1704 – Birth of the Review: *A Review of the Affairs of France* begins publication on February 19th

I want to talk a little bit about the history of periodicals and most particularly the history of Daniel Defoe’s *Review*. The first daily paper in England was published in 1702, and that was *The Daily Courant*. The *Review* started publication in 1704, specifically February 19th, 1704. A few other major periodicals that were to follow were the *Tatler* in 1709, and the *Spectator* in 1711. The *Review* began as a weekly, but very quickly became a twice weekly. After about a year of publication, it started being published three times weekly and that was the publication pattern it followed until the end of its run in 1713.

The *Review* was different from the *Courant* in that it was not specifically a newspaper. It was a series of essays that contained other features including letters from readers. Gossip, for example. Usually this gossip was made up, it was just stories that Defoe thought would help teach his readers something, sort of in the form of a parable. They ran under the head of something called the *Mercure Scandale*, which was the name of a French paper at the time and Defoe quickly changed this to the *Scandalous Club* and eventually, after many letters back and forth from readers who felt that title made no sense, he changed it to the *Scandal Club*. The content of the *Review* was different from the content of the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*. Very often the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*, written and published by Richard Steele and Joseph Addison, are referred to as the first periodicals in English and what is usually meant by that is that they are the first literary periodicals. The *Review* was more of a public affairs essay periodical. It was written by Defoe, who at that time could really be considered a talented hack. Later he would develop more into a major author as a result of his novels, but at the time he certainly wasn’t seen that way by any of his contemporaries. The *Tatler* and the *Spectator* differ in that they are literary periodicals featuring criticism, moral advice, and published by people who had a much higher sort of social standing and literary standing in England.

The *Review* was an odd mixture of advocacy for the policies of Robert Harley, who was the leading Whig politician during the reign of Queen Anne, and Defoe’s own creation. So Harley actually, as far as we can tell – there are some mysteries surrounding this – Harley seems to have approached Defoe and suggested the idea of a weekly paper that would promote the ideas of the government and Defoe was, quite possibly, in prison at that time for seditious libel. Interestingly enough Harley was one of the ones who put him in prison, but Harley also recognized the significance of propaganda, the significance of the written word in shaping and forming public opinion. So he kind of offered Defoe a little bit of a deal, saying he would help him shorten his prison stay or help him keep out of future scrapes a bit, and also there is some evidence, quite a bit of evidence, all kind of scattered, that Defoe was paid fairly regularly by Harley during the publication of the *Review*. So Defoe was in prison through much of 1703. He may have started writing the *Review* in prison, that’s a bit unsure. Then finally he was out of prison by the time the *Review* began its publication on February 19th of 1704.

I should probably say a little bit about Robert Harley. Harley was an important figure in the history of the relationship between writers and politics. Harley definitely saw the value of propaganda. He saw the value of getting someone to speak the ministry’s case who was not in the ministry. So he hired Defoe, as I was saying, under the table pretty much. He hired Jonathan
Swift, Delariviere Manley, he was really one of the first to do these kind of things, if not the first. So the *Review*, we can say, was really an early version of what we now know as “spin.” It’s undeniable that Defoe was a bit of a rogue as a spin master, in that he put a lot of his own opinions in there, a lot of his own ideas into the *Review* and he made it very much his own paper but it was his own paper with the secret hidden backing of Robert Harley the whole time. This wasn’t too difficult a thing to pull off in that they both came from very similar backgrounds in terms of their religious beliefs and their political beliefs. Both were religious non-conformists, Defoe was an actual dissenter and both were wigs with power bases in the city of London. At first the *Review* advocated for the Whig policies during the War of the Spanish Succession, mainly advocating for larger armies, larger preparedness in the face of French power. The Tories at the time were very much arguing for larger navies and that England shouldn’t be getting into complicated land battles. In the first years of the *Review*’s publication, Defoe regularly advocated for Whig policies in the land war in the War of the Spanish Succession, so the Battle of Blenheim was one of the early sorts of events that vindicated the things being argued in the *Review* and the things being pushed by Harley in the Ministry at the same time.
1707 – Review published from Edinburgh: Defoe works as a spy to encourage England’s union with Scotland

