

Research Interrupted: A Reflection on Digitizing Sarah Sophia Banks's Collections and Access to Ephemeral Materials

Kacie L. Wills and Frica Y. Hayes

Number 74-75, spring 2020

Romanticism, Interrupted

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1117984ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1117984ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Université de Montréal

ISSN

2563-2582 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Wills, K. & Hayes, F. (2020). Research Interrupted: A Reflection on Digitizing Sarah Sophia Banks's Collections and Access to Ephemeral Materials. *Romanticism on the Net*, (74-75), 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1117984ar>

Article abstract

In this reflection, we consider the interruptions to archival research caused by COVID-19 and share some of the challenges we have faced moving forward with our digital project on Sarah Sophia Banks's ballooning scrapbook. We address some of the problems of archival access and explore potential solutions offered by digitized ephemeral materials. In light of recent scholarship that establishes ephemera as a Romantic-era technology that mediates our relationship to various forms of public knowledge, we highlight the scholarly opportunities made available by digital interfaces and tools.

Copyright © Kacie L. Wills and Frica Y. Hayes, 2020



This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

érudit

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>



Romanticism on the Net

Research Interrupted: A Reflection on Digitizing Sarah Sophia Banks's Collections and Access to Ephemeral Materials

Kacie L. Wills
Illinois College

Erica Y. Hayes
Villanova University

Abstract

In this reflection, we consider the interruptions to archival research caused by COVID-19 and share some of the challenges we have faced moving forward with our digital project on Sarah Sophia Banks's ballooning scrapbook. We address some of the problems of archival access and explore potential solutions offered by digitized ephemeral materials. In light of recent scholarship that establishes ephemera as a Romantic-era technology that mediates our relationship to various forms of public knowledge, we highlight the scholarly opportunities made available by digital interfaces and tools.

Biographical Note

Dr. Kacie L. Wills is an Assistant Professor of English at Illinois College. Her research is in the literature and material culture of the long eighteenth-century and the Romantic period. She is the recent recipient of a Keats-Shelley Association of America Pforzheimer Research Grant and a Huntington Library Short-Term Dibner Fellowship in the History of Science. Wills is co-editor of the book *Women and the Art and Science of Collecting in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Routledge 2020). She has essays published or forthcoming in *Interdisciplinary Digital Engagement in Arts & Humanities* (IDEAH), *English Studies*, and *The Edinburgh Companion to Romanticism and the Arts*.

Erica Y. Hayes is a Digital Scholarship Librarian at Villanova University, where she leads Falvey Memorial Library's digital scholarship program and collaborates with faculty and students on developing digital humanities projects. Prior to joining Villanova University, she was an NCSU Libraries Fellow based in the Copyright & Digital Scholarship Center and User Experience Department at the NC State University Libraries. While she was working at NC State, she was the project manager on the Immersive Scholar Andrew W. Mellon Foundation grant. Her research interests include eighteenth-century studies, women's studies, contemporary poetry, digital humanities, and cultural heritage materials and technology. She has articles published in *Interdisciplinary Digital Engagement in Arts & Humanities* (IDEAH) and *Women and the Art and Science of Collecting in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Routledge 2020).

I. Interrupted Research: Sarah Sophia Banks's Ballooning Scrapbook

1. Sarah Sophia Banks was sister to Sir Joseph Banks, botanist on the first Cook voyage and later president of the Royal Society. While Sir Joseph was famous for his collections of natural and scientific specimens, Sarah Sophia amassed a 30,000-object collection of ephemera, coins, and manufactured materials that rivaled the collections of her brother. She also helped him organize and curate his collections and lived with him and his wife at 32 Soho Square.¹ Upon her death in 1818, Sir Joseph's wife, Lady Dorothea Banks, donated Sarah Sophia's collections to the British Library, the British Museum, and the Royal Mint.
2. Within Sarah Sophia Banks's ephemera collections, there are several scrapbooks that serve as historical records. These scrapbooks remediate ephemeral materials, offering a glimpse into the circulation of print media surrounding phenomena like "balloonomania." Additionally, they illustrate Banks's unique perspective on innovation and popular culture during this period. Housed at the British Library, her scrapbook on "Balloons, sights, exhibitions, [and] remarkable characters" presents the mania for the hot air balloon from the perspective of a woman intimately connected with the voyages of discovery championed by her brother, Sir Joseph ([A Collection of broadsides, cuttings from newspapers, engravings, etc.]). Banks's scrapbooks are one example of the types of material objects that offer rich resources for scholars seeking to understand Romantic ephemera, women's collections, and the role of collecting and material culture in organizing the world during this period.² Our digital project, [*Exploring the Collections of*](#)

[Sarah Sophia Banks](#), aims to archive, map, digitize, and study Banks's vast ephemera and numismatic collections, with a focus on examining and comparing her scrapbooks on hot air ballooning with others at peer institutions and museums across the U.S. and the U.K.

