

Studying Political Satire: "The Egyptian Red Book"

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C O N N E X I O N S

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Table of Contents

1 The Research Project

1.1	Studying Political Satire: Introduction to "The Egyptian Red Book"	2
1.2	Categorizing Historical Documents: What is a Red Book?	4
1.3	Identifying Historical Figures: Putting Names to the Caricatures in "The Egyptian Red Book"	22
1.4	Getting the Whole Story From "The Egyptian Red Book": General Charles Gordon in Khartoum	35
1.5	Using Library Resources	58
	Index	137
	Attributions	138

Chapter 1

The Research Project

1.1 Studying Political Satire: Introduction to "The Egyptian Red Book"¹



Figure 1.1

¹This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m12817/1.13/>>. Available for free at Connexions <<http://cnx.org/content/col10290/1.6>>

Introduction

The "Egyptian Red Book"² is a collection of nineteenth-century British political cartoons and a serious criticism of the Liberal Government led by Prime Minister Gladstone in London in the 1880's. It tells the sad story of the demise of General Charles "Chinese" Gordon at the hands of the Mahdi of Sudan in the winter of 1885. It also offers a unique perspective on the media's perspective on the British Government at the end of the nineteenth century. This module uses "The Egyptian Red Book" as a case study to introduce a variety of library resources and research strategies, which are laid out in the list of questions that follows this introduction. We hope to show that many of the questions historians come to ask originate or are refined during the research process itself. This project is a guided exploration of the research process that will enhance your knowledge of the tools of the trade and your ability to advance your own projects productively.

TIMEA

The "Egyptian Red Book"³ is one of many artifacts and texts that have been digitized and published online by TIMEA⁴. TIMEA (Travelers In the Middle East Archive) is a digital archive of narratives documenting travel to the Middle East published between the eighteenth and early twentieth centuries, along with images and interactive GIS maps. This course contributes to the project by organizing a virtual research project around the digitized text of the "Egyptian Red Book"⁵. The electronic text and images of the book in the digital archive can be used to demonstrate the practical application of certain research methods.

The following are specific versions of the basic questions typically asked at the beginning of many research projects. They are also the titles of several modules that demonstrate how to conduct research. Select any of the questions you see to be taken to a short description of the content and aims of the modules they represent. While you are browsing the descriptions, select any of the links in the paragraphs to be taken directly to that section of the module you are reading about.

What is a "Red Book"? (What is a Red Book?, p. 3) How to categorize your work in relation to others.

Who are these guys? (Identifying the Characters in the Egyptian Red Book, p. 4) How to identify the unnamed historical figures in the cartoons.

What is the whole story? (Getting the Whole Story from the Egyptian Red Book, p. 4) How to get to the historical events behind the political criticism.

What are microfiche (Section 1.5.5.3: Microfiche), microfilm (Section 1.5.5.5: Microfilm), and microcards (Section 1.5.5.6: Microcard)?

How do I study the political context by accessing and using the British Parliamentary Papers?

Other questions addressed in specific modules

The following list of questions are addressed through examples contained in any one of the modules related to this project. If one of the questions below interests you, select it and you will be taken directly to the location in one of our modules that seeks to answer it.

How do I access online reference resources? (p. 5)

How do I find periodicals and call them up from storage? (Periodical Search, p. 16)

How do I construct a balanced bibliography for a specific subject? (Evaluating sources and assembling a balanced bibliography, p. 40)

How do I follow a historical event in newspapers? (Section 1.4.3: Looking for the Story in the London Times)

What is a Red Book?

In "What is a Red Book?" we look at the work we are researching in comparison with other, similar works. To do this we first categorize the work (Section 1.2.1: Categorizing the work you are researching). We begin with an introduction to online reference tools (p. 5) including Dictionary.com (p. 5) and The Oxford English Dictionary (p. 6), as well as Library of Congress Subject Headings (p. 6), WorldCat (WorldCat, p. 6), and the online library catalog (Library Catalog, p. 15). Then we begin gathering similar works for comparison with the Red Book. (Section 1.2.3: Finding similar works) We guide you through locating periodicals in the stacks and also show you how to call periodicals up from storage (Periodical Search, p. 16), if necessary. We

²<http://dspace.rice.edu/handle/123456789/15>

³<http://dspace.rice.edu/handle/123456789/15>

⁴<http://timea.rice.edu>

⁵<http://dspace.rice.edu/handle/1911/9170>

then guide you through a comparison of the work you are researching to similar works (Comparing Punch to The Egyptian Red Book, p. 20) in order to better understand its intended purpose, audience and impact on publication.