Later one of the major things Defoe would do would be to move up to Edinburgh and to advocate for the Act of Union that created Great Britain that brought Scotland into the union with England. Defoe actually lived in Edinburgh for more than a year, posed as a businessman interested in trade, and a lot of people in Scotland never knew that Defoe was actually a spy for the ministry and was publishing his *Review*. During his time in Scotland, he actually published an Edinburgh version as well as a London version of the *Review*. The paper went through several sorts of periods, several kind of generations in which it did different things, had different functions, and it basically lasted as long as the reign of Queen Anne and also about as long as Harley’s power as minister. These waned at about the same time so Defoe published until about 1713 and then closed up shop right about the time the Hanoverian succession was taking place. George the First was coming to power and Harley was really on the outs by that point.
1938 - A. Wellesley Secord facsimile edition published: Review becomes available in its complete form

The last edition of the *Review* produced was also involved in technological change and its effect on texts. Arthur Wellesley Secord edited a facsimile edition of the *Review* for a small subscription of 475 institutions back in 1938. This text is the one most readers of the *Review* in our time have used. While it would seem that facsimile editions are, if done right, almost as good as the original, or at least as close to it as we’re going to get. The fact is that even this technology, the mirror up to nature’s school of editing, has its effect on the text. Secord assembled all four major editions of the text in one place. He worked in the Columbia University Library with copies from that library, the British Library, the University of Texas, and Cornell University all laid out to compare the visual quality of the sheets. He then had the best pages from each photographed. By “best” he meant ones that photographed most cleanly. He called his *Review* a mosaic and the modern reader has no way of knowing which pages come from several discrepant in the copy that was used in that facsimile. That showed that Defoe introduced corrections, probably as the press run was underway. I have this image of him sort of running into the press and adding an advertisement; that’s usually the kind of thing he did, something to make more money for it rather than any sort of editing to change the wording of the text, there’s very little of that. The current Pickering and Chatto edition of the *Review*, which John McVeagh is editing right now, is very well done, very well annotated. It’s also being made from a computer scan of Secord’s facsimile, which the editor then edits and proofreads. This means the edition is the copy of a copy, and more importantly, the copy of a copy whose main editorial policy was directly tied to the technology used to create it rather than anything having to do with the text wording or changes in that wording or for print run. Now, that isn’t necessarily a problem, but it does mean that beyond the digital presentation of this blog version of the *Review* that there are copy text differences between the two projects; differences belonging to the field of textual editing and its concerns.
1988-present - Debate over Defoe canon: Computers used to argue for Defoe's authorship of hundreds of texts

I’m Irving Rothman, a professor of English at the University of Houston and I am working with a team of researchers to objectively study whether Daniel Defoe did or did not write a number of his works. The team consists of Dr. Rakesh Verma, professor of computer science at the university and Dr. Thomas Widdel, a Professor Emeritus of Linguistics. *Robinson Crusoe* was Defoe’s most famous work, in fact, it’s the most translated work in the world other than the Bible. He also published 537 other works, 547 other works, according to John Robert Moore, who compiled this bibliography in 1960. One of the works was the *Essay Upon Projects*. Daniel Defoe in this *Essay* urges the construction of highways with slave labor in England. He also advocates an academy of women and he advocates special pensions to seamen so that they are sure when boats need to be unloaded. He wrote another book *The Political History of the Devil*, which is a satire of human beings. He said the devil has been away from Earth for 400 years and he comes back to Earth to discover that people have committed all kinds of crimes far more devious than he could have devised without having consulted him, but they still blame him for the crimes that they commit.

So Defoe has written a lot of different types of books: fiction, nonfiction, satire. And we find he had 547 works in his canon. But in 1988 two British scholars, Philip Furbank and William Owens came out with a book called *The Canonization of Daniel Defoe*. They began to question whether all these books were by Defoe and by 1994, they published a book called *The Deattributions of Daniel Defoe* in which they removed about 250 books from the canon. They said there was no way that Defoe could have written these and this was a subjective judgment. They had ignored a book published in 1974 by Stieg Hargievik. Stieg Hargievik is a Swedish scholar who did a stylometric study that attempted to study every one of Defoe’s works. Furbank and Owens deattributed, as they said, a number of works were not Defoe’s but 54 of the works that they said were not Defoe’s, are definitely Defoe’s according to Hargievik. So at the University of Houston, we decided to take Hargievik’s methodology and try to study a number of works by computer analysis and that’s where Dr. Verma and that’s where Dr. Widdel became very, very important to this project. I had to retype – have students retype a number of Defoe’s documents, we have about 750,000 words retyped. Hargievik says we should go to three million in order to develop our analysis but Dr. Verma is better informed, more knowledgeable about how this process works about how one evaluates these materials and how one makes judgments.
2004 - Origins of Defoe's Review blog: New media seeks to duplicate accessibility of the original Review

