Capturing Understanding of Women’s Embroidery Designs: A Methodology for Research and a Critique of Cataloguing Databases using the Example of Women’s Embroidery in Nineteenth-Century Britain

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Daughter of a merchant, the amateur designer and embroiderer Sarah Bland came from an upper-middle-class family. She made an album of a collection of drawn and printed designs between 1835 and 1854 that includes her original designs, patterns traced from magazines, and commercial, printed designs for Berlin wool work. This case study explores her kinship networks, social context and environment as well as perceptions of a woman’s role. It concentrates on Bland’s designs, both made and collected, and compares these to her botanical illustrations, made while she was staying at St Leonards-on-Sea on the south-east coast of England from 1835 to 1843. These pieces are now held at the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the Museum’s database is discussed in relation to other systems to explore its potential for cataloguing such designs as well as its shortcomings. This article posits that art historical databases can be used to catalogue designs for embroidery with a method which is both sensitive to gender and socially contextual. This allows women’s history in relation to designs for embroidered textiles and dress to emerge.

Introduction

The first aim of this article is to study the involvement of a merchant’s daughter, Sarah Bland, in designing and collecting designs for embroidery and her amateur embroidery practice in the mid-nineteenth century. The second objective is to assess how adequately cataloguing systems allow linkages to be made between female makers, designs and textiles where the relationship between these three is initially unclear on acquisition as well as how such cataloguing systems facilitate the recording of related historical material.

Just as ‘whodunit?’ is crucial to the plot in a detective story, so ‘who did it?’ is vital to the catalogue entry. Mary Schoeser was a detective when she used the ‘who done it?’ methodology in her chapter entitled ‘The Mystery of the Printed Handkerchief’. She began with an investigation of the biography of Charles Weston, the map-seller and map-engraver who, with his associates, was copperplate printing on paper and on silk, thus connecting the map-selling and textile printing trades. Her thesis was to push back...
the origins of eighteenth-century copperplate-printed toiles to about the last quarter of the seventeenth century. Schoeser solved her mystery and discovered a new direction for textile history.

In this article, answering the ‘who done it?’ question is complicated by the complex nature of designs for embroidery associated with a specific woman’s name. The Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) has the largest collection of printed and drawn designs for embroidery in Britain and it would be useful to publish them, but the problem is that the drawn patterns in particular are often anonymous or it is unclear who did the designs. This vacuum of knowledge was observed by Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall in *Family Fortunes* when they noted that, ‘although written evidence is scarce, one of the great silences about women’s lives was undoubtedly filled with needlework’. When approached with an awareness of the multitude of roles women played in relation to embroidery, the question ‘who did it?’ does provide a way of working out the possible origins of the patterns and whether they were copied, bought, given as gifts, shared among friends or traced from magazines. It may indeed illuminate whether they were designed by a specific woman and if she subsequently may have embroidered them herself. The question provides the opportunity to critique SPECTRUM, the UK museum documentation standard, by checking the adequacy of both the standard and its implementation on the V&A’s database for cataloguing collections of designs by women. The differences in the implementation of the SPECTRUM standard in databases in three museum organisations are compared. This research opens up possibilities for discovering and recording women’s history in relation to embroidered textiles and dress.

**Sarah Bland’s Album**

This article focuses on a collection of drawn and printed needlework designs in an album belonging to Sarah Bland (English, born in Walthamstow in 1810 and died in Cheltenham in 1905). These are in the V&A in the Word & Image Department and available to be seen in the Prints and Drawings Study Room. In addition, there are three embroidered samplers by Sarah Bland in the Textiles and Fashion Department at the V&A that her great, great niece described as ‘sampler specimens of her work’ (Fig. 1).

The designs were catalogued in typescript form before the existence of the V&A’s database Collections Information System (CIS) as follows:

**Bland, Sarah (worked mid-19th century) Possibly by**

Pattern book of designs for embroidery, including printed designs for Berlin wool work and drawn designs for petit-point, bead-work, decoration for dresses, collars and cuffs, aprons, slippers, tablecloths and covers, cushions, bags, penwipers, initial letters, alphabets etc. Mounted or drawn on 366 pages of alternate leaves of white wove and blue-toned paper, some with watermarks dated between 1829 and 1834. Quarter-bound in leather with cloth boards simulating watered silk. Signed and dated in ink on page 1 ‘S. Bland. St. Leonards. 1836’. Inscribed in ink throughout with notes, and with dates ranging from 1836 to 1854, in pencil on page 162 ‘P. Barclay’.

Pen and ink, watercolour and crayon. Size of volume 21 × 26.1 cms.

Given by Mrs D. McGregor.

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Shortcomings of the Original Catalogue Entry
This catalogue entry describes the designs, the plurality of objects for which they are intended, and the album concisely. Nevertheless, it fails to draw out the fact that they are a collection of patterns from disparate sources. The donor, Sarah Bland’s great-great-niece, described them as ‘collections of embroidery patterns’, and it is her description that is key to understanding them. The drawn and copied designs in the album are generally executed directly onto the page alongside the pasted-in printed designs. Bland’s collection included her own botanically accurate designs, simplified patterns from botanical observation, patterns traced from magazines, commercial, printed Berlin wool work patterns, gifts of patterns, including commercial ones from friends and relatives. The method of cataloguing prints and drawings by artist’s name in the V&A can create a problem when cataloguing designs for embroidery because the associated woman’s name is taken to be the artist’s name although the relationship is unclear. In the catalogue entry above, this confusion about authorship led to the qualification of the attribution with the words ‘possibly by’. Bland’s album is a record of her own work, what was available commercially, gifts from relatives, and the sharing of patterns in her social network and thus provides insight into women’s interaction through the medium of design for embroidery. However, this catalogue entry is based on a method that fails to tease out the numerous roles women played in relation to embroidery. Moreover, it omits a reference to Bland’s three samplers, resulting in a separation of designs from actual textiles in collections that impacts on the effectiveness of cataloguing and the comprehension of objects. Understandably, in a survey of collections, this can result in designs and embroidery being published separately without reference to each other. This happened to Bland’s designs and samplers. One of her designs is attributed to her, although her embroidery is not mentioned. In addition, the embroidery is published as ‘anonymous’ without reference to her designs. Cataloguing can also provide the link. The V&A’s database contains a Related Museum Numbers field which is for noting the museum number of an object (or objects) related to the object described in that.

