

CASE STUDY

Eighteenth Century Collections Online

Eighteenth Century Collections Online is a key resource which gathers together and immediately makes available a wealth of cross-searchable primary source material.

THE RESOURCE

Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO) contains over 180,000 titles (200,000 volumes) and more than 32 million pages, making *ECCO* an indispensable leading resource for eighteenth-century research. Users of *ECCO Part I* and *Part II* can search the full text collection via an intuitive user interface.

ABOUT

Professor Lidia De Michelis teaches English Culture and Culture of the English-speaking world at the University of Milan, with a focus on Cultural Studies including Linguistics and Cultural Mediation.

Professor De Michelis' research interests are the narratives of the early 18th century, which includes the journalistic and propagandist works of the greatest authors of the 18th century. Professor De Michelis is also interested in English Literature of the 21st century, especially political or key cultural speeches. She actively participates in Anglo-Italian conferences on 18th century studies and is currently editing a book with Frank O'Gorman which contains a selection of essays from the Anglo-Italian Eighteenth Century Conference of York.



THE CHALLENGE

Professor De Michelis explained some of the challenges experienced before using *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, *"You had to travel to get the materials you needed. Often there weren't enough funds for a long journey abroad, so students, researchers and professors had to pay part of their own living costs. We had to use Italian or foreign funds to travel and access materials from libraries abroad, and the first day was spent booking the volumes required from the library to hopefully ensure you had access to the materials you needed. We had to do the bibliographical research first, then transcribe the materials. Back then there was a lack of index references too, so you had to work for one or two weeks before you travelled, just to organise the bibliographical material."*

Professor De Michelis went on to explain, *"The limitations we encountered were mainly related to identifying the bibliography. We had to work from catalogues; we didn't have access to unlimited texts per day and to access some documents you had to gain permission. Another*





problem was the reproduction of books; you couldn't do photocopies but had to order them. This led to high costs, but now we have Eighteenth Century Collections Online and I have found it very useful."

IMPACT ON RESEARCH

Professor De Michelis stated, *"Digitising these materials has allowed us immediate access, saving money on travel and saving a lot of time. ECCO also allows you to search words included in old and rare 18th century books, which helps you to narrow in on a specific topic from a broader range of materials."*

Professor De Michelis described how ECCO aided her research. *"I researched the pamphlets of Daniel Defoe, but ECCO was useful too when I wrote about the South Sea Company and the text 'General History of Discovery'."*

"ECCO is a key resource because it gathers together and makes available a wealth of cross-searchable primary source material immediately."

"ECCO helped me in getting earlier editions of books before someone published revised editions. In general, it helped me with targeted research whilst other researchers found this more difficult. It helped me find books not yet available as modern editions."

"I have been an expert on 18th century studies for 25 years. I have used ECCO for the last 10 years, during which time I think I have used almost 150-200 volumes. As an expert on

the 18th century I appreciate having a vast range of resources, the more the better, especially for scholars who focus on specific niche topics."

Professor De Michelis concluded by saying, *"ECCO is a key resource because it gathers together and makes available a wealth of cross-searchable primary source material immediately. It enables researchers to go from one inspired idea to another, and so helps advance scholarship in the field of Digital Humanities."*