3. While the British Library and other major research institutions have made significant efforts to digitize their print and ephemera collections, making them freely available for use, certain scrapbooks in Banks's collection remain difficult to access.³ At the time of writing, these scrapbooks have not been scanned for researchers to openly access online from a distance; parts of Banks's ephemera collection can be accessed through an expensive subscription to Adam Matthew Digital while others are only viewable in the reading room of the British Library. These collections, thus, serve as a strong case study for the vital role open access and digital collections could play in archival research during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. As scholarship on ephemera has become increasingly germane to Romantic studies, access to archives and manuscripts has become more and more necessary.⁴ The interruption to in-person archival research brought on by the pandemic has threatened not only individual projects but the larger place of archival work within Romantic studies. Virtual accessibility would allow scholarly work to continue remotely under difficult circumstances like those we are facing in 2020 and would allow for future collaborations between institutions.
4. Due to the nature of our work at the cross-sections of eighteenth-century and Romantic studies and the digital humanities, affordable and timely access to objects and image scans has been a subject we have been grappling with for some time. Since March 2020, however,

these challenges have been brought to the forefront of larger conversations around research practices and tenure clocks. Exacerbating the problem of archival access is the possibility of further staff and funding cuts to major institutions housing ephemeral material like the Victoria & Albert Museum, which recently made curatorial cuts and restructured their National Art Library (NAL) and the V&A Archives into one centralized unit.⁵ These funding cuts limit in-person archival access and reduce staffing and other resources needed to digitize archival collections, such as scanning equipment, image-editing software, and server space for hosting these materials online. Given ephemera's relevance to Romantic studies, the question of how to make ephemera more accessible, especially to graduate and postgraduate researchers who often rely on outside funding, is an issue that must be continually prioritized by administrators in order to advance scholarship.

II. Scrapbooking, Technology, and Mediated Interfaces

5. Recent work in ephemera studies examines ephemera as a Romantic-era technology and demonstrates how it has shaped our personal relationships to media (Russell, *The Ephemeral Eighteenth Century*; Zieger). Gillian Russell, Susan Zieger, and Ellen Gruber Garvey establish a foundation for the study of ephemera as both a mediated form and a technology. Their work opens up further possibilities for the study of ephemera within digital spaces, mediated through interfaces, and for the types of accessible, innovative scholarship such study would produce.⁶

6. Additionally, important research has been recently published on the place of ephemera books, commonplace books, and scrapbooks in understanding the literary tradition and the intersections of print and manuscript culture. David Allan claims that commonplace books “may yet provide the most revealing insights into the nature and consequence of reading” because they offer not only a record of reading practices but also, like scrapbooks, a record of individual taste and engagement with the broader print culture of the time (19). Abigail Williams’s work on the social practices surrounding reading examines the ways that literature moved beyond the bound pages of the book and was shared by people in a myriad of ways. Scrapbooking involved re-arranging printed material to suit the preferences of the compiler; it encouraged a social, domestic literary culture, with scrapbooks often being read and shared by and with visitors to the home (Williams 141-143). Garvey argues that scrapbooks “were a crucial technology for writing with scissors, commenting on media, and recirculating both original articles and the compilers’ own understanding of them” (22). Scrapbooks brought publicly available ephemera into the private domestic space, then recirculated the thoughtfully arranged ephemera via the pages of the scrapbook in individual social circles. They served, like modern social media, as sites of personal media assemblages and personal media archives (Good). Scrapbooks, thus, are significant objects of study, and their digitization would provide access to the ways individuals, especially women, engaged with the mass amounts of ephemera produced in the Romantic era.
7. Due to the deteriorating and fragile state of many ephemera collections, increased digitization is vital to the future of this research. One of the reasons scrapbooks like those of Banks have not been digitized is that the process is very challenging. As Mary Elizabeth

Downing and David Obermayer contend, “Preserving scrapbooks is always difficult because scrapbooks often involve a mix of materials, each with their own preservation concerns. Scrapbooks are also often constructed in an atypical manner using nonprofessional grade materials” (7). Laurel Rhame also notes the challenges posed by the sheer size of many scrapbooks. Transporting Banks’s scrapbook on ballooning from the circulation desk, for instance, requires a cart, and the scrapbook easily takes over multiple reading desks when opened for study. In order to fully appreciate the scrapbook and its contents, both the full pages of the scrapbook and the individual mixed-media items need to be digitized. The International Interoperability Image Framework (IIIF) and the Mirador IIIF compliant viewer platform, which we will discuss later in this paper, are key to the study of scrapbooks because they provide the opportunity to view digitized books and virtually reposition layers of scanned sections of damaged manuscripts and torn out pages, bringing them back together.⁷ Though there are clear challenges, finding ways to make high quality digital scans more widely available to researchers would allow for the continuation of ephemera studies for years to come, even amid unforeseen challenges like we are facing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

III. Ballooning Ephemera and the Romantic Imagination

8. Hot air ballooning is representative of trends in Romantic-era media and scrapbooking and is a generative subject for archival work, given its links to the Romantic imagination. Michael Lynn, at the outset of *The Sublime Invention*, places hot air ballooning within the context of other scientific ventures that captured the imaginations of the public during the

late eighteenth century, specifically the Cook voyages (2). The ballooning craze is illustrated in various Romantic-era newspapers, novels, prints, poems, and plays; many of these materials are curated in personal collections like those of Sarah Sophia Banks.