Fig. 1. Detail of a sampler embroidered with wool and silk in cross stitch on cotton by Sarah Bland, 1850s; 133.4 cm × 21.5 cm. Given by Mrs D. McGregor. Victoria and Albert Museum, T.240–1967. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
In the catalogue entry for Bland’s collected patterns for Berlin wool work, this field functions to link her designs for Berlin wool work and the embroiderer’s actual work through their museum numbers.

**Difficulties in Categorising Women’s Work**

Identifying and solving problems encountered with women’s work in museum collections was suggested to the author by Rozsika Parker’s *The Subversive Stitch. Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine.* This comprehensive study of femininity in relation to the history of women’s embroidery continues to be influential. Parker stated the origin of her attitude to embroidery in Jennifer Harris’s and Pennina Barnett’s exhibition catalogue of the same name:

> It was, in fact, through painting that I began to think about embroidery. I belonged to a group called the Women’s Art History Collective, which formed in 1971 to look at why women’s art has been hidden from history [...].

In her analysis of the division of labour along gender lines, linked to amateur and professional practice, in the history of embroidery, Harris argues that men tend to be recorded as professional embroiderers or pattern-drawers whereas women worked more ambiguously with designs for embroidery, particularly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The number of patterns annotated with women’s names surviving from this period and the difficulty of knowing whether the women were professionals or amateurs supports this argument. Harris pointed out that, during the medieval period, embroidery was considered a great art and there is documentary evidence of women named as embroiderers. The decrease in women’s role in professional embroidery and the relegation of embroidery to a female domestic art began in the sixteenth century with the changing status of male painters from craftsmen to professional artists. Painters were no longer willing to design for crafts. In eighteenth-century France, embroidery pattern-drawers were well-known men, whilst women worked anonymously as embroideresses. On the other hand, Clare Browne refers to mid- to late-eighteenth-century letters recording admiration of the embroidered apparel worked by the British professional embroiderers Phoebe Wright and Jenny Glegg. Nevertheless, anonymity and the rise in amateur embroidery produces a complicated and confusing picture for cataloguers.

The published handbook of the V&A’s collection of prints and drawings contains a chapter on textile designs, but some are referred to in general terms without the name of a pattern-drawer whereas the names of male designers are given. The lack of clarity about printed and drawn designs for embroidery in the V&A appears to be part of a nationwide problem judging by the enquiries about such patterns that arrive from curators and the public. Such questions include: asking whether the patterns are familiar; if there are any sources where more can be learnt about them; if they were common in households of the gentry; whether they could be by a relative; and if it is of interest to anyone to know that they exist. This article is partly a response to such questions. The only clue to identifying designs for embroidery tends to be a woman’s name inscribed on a design or printed or handwritten on the cover, title-page, or fly-leaf of a design.
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album. The problem is compounded by the lack of reference works that list these women’s names because they are either unrecorded as professional pattern-drawers or are amateurs.

Coupled with the ambiguous identity of the professional pattern-drawer, this means that the designs run the risk of not being seen as a priority for online cataloguing, display, re-mounting, publishing or teaching. Women’s amateur as opposed to professional status when designing for embroidery raises problems because amateur work has tended to be regarded as less significant. In the case of embroidered textiles, Mary Brooks noted that Western collectors tended to value the fine, as opposed to the decorative, arts and to favour pieces that can be identified with specific artists or artistic traditions. She argued that the mainstream acquisition of amateur work did not fit these categories. Designs for embroidery, associated with a woman’s name, do not fit these categories either and therefore require a different methodology for researching authorship.

A Methodology for Investigating and Recording Bland’s Pattern Book

A methodology for investigating and recording Bland’s relationship to the drawn and printed designs in the pattern book for embroidery that bears her name must be found. The aim is to discover if this woman associated with the designs printed, drew, copied, or collected them by purchase or gift. It is necessary to know if she used them, or employed someone else to use them, for embroidery. Such a methodology requires multi-disciplinary approaches of gender history, women’s history, and literary studies to tease out the information. The case study of Bland’s patterns demonstrates three areas for study: those of kinship and social context, environment and perceptions of women’s role.

The analysis of the objects aided an understanding of the designs. Evidence, where available, may support an exploration of the life of the woman who is associated with such objects. Primary sources, both manuscript and printed, including archival records, letters and privately owned sketchbooks, may establish birth and death dates and provide information about kinship, marital status and social context. In Bland’s case, census returns, used in conjunction with the designs which are inscribed with place names, pinpointed her movements across Britain. Then different types of designs annotated with different sorts of information including names, dates and technical information, but with place names from one county, were chosen to focus the research. In addition, botanical illustration from the same county was chosen. This methodology thus established which place was significant to explore as Bland’s environment. Nineteenth-century guidebooks enabled a picture of this region to be constructed. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century illustrated books on botany served as comparisons to the botanical illustration in the sketchbooks and designs. This case study therefore demonstrated ways of looking at other possibilities of how Bland worked with designs for embroidery other than those provided by the art-historical practice of making attributions.

Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Discourse on Women’s Needlework Practice

Women’s designs need to be considered in a more socially constructed framework. The discourse about the disadvantages and advantages of women practising needlework in
Aspects of Christine Hivet’s analysis of the debate in eighteenth-century literature about the purpose of types of needlework and women’s rights in eighteenth-century Britain are helpful in illuminating links between attitudes in that century and the nineteenth century in which Bland lived.18 This discourse engaged with both embroidery as a pastime and needlework for economic reasons; there are also similarities with the debate about household tasks and morals. Familiar areas of discussion include the improvement of the female mind, the dangers of vanity in relation to dress and laziness as corrupting influences. Hivet examined public, especially women’s, views on attitudes to needlework as compared to attitudes to the rights of women in English literature towards the close of the eighteenth century.19 Needlework was one of the battlefields on which the proto-feminists and their enemies fought at the turn of the nineteenth century. This attack on needlework occurred because of the rise of proto-feminism and a case being made that it was sewing which prevented women from developing their potential. Mary Hays, in *Letters and Essays Moral and Miscellaneous*, criticised sewing for ‘cramping the minds and bodies of young girls’.20 Mary Wollstonecraft aired her conviction in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* that needlework affected the female mind, stating:

