

Cataloguing the Works of Women: The Poetess Digital Archives

Gabrielle Ramirez,* Bernadette Hand*

Faculty: Mary Waters

Department of English, Fairmount College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

As scholars reassess what the literary canon should consist of, women's writing has been expanded upon. In the past, women were restricted to certain areas of writing; in reconsidering the preservation and analysis of women's work, interest in other, lesser-known genres like literary criticism has grown. To make the study of these women's writings more accessible, digital archives such as The Poetess Archives exist to catalog these women's works.

The Poetess Archives preserves works from the late eighteenth century and the nineteenth century. While the works preserved are primarily by women, there are some men included as well, as "poetess" refers not to the gender of the writer, but rather the tradition of writing being used: an effeminate, counter-traditional style. Not only were women publishing more creative works, they were also publishing more literary criticisms, opening doors for themselves and other women in this more professional area of publishing. This archive seeks to preserve these works for a new generation of scholars to understand these developments in women's publishing.

Graduate research assistants get an even more close-up experience of not only these writings, but also the work behind a digital archive. Research assistants work on everything from finding and transcribing writings to adapting the transcriptions to code for the website. This work is cross-disciplinary, as much of the digital humanities is, and it provides one example of how the humanities fields have adapted to the rapid change in technology in the past several decades.