9. The balloon is a subject of interest in the writing of Percy and Mary Shelley as well. Percy Shelley's "To a balloon, laden with Knowledge" presents the balloon as a figure of hope and potential; as with popular ephemera, the balloon appealed to the masses and communicated scientific innovation and progress in a spectacular manner. At the same time, however, the poem acknowledges the ephemeral nature of the balloon, which soon shall "Fade like a meteor in surrounding gloom" (line 6). In Mary Shelley's futuristic novel, *The Last Man*, set in the twenty-first century, balloons serve as extraordinarily ordinary means of transportation. The balloon represents innovation and the ambition for the infinite, but it is ultimately, like the human race, subject to its materiality.
10. For Percy's twenty-sixth birthday, Mary gave him a hand-stitched balloon and telescope they purchased together in Geneva, illustrating the popularity of collecting material objects related to balloon flight (Fara 217). The Shelleys's writing on and collecting of balloons highlights the balloon's materiality, its personal and popular significance, its science, and its public spectacularity in a manner that correlates with the curating and collecting of balloon ephemera in popular culture, particularly Banks's. The balloon is a figure of ephemerality and communicates both human potential and fragility to the public. Its presence in collections of ephemera is, therefore, especially ripe for analysis. Through examining how individuals like Banks processed the abundance of printed material

available on ballooning, we gain insight into the balloon's place in literature and its impact on both public and domestic life.

IV. Archival Access and Digitization of Ballooning Scrapbooks

11. One of the goals of our project is to provide a more comprehensive understanding of hot air ballooning scrapbooks, specific examples being that of Banks, as well as those in the aeronautica collections of the Huntington Library, the Walpole Library, the Penn-Gaskell collection at the Dana Research Centre and Library, and the Smithsonian. Through studying the ballooning craze as it is represented in scrapbooks compiled on the subject, our goal is to show the unique engagement of the scrapbook as a media technology with the experimental innovations of the hot air balloon, while highlighting the role of the scrapbook compiler in arranging clippings, souvenirs, and related letters on the topic.⁸ In bringing this scholarship to a digital space, we also hope to further study the complexities of Enlightenment mediation as it is manifest both through the scrapbook page and through digital interfaces.

12. Our digital project received a short-term Dibner Fellowship in the History of Science at the Huntington Library for summer 2020. Due to COVID-19, this fellowship was postponed, but we are carrying out this research in summer 2021. The fellowship allows for the study of the Huntington Library's aeronautica collections, specifically two scrapbooks on hot air ballooning ([Collection of clippings relating to aviation: a scrapbook, 1780-1850] Series 1,

139413; [C.W. Williams archive and scrapbook of early ballooning and parachuting, approximately 1880-1892] Box 2, mss Williams). This research is central to our project.

13. Through the study of hot air ballooning scrapbooks and other aeronautical ephemera at institutions like the Huntington Library, we hope to draw attention to and make accessible the collections of female collectors like Banks and to further explore the relationship between ephemera and digital interfaces. When the ballooning scrapbook is studied closely alongside others, the compiler of each scrapbook can be seen to emphasize different aspects of the ballooning craze and to employ unique taxonomical structures. Scrapbook 139413 at the Huntington Library, for instance, offers a more comprehensive history of ballooning and reveals the compiler's interest in ballooning disasters and souvenir collecting. For example, the scrapbook includes notes taken up in balloons, scraps of material from balloons, and clippings and illustrations of failed flight attempts. This scrapbook lends insight into the ways that ballooning took hold of the British public's imaginations after Vincent Lunardi's first English flight in 1784. From this point, it became a popular spectacle and was met with both fascination and critique in the press. Attending a balloon flight would expose one to the sensational aspects of being in a crowd: pickpockets, riots, and so on (*Times* May 4 1785, May 9 1785, June 4 1785; Gillespie 264). In spite of the innovation it displayed, aerostation was seen by many as "foreign, lower class, and mischievous" (*Times* May 5 1785; Gillespie 264). "The rage for ballooning" was seen as a sign of "the folly of the age" (*Times* May 5 1785). The potential for disaster associated with balloon flight also became a point of fascination for the public: "A person who goes up in a balloon for the entertainment of the public, has a double chance of meeting with

death,” either from the rioting of the mob or the dangers of the voyage (*Public Advertiser* May 5 1785). Banks’s scrapbook, on the other hand, moves beyond the depiction of the balloon as merely a sign of “folly” or a dangerous spectacle; she includes more clippings than male compilers do related to female aeronauts and repeats articles and prints that hint at her interest in the science of ballooning, its innovation, and her use of the scrapbook as a space for processing information available via mass print culture.

14. By studying the Huntington ballooning scrapbooks at length and comparing them to Banks’s scrapbook, we hope to illustrate Banks’s unique organizational strategies in her collection of popular material culture while demonstrating how her relationship with her brother influenced and shaped her scrapbook’s focus on the science *and* sensationalism of the ballooning venture. As Russell points out in *The Ephemeral Eighteenth Century: Print, Sociability, and the Cultures of Collecting*, the act of collecting ephemera enabled Sarah Sophia Banks to “contribute to an informal, expansive, science of the present” (107). Fashionable and ephemeral innovations like Banks’s collections of ballooning ephemera formed a “stock of real knowledge in their own right” (138).