> this employment contracts their faculties more than any other... I have already inveighed against the custom of confining girls to their needle and shutting them from all political and civil employment: for by thus narrowing their minds, they are rendered unfit to fulfil [their]... duties.21

Conservative writers, however, considered the needle to be a useful implement that kept women from laziness. Jane West described it as ‘that useful implement... our constant preservative from lassitude’.22

Hivet argued female authors, such as Priscilla Wakefield, either rejected or recommended needlework, depending on their class. For the ‘daughters of every species of tradesmen below the merchant, and above the meaner mechanic’, Wakefield recommended ‘useful needle-work in every branch with complete skill in cutting out and making every article of female dress’, and that it ‘should be a principle object in their instruction and ought to employ a considerable part of the day in childhood’.23 Frivolous for women in the upper reaches of society, every branch of needlework was thus considered necessary for the education of women at these lower levels of the population. Hivet also analysed male authors writing about needlework in advice manuals addressed to women. Physician and writer Dr John Gregory, Professor of Medicine, Kings College, Aberdeen, claimed that needlework was a way of filling some of the solitary hours when women had to stay at home.24 Richard Polwhele, a clergyman and writer born into the landed gentry, thought that needlework should not be done for the sake of vanity with women embellishing their own dresses.25 Enemies of proto-feminism were interested in preserving order, religion and needlework. Thomas Gisborne the Elder, Anglican priest and Prebendary of Durham, argued that God created women with a different ‘structure of the corporeal frame’ wisely adopting ‘a corresponding plan of discrimination between...
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the mental powers and dispositions of the two sexes’. He described what he considered suitable domestic pursuits now in danger of being superseded by other arts:

It would perhaps be no unfair representation of the sentiment which prevailed in the last age, to affirm that she who was completely versed in the sciences of pickling and preserving, and the mysteries of cross-stitch and embroidery; she who was thoroughly mistress of the family receipt-book and of her needle, was deemed, in point of solid attainments, to have reached the measure of female perfection. Since that period, however, it has been universally acknowledged, that the intellectual powers of women are not restricted to the arts of housekeeper and the sempstress.

Proto-feminist authors, such as Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays, considered needlework a potential source of income, yet rejected some of its uses, fearing it could turn into a form of labour imposed on their sex by society. Useful as this might be, needlework undertaken for money was never more than a compromise for proto-feminists who would have liked to see women employed at stimulating and better-paid tasks such as business, the professions and even politics.

A Woman’s Status Within the Upper-Middle-class Family

Their research on wills enabled Davidoff and Hall to establish a model for the status of upper-middle-class women. In the majority of cases, sons and daughters were treated as if they had a right to inherit equally in terms of values, even if they inherited different kinds of property. However, women’s property, closely linked as it was to their status as daughters, wives and widows, only allowed them, at most, a semi-independence. This limitation was intensified by difficulties in maintaining their own and their family’s status precisely by not being openly involved in working for money. This semi-dependence of women within the family was underpinned by legal, political and social practices which subordinated them. Nevertheless, it was combined with recognition of their economic worth within the family enterprise.

Sarah Bland’s Life and Embroidery

This model was true for the Blands. The merchant Michael Bland (1776–1851) appointed his two surviving sons as executors. His daughter Sarah remained unmarried (Fig. 2). In the census returns, Sarah was listed as ‘gentlewoman’ in 1851, while the occupation column remained blank in 1871, suggesting that she was unemployed. She was recorded as ‘living on own means’ in 1901 and had three servants. She therefore apparently did not need to do plain sewing because the maids would have done this, while embroidery would have been acceptable as an occupation for a lady.

Sarah Bland and St Leonards

The album is inscribed on the first page ‘S. Bland. St. Leonards, 1836’, so the resort of St Leonards, on the south-east coast of England, was identified as a significant place to study what Bland did with designs and gifts of designs while she was there. Bland holidayed in this fashionable resort which James Burton (1761–1837) had developed between 1828 and 1830. The ‘Dispatch’ coach started travelling between London and St Leonards
in 1830, a journey taking seven and a half hours. Sixteen years later, in June 1846, the South Coast Railway from London to St Leonards was opened. The Blands must have travelled using both methods. The 1841 census return recorded them as living in the same Crescent as James Burton’s son, the architect Decimus. In its early days, St Leonards had a pioneering atmosphere captured in Dorman’s guidebook, ‘those who remember the days when bonnets and shawls were thrown aside’ and meetings were described as ‘unceremonious’.

*The Album and the Embroideries*

Bland’s album shows the type of work that she was doing, including designs for embroidery for garments and their accessories. Santina Levey considered the patterns in the album to contain much information about the colours and materials available, the types of embroidery and their ultimate use. Such informative patterns therefore help in the dating, identification and understanding of the vocabulary of dress and are valuable evidence where surviving types of dress are not in abundance.
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Bland’s miscellaneous collection of designs includes numerous commercially printed and hand-coloured Berlin wool work patterns, for example, one by L.W. Wittich. Such patterns were printed in Berlin from 1810 and sold, already hand-coloured, in London. Bland’s three samplers are exercises in Berlin wool work (Figs 1, 3, 4 and 5). The single pink tassel worked at the top right of one of Bland’s samplers (Fig. 1) is similar to a group of three on a Berlin wool work sampler of about 1850 (private collection) which is possibly a professional piece, intended as a model for amateurs to follow. Clare Browne argues that ‘after about 1850 samplers were mostly used to educate only girls who wanted to become professional embroiderers’, and thought it possible that this sampler was a professional piece. The census returns, however, do not demonstrate that Bland used embroidery professionally to earn income. Patterns with useful annotations such as Bland’s are therefore significant in distinguishing between professional and amateur work. The difficulty of distinguishing between good amateur and professional embroidery is clearly demonstrated by her Berlin wool work samplers. Amateur patterns are key documents for use in identification of amateur and professional embroidery.

Fig. 3. Another detail of the Berlin wool work sampler shown in Figure 1. Given by Mrs D. McGregor. Victoria and Albert Museum, T.240–1967. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Fig. 4. Detail of a sampler embroidered with wool and silk in cross stitch on cotton by Sarah Bland, 1850s; approx. 133.4 cm × 21.5 cm. Given by Mrs D. McGregor. Victoria and Albert Museum, T.238–1967. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Fig. 5. Another detail of the sampler shown in Figure 4. Given by Mrs D. McGregor. Victoria and Albert Museum, T.238–1967. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
Evidently, Bland’s social position meant she could not be seen to be ‘working’ in terms of income generation, but it is likely that she embroidered accessories for dress, garments for adults and a child, penwipers, tablecloths, book covers, and cushions as gifts which were her contribution to the household, wider family and friendship (Fig. 6).