The idea for this project actually emerged from a question that I was asked when I interviewed for my current job at St. Edward’s University. The university’s vice president told me the school was interested involving undergraduate students – we’re largely a liberal arts school focused on undergraduate education – in faculty research. He asked how I might do that. Well, this is a bit of a challenge because most of the research we do in the humanities obviously involves a single scholar with a single book, or a single scholar in the archive. It’s very one on one, very independent, not group research for the most part. But I had been playing with the idea of editing a new edition of Defoe’s *Plan of the English Commerce* for the Stoke Newington Daniel Defoe Edition, and I’d already done the transcribing of that text. I realized that this is something that I probably could’ve done as an undergraduate as well. For doing that, I sat in the library at UCLA Special Collections and basically typed in the text on my laptop. Scanning technology was a bit dodgy back then, so there were certain things that it wasn’t going to do well.

I’m also interested in New Media, was playing around with the idea of an academic blog and, increasingly, I was believing that blogs were to our time what periodicals had been to the eighteenth century. The fact that a single author could write an essay, go to the local print shop, and have it printed and call it a periodical was very democratic, just like a blog is. This was the time when Blogger and Blogspot and Wordpress and all these things were just coming out with very easily accessible interfaces, so you could become a periodical author in front of your computer and kind of send your work out into the world and automatically you were some sort of journalist. You may not have had a readership, but you were a journalist.

So, just about this time, I also had come across Phil Gyfford’s excellent blog of the Diary of Samuel Pepys, and it occurred to me, sometime during the answer to this interview question, that Defoe’s *Review* would be an ideal thing to blog and to blog according to a time frame that echoed Defoe’s. February 19, 1704 showed up on February 19, 2008 and since then I’ve tried to follow Defoe’s publication schedule to the day.

My background has a lot to do with this. I worked for ten years as a copy editor on daily newspapers, so Defoe the journalist was interesting to me, and editing as a form of journalism seemed sort of a logical outgrowth of that. It also occurred to me that here was an activity students could work on. I knew from past research that the Harry Ransom Center was exceptionally open to researchers, not requiring the sort of credentials that places like the Huntington or Bodleian require just to get through the front doors. I also knew that it had one of only four complete, or nearly complete, copies of the *Review*, so I answered something about doing a Defoe’s *Review* blog with students transcribing the text. This would give them a taste of archival research and would give me a rough text to edit. The idea really began there at the nexus of teaching and research in a liberal arts school and on the spot with me trying to say something that would get me a job.
Christopher Flynn: We’re here with Chris Martinez and Jason Rosenblum, who have been involved in working on the Defoe site since its inception in 2006, and we’re going to talk a little bit about some of the technical work that’s been done on the site and some of the ways in which it works. So I’m just going to turn it over to Jason and he’s going to talk about what interested him about the site from the beginning and sort of how that got going.

Jason Rosenblum: One of the things that I find particularly innovative about the Defoe Review site is that although it’s a blog, in reality it has features that are pulled from Wiki technology. So in addition to being a blog, it’s also very collaborative and it incorporates features that are typically Wiki-oriented features. That means that the end user, pretty much anybody, can contribute to the idea of building and putting knowledge into the site in the form of annotations and comments. And I find that one of the really, really innovative things that came out of this project.

CF: Okay. And Chris Martinez has worked with me on and off for really the last two years. Any time something explodes, which happens every now and then, Chris un-explodes it. Do you want to talk about some of the problems we have faced and what we have done about them?

Chris Martinez: Well, in the beginning, one of the problems we faced was the technology – deciding what is the best blog engine to use for this and coming up with the proper presentation layer so it looks the way it looks now across all browsers. The big thing that we had as an issue was dealing with the CSS so it works with WordPress properly so that when you visited IE6, the header wasn’t found at the bottom of the page or something very weird would happen. Lately, right now, what we’re looking at right now is trying to update everything, to implement some security and take care of security issues.

CF: Ok. And there were also some concerns at some point, Jason, with public participation, participation by people who are not part of the St. Edward's community. Do you want to talk a little about how we addressed that?

JR: Sure. In fact this project kind of became a test case for how St. Ed’s and St. Ed’s faculty looked at and defined what was a scholarly community from a technology point of view, and as a result of this project, when this topic was brought up in front of the campus Teaching and Learning with Technology roundtable and as a result the technology and information policy got amended to allow faculty members to expand their idea of a scholarly community beyond what had already been done and have that be supported by technology such as the Defoereview.org. In order to do that, we had to make sure that safety considerations were kept in check, and the way that that was handled was that Professor Flynn was made to be kind of the person that received all of the in-user submissions, so nothing got put up on the site without Professor Flynn signing off on it, so that’s how that was handled.

