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*Visualizing hidden histories 'in progress – online'*

**Abstract**

Let what is hidden be brought out into the light. Research is meant to be shared and made available to all and each researcher can do this in their own way by putting their work that is 'in progress' online. The feedback is beneficial, the enabling technologies are there to make it possible and in the long term sustainable.

**Introduction**

How many historians or researchers are working away in their own specialist area creating valuable knowledge, achieving insights into the nature of the human condition? I don't know because much of this work is still hidden like much of my work on the History of Acromegaly and Gigantism<sup>1</sup> had been to use the commonly seen phrase in curriculum vitae or research updates 'in progress'.

Fine, I had published a paper on 'Mr Punch, Acromegaly and Caricature'<sup>2</sup>, given several lectures early on in my research and carried on working away when I could between running a business and then teaching students. However the greater part of my research was sitting in files and boxes gathering dust and 'in progress' really meant nothing much happening.

However, technology moves on and what was sitting in the form of photocopies, reference cards, black-and-white negatives and handwritten or typed notes could become digital files and put online as a resource for interested readers, researchers and the general public.

Just take a look around you or imagine a library or your study. How much of what you have access to is really hidden?

Hidden in boxes  
Hidden in negatives  
Hidden on your computer  
Hidden in journals  
Hidden in books  
Hidden in our notebooks and jottings  
Hidden in our thinking and heads

This paper looks at some of the possibilities and my personal reflections of having put my research online. I wouldn't say any of it is new or will come as a revelation to the converted but it will I hope whet appetites to join the online research community and reveal your own 'hidden history'.

**Why put your research online?**

What is it about the Internet that makes it such a useful medium?

Research that is online can be continuously updated and developed there isn't the same expectation that the work is finished the whole of the Internet is a work 'in progress'. Putting your research

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<sup>1</sup> Bryson D. Acromegaly and Gigantism: An historical portrait of a disease. <http://www.cladonia.co.uk/acromegaly/> 2005

<sup>2</sup> Bryson D. Mr Punch, acromegaly and caricature. *Journal of Audiovisual Media in Medicine* 1996: 19 (3) 119-22.

online takes the idea of Open Access one-step further back than pre-publication<sup>3</sup>, as advocated by e-prints.org<sup>4</sup>, the ROMEO project<sup>5</sup> and the Budapest Open Access Initiative.

The internet is a living network of connections and a research website should be a growing entity not the site of the journal paper or a few web pages to give information about an exhibition but a place to also put your thinking and deposit your research ephemera. Web pages have the ability to Cross-Link to the work of other researchers and directly to other online sources or journal papers.

There is an expectation, encouraged by many funding organisations insisting on dissemination, that research should be accessible and made available for other researchers and the general public to encourage the development of a social context for medical history and wider use in teaching<sup>6</sup>. What better ways to provide access than to put work that is 'in progress' onto the World Wide Web?

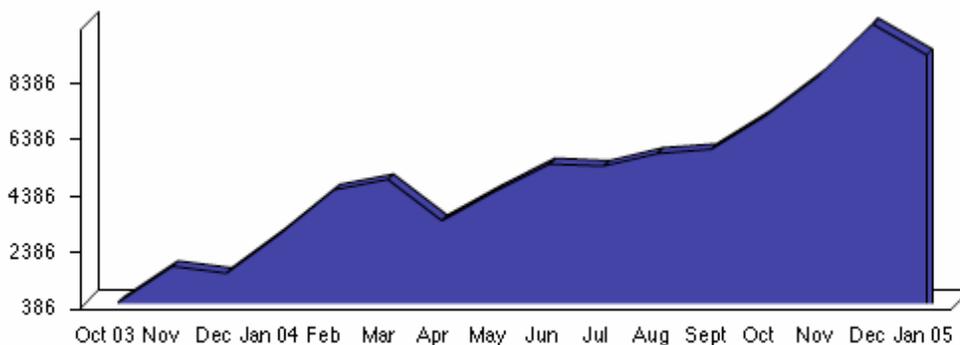
The Internet is in its own way a community often a silent one but still a community. People do revisit sites and bookmark them. It is not possible to know who is interested in what without adequate dissemination.