One design for Berlin wool work collected in her album, inscribed ‘E. Barclay’, demonstrates the gift of a design between female family members. The merchant and banking families of Bland and Barclay were related by marriage. Two possible women could have given this gift: Edith Richenda Barclay who married Francis Maltby Bland, Bland’s nephew and heir, in 1872, or Esther (née Reynolds), who married Ford Barclay in 1824 and was grandmother to Bland’s niece-in-law, Edith Richenda. Edith was born in 1849 and would have been too young to have used the design. Esther, however, was the right age to have used it and to have given it to Bland, although this must have happened after she married. In 1835, a friend, Lady Temple, shared a pattern for a tablecloth border by allowing Bland to trace it (Fig. 7). It is important to note the occasions when such gifts of patterns occur, because they provide a way into the part played by embroidery in social history as well as a context for designs otherwise only viewed as a type of art object.

The theory of gift exchange, on which there is a large literature originating in the work of the pioneering social anthropologist Marcel Mauss, is pertinent to the giving of designs for embroidery and embroidered items. Mauss analysed potlatch, an occasional feast of Indian tribes in the Pacific North-west, as competition for status through giving and waste. Gift-giving always has an expectation of reciprocity. Indeed, an anthropological approach would be appropriate for future research because gifts are pertinent to the study of collections of designs by a woman of Bland’s background from a wealthy merchant’s family with social networking as a duty. The economic and social historian

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Avner Offer argues that, despite the market economy, gift-giving and a variety of reciprocal exchanges persist in the modern world. Offer emphasised eight features incorporated in gifts, including: ‘voluntary transfer; an expectation of reciprocity which is notionally open to discretion as to value and time; motivation by a desire for regard, over and above any gains from trade; regard communicated by gifting; personalised gift authenticates regard, hence an avoidance of money. Gift is unpriced, often unpriceable; establishes repetitive, self-enforcing bond which facilitates trade’. Colin Camerer treats gift-giving as a signalling game where the gift is a signal of one’s willingness to invest in a relationship. Bland’s talent as a designer and skill as an embroiderer, demonstrated in the quality of her Berlin wool work sampler which has been thought possibly to be professional work, meant that her gifts were valuable. They were a means of bonding between women, in this case Bland and Lady Temple at St Leonards, and Bland and a female member of the Barclay family.

**Bland’s Botanical Illustrations and Designs**

While the Bland family was in St Leonards, natural history enthusiasts stayed in nearby Hastings. The botanical painter, Marianne North (1830–1884) wintered in the resort and knew Lucie Austin, who carried a snake up her sleeve which ‘put its slender head out at the wrist hole’, and was also impressed by William Henry Hunt’s (1790–1864) paintings of the birds’ nests which ‘were found in the hedges and gardens about Hastings’. It is possible that the Blands knew of the Norths, but the point here is that Sarah Bland was at a resort where people were interested in depicting and engaging with flora and fauna, and where there was freedom to enjoy nature and opportunities to meet and forge relationships with others.

The atmosphere of art and nature study must have inspired Bland, because she produced sketchbooks of botanical illustration that can be compared to illustrated books on the subject (Fig. 8). The sprigs of two genera or species from the family identifiable...
as *Convolvulaceae* are botanical studies of plants that she intended to use for embroidery in coloured silks. Such designs were probably intended to be worked in satin stitch, because this would be the most naturalistic technique for embroidering botanically accurate patterns. Bland’s interest in illustrating two types of *Convolvulaceae* simultaneously may be linked to her father’s interest in taxonomy. Significantly, Michael Bland was elected to the Linnaean Society, dedicated to ‘the cultivation of the Science of Natural History in all its branches’ in 1811, withdrawing in 1842.

The correct depiction of plant forms is consistent with Bland’s botanical illustrations (Fig. 9). Bland’s method was to record, in watercolour studies, the plant life of a particular region or time; listing both common and sometimes Latin names of the plant, its location and a record of the date. Much of this work took place in Sussex in the late spring and summer months of the 1840s. Another sketchbook containing botanical illustrations includes watercolours done at St Leonards as follows:

Wood anemone, St. Leonards-on-Sea, Sussex, April 1841  
Corn horse tail, St. Leonards-on-Sea, April 1843  
Hares-foot Trefoil, St. Leonards-on-Sea, Sept. 4th 1843.

These were in a British botanical illustration tradition. For example, Bland’s composition, painted in 1842, of a yellow water-lily which displays the flower against its upright leaf is close to James Sowerby’s depiction of the same plant in 1794 (Figs 10 and 11).

The album contains a fuchsia pattern which must have been traced from a design in a magazine because an identical pattern exists in an anonymous collection of designs, said to be for whitework, dating from 1813 to 1822. The fuchsia in Bland’s pattern is coloured accurately from life and the flowers have numerous stamens observed from the plant. The anonymous tracing, however, remains a simplified outline, because colour would be unnecessary for whitework. Bland’s use of colour and added stamens shows how she adapted a commercially available pattern both by painting it in colours and including stamens observed from life (Fig. 12).

There is another fuchsia pattern in her collection in which the flower is further simplified and the plant is entwined with that of a forget-me-not at the bottom of the
Bland intended the design for the flounce of a dress, inscribing it ‘Muslin on Net for dress flounce’. The fuchsia and forget-me-not combination is close to parts of patterns in *The Lady’s Newspaper* and shows the fashionable status of this particular flower as a motif in 1848. The use of the fuchsia patterns demonstrates how Bland modified the commercially available patterns in different ways; by painting one with colour observed from life, and by copying and adapting the other to fit the flounce of a dress. A design appeared in the magazine *The Lady’s Newspaper* in 1848 for a penwiper similar to one in the lower left corner of a group of designs in Bland’s album (Figs 13 and 14). The example in her album may have been traced from the magazine.