Identifying the Characters in the Egyptian Red Book

In Identifying the Characters in the Egyptian Red Book we begin with the unidentified faces in the cartoons and we search for their names and other biographical information by combining the resources we discover along the way. We begin by looking for related material in other works by the same publisher (Section 1.3.1: Going to the Source: Works by the Same Publisher), which we sort by their subject headings. Once we have accumulated enough information from our sources, we then search for the biographies of the characters in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography . This module highlights the importance of using your resources in concert to bring to light information that would be impossible to glean from one source alone.

Getting the Whole Story from the Egyptian Red Book

In Getting the Whole Story from the Egyptian Red Book, we search for different angles on the story the Red Book aims to tell. We begin by introducing a sketch of the historical events (The Story, p. 35) that we have gathered from reliable sources. Then we begin excavating the story from the Red Book, but only the minimum amount of information we need to find other works on the subject. Once we have the information we need, namely the important key words necessary to call up related material in a catalog search (Searching the Library Catalog, p. 40), we can begin looking for different perspectives on it in other works. Having found a number of related works, we then guide you through the building a balanced bibliography (Evaluating sources and assembling a balanced bibliography, p. 40). We then follow the events described from day to day in archived editions of the London Times (Section 1.4.3: Looking for the Story in the London Times). Finally we establish the context of the quotes (Section 1.4.4: Placing the Quotes in the "Red Book" in Context) we find in the Red Book by locating them in the minutes of the British Parliamentary Debates (Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, p. 49).

1.2 Categorizing Historical Documents: What is a Red Book?⁶



Figure 1.2

Introduction: Decoding Historic Documents

When you're doing historical research, you often encounter documents that are difficult to categorize. Without knowing more about such works, it's difficult to advance a knowledgeable argument about them. For instance, the Egyptian Red Book⁷ (1885), a satire that is part of the Travelers in the Middle East Archive (TIMEA)⁸ , reveals little about itself directly. It includes no author, introduction, table of contents, statement of purpose or even references to the figures represented in the text and the images. Few of the cartoons have named figures or artists. The pamphlet presents itself to the reader like the political cartoons it contains: an overt message with very little background, a visual sermon to the converted with little

⁶This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m12813/1.10/>>.

⁷<http://hdl.handle.net/1911/9170>

⁸<http://timea.rice.edu>

consideration for those outside the know. If you would like a synopsis of the story addressed in the Red Book you may skip to our sketch of the historical events.

In order to understand both the intended and historical meaning of the text and the images, it is important to find out what sort of work the "Egyptian Red Book" is. We will use the following questions to guide our research:

- What is the significance of the term "Red Book" in the title? (Defining Key Terms: "Red Book", p. 5) To answer this question, we will look up the term in dictionaries and examine other red-and-green-books.
- How do we categorize the work? (Section 1.2.1: Categorizing the work you are researching) We'll see how librarians have described it by using the catalog.
- How does this work compare with others that come from the same period and/or that address a similar topic? (Section 1.2.3: Finding similar works) Let's analyze the "Red Book" in relation to newspapers and magazines from the same time period.

Defining Key Terms: "Red Book"

Often the first clue to a document's significance is its title. To begin, then, we should define what is meant by "Red Book". What is the significance of "Red" here—why not blue or green? The adjective "Egyptian" indicates that the work focuses on a particular country, but it's not clear how. Time to head to the library to find more information! We will use online reference materials to begin our sleuthing. For the purposes of demonstration, we will describe how to conduct this research using Fondren Library's resources, but a similar process will work at most other research libraries.

From the Fondren home page⁹ select the Collections option and then the Online Reference Sources option that appears next to it.



Figure 1.3

Then select General Reference at the top of the screen.

[General Reference](#) | [Foreign Language Dictionaries](#) | [Biography](#) | [Style Manuals](#)

Figure 1.4

You will find a list of online dictionaries and encyclopedias here to choose from. By selecting Dictionary.com¹⁰ and entering red book we are offered this definition:

⁹<http://www.rice.edu/fondren/>

¹⁰<http://dictionary.reference.com/>

Red book, a book containing the names of all the persons in the service of the state. [Eng.]