Ultimately the Internet makes your research available, for as long as it is kept online. If you consider how long has it taken to accumulate all your research and then how much work a researcher coming along after you, or a new researcher in the field, would have to start research in the same area. It is clear we need to make our work accessible not hidden, online instead of offline.

### How do people find your work?

Still not sure that it is really worth the effort? Do people really visit a site on the History of Acromegaly and Gigantism? The answer is an emphatic, yes.

Figure 1 below shows the steady increase in visitor numbers since my site, <http://www.cladonia.co.uk/acromegaly>, has been online and I have had statistics available. The biggest number of referrals comes from Google<sup>7</sup> and the other search engines. Indeed if you type in a search for 'History of Acromegaly and Gigantism' on Google you will see that my site is number 1 out of 4,600 results, for History of Acromegaly number 1 out of 30,400 and number 3 out of 26,700 for 'History of Gigantism. The system does work and people do visit.



Number of hits per month on folder <http://www.cladonia.co.uk/acromegaly> this includes hits by bots like googlebot so is a guide only.

Figure 1 – Graph of hits per month on History of Acromegaly and Gigantism site folder. This doesn't mean the number of unique visits just the number of page impressions. So if in a month

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.soros.org/openaccess/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.eprints.org/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://romeo.eprints.org/>

<sup>6</sup> Barnes E. Outreach activities at the Manchester Unit. Wellcome History 2004 (26): 22-3. [URI [http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/doc\\_WTX022814.html](http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/doc_WTX022814.html)]

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.google.com/search?q=History+of+Acromegaly+and+Gigantism&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8>

when there were 8,000 page impressions and on average 4 pages were visited by each user you are looking at 2,000 users.

The other source of visitors is via mediated sites where resources have been reviewed for example MedHist: The guide to history of medicine resources on the Internet<sup>8</sup> offers free access to a searchable catalogue of Internet sites and resources covering the history of medicine. This resource sponsored by The Wellcome Foundation<sup>9</sup>, and is part of the Resource Discovery Network<sup>10</sup>.

The other source of visitors is from web links, the most regular of these for my site is from Nada Farm Museum of Archetypes website which has a number of links<sup>11</sup> about Mr Punch, otherwise known as Pulcinello. My site is also linked to from Anatomy and Physiology textbooks that used some of my images taken from old journals and publishers support sites to get students looking at a broader range of resources.

Marketing publicity is not really needed, as use of resources on the Internet is to a certain extent self-generating. If you regularly update your material and keep people informed of updates you slowly but surely generate a certain amount of traffic and things do happen on the Internet by word of mouth, or rather word of click. However the neatest and easiest generator of visitors is to include a link to your site at the bottom of your e-mail signature. If you think how often you click a web link on an e-mail think of how often people would start to click on yours. The Internet is viral<sup>12</sup> if something hits the spot it can be an overnight sensation or as is the case with most History sites become a chronic success.

### **Enabling technologies**

One of the biggest changes recently, which in Internet terms are probably over the last two years, is the availability of open source technologies that enable the end-user to painlessly add material online even if they are barely able to use a wordprocessing programme.

#### Table 1 Examples of Open Source Software

- Wikis
- Blogs
- Virtual Learning Environments
- E-portfolios

How these work and examples can be found on the Centre for History and New Media's website <http://chnm.gmu.edu/><sup>13</sup>.

A wiki for example e.g. MediaWiki<sup>14</sup>, on which Wikipedia<sup>15</sup> is based, is particularly suited for developing research as links are kept by the programme in the database file and once a new link has been created all that is needed to create a new page with a new theme is to click on that link. If there is already material in a link of that name it will take you there instead.

In supporting students in writing for dissertations I always advocate the little and often way of working a large essay ultimately only consists of number of paragraphs each containing a key thought or concept building up to a greater whole. This is the key to working online with a wiki you can add what you want when you want and it is there and updated online as you save each page working directly through your web browser.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.medhist.ac.uk/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.wellcome.ac.uk>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.rdn.ac.uk>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.spyrock.com/nadafarm/html/punchlinks.html>

<sup>12</sup> The contagious nature of viral marketing. [URI <http://www.accountingweb.co.uk/cgi-bin/item.cgi?id=134411&d=448&h=0&f=0>]

<sup>13</sup> <http://chnm.gmu.edu/>

<sup>14</sup> <http://wikipedia.sourceforge.net/>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.wikipedia.org/>

You don't have to be a web design expert to put up a site with a basic number of pages. Once a site is set up working on material is not that much more complicated than using Microsoft Word or PowerPoint.