**Fig. 9.** Botanical illustration from a sketchbook by Sarah Bland, inscribed ‘yellow-iris, Crowhurst Lane, Sussex, June 1841’. Watercolour on paper; Sketchbook: H. 30.3 × W. 23.1 cm. *Courtesy of Mrs Sarah Horne.*

**Critiquing Cataloguing Databases as Tools for Recording Embroidery Designs**

This case study can be used to argue for a more precise method of cataloguing embroidery designs made and collected by women. Cataloguing is the process that makes information about objects searchable and available. What if its rubric does not do the job? The original catalogue entry for Bland’s album, given above, works for some
objects. It functions for those that were considered art-historically important. In such cases, there would be text beneath the basic catalogue entry detailing information such as provenance, commission and its relationship to work by other well-known artists, including bibliographic references. Textile historians have used their research skills to obtain oral testimony and to interrogate objects in a complementary way to the art-historical practice of making attributions. They tease out information about women’s roles in relation to textiles. Marilyn Willis’ examination of the role that hand-knitting
Fig. 12. Fuchsia pattern from an album of designs by Sarah Bland, pen and ink and watercolour on translucent wove paper, 1836–1854; 20.3 cm × 25.9 cm. Given by Mrs D. McGregor. Victoria and Albert Museum, E.372.79–1967. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Fig. 13. Design for a penwiper from The Lady’s Newspaper, no. 97, Saturday, 4 November 1848, p. 367. 9.7 cm × 10 cm. National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, PP.9.T. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

played in the lives of women during the 1930s is a recent example of this practice. Willis used oral testimony and the use of knitted garments, women’s magazines and family photographs to provide information. A different history of women’s contribution to family and society emerges that makes curators question their own practices — and the pro-forma fields that must be filled in for cataloguing objects.

The process for cataloguing designs for embroidery by women requires the same approach as for other objects. The difference, however, is that it must be sensitive to gender and informed by a socially constructed framework. Comparing the V&A’s MUSIMS database, CIS, with the Museum of London’s (MOL) MIMSY XG and Kirklees Museums and Galleries’ (KMAG) MODES for Windows is revealing. All these databases are based on SPECTRUM, although probably on different editions published by the Museums Documentation Association (MDA), known since 2008 as The Collections Trust. The units of information for cataloguing in the earliest (1994) and latest (2009) editions of SPECTRUM are compared, focusing for the sake of simplicity and pertinence on one ‘Information Group’ only, which was found to be the same for both editions. This ‘Information group’, that of ‘Object production information’ is used to record the aspects of the creation of an object and contains the following ‘Units of information’:

- Object production date
- Object production note
- Object production organisation
- Object production people
- Object production person
- Object production place
- Object production reason.

Table 1 gives a comparison of the examples given for the units of information from the information groups ‘Object production information’ and ‘Object history and association information’ in both editions of SPECTRUM together with comparative frequency of subject-specific terminology.

The majority of examples are art historical or archaeological, with no social historical terms conducive to women’s history, suggesting a bias towards the former subjects in SPECTRUM. A comparison between the databases of the museums will help to show how different systems implement SPECTRUM and capture data for the units of information ‘Object production person’, ‘Object production people’, and ‘Object production organisation’ (Table 2).

The age of the V&A’s MUSIMS CIS system affected the number and variety of fields available for cataloguing. One of the reasons that the V&A took an upgrade to MuseumIndex+ is that SPECTRUM has been revised, so databases follow suit. MuseumIndex+ has more fields than CIS, for example, a new ‘Production person’ field and a ‘Note’ field attached to each Production field where the nuances of production can be explained. In the V&A’s MUSIMS CIS, the ‘Attribution place’ field was useful for Bland’s collection of patterns because she moved about Britain and annotated her designs with place names, for example, ‘St. Leonards’ (Fig. 15).
### Table 1. Comparison of Rate of Frequency of Subject-Specific Terminology in SPECTRUM Units of Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Units of information</th>
<th>Art History</th>
<th>Archaeology</th>
<th>Social History</th>
<th>History of Upper Orders</th>
<th>Natural History</th>
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<td>Object production note example</td>
<td>Adam drawings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Object production person definition example</td>
<td>‘This may include commissioner of an object’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object production reason example</td>
<td>‘The table was commissioned for an exhibition of avant garde domestic furniture’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Object history note examples</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>‘This cabinet relates to Elizabeth Bewick swan Dashwood, first daughter of Sir James Dashwood, 2nd Baronet […]’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associated cultural affinity examples</td>
<td>Romanesque</td>
<td>Belgic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associated cultural affinity use example</td>
<td>‘Note that some terms in common archaeological use […]’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associated event name type examples</td>
<td>Garden party</td>
<td>Coronation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Comparison of Implementation of SPECTRUM Units of Information ‘Object Production Person’, ‘Object Production People’ and ‘Object Production Organisations’ in the V&A’s MUSIMS CIS with MOL’s MIMSY XG and KMAG’s MODES for Windows 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Database</th>
<th>Implementation of SPECTRUM unit of information ‘Object production person’</th>
<th>Implementation of SPECTRUM unit of information ‘Object production people’</th>
<th>Implementation of SPECTRUM unit of information ‘Object production person’ by including ‘Nature of their involvement with production process’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V&amp;A’s MUSIMS, CIS</td>
<td>Attribution tab window (Fig. 15): ‘Artist/Maker’ field can be used when the artist is known. Each design in an album should have a record. This caters for Bland’s album. Biographical information about Bland can be entered into the Artist (Individual) record for her on the artist authority file on the MUSIMS terminology client accessed by clicking on the ‘Name’ field. If the artist is anonymous then the term ‘Unknown’ can be used or for anonymous designs in her collection that have been traced to other sources.</td>
<td>The Attribution tab has the ‘Artist/Maker’ field that has an ‘Uncertainty’ field that can be used to express the following circumstances as defined by the CIS User Help Content and Format Guidelines (hereafter the Guidelines): ‘Object made after a work by the artist/maker given in the “Name” field – enter “after”’; Object made in the style of the artist/maker given in the Name field – enter “style of”; Object made by the workshop of the artist/maker given in the “Name” field – enter “workshop of”. Victoria Panter, the V&amp;A’s Documentation Manager, pointed out that the main name field is called ‘Artist/Maker’ (rather than just ‘Artist’) ‘to try to reflect the difference between the art historical notion of the artist and people associated with the making of items in the collection in other ways’. When cataloguing prints and drawings, as already mentioned, it is normal practice to use ‘Artist’. The cataloguer must reconsider both who created the object and the manner of its creation when cataloguing designs associated with a woman’s name. The SPECTRUM standard unit of information terminology ‘Object production person’ facilitates cataloguing because it is generic.</td>
<td>The terms ‘after a work’, ‘in the style of’ or ‘workshop of’ are from the art-historical methodology of attributing objects and do not work with precision for a woman’s collection of designs. The system requires refinement to allow differences in attributions of objects arising from gender to be entered automatically. The terms ‘traced from’ and ‘adapted from’ are not in the Guidelines to be included as entries in the ‘Uncertainty’ field. They would, however, describe the possibility of a woman having traced the design from another pattern and would be useful additions to the Guidelines. The SPECTRUM unit of information is adequate and the expression ‘object production person’ is conducive to cataloguing designs by Bland or ones that were traced by her from a friend’s or family member’s pattern.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 2. Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Database</th>
<th>Implementation of SPECTRUM unit of information ‘Object production person’</th>
<th>Implementation of SPECTRUM unit of information ‘Object production people’</th>
<th>Implementation of SPECTRUM unit of information ‘Object production person’ by including ‘Nature of their involvement with production process’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MOL’s</td>
<td>Brief Biography tab in which biographical information and social contextual material can be entered (Fig. 18).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIMSY XG</td>
<td>MODES can be used for social historical recording of textiles. It adheres to the units of information terminology of V&amp;A’s and MOL’s databases.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KMAGs’ MODES for Windows</td>
<td>MODES can be used for social historical recording of textiles. It adheres to the units of information terminology of V&amp;A’s and MOL’s databases.</td>
<td>A catalogue entry for embroidery by Jane Smith who was a member of the Huddersfield Embroiderers’ Guild serves as an example of such a record. There is a ‘Production’ field that has a ‘Person’ subfield into which ‘Jane Smith’ can be entered. In addition, there is an ‘Association’ field with a ‘Nature’ subfield, so the fact that she was a member of ‘Huddersfield Embroiderers’ Guild’ can be entered by including it in the ‘Corporate body’ subfield beneath. The ‘Association’ field is conducive to social historical entries rather than the ‘Artist/Maker’ and ‘Role’ qualified by ‘Uncertainty’ fields in the V&amp;A’s MUSIMS CIS.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources:
2. Ibid., p. 6.
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The place-name annotation is recorded on the ‘Marks and Subjects’ tab in the ‘Marks and inscriptions’ field and the ‘Place’ field (Fig. 16). The description of the object should be inserted in the Whole tab that is located at the bottom of each window. In the Whole tab window, there is a field entitled ‘Descriptive line’ (Fig. 17). A brief description of the whole object, including the object name, its maker and, in the case of designs for dress and accessories, the part of the garment for which the design is intended; for example, ‘cuff’ is entered into this field. Researchers can then search on ‘design and cuff’ to find designs for cuffs. In the MOL’s MIMSY XG, there is a ‘Brief biography’ tab in which biographical information and social contextual material can be entered (Fig. 18).
Capturing Understanding of Women’s Embroidery Designs

