an expansion of the English Poetry Full-Text Database. In response to a gap scholars identified in this database, the project focused mainly on poetry written by lesser-known British women writers who were not part of the canon. The project was expanded in later years to include other genres – novels, children’s literature, pamphlets, and religious tracts – as well as women writers outside of Britain. Although work on the database stopped in 2003, it has been reinvigorated in recent years through the enthusiasm of faculty and students in the English department at Indiana University. On the updated and newly designed website, the project’s managers explain, “the VWWP is pleased to be back with an expanded purview that includes women writing in the nineteenth century in English. As before, the project will devote time and attention to the accuracy and completeness of the texts, as well as to their bibliographical descriptions. New texts, encoded according to the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) Guidelines, will adopt principles of scholarly encoding, facilitating more sophisticated retrieval and analysis.” The database now includes full texts of the work of about fifty authors and new features including genre browsing based on the MLA Thesaurus; an interactive timeline situating authors, publishers, and major events in historical context; and contextual materials authored by students.

It is difficult not to compare the VWWP with the far more ambitious Orlando project, which currently has almost two thousand authors listed in its database. Where the Indiana site differs – and this is its chief value to students and researchers in Victorian literature – is in making accessible often out-of-print Victorian texts. While Orlando offers comprehensive biographical and contextual material,
it has only summaries of, and sometimes excerpts from, its authors’ works. A quick search on both websites for author Sarah Stickney Ellis (1799–1872) is illustrative of the differences between them: two full text documents appear on the VWWP, *Sons of the Soil: A Poem* (1840) and *The Women of English, Their Social Duties and Domestic Habits* (1839). Scholars needing the full text for their own research or to include as reading material for a course, and who cannot find it digitized elsewhere, will find VWWP invaluable. In contrast, Orlando does not have the complete texts, but it does offer a remarkably full discussion of Ellis’s life and works, including a synopsis of the themes of these two specific texts. The databases thus complement one another well.

One very exciting aspect of the project is its commitment to community building and to student learning; indeed, it is marketed as a pedagogical tool. The partners listed on the website include individual undergraduate interns as well as other students working alongside faculty in the department of English and librarians at Indiana University. In their presentation at Indiana’s Digital Library Program Brownbag Series last March, Michelle Dalmau and Angela Courtney, the general editors of the VWWP, described their collaborative work developing an English graduate course that was meant to both revive the VWWP and, at the same time, introduce students generally to the field of Digital Humanities. Their intention, they explained, was to leverage the domain expertise in the department, increase the profile of VWWP for teaching and research, build a pool of encoding experts in the department, and create ongoing opportunities for students to add to the site. In this regard, the project is then not only an important resource for researchers in the field of Victorian studies but also an exciting model of what can happen when faculty’s academic interests intersect with opportunities for student learning. It is also a great example of the increasing ways developments in Digital Humanities can complement more traditional fields of research and learning.

After reviving the site, the department of English continues to take advantage of opportunities for student learning by incorporating the management, content-building, and design of the database into the curriculum, and this integration is also how its partners hope to

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protect the project from the threat of what has become known in the field as “graceful degradation,” or the gradual degradation of a system that, although it does not entirely fail, continues operating at a significantly reduced level. Graceful degradation is a problem that even the largest, most dynamic digital resources, including the Orlando project, must address, and the VWWP may have found a creative, as well as productive, intervention.

Overall, the VWWP is a valuable resource for students, scholars, and librarians interested in Victorian literature written by women. By offering full-text versions of this literature, the site opens up possibilities for study both in and outside the classroom.

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Jacob Bigelow (1786–1879) graduated from Harvard University in 1806; four years later he earned an MD from the University of Pennsylvania. For the next sixty years, Bigelow practised medicine in Boston, while also lecturing on botany and materia medica (botanical pharmacy and drugs) at Harvard Medical School. In October 1816, the New England Journal of Medicine announced that commencing the following summer Bigelow planned to release the “first Number of a work on Medicinal Plants of the United States, with colored engravings” (411–12). This work was designed for the physician and apothecary for whom “it must afford a great security against error and imposition;” the book was also to be of use for the “lover of botany.” A prospectus was to be issued, but specimens of the plates could be viewed at Cummings & Hilliard’s Bookstore, Boston. The project would eventually run from 1817–21 and become American Medical Botany. While Bigelow’s work is important for the history of American medicine, pharmacy, and botany, the actual volumes as artefacts (three in all) became significant for bibliographers and book/print culture historians because it was held that they were the first in the United States to have the plates not hand-coloured; rather, they were mechanically printed in colour – and this before the widespread use of chromolithography several decades later.