15. In addition to studying Banks’s ballooning scrapbooks alongside others, our project examines the role of the scrapbook as a means for information processing. To illustrate this, the comparative study of digitized scrapbook pages is essential. One ballooning scrapbook held in the Penn-Gaskell Collection at the Dana Research Centre and Library offers a significant point of comparison to Banks’s scrapbook. The Penn-Gaskell scrapbook’s collection and organization speak to the balloon as a source of possibility, as

a symbol for modern innovation, and to the balloon scrapbook as a Romantic media technology. Comparison of this scrapbook with Banks's volume highlights the uniqueness of Sarah Sophia's scrapbook as a space of repetition designed for processing the vast amount of information available about ballooning in the midst of "balloonomania."⁹ Banks clearly saw the ephemera book as a "permeable, adaptable entity" (Russell, *The Ephemeral Eighteenth Century* 112). As such, the opportunities afforded by digital display and analysis for uncovering new juxtapositions across volumes and collections further allows us to understand the dynamic nature of ephemera and its intersections. Ballooning ephemera in particular is thought to represent a significant moment in Enlightenment history and the Enlightenment as a period of mediation (Russell, *The Ephemeral Eighteenth Century* 144).¹⁰ This makes the digital examination of balloon ephemera all the more fitting. All of this research, however, is dependent upon access to archival objects and to high-resolution scanned images of these items.¹¹

16. In spite of ballooning's cultural significance, few ephemera collections related to ballooning have been digitized. We suspect that this may be the result of the vast amounts of ballooning-related ephemera in existence and the challenge of digitizing scrapbooks and creating a clear chronology of the phenomena in collections like those of Banks. Additionally, shortage of funding, technical equipment, staffing, and other resources needed for widespread digitization make it difficult to prioritize the scanning of entire scrapbooks among other valuable collections.

V. Sarah Sophia Banks's Scrapbook and the Value of Comparative Study

17. The comparative study of scanned pages from Banks's scrapbook reveals further contextual information about particular images and clippings and offers the opportunity for comparison across scrapbooks from different institutions. Comparison of specific images reveals the unique vision of Banks as the scrapbook's compiler.

18. One of the more striking images in Banks's ballooning scrapbook is of famed aeronaut and inventor, Vincenzo Lunardi, making an experiment on the Thames with his invention to save persons from drowning (Fig. 1: Lunardi on the Thames). Lunardi's "aquatic machine" was like a one-man lifeboat with an oar for steering. He successfully tested the machine in 1787, and this print was made in the same year of that event.



Fig. 1. Lunardi on the Thames, © British Library Board, L.R.301. h.3, f036r.

19. Through digitization and display, the context of this image could be further illustrated, linking it not only to relevant clippings in the scrapbook but also to relevant pages in other scrapbooks. For instance, following the Lunardi print in Banks's scrapbook, there are numerous articles pasted to the subsequent pages about the invention, how it has been tested and judged, and how Lunardi has made it part of his showcase of aerostatic inventions at the Pantheon. Such clippings were often used in these volumes for commentary or annotation, making something new and illustrating the compiler's understanding through juxtapositions (Russell, *The Ephemeral Eighteenth Century* 110; Garvey 22).
20. By considering what appears to be a triumph in the scrapbook alongside what is placed before it, we can access additional contextual information that speaks to both the successes and failures of the ballooning venture, as well as Banks's interest in the aeronauts' perseverance. Two images illustrate Lunardi's "downfall" in Tottenham Court Rd. These are accompanied by a poem chiding Lunardi for flying "too high."
21. The placements of these various illustrations and clippings in the scrapbook demonstrates Banks's vision of Lunardi and the ballooning venture: failure leads to progress, and the science of making advancements in ballooning and aeronautic safety is as much a part of this progress as the spectacle of the display.¹² As Russell notes, Sarah Sophia was also "fascinated by occasions when the romance of ballooning was not realized" (*The Ephemeral Eighteenth Century* 141); she kept an ephemeral record of failures as well as successes. This places her as a precursor to figures like Walter Benjamin, whose *Arcades*

Project was less concerned with progress than with understanding a cultural moment (Russell, *The Ephemeral Eighteenth Century* 150). Examining the various pages of Banks's scrapbook in these contexts further demonstrates the ways she utilizes the spaces of the scrapbook pages to process the information about ballooning available in print and to come to conclusions about its impact. This careful curation with the number of repeated clippings makes particularly clear these pages are not just meant to be read but to be used and experienced.

22. Technology both in the Romantic era and today enables us to more fully realize through digital means what Russell has described as the immersion and absorption in materiality and history that characterizes ephemera collecting (*The Ephemeral Eighteenth Century* 151). Examining digital scans of Banks's scrapbook allows for a greater understanding of her thoughtful process as a collector and for a fuller appreciation of her collection. Since Banks is a figure who has been often labeled as a "hoarder," and her collection has generally been overshadowed by that of her more famous brother, these opportunities to examine her collection in more detail are invaluable to generating a broader appreciation of her contributions to women's collections in the early Romantic period.¹³

VI. Moving Forward: Community and the International Image Interoperability Framework (IIIF)

23. Digital tools, online platforms, and interfaces offer us the opportunity to connect and create broad scholarly networks and communities during COVID-19 that can be valuable

resources as we move forward in our scholarship post-pandemic. Currently, the International Image Interoperability Framework (IIIF) is used widely among cultural heritage organizations to share and showcase digitized images, books, newspapers, manuscripts, maps, scrolls, and other archival materials. Developed in late 2011, IIIF provides a set of application programming interfaces for the interoperable delivery of digital image-based resources.¹⁴ Originally conceived by libraries and museums to facilitate the reuse of image-based resources, “IIIF uses JSON-LD, linked data, and standard W3C protocols to parse and share digital image-based resources across technology systems” for scholars and researchers to access from anywhere online (*iiif.io* “community”).