If you don't want to totally create your own site and identity you can add your specialist work and expertise on to the work of others.

Another part of enabling technologies is to make sure your work is accessible. This can be achieved by adhering where possible to internet standards, Extensible Hypertext Markup Language (XHTML), Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) for design, fonts and printing (See Figures 2 a b and c), fast downloads by optimizing file sizes<sup>16</sup> and has been constructed to comply with AAA accessibility standards.

If you really want a large high quality image to be available you can always link to a large image from a small version and include information on the file size should anyone like to download and view a larger image. For example my site has 122 web pages with 570 large images and 570 small thumbnails total size of the site is 190Mb. The specifications I have used for these photographs as follows; the negatives were scanned at 300 pixels per inch (ppi) enlarged to A3, jpg quality 100% then reduced to two sizes for use on the web. In-line images 72ppi, jpg quality 80%, max size 320 x 200 pixels (30 – 40 Kb) and larger images 72ppi, jpg quality maximum size 640 x 400 pixels (110 – 130Kb).

Applying standards makes access easier but requires a better understanding of the technology and how it works, unless you get someone to design your site for you and you just use a simple programme like Macromedia Contribute<sup>17</sup> to update and add the content. In this model the design, style and accessibility can be controlled by a web designer and is kept separate from the end-users when they add links, text or images.

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<sup>16</sup> Technical Advisory Services for Images <http://www.tasi.ac.uk/>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.macromedia.com/software/contribute/>



## Acromegaly and Gigantism: An historical portrait of a disease

Home

Photography

Learning Resources

History of Science and Medicine

PDP

### Content

Introduction  
Physical features  
Acromegaly through the ages  
Giants: Fact and fiction  
Early medical descriptions 1526-1885  
Pierre Marie and acromegaly 1886  
Aetiology and therapy 1890-1937  
Life history of an acromegalic  
Acromegaly and modern medicine  
Not acromegaly  
Statistics  
Bibliography  
Newsletter  
Short articles  
Published papers

Introduction  
Giants in myth and legend  
British and Irish Giants  
The medical professions' fascination with giants  
Giants among men  
How do they measure up?  
Giants today

### Giants among men

From their portrayal on walls of Tombs in Egypt, illustrations and portraits to postcards and newspapers giants have been interesting not just to the medical profession but to the population in general. The sections below start to bring these illustrations together and discuss the issues this objectification of Giants raises.

#### Postcards

Collectors of postcards may prefer them pristine with no writing or message on the back but in terms of historical and cultural interest these can be of great value. They often provide a context with date or other information about where Giants were seen and their place in society.



There is a strange symbiosis almost between the general public and giants now and in the past. Being a Giant could be a good profession whether as an impressive soldier for an army, a gentleman's social scene, part of a travelling circus like the Barnum Circus in America or visiting the London Hippodrome which showed circus and variety acts.

Figure 2a - Normal view of a web page



## Acromegaly and Gigantism: An historical portrait of a disease

<a href="#">Home</a>	<a href="#">Photography</a>	<a href="#">Learning Resources</a>	<a href="#">History of Science and Medicine</a>	<a href="#">PDP</a>
<b>Content</b>	<b>Giants among men</b>			
<a href="#">Introduction</a>	From their portrayal on walls of Tombs in Egypt, illustrations and portraits to postcards and newspapers giants have been interesting not just to the medical profession but to the population in general. The sections below start to bring these illustrations together and discuss the issues this objectification of Giants raises.			
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<a href="#">Early medical descriptions 1526-1885</a>	Collectors of postcards may prefer them pristine with no writing or message on the back but in terms of historical and cultural interest these can be of great value. They often provide a context with date or other information about where Giants were seen and their place in society.			
<a href="#">Pierre Marie and acromegaly 1886</a>				
<a href="#">Aetiology and therapy 1890-1937</a>				
<a href="#">Life history of an acromegalic</a>				
<a href="#">Acromegaly and modern medicine</a>				
<a href="#">Not acromegaly</a>				

Figure 2b - The same page but with text enlarged for people with reading difficulties

## Acromegaly and Gigantism: An historical portrait of a disease

### Giants among men

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"Dear Glad hope you are all well I think you will know who this is as you have seen him C & D." March 18th 1905.