CF: Ok, and Chris, we’re actually having to revisit that a little bit for technical reasons, right? Do you want to talk about where we’re going now?
CM: Right. There have been some, I guess you call it breaches in security, where some postings have been made that did not get your approval. So what we are looking at is upgrading the software and possibly even just changing the software to something a little bit more secure.

CF: Yeah, during Defoe’s years he had a regular advertisement from a Dr. Harborough who would cure any sort of venereal disease you had, and today, interestingly enough, we are getting people who have similar sorts of products for sale but they are not asking us whether we really want to sell them on the site. So that’s one of the issues. It’s just the regular spam that infects your average inbox or most blogs, so that’s one of the big security issues we are working on right now.

JR: And it is a challenge because spammers have become more efficient and they adapt to technology and so I think it is normal for technology to need to adapt to spammers.

CF: It becomes our challenge to both keep this project an open and accessible project, yet not a corrupted and a falling apart sort of project. We have to guard the integrity of the text but still keep open the dialogue.

CM: How do we make it open and available to everyone to use and comment on but still moderate and police it so that certain things aren’t posted?

CF: Right. Okay, well that is I think what I had for us today so thanks for joining us on this.

JR: Thank you Chris.

CF: Thank you.
Christopher Flynn: Rafael Trujillo is one of the student interns who has worked on the project. Rafael, I just wanted to start out by asking you a little bit about how you got involved with the project.

Rafael Trujillo: I actually got involved with the project through a grant that was called the TG grant, the Texas Guaranteed Loan Corporation grant. It was a summer internship grant that I received and they directed some of the funds in your direction so that you could have an intern and you asked me to be your intern. That’s how I got involved. It’s pretty exciting. You had told me about it in one of your classes.

CF: Right, I’m trying to remember, that was the Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Literature class, right?

RT: Yeah.

CF: Okay, so tell us a little bit about what it was like working on the project, like what your daily activities were, what you actually did to generate the text for the project.

RT: Most of the project was geared around transcribing and basically what I did was I transcribed the original eighteenth-century Defoe text. And basically I would go into the Harry Ransom Center and check the books out and open them up. This is the original manuscript text, so that was a lot of fun and I, basically, would look at the original text and type it out onto the laptop so that we could put it in an online edition of the text.

CF: What were some of the things that you had to be most careful about when you were doing the transcripts?

RT: It was really particular. Some of the stuff that I had to be really particular about were punctuation or just the line-spacing, a lot of times also the way that words were spelled in particular because they were spelled differently in the 18th century versus the way they are spelled now.

CF: So you had to turn off all Microsoft’s ways of saving us from our own misspellings. All the auto-format, auto-correct stuff has to be off when you do that, right?

RT: Yeah.

Dr. Flynn: Good. So what was it like working in the Ransom Center as an undergraduate? I mean, did you feel like they made it a warm, happy place for you, that it was a comfortable thing to do?

RT: The HRC is a great place. I still go back every once in awhile and visit. It’s really fun and I enjoy it a lot. The librarians, or I guess you would call them librarians, were extremely helpful in anything that I needed. They were always there when you needed to get any text that wasn’t already out for you and you needed to ask them for it and they seem to really know about what the archive has in it. They’re still going through a lot of the process of understanding what it is that is there and organizing it but everything that I ever asked for was automatically out for me.

CF: Yeah. It’s interesting that you say that they really know what they had because at times it almost seemed like they knew but they didn’t know. Remember that we discovered a few – at least an extra text – that they didn’t seem to know that they had according to the catalogue.

RT: They are constantly getting new stuff though from what I understand.
CF: And also the transference of information from the card catalogue to an online catalogue is incomplete at this time so there are books they don’t know about that they have there and one of them happened to be a second copy of the first volume of Defoe’s Review. So one day I came in to work on the text to do some editing of what he had transcribed and you had two books instead of one, and I’m wondering, what has happened here? So it was kind of a major discovery that they own that.

Okay. What was I going to ask you? Oh, I was going to just talk a little bit about maybe the idiosyncrasies of the text. You were one of the only interns I’ve had – there have been four on this project so far, and Rafael was on it for the longest time period – and he’s the one who probably got the most distracted by the actual text at times. So can you talk a little bit about what is in the text and kind of how that happened and why.