24. The setup and implementation of the IIIF Image API requires a web server or an image server, with different compliance levels for the Image API (*iiif.io* “technical details”). Some of IIIF’s main features include the functionality for deep-zoom viewing, annotation, and the manipulation and comparison of scanned images through the use of one of IIIF’s compliant image viewer clients. One IIIF compliant image viewer is Mirador, an open-source multi-window image viewing platform originally developed by a team at Stanford University with the “ability to display, annotate, and compare digitized images from around the world” side by side (*projectmirador.org*).

25. The Mirador IIIF image viewer would allow for the juxtaposition of pages from Sarah Sophia’s ballooning scrapbook alongside other ballooning scrapbooks at peer institutions. One such juxtaposition we have in mind investigates the print of the disaster in Lord

Romanticism on the Net #74-75 (Spring-Fall 2020)

Foley's Garden from Banks's ballooning scrapbook with a page from one of the scrapbooks held by the Huntington Library ("Collection of clippings relating to aviation: a scrapbook, 1780-1850"). This juxtaposition highlights the spectacle of ballooning disaster. This isn't a subject of particular focus in Banks's collection, but it is in the Huntington scrapbook's collection ("Collection of clippings relating to aviation: a scrapbook, 1780-1850"). One page from the Huntington scrapbook contains a scrap from the balloon that went up in flames during the aeronaut De Rozier's disastrous flight. (Fig. 2: De Rozier's Balloon) Such souvenirs provide a material connection to these spectacles. When juxtaposed with Banks's page of a similar failed flight attempt (albeit with no fatalities), we can see the compilers's strategies and unique takes on such events. While Banks is documenting in a matter-of-fact way the events that occur, the expense suffered, and the materials lost, the Huntington compiler is more interested in the sensational.



Fig. 2. De Rozier's Burning Balloon, "Collection of clippings. etc., relating to aviation: a scrapbook. 1780-1850," 139413, Aeronautica Collection: Prints and Ephemera, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

26. As Russell argues, Banks creates an “ephemeral assemblage” that evokes the “co-presence of people together...within the borders of space and time” (*The Ephemeral Eighteenth Century* 150). Through further contextualization and comparison of Banks’s ballooning ephemera with those of others, this queer ephemeral assemblage can be appreciated by new groups of scholars and enthusiasts.
27. Another opportunity afforded by the Mirador IIIF compliant image viewer is the comparative study of digitized scrapbook pages from various institutions for further contextualization of the prints within Banks’s scrapbook. Alone, the various prints in Banks’s scrapbook are often difficult to understand within the broader context of balloon ephemera in circulation. Bringing her scrapbook pages together with prints and clippings from other ephemera collections would not only make the material more accessible but also offer opportunities for further research into Banks’s organizational strategies and the significance of the individual clippings she compiled.
28. For example, *All on Fire Or the Doctors Disappointed: A View in Lord Foley’s Garden*, directly follows the pages on Lunardi previously discussed. (Fig. 3: All on Fire) The print, also called “Balloon on Fire,” shows the second attempt by anatomist Dr. John Sheldon to launch a balloon on the grounds of Lord Foley’s home in Portland Place, London (Dundon).¹⁵ During this 1784 attempt, the balloon caught fire and was destroyed. This print in Banks’s scrapbook also warrants direct comparison to prints in other collections. For instance, the Science Museum in London has a satirical version of the print in which the balloon is shaped like a giant bottom from which flames and smoke pour forth while a

smaller balloon with a jester's cap emerges.¹⁶ Banks's scrapbook also contains this jester balloon, though in a separate print from *All on Fire*. Banks' larger, close-up print of the jester balloon, *An English Balloon, 1784*, possibly by Paul Sandby, is also held in the Science Museum collection.¹⁷ This collection of prints from different institutions offers excellent opportunities for comparison and analysis. By digitizing these pages and viewing them side by side in the Mirador IIF compliant image viewer, we can both enlarge our understanding of context and deepen our examination of particular prints.