Figure 1.5

This resource is great for a quick reference, but it is important to understand its limitations. Any two dictionaries published within a few years of each other will probably provide you with similar, but not identical, definitions for a common word. The meanings of words change over time, however. The best way to observe the way English words change and the importance of identifying not only how, but when the word you're investigating was used is by looking it up in *The Oxford English Dictionary*¹¹.

The Oxford English Dictionary is not only a guide to the meaning, history, and pronunciation of over half a million English words, both present and past, it is the definitive reference source for the meaning and pronunciation of any word in the English language. It traces the usage of words through quotations from a wide range of international English language sources. For example, "Red Book" is defined as "a book bound in red" in terms of today's usage. However, its usage has varied from a collection of all the "composicions" of the "chantry preestis" in 1479 to "a Witche's red Book, a Catalogue of such as have sealed to the Devil with their own bloud, la rouge liste" by 1688. By the time of the publication of "The Egyptian Red Book," in the late nineteenth century, the term seems to have referred to a book containing the names of all persons holding office under the State or receiving pensions from it.

As we shall see, "The Egyptian Red Book" addresses the work of government officials. It also condemns those actions, holding the officials responsible for the death of a General in the British army. We can see the possibility that the term has held onto some of its previous meanings: the condemnatory list of individuals that have exchanged their free will for power, an account of the works of particular authorities, and a list of individuals in the service of the State, in this case those involved with British policy toward Egypt. As we continue with our investigation of this work, other explanations for the title will present themselves, all of which must be considered in our research.

1.2.1 Categorizing the work you are researching

Nearly every work shelved in every library around the world is categorized in relation to other works in terms of its content. This is done according to a system of subject headings established by the Library of Congress¹² that describe the content of the work, such as Athletics or History. Subheadings then further specialize the relation of the work to others, such as Swimming or Britain, 1800-1900. By locating our work within this system of categorization, we not only discover what sort of work it is considered to be, we also gain access to other titles that are similar to it. This can be of great advantage in any research project.

WorldCat

WorldCat is a system designed to help you to browse the collections of over 16,000 libraries world wide. You can also order the books you find on WorldCat from other libraries through Interlibrary loan if they are not available at your library. Here we will use WorldCat to locate our work for the purpose of defining exactly what sort of work the "Red Book" is in terms of the way libraries categorize it around the world. For a more extensive tutorial, visit our WorldCat module.

You can either use WorldCat.org, which can be accessed at <http://www.worldcat.org/>¹³, or the full version¹⁴ of WorldCat, which is available to subscribers, such as your university library. WorldCat.org is free, but provides fewer features than the full version of WorldCat. Please note that in order for the link to the full version to work, your institution must have a subscription and you must either be on campus or be

¹¹<http://dictionary.oed.com/entrance.dtl>

¹²"How Does "Oriental Cairo" Compare With Similar Works?": Section The Library of Congress
<<http://cnx.org/content/m12585/latest/#loc>>

¹³<http://www.worldcat.org/>

¹⁴<http://firstsearch.oclc.org/fsip?dbname=WorldCat>

connected via a VPN or proxy server. Different libraries organize their materials differently, of course. If you were to look for the link to WorldCat from the Fondren home page, you would click on "Catalog," then select "Other Library Catalogs" and look for "WorldCat."

Once you're in WorldCat, type the title into the text box provided and then select Title in the pulldown menu.

The second search result looks like our work.



Figure 1.6

Select the blue title link and you will be taken to the full entry.