Table 3 compares the implementation of SPECTRUM information groups ‘Object description information’ and ‘Object production information’, and the relevant units of information ‘Material’ and ‘Object production note’ in the V&A’s MUSIMS CIS with the MOL’S MIMSY XG and KMAGs’ MODES for Windows (Fig. 19). The inscription for embroidery technique was captured in the V&A’s MUSIMS CIS on the ‘Marks and subjects’ tab in the ‘Marks and inscriptions’ field (Fig. 20).

Fig. 17. Whole tab window from the V&A’s CIS database for record number E.372.103–1967. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Fig. 18. MIMSY XG People Authority Record. Photo: MIMSY XG Copyright 2009, Selago Design, Inc.
### TABLE 3. COMPARISON OF IMPLEMENTATION OF SPECTRUM INFORMATION GROUPS ‘OBJECT DESCRIPTION INFORMATION’ AND ‘OBJECT PRODUCTION INFORMATION’, AND THE RELEVANT UNITS OF INFORMATION ‘MATERIAL’ AND ‘OBJECT PRODUCTION NOTE’ IN THE V&A’S MUSIMS CIS WITH MOL’S MIMSY XG, AND KMAGS’ MODES FOR WINDOWS 1, 2, 3, 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V&amp;A CIS</td>
<td>In the ‘Production type’ field, the term ‘design’ is an entry that can be chosen from the drop-down list which is adjacent. The ‘Production note’ field is described in the Guidelines as ‘a free-text field that you can use to give further information regarding the production of the object, e.g. the reason for or circumstances of its production’. This is useful for giving information about designs intended for different purposes, for example, for dress accessories such as cuffs and collars, or particular types of embroidery, for example, in coloured silks suggesting the technique of satin stitch (Fig. 19).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUSIMS</td>
<td>The MOL’s MIMSY XG has an archaeological bias that makes it unable, without adaptation, to record materials such as synthetic fibres for a dress collection that extends to the contemporary.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOL’s MIMSY XG</td>
<td>The necessity for the system to record the different designer and maker of a Diaghilev costume is as an example of complexity in production. An extra field had to be added for ‘designed’. The ‘Production note’ field of the V&amp;A’s MUSIMS CIS is similar to that in MODES allowing the former the capacity to record more socially contextual material.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KMAGs’ MODES</td>
<td>In MODES, the production tab and its ‘Note’ subfield can be used to record information about the making of an object as in the Kirklees Museums and Galleries’ record for a Rajasthani sharara wedding outfit that describes how both tailors and embroiderers produced it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sources:**
3. The production note for the botanically accurate sprigs of Convolvulaceae E.372.81-1967 is as follows: ‘This design is for embroidery and the most naturalistic way of embroidering these botanically correct designs would be to use satin stitch which produces a smooth appearance’.
Capturing Understanding of Women’s Embroidery Designs

The information group ‘Object history and association information’ in SPECTRUM 2009 now has twenty-four units rather than the ten units of information in the 1994 edition. It is adequate for recording history in any subject.59 The example for the unit of information ‘Associated activity note’ is for women’s history, and it states that ‘it was unusual for a woman to own this type of business at this time’.60 This example demonstrates that members of SPECTRUM emphasised women’s history in this edition by choosing it as a model of the sort of associated activity to note. Table 4 compares the implementation of SPECTRUM information group ‘Object history and association information’ and one of its units of information ‘Object history note’ in the MOL’s MIMSY XG with the V&A’s MUSIMS, CIS (Fig. 21).
Moira Thunder