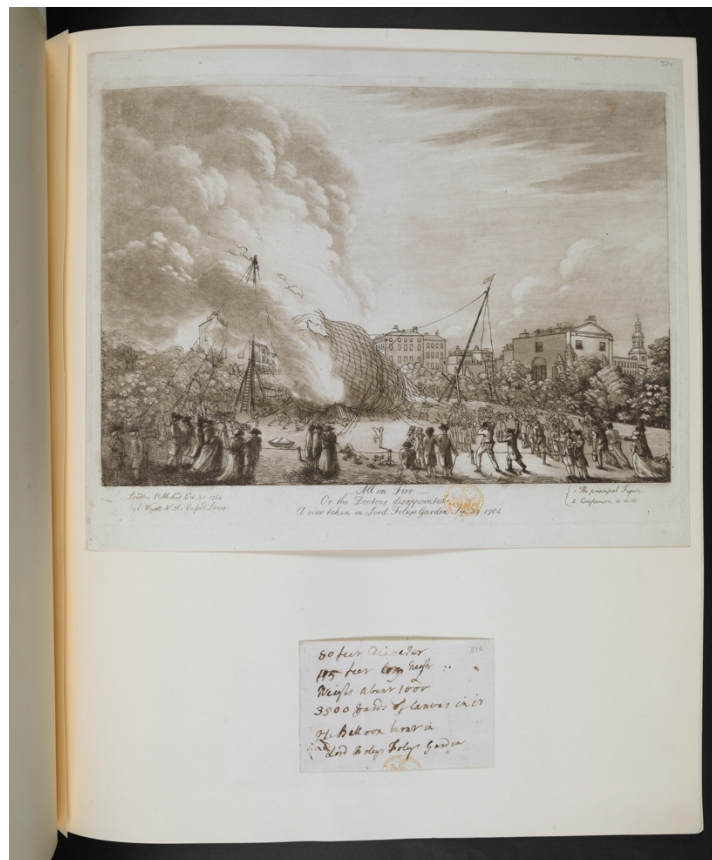


Fig. 3. *All on Fire Or the Doctors Disappointed: A View in Lord Foley's Garden*, © British Library Board, L.R301. h.3, f037r

29. The possibilities afforded by digitization and IIF for displaying, comparing, and studying material objects, like scrapbooks, are vast, though more scanning is required to fully appreciate the interoperable potential of IIF. A push for an increase in digitization, as well

as assistance with setting up and implementing an image server for scholars to make use of IIIF, would allow for more work to be done in this arena. Hopefully, this progress will come through an increased understanding of the ways digital interfaces can help enable a more haptic manner of engaging with texts and archival objects.¹⁸ As Garvey has argued,

Traces of scrapbooks survive in our digital world beyond the repertoire of gestures of archivalness and of cutting and pasting. Scrapbooks, newspaper collections, clipping services, library cataloging systems, filing systems, and even pigeonhole desks embody overlapping modes of thinking about information, how to concentrate it, and how to find it again. They are the foundations of more recent filtering of information via digital methods such as Google, LexisNexis, and blogging. They all understand that pieces of information—whether in the form of articles, books, or snippets—are detachable, movable, and classifiable under multiple headings. (21)

The very ways we think about interacting with digital devices are shaped by the “cut-and-paste terminology,” the transference of mediums, and the recontextualization that characterized ephemera circulation and scrapbooking (Garvey 21-22, 251). Online platforms can help scholars develop a more material understanding of mediated interfaces, like the scrapbook, as means of information processing in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, all the while encouraging us to reassess the modes we use to produce and disseminate scholarly knowledge across time.

30. As with all discussion of digitization, the question of what is lost versus what is gained comes to the forefront. We are not proposing that digital interaction can replace physical engagement with a material object. It is difficult to reproduce the tangible experience of

turning the pages of the scrapbook and to replicate its size—navigating a cart full of oversized scrapbooks through a quiet reading room is an experience in itself. We acknowledge that the digital image is always a representation of the object, but perhaps hierarchical valuation is not the most productive approach at this time. The events of 2020 suggest that the question we need to be asking is what opportunities the digital space can offer, not only in terms of access but in terms of new and productive readings of these scrapbooks. We've illustrated a number of these possibilities in this paper, but we hope that future research will continue to embrace the unique experiences and new ways of understanding Romantic ephemera and material culture that digitization offers.

Works Cited

Allan, David. *Commonplace Books and Reading in Georgian England*. Cambridge UP, 2010.

Brant, Clare. "The Progress of Knowledge in the Regions of the Air?: Divisions and Disciplines in Early Ballooning." *Eighteenth Century Studies*, vol. 45, no.1, 2011, pp. 71-86.

Cascone, Sarah. "The Victoria and Albert Museum Will Cut a Fifth of Its Curatorial Staff as Part of a Sweeping Round of Layoffs." *ArtWorld*, 26 February 2021, news.artnet.com/art-world/victoria-albert-museum-layoffs-1947403. Accessed 14 April 2021.

[A Collection of broadsides, cuttings from newspapers, engravings, etc., of various dates, formed by Miss Sarah Sophia Banks. Volume 3: Balloons, sights, exhibitions, remarkable characters: Katterfelto the Monster] L.R.301. h.3, The British Library, London.

Romanticism on the Net #74-75 (Spring-Fall 2020)

[Collection of clippings relating to aviation: a scrapbook]1780-1850] Series 1, 139413.

Huntington Library Aeronautica Collection: Prints and Ephemera, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

[C.W. Williams archive and scrapbook of early ballooning and parachuting, approximately 1880-1892] Box 2, mss Williams. Huntington Library Aeronautica Collection: Prints and Ephemera, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Eagleton, Catherine. "Collecting African Money in Georgian London: Sarah Sophia Banks and Her Collection of Coins." *Museum History Journal*, vol. 6, no.1, 2013, pp. 23-38.

Downing, Elizabeth Mary and David Obermayer. "Case Study: A Hybrid Approach to Preserving Scrapbooks using Digitization." *Forsyth Library Faculty Publications* 4, 2019, pp. 1-21.

Dundon, Rian. "Pre-photographic Pictures of Hot Air Balloon Accidents Show the Perils of Late Modernity." *Timeline*, 7 June 2017, [timeline.com/hot-air-ballon-accidents-a18639c4a1ca?gi=7ba81ef1630b](https://www.timeline.com/hot-air-ballon-accidents-a18639c4a1ca?gi=7ba81ef1630b). Accessed 18 Dec. 2020.

