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**History and the Internet**

**Thursday 1 December 2016, 9am-1pm**

**The Council Room, King’s College London**

The internet is a phenomenon studied from a wide variety of academic disciplinary perspectives – sociology, political science, psychology and philosophy as well as information science. But there is scope for a more thorough application of historical knowledge in this area. This event will seek to provide an historical perspective; subjects discussed will include technological revolutions, communications networks, the printing press, Hansard, Big Data now and in the past and the challenges and opportunities of the internet for the historian and the archivist.

9am-9.20am

**Arrival/breakfast**

9.20am

**Dr Andrew Blick – opening remarks**

Session 1 - 9.30am-10.30am

**The printing press and Parliament: revolutions of power and communications**

Chair: Dr Andrew Blick

Professor Jason Peacey, Head of History Department, UCL

***‘The media and Parliament: seventeenth-century parallels’***

Abstract: *This paper will suggest that many modern issues relating to the relationship between the media and Parliament, and concerning the role at the media might or should play – and perhaps doesn’t play – in relation to the coverage of political affairs, and in the healthy functioning of democracy, can be paralleled in the seventeenth century. This too was an age that can be characterised as witnessing a media revolution, which can be shown to have raised issues relating to, and concerns about, the potential impact of the media on political and parliamentary life. These included the accessibility and transparency of parliamentary proceedings, the possibilities for citizens participating in political life, and the responsiveness of a parliamentary elite to their concerns. The aim will be to suggest that the seventeenth century provides a useful example of how a political culture coped with a media revolution, in ways which involved recognising that attitudes to the media were bound up with attitudes towards representation, trust and accountability, and ultimately political legitimacy.*

Continued below

Edward Wood, Director of Research, House of Commons Library

***‘Hansard, the Internet and the Unofficial Report’.***

Abstract: *This paper describes the impact of the internet on a key process within Parliament – the publication and distribution of Hansard, the official report of debates. It seeks to draw parallels with an earlier period, in the 17th and 18th centuries, before the reporting of debates became institutionalised. With the advent of the internet, there was a period of transition before the implications of this new set of technologies were fully understood and could be exploited. Actors outside Westminster led the way, taking Hansard and re-purposing it for the web, although Parliament eventually began to adapt to the new landscape. The paper also takes a brief detour to consider the period immediately before Hansard was published on the world wide web, to illustrate the extent of the gulf between the pre- and post-Internet eras.*

Session 2 – 10.40am-11.40am

**The history and future of big data**

Chair: Professor Jane Winters, Professor of Digital Humanities, School of Advanced Studies, University of London

Dr Nishanth Sastry, Senior Lecturer in the Centre for Telecommunications Research, Department of Informatics, King’s College London

*An historical overview on data in computing - ranging from how databases were invented to corral large amounts of data, to how our digital 'pheromones' are being analysed to track us in new developments.*

Lois Lane, PhD student, Department of History, King’s College London

***‘Domesday: Big Data in the Eleventh Century?’***

Abstract: *We tend to think of governments harnessing the power of Big Data to monitor and police their populations as an intrinsically modern phenomenon. Yet popular uneasiness at the notion of increasing state surveillance through enhanced methods of data collection far predates our current digital revolution. This paper focuses on the Domesday survey of 1086, a formidable administrative undertaking which constituted a radical expansion in the data collection powers of the medieval state. It asks what lessons can be learned from this nearly millennium-old document about how governments can best collect and use data and examines how modern digital techniques have allowed scholars to use the information contained in Domesday Book in ways its creators never could have imagined.*

Session 3 – 11.50am-12.30pm

**Digital records and the future of history**

Chair: Alix Mortimer, History & Policy

Anthea Seles, The National Archives

***‘Making History Present: Historical research in the digital age.’***

12.30pm-1pm **Round-up address by Dr Andrew Blick/final discussion and questions**