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implementation of SPECTRUM Information group ‘Object history and association’</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MOL’s MIMSY XG</td>
<td>Extra fields had to be added to the MOL’s database MIMSY XG to facilitate cataloguing of costume. These include fields for ‘Depicted’, ‘Referenced’, ‘Used’ and ‘Worn’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V&amp;A’s MUSIMS, CIS</td>
<td>There are two history tabs. The first field is the ‘Object history note’ which is a free text field for recording information about the history of the object specifically its creation, ownership, vendors, sales and the circumstances surrounding them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The ‘Historical context note’ field is useful for recording biographical information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The ‘Associated names’ field is to be used to record the names of individuals associated with the object during its life other than through production or ownership.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Comparison of Implementation of SPECTRUM Information Group ‘Object History and Association Information’ and One of Its Units of Information ‘Object History Note’ in Examples in MOL’s MIMSY XG with the V&A’s MUSIMS, CIS 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 & 7

Guidelines for the ‘Object history note’ is that of a vase inspired by a famous vase and the related group of vases made probably after a particular date at specific potteries. The arms of the aristocrat to whom it was presented and the reason for the presentation are mentioned. This fits in with an art-historical methodology of artists’ work inspired by well-known objects and associated with prominent figures in the historical record. The information gathered from study areas of kinship and social context, environment and perceptions of a woman’s role can be included in here. The example given in the Guidelines for the useful ‘Historical context note’ is a social historical one: ‘The game was widely played by children from this time. More complex versions such as this one were developed for adult play in the early twentieth century’. Building on such examples, a new way is required for designs for embroidery. Panter stated that the Guidelines are kept as generic as possible because of the diversity of the collections. Staff can think about including a wider range of examples in the new CMS. For example, information about Bland and her family connections could be included to explain the annotation of a relative’s name on a design in her collection.

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Implementation of SPECTRUM Information group ‘Object history and association’

The ‘Associated Event’ field is for recording important events in the history of the object.

The Guidelines give the Coronation of Queen Victoria as an example. Associated events that are suggested by the research and that are sensitive to gender are the ones to include. An example of this is the catalogue entry for a botanically accurate design by Bland wherein an event that prompted women’s interest in studying plants can be entered. Such events include the date of the establishment of Botanical and Horticultural Societies, dates at which they increased admittance to women and the publication of a bestseller such as Jane Loudon’s Instructions in Gardening for Ladies in 1840. In this case, the period when Bland’s father was a member of the Linnaean Society is relevant. The opening of the resort where Bland painted her original designs and was given another by a friend can also be recorded here.

The final ‘Historical Significance’ field is another free text field to be used to ‘provide an explanation of why the object is important or relevant, its influence on other objects / styles whether it is a good example of its kind and why’.

The example given for this field in the Guidelines is of an altarpiece cited by an authority as one of the outstanding examples of this type of work. It is compared to another in a major collection. Again this example uses the art historical methodology of citing authorities and other collections. It does not work for designs for embroidery which are not regarded as art in the established canon. Nevertheless, it is here that material about the perceptions of a woman’s role that is pertinent to the discourse on women and therefore gender history can be included. In Bland’s case, the gift of designs demonstrates connections between relatives of merchant and banking families and is of historical significance in bonding between such families.

Sources:
2. Ibid., p. 15.
5. Ibid., p. 15.
7. CIS User Help, p. 15.
Databases are constantly revised and updated, thus the comparisons with other databases were valid at the time of research. However, the V&A has now launched a Collections Management Programme (CMP) that has transformed the way in which staff manages the V&A’s collections and works together to deliver the public programme.\textsuperscript{61} A new Collections Management System (CMS) replaced CIS. The CMP team consulted staff in curatorial workshops about upgrading CIS which was the forum for making the recommendations highlighted in the conclusion of this paper. CMS has an ‘Associated object’ field that is the same as the ‘Related museum numbers’ field that was in CIS. It can be used to link embroidery designs and textiles in the Museum’s Collections. The ‘History and references’ tab does provide additional fields: ‘Associated place’, ‘Associated organisation’, ‘Associated person’ and ‘Associated people’. There is not, however, an ‘Associated activity’ field that might have had an ‘Associated activity note’ useful for recording women’s history relating to designs as in SPECTRUM’s example for this unit of information. System Simulation Limited, the developer of CMS, included every field in SPECTRUM, including the ‘Associated activity’ field in its MuseumIndex+ software, therefore this exclusion was not a product omission but an internal V&A decision. The CMP team at the V&A consulted lead users on a review of fields. For the purposes of simplicity, it was decided to reduce the number of fields on a screen and to hide some that staff thought irrelevant. This field happened to be one of these. More involvement by staff in discussing ways of recording women’s history with lead users would be beneficial, but this field can easily be returned to the record view when a new release of CMS is made. The additional fields therefore are helpful but not the optimum for cataloguing women’s designs. These fields and notes need even more consideration so that their character can be used to extract and record fully the historical context of women’s embroidery designs. Cataloguing could then be done in a more socially constructed framework that is sensitive to gender.

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Capturing Understanding of Women’s Embroidery Designs

Conclusion

The Sarah Bland case study shows that a woman’s name attached to a collection of designs for embroidery requires researching that woman to establish whether she was designing as a professional and working as an embroiderer or working as an amateur with responsibility to her immediate and extended family and social network. If the designs are a collection of different types of pattern, whether original, commercially produced, traced from magazines, and if there is evidence that they belonged to a relative or friend who gave them to the woman or allowed their pattern to be copied, then it is likely that the woman can be identified as an amateur. If there is no evidence of the woman working as a professional, then it is likely that the collection was used for family and social networking purposes.

When working off the well-beaten track of the art-historical canon, primary sources help to locate the woman in society and her environment. Catalogue entries that are more socially contextual can then be created by using the data fields to record kinship and social context, environment and perceptions of a woman’s role. Researchers can then find the entries by searching without needing the name of the artist by using the terms ‘design’, ‘embroidery’ and ‘collection’. In this way, the designs as a group can be found. In addition, researchers could search on, for example, ‘design’ and ‘cuff’, or ‘design’ and ‘collar’ or ‘design and bag’. The list extends as far as the number of types of object for which there are designs in the collection in an album.