Fara, Patricia. *Pandora's Breeches: Women, Science and Power in the Enlightenment*. Random House, 2004.

Garvey, Ellen Gruber. *Writing With Scissors: American Scrapbooks from the Civil War to the Harlem Renaissance*. Oxford UP, 2012.

Gascoigne, John. *Joseph Banks and the English Enlightenment: Useful Knowledge and Polite Culture*. Cambridge UP, 1994.

Gernes, Todd. "Recasting the Culture of Ephemera." *Popular Literacy: Studies in Cultural Practices and Poetics*, edited by J. Trimbur, Pittsburgh UP, 2001, pp. 107-127.

Romanticism on the Net #74-75 (Spring-Fall 2020)

Gillespie, Richard. "Ballooning in France and Britain, 1783-1786: Aerostation and Adventurism."

Isis, vol. 75, no. 2, 1984, pp. 248-268.

Good, Katie Day. "From Scrapbook to Facebook: A history of personal media assemblage and archives." *New Media and Society*, vol. 15, no. 4, 2012, pp. 557-573, EBSCOhost, doi:10.1177/1461444812458432.

Harris, Gareth. "Victoria and Albert Museum backtracks on plans to cut its National Art Library staff." *The Art Newspaper*, 18 March 2021, www.theartnewspaper.com/news/v-and-a-rolls-back-on-plans-to-cut-national-art-library-staff. Accessed 14 April 2021.

Hayes, Erica Y. and Kacie L. Wills, "Sarah Sophia Banks's Coin Collection: Female Networks of Exchange." *Women and the Art and Science of Collecting in Eighteenth Century Europe*, edited by Arlene Leis and Kacie L. Wills, Routledge, 2020, pp. 78-92.

---. "Visualizing Sarah Sophia Banks 'African Coins.'" *IDEAH*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.21428/flf23564.1d32a4b3>.

Holmes, Richard. *The Age of Wonder: How the Romantic Generation Discovered the Beauty and Terror of Science*. Pantheon, 2008.

IIIF. iiif.io/about/. Accessed 18 Dec. 2020.

Keen, Paul. *Literature, Commerce, and the Spectacle of Modernity, 1750-1800*. Cambridge UP, 2012.

Leis, Arlene. "Cutting, Arranging, and Pasting: Sarah Sophia Banks as Collector." *Early Modern Women*, vol. 9, no.1, 2014, pp. 127-140.

---. "Displaying Art and Fashion: Ladies 'Pocket-Book Imagery in the Paper Collections of Sarah Sophia Banks." *Journal of Art History*, vol. 82, no. 3, 2013, pp. 252-271.

---. "Ephemeral Histories: Social Commemoration of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars in the Paper Collections of Sarah Sophia Banks." *Visual Culture and the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, edited by Satish Padiyar, Philip Shaw, and Philippa Simpson, Routledge, 2017, pp. 183-199.

---. *Sarah Sophia Banks: Femininity, Sociability and the Practice of Collecting in Late Georgian England*. PhD Thesis. University of York, 2013. White Rose eTheses Online, etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/5794/.

Lynn, Michael. *The Sublime Invention*. Routledge, 2016.

Matthews, Samantha. *Album Verses in Romantic Literary Culture: Poetry, Manuscript, Print, 1780-1850*. Oxford UP, 2020.

Mirador. projectmirador.org/index.html. Accessed 18 Dec. 2020.

Murphy, Kevin and Sally O'Driscoll, editors. *Studies in Ephemera: Text and Image in Eighteenth-Century Print*. Bucknell UP, 2013.

Peltz, Lucy. *Facing the Text: Extra-Illustration, Print Culture, and Society in Britain 1769-1840*. Huntington Library Press, 2017.

The Public Advertiser. 5 May 1785. Gale *Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Burney Newspapers Collection*. <https://www.gale.com/c/seventeenth-and-eighteenth-century-burney-newspapers-collection>

Rhame, Laurel. "The Scrapbook Challenge." *Williams Libraries*, library.williams.edu/2018/03/07/the-scrapbook-challenge/. Accessed 14 April 2021.

Rickards, Maurice. *The Encyclopedia of Ephemera*. Routledge, 2000.

Russell, Gillian. *The Ephemeral Eighteenth Century: Print, Sociability, and the Cultures of Collecting*. Cambridge UP, 2020.

---. "Sarah Sophia Banks's Private Theatricals: Ephemera, Sociability, and the Archiving of Fashionable Life." *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, vol. 27, no. 3-4, 2015, pp. 535-55.

Sandby, Paul. *An English Balloon, 1784*. The Science Museum, London, <https://collection.sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk/objects/co523202/an-english-balloon-print>.

---. *The English Balloon, 1784*. The Science Museum, London, <https://collection.sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk/objects/co523203/the-english-balloon-print>.

Shelley, Mary. *The Last Man*, edited by Anne McWhir. Broadview, 1996.

Shelley, Percy Bysshe. "Sonnet: To A Balloon Laden with Knowledge." *The Esdaile Notebook in Shelley and His Circle*, vol. IV, edited by Kenneth N. Cameron. Harvard UP, 1970.

Siskin, Clifford and William Warner. "If This is the Enlightenment Then What Is Romanticism?" *European Romantic Review*, vol. 22, no. 3, 2011, pp. 281-91.