"Thought you would like this card showing you the giant." London 29th March 1905.



On front - Saw "Mariedl" last night, W. Postmarked Cardiff, May 27th 1907.

There is a strange symbiosis almost between the general public and giants now and in the past. Being a Giant could be a good profession whether as an impressive soldier for an army, a gentleman's social scene, part of a travelling circus like the Barnum Circus in America or visiting the London Hippodrome which showed circus and variety acts.

Enderle in 1998 reported on an analysis of a collection of 893 historical postcards from 1900 to 1935. The paper is focussed predominantly on dwarfism but also looks at gigantism.

"The postcards, which were certainly sold by the 'protagonists' themselves, served as a billboard on which no amount of sensationalism was spared. The juxtaposition of giant and dwarf was supposed to appeal to the viewer's craving for the spectacular." Enderle 1998

This comparison can be seen in the postcards of [Jan Van Albert](#) and [Les Frères Hugo](#) which both include a dwarf. One important observation he makes is that dwarves were usually employed in

Figure 2c - The page as printed out without menus controlled using a print.css file (CSS Cascading Style Sheets).

Some technologies are newer and more demanding but can again support your visitors these include; sending out e-mail newsletters, Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds<sup>18</sup> which uses eXtensible Markup Language (XML).

Flash is commonly used for developing websites that are more interactive in nature and whilst a complete site executed in flash does require a great deal of technical expertise individual flash objects can be used to great effect on web pages whether providing access to an RSS feed as a ticker or from a drop menu or to show figures in a graphical format. Strangely one of the popular files downloaded is a flash file which uses data I collected about the changes in number of papers written about acromegaly and gigantism with time, see Figure 3.

<sup>18</sup> Moffat M (2003) RSS - A Primer for Publishers & Content Providers Version 1.00 20th August 2003, EEVL: Edinburgh. [URI [http://www.eevl.ac.uk/rss\\_primer/](http://www.eevl.ac.uk/rss_primer/)]

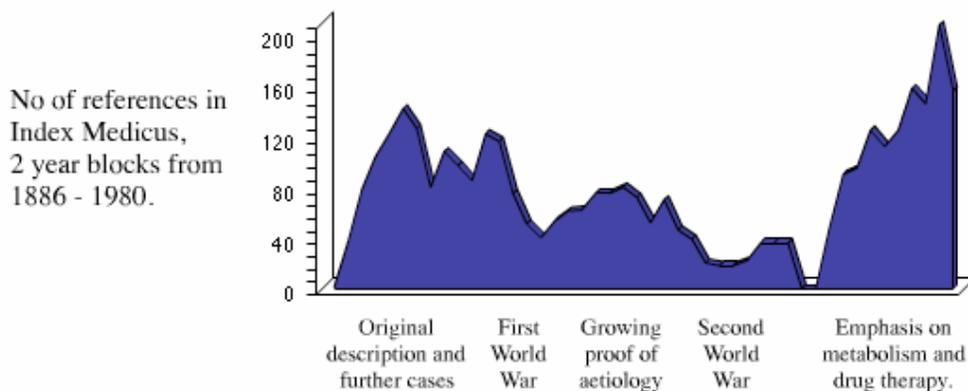


Figure 3 – Screen grab of flash object showing the increasing number of published references on acromegaly and gigantism with time recorded in the Index Medicus.

I have made a large number of changes as I have developed the website that I hadn't considered in my initial planning one of these was the scanning using optical character recognition (OCR) software and transcription by hand of some of the early papers I have obtained as InterLibrary Loans so not only are my opinions there but the original papers and images on which I have based my thinking.