Title:	The Egyptian red book.
Publication:	Edinburgh : William Blackwood & Sons,
Year:	1885
Description:	28, [2] p. , [2] p. of plates : ill. ; 17 x 20 cm.
Language:	English
	SUBJECT(S)
Descriptor:	Political satire, English.
Geographic:	Great Britain -- Politics and government -- 1837-1901 -- Caricatures and cartoons. Egypt -- Politics and government -- 1882-1952 -- Caricatures and cartoons.
Class Descriptors:	LC: PR3991.A1 ; Dewey: 962.04
Document Type:	Book
Entry:	19730221
Update:	20040530
Accession No:	OCLC: 25951366
Database:	WorldCat

Figure 1.7

This cataloging record provides information about who published the work, when it was published, and in what language. Significantly, it omits the name of the author, which is typically available. The description field tells us about the physical nature of the volume—that it has 28 numbered pages, 2 [unnumbered] pages, and 2 pages of plates, that it is illustrated, and that it measures 17 by 20 centimeters. We are given the call

number in both the Library of Congress (LC) and Dewey Decimal systems. Note also that you are able to order a copy of this work through interlibrary loan.

GET THIS ITEM

Check the catalogs in your library.

- [Libraries worldwide that own item: 12](#)
-  [Connect to the catalog at Fondren Library](#)
- [Borrow this item from another library](#) (Interlibrary Loan)
-  [Find this item at Antiquarian Booksellers Association of America](#) (Bookseller)
-  [Find this item at Barnes & Noble.com](#) (Bookseller)

Figure 1.8

For more information on this process, visit our Interlibrary loan module.

The information we are most interested in for now we find under the heading Subject(s).

SUBJECT(S)

Descriptor: [Political satire, English.](#)

Geographic: [Great Britain -- Politics and government -- 1837-1901 -- Caricatures and cartoons.](#)
[Egypt -- Politics and government -- 1882-1952 -- Caricatures and cartoons.](#)

Figure 1.9

Political satire, cartoons, caricature, Britain, Egypt and government sound about right. Let's see what other works WorldCat describes in this way. Select the descriptor beginning with Great Britain.

The list is relatively short, only twenty-five entries. The second descriptor beginning with Egypt is reserved solely for "The Egyptian Red Book" so we are dealing with a manageable number of works. For now, let's just mark all of these entries and email them to yourself so we will have them for later stages in the project.

Scroll down to the bottom of the page until you see the Mark all option.



Figure 1.10

Once you select this option you will notice check marks in the boxes to the left of each entry on the page.



Figure 1.11

This means they are selected. Move on the the next page and then the next repeating this process until every box is checked and then select the email option.



Figure 1.12

Enter in the information requested. Select the "Detailed records" and "Send as plain text options" and then press send. Your entry should look like this.

Figure 1.13

You will receive an email at the address that you entered with all of the entries; select all of the text, copy it and then paste it onto a Word or text file. These will come in handy later on in the project. If you have a bibliographic program such as EndNote, you could instead select the "Export" option and pull the data into that program.

Note that our list makes several mentions of "Punch" and "The Westminster Gazette," which are nineteenth-century periodicals. These publications are included in our list under a dated subject heading; thus we can be confident that they were in publication at the same time as our work. When we look for similar works in the collection at the library in the next section, we should be sure to explore their periodicals

as well as books on our subject.

1.2.2 Limits of Finding Works by Subject Headings

It is interesting to note here that one very similar work does not appear in our list of works that share a subject heading with the "Egyptian Red Book." It is a work that we discussed in our "Identifying the Characters of the Egyptian Red Book Module"¹⁵ entitled "The Irish Green Book." It is important to note this here for a few reasons. First, this valuable resource for our research would have remained undiscovered if we had not explored a variety of options, rather than simply one or two. Second, this kind of oversight is indicative of the limitations of a system that attempts to categorize works by general subject. It is important that we develop an understanding of the limitations of our techniques and resources so that we may overcome them. Let's locate the Irish Green Book on WorldCat and compare the subject headings.

For the Irish Green Book and

Named Person: [Gladstone, W. E. \(William Ewart\), 1809-1898 -- Caricatures and cartoons.](#)

Geographic: [Great Britain -- Politics and government -- 19th century.](#)

Figure 1.14

for the Egyptian Red Book

Descriptor: [Political satire, English.](#)

Geographic: [Great Britain -- Politics and government -- 1837-1901 -- Caricatures and cartoons.](#)
[Egypt -- Politics and government -- 1882-1952 -- Caricatures and cartoons.](#)

Figure 1.15

What do you see? They are actually very similar collections of keywords, but not similar enough to produce the two books in the same subject heading list. Let's take a closer look at the Irish Green Book and see for ourselves how similar they are.

¹⁵<http://cnx.org/content/m12813/latest/m12815>

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