The Times. 4 May 1785; 5 May 1785; 9 May 1785; 4 June 1785. *Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Burney Newspapers Collection*. <https://www.gale.com/c/seventeenth-and-eighteenth-century-burney-newspapers-collection>

Tucker, Susan, Katherine Ott, and Patricia P. Buckler, editors. *The Scrapbook in American Life*. Temple UP, 2006.

Williams, Abigail. *The Social Life of Books: Reading Together in the Eighteenth-Century Home*. Yale UP, 2017.

Zieger, Susan. *The Mediated Mind: Affect, Ephemera, and Consumerism in the Nineteenth Century*. Fordham UP, 2018.

Acknowledgements

It is with gratitude that we acknowledge that much of the in-person work we were able to do with Sarah Sophia Banks's collections prior to the onset of the pandemic was through the support of a Keats-Shelley Association of America Carl H. Pforzheimer, Jr. Research Grant. You can learn more about the grant here: k-saa.org/awards/carl-h-pforzheimer-jr-research-grants/

¹ Both Leis and Russell note the connections between the siblings's collecting interests. Russell states that ballooning represented one especially significant area of intersection (*The Ephemeral Eighteenth Century* 136).

² See Eagleton, Leis, Russell, Hayes and Wills.

³ The British Library has digitized some of their collections (www.bl.uk/catalogues-and-collections/digital-collections) and digitized manuscripts (www.bl.uk/manuscripts/) and made them openly available for free through their digital collections. Also, they use IIF (example here: www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=or_15227_f001r) and are, in fact, one of the founding libraries for IIF: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Image_Interoperability_Framework. (The Image API was proposed in late 2011 as a collaboration between The [British Library](#), [Stanford University](#), the [Bodleian Libraries](#) (Oxford University), the [Bibliothèque nationale de France](#), [Nasjonalbiblioteket](#) (National Library of Norway), [Los Alamos National Laboratory Research Library](#), and [Cornell University](#). Version 1.0 was published in 2012.) Progress is definitely being made in these areas. We simply want to point out that the ephemera collections that haven't been digitized are nearly impossible to access and work with at present, and it is expensive for scholars to pay for the digitization of an entire scrapbook, for example.

⁴ See Garvey, Leis, Matthews, Russell, and Zieger. See also: Gernes, Murphy and O'Driscoll, Peltz, Rickards, and Tucker, Ott, and Buckler.

⁵ For more on the cuts to the V&A Museum, see [ArtReview](#), Cascone, and Harris. Harris most recently reports that the museum has backtracked on the funding cuts after public outcry and is working to restructure.

⁶ We use the term interface, both physically and virtually, to mean the bringing together of often disparate objects and the process through which this occurs.

⁷ The [Mirador IIF viewer](#) is a web-based digital image viewer that supports deep zoom, analysis, comparison and annotation of high-quality cultural heritage images. It is compatible with the [International Image Interoperability Framework \(IIF\)](#), and thus has the capability to load and display hundreds of millions of images published on the web by participating IIF institutions. Originally built by the team at Stanford, Mirador has been developed and adopted by dozens of libraries, museums, archives and other cultural institutions world-wide. The viewer allows for the comparison of multiple images in the same workspace, even from different objects and different institutions and the ability to view objects that have been digitized with multiple layers. Here is one [example](#) of how you can use the Mirador IIF viewer to view multiple layers of objects and bring together damaged or torn manuscripts. This [demo](#) (click on Minatures and checkmark both images) shows the virtual reconstruction of a damaged manuscript from Châteauroux in France (Grandes Chroniques de France, ca. 1460). The manuscript's fourteen illuminations were cut out at some point and eventually ended up at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in the nineteenth century. The digitization of the miniature image on one layer, and the full manuscript page on the other,

allows a virtual repositioning and reconstruction of the original manuscript page brought together by two institutions who have both digitized the separate components of the object and made them available via IIF.

⁸ For more on “balloonomania” see Keen and Holmes.

⁹ Russell notes that Sarah Sophia frames her collection as her brother does, “as an international phenomenon, underpinned by correspondence networks and . . . the wider paper economy of the republic of letters” (*The Ephemeral Eighteenth Century* 139).

¹⁰ See also Brant (75-76) and Siskin and Warner for more on Enlightenment disciplinarity and mediation.

¹¹ It is important to note that any scans from scrapbooks included here have been purchased with our own money. This also includes the cost of licensing.

¹² As Russell points out, it is possible Sarah Sophia may not have assembled the British Library volumes, or their sequence, but of all of them, the volume on ballooning is “coherent in its focus on sensations of the 1780s that attracted considerable and particularly ephemeral print publicity” (*The Ephemeral Eighteenth Century* 137).

¹³ For more on the significance of Sarah Sophia’s collections, independent of her brother, see Fara, Leis, and Pascoe.

¹⁴ These include four: Image API, Presentation API, Authentication API, and Search API.

¹⁵ For more information, see: timeline.com/hot-air-ballon-accidents-a18639c4a1ca

¹⁶ *The English Balloon, 1784*:

<https://collection.sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk/objects/co523203/the-english-balloon-print>.

¹⁷ *An English Balloon, 1784*:

<https://collection.sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk/objects/co523202/an-english-balloon-print>

¹⁸ See note 3.