### Digital objects

Everything you put onto a website or store on your computer is a digital object. It is stored digitally whether it is a photograph, video clip or a piece of text. Some web pages may be made up of multiple digital objects. Digital objects are not the real thing but representations of the real thing.

Some people may never visit a museum or get to see one they would like to visit if it is abroad but they can do so online. You can't visit the researcher in his study but you can visit his or her website. Digital objects can be more than static they can include the 3 or 2 dimensional object, even through flash<sup>19</sup> allowing the object to be moved, rotated or zoomed in on. One digital object can be used in a number of ways an image doesn't just lay in a folder like it lay in a negative bag but it can be used in multiple ways.

A single image could for example be used:

- On a main section web page
- Page giving information about a reference including images
- A figure in a pre-publication or online paper
- Accessed directly from Google image search<sup>20</sup>
- In a lecture you have given then put online as a PowerPoint presentation
- Part of a multimedia object

It may initially take time to scan, store and add data to an image, its metadata, but then it can be used in a wide variety of ways and multiple times with no extra work needed. The way this is moving forward on the Internet is that the addresses for digital objects, their URI, will become more persistent. This is being made easier with initiatives like scholar.google.com<sup>21</sup> and the increasing use of Digital Object Identifier System<sup>22</sup> and OpenURL to make tracking and linking to articles more consistent over time.

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.macromedia.com/software/flash/>

<sup>20</sup> <http://images.google.com/imghp?hl=en&lr=&sa=N&tab=wi&sourceid=tipimg>

<sup>21</sup> <http://scholar.google.com/>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.doi.org/>

### **Sharing or protecting**

There is a sense of sharing on the Internet in readers feeding back about an aspect of your work, even just knowing that your research has readers from the site statistics. As you find people are reading it gives you more incentive to write not just for yourself but also for your audience. The developments have been in free form as I have found more interesting details I have added them to the pages concerned, improved the bibliography and linked to pages of images from inside the web pages and from the bibliography. It is in many ways growing organically but visibly not with the file on my shelves getting fatter.

Putting your research on the Internet is not giving up ownership or the possibility of publication. Indeed I have hopes that when I have got more material ready my work could be published and part of my marketing strategy for the publisher would be that people are already interested in reading it. There are several ways of protecting your work and just uploading material doesn't mean you lose your copyright to the work. Admittedly it might be harder to protect but the extent of sharing is I believe a reasonable trade-off. The work on my site is available via what is called a Creative Commons deed<sup>23</sup>.

Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0<sup>7</sup>.

You are free:

- to copy, distribute, display, and perform the work
- to make derivative works

Under the following conditions:

Attribution. You must give the original author credit.

Noncommercial. You may not use this work for commercial purposes.

Share Alike. If you alter, transform, or build upon this work, you may distribute the resulting work only under a license identical to this one.

For any reuse or distribution, you must make clear to others the license terms of this work.

Any of these conditions can be waived if you get permission from the copyright holder.

Creative Commons is a non-profit that offers flexible copyright for creative work, <http://creativecommons.org/>

The opposite of hidden archives is the overabundance of information that is preserved digitally; aspects of this digital overload have been examined in detail by Rosenzweig R 2005<sup>24</sup>.

### **Future directions**

A work like this is never finished and indeed I am also working on researching about my Great Aunt, Dorrie Nossiter who was a jewellery designer in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s this too is online<sup>25</sup>. Other material I have sitting in files is slowly seeing the light of day the paper on the Anatomy of the Cornea that was too big for a particular journal, the handbook on Consent and Confidentiality is on a wiki. When in doubt publish show off your wares. The discerning reader knows by the rigour with which you do or don't approach your research and referencing whether your hidden history should have remained hidden or has become a useful resource. I still have a lot more to write up about the History of Acromegaly and Gigantism on the site and research to undertake but at least what I have so far is being read.

I hope you enjoy the site and take the plunge to put your own work online.

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<sup>23</sup> <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/>

<sup>24</sup> Rosenzweig R. Scarcity or abundance? Preserving the past in a digital era. [ URI <http://chnm.gmu.edu/assets/historyessays/scarcity.html> Accessed 10th February 2005]

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.cladonia.co.uk/dorrie>