This case study demonstrates that an art-historical system like the V&A’s MUSIMS, CIS could in the past have been used for cataloguing social historical content about objects because it compares well to Kirklees Museums and Galleries’ MODES which appears to deal particularly effectively with women’s embroidery. CMS has additional fields that facilitate the cataloguing of collections of women’s embroidery designs. Nevertheless, it is important that those developing SPECTRUM for The Collections Trust check for bias and widen the standard’s subject-specific terminology by continuing to include more social historical examples in the information group ‘Object history and association’. Helpfully, it now has many more units of information and gives an example for women’s history. In this way, SPECTRUM can continue to be more inclusive of women’s history. In addition, this article urges museum professionals to brief the developers of database systems to address the art-historical or archaeological bias of systems that are being superseded and to consider modifying them to enable gender-sensitive information and social historical material to be captured more easily. The guidelines agreed by museum professionals must steer the user with more examples of this type of material. Women’s embroidery designs require research and cataloguing in this way to open up women’s history in relation to such textiles and dress and to provide opportunities for researchers.

Acknowledgements

Moira Thunder would like to thank especially the Joint Editors Mary M. Brooks and Laura Ugolini, and the peer reviewers of Textile History, as well as Christopher Marsden, Elizabeth Miller, Lesley Ellis Miller, Angela McShane and Victoria Panter for reading this article, for their comments and for their help in its preparation. Special thanks are due to Joanna Dorling and Sarah Horne, without whose help and generosity this article could not have been written. In addition, thanks are due to the
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following for their help with the research: Katina Bill, Alex Bromley, Hilary Davidson, Edwina Ehrman, Richard Langley, Barbara Lasic, Angus Patterson, Ben Sherwood, Lynda Brooks, and Margaret Thunder; Ken Jackson, Natasha Jacoby, and Paul Robins for photography; Therese Crawley for help with CIS and James Sutton for help from the V&A Archive.

References


4 D. McGregor to N. Rothstein, 8 April 1967, MA/1/M1569, Nominal File, V&A Archives, London. Bland’s dates are confirmed by the census returns and by the date of her will.


6 Patterns opposite pp. 333, 348, 359, 362, 356, 308, 288, 249 and 207 were coloured in using crayons in the twentieth century. I am grateful to Sarah Horne (née McGregor) for this information.


12 Ibid., pp. 8–9.

13 Ibid., p. 11.


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Hivet cites the following in ‘Needlework and the rights of women’, pp. 40–46: M. Hays, Memoirs of Elizabeth Courtney (London, 1796); M. Hays, Letters and Essays (London, 1793); J. West, Letters to a Young Lady in which the Duties and Character of Women are Considered, chiefly with reference to prevailing Opinions (London, 1808); M. Wollstonecraft, Maria or The Wrongs of Woman (Paris, 1798); R. M. Wardle, Collected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1979); M. Hays, La Victime du Préjugé (Paris, 1799); P. Wakefield, Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex (London, 1798); M. Wollstonecraft, Original Stories from Life (London, 1796); M. Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Women (London, 1792); M. Wollstonecraft, Thoughts on the Education of Daughters with Reflections on Female Conduct in the more important Duties of Life (London, 1787); H. More, Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education (London, 1799).


Wollstonecraft, Vindication of the Rights of Women, pp. 75 and 169, cited in ibid., p. 44.

West, Letters to a Young Lady, ii, p. 416.


Ibid.

Wollstonecraft, Maria or The Wrongs of Woman; Wollstonecraft, Original Stories and Hays, La Victime du Préjugé, cited in Hivet, ‘Needlework and the rights of women’, pp. 41–42.

Davidoff and Hall, Family Fortunes, p. 206.

Ibid., p. 278.

Ibid., p. 25.

Michael Bland’s will, proved 29 April 1851, 11/2130, The National Archives, London. Bland’s executors were his sons George Bland and Francis Lawrence Bland; N. Carlisle, Collections for a History of the Ancient Family of Bland (London, 1826), p. 21. With thanks to Sarah Horne for this information.


I am grateful to Joanna Dorling for the information from the 1841 census.


I am grateful to Joanna Dorling for this information; Descent of Henry Ford Barclay Esq., p. 99.


Fellowship certificates, 1811, Bland, Linnean Society of London Archives, Linnean Society, London; M. Bland to [Edward Stanley, Bishop of Norwich, President of the Linnean Society], 5 December 1842, Miscellaneous correspondence, Linnean Society of London Archives, Linnean Society, London.

See, for example, J. Sowerby, English Botany (London, 1790); J. Lindley, A Synopsis of British Flora arranged according to the Natural Orders: containing vasculares, or flowering plants (London, 1829); J. Smith, English Botany, the figures by J. Sowerby (London: C. E. Sowerby, R. Taylor, 1832); J. Loudon, British Wild Flowers, 1 (London: W. Smith, 1844).

V&A; E.98 (12)-1955. Pattern from an anonymous collection of whitework patterns given by Miss Joy Packenham. One of the patterns is inscribed ‘bought from France by Lady Acland’ [possibly Lydia Elizabeth Hoare who married Sir Thomas Dyke Acland, 10th Baronet, in 1808].


The Lady’s Newspaper, 4 November 1848, p. 367.


MIMSY XG (‘Museum Information Management System — Next Generation’) was developed by Selago Design, Inc.
Capturing Understanding of Women’s Embroidery Designs

Museum of London, for the information about MOL’s MIMSY XG and to Alex Bromley, Documentation Manager, MOL, for explaining the acronym.

I am grateful to Katina Bill, Collections Officer, Kirklees Museums and Galleries for sample layouts of how a record might look on the Kirklees’ MODES database. Richard Langley, Technical Services Manager, MODES Users Association, stated that MODES ‘began as an acronym for “museum object data entry system”, as that was all you could do with it in the early days. But that is now wholly inaccurate as we have added data retrieval, output and reporting, and there are applications for archives, conservation, people and places. In fact it is better described as a generic XML database system’. Personal communication, 21 January 2010.

The V&A’s MUSIMS CIS database was developed in about 1996 and is based on an older edition of SPECTRUM (1994). The MOL’s MIMSY XG was released in 2004 and is possibly based on a revised edition of SPECTRUM published in 1997. For The Collections Trust, see http://www.collectionstrust.org.uk [Accessed: 13 December 2012].


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