RT: I think part of what was so distracting about the text were all of the different characters that would have appeared. So you had various dukes that he would talk about, he talked a lot about economics, it’s really difficult to pin Defoe down as a historian or as strictly an economist or strictly just someone who is documenting what is happening. So it was really interesting to be able to look at all three of those different perspectives and to find that he was talking about the economics of trade that were going on in 18th century London or, you know, specifically talking about the city or he talked a lot about the slave trade as well, so there were various topics that he touched on that were really interesting and I did get really distracted by it.

CF: And then there are always the advertisements too.

RT: Right.

CF: There were advertisements for… What were some of the advertisements?

RT: Some of them were for soaps or for hair oils for wigs?

CF: Hair oils for Periwigs.

RT: Periwigs! Yeah. And he does have a section also where it’s a “Scandalous Club,” where he talks about all the ladies’ scandals that are going on with the upper classes, and stuff. The upper echelons of society, which is really interesting too.

CF: Well, after Rafael would generate the text, basically he would send me the files, and I had a three-step process that I would go through with the actual text. The first step would be to simply proofread it. I’d have to go back to the Ransom Center with the file and with the same text that he used and basically read line by line. This is a pretty painstaking, pretty slow part of the process. Actually I kind of wish I was doing what he was doing, the generation of the text; it’s a little more active, you’re actually doing something, where with mine, you’re just reading a line, then you read a line over there, then you read a line, then you read a line over there, and you do this for, you know, four hours. So that was the second stage. So, text generation is the first stage, proofreading is the second stage, and then finally the editing stage, which really takes – has two components to it. The first one is simply the kind of editing you do for editing projects and that’s where you apply your editorial principles, all of which are listed on our website and I think spelled out in pretty good detail there. We are pretty light editors in that we believe in not changing much of the base text but there are certain little things that we do change, the main one being when there is an obvious misprint that as far as we can tell was the mistake of the printer rather than Defoe himself. It’s a long, complicated process
that we go through to determine whether we’re confident that that was the case. So, that’s part of it, and then the last part is the formatting of the text where we have to put it all in HTML formatting, or XML, kind of a mixture of the two at this point, that we are using. So, that’s the last thing that we do with the text. Okay. I’d like to thank Rafael for coming in on our talk on this.
2008 - Defoe's Review goes online February 19: Date marks the 304th anniversary of the original publication

This is Christopher Flynn. I am the editor of Defoe’s online Review. This video will explain how the site works. We’re going to start with reading. If you simply want to read and do not feel like taking part in the discussion on the site, no registration is required. Simply read the posts as you would any modern blog. Click on the date at the top of an entry, so, for example up here, “Saturday November 4, 1704,” you can just click there, or at the bottom where it says “Read Full Text.” This will open any individual number of the Review.

So we click here and then what this does is give you the entire text from the top all the way to the end of what Defoe wrote for that particular day. Another thing you can do without registering, without signing in, is you can use the “Search” function. The “Search” is located at the top right of the main page. So, for example, if we type in a term like “France,” we will get as results virtually every issue of the Review that has been published to this date. Let’s look at previous entries. So it’ll keep going and going since France is the main concern of the Review in its first year, but if we pick something a bit more focused, for example “Marriage,” we’re going to get significantly fewer results. So here you see we have Tuesday, October 24, Saturday, October 14th, September 5th, and July 1st, so there are four issues in this first year to this point that are posted that have the word “marriage” in them somewhere. One can also type in the date of a particular number or a topic or anything else.

Okay, so for those who would like to register for the Review and go beyond reading and searching to commenting on the text or helping annotate terms, or just to allow us to see what sort of readership we have, you can click on the button on the top left of the site’s main page and follow the instructions. So, if we click here, “Register,” we get this box here that says “Register for this Blog.” So you choose a username and, for today, just to be a little silly, we’ll register Joseph Addison. Joseph Addison’s e-mail is joe.addison.1704@gmail.com. You click register and that is really all that has to be done. Now all Joe Addison has to do is go to his inbox and check for his password.

Then you click on Login click in, type the username and put the password that has been sent and log in. At this point, the very first time you sign in you’ll have “Profile and Personal Options,” so you can have a username, first name, last name, you can have a short biographical sketch if you feel like doing that, a link to any website of your own, or you can update passwords here. So, this is the first thing you see every time you sign in. To go to the main site you just click on “View Site” at the top left of the page and that will bring you in and now at this point it brings you in as a logged in user. A logged in user has a few more options. One of them is to take part in the discussion that we hope gets generated on this blog, so at the bottom of every number, either on the truncated page that shows up at the beginning or in the full open section, you’ve got a button at the bottom that says “Conversation.” So, we click on this button “Conversation,” it brings up the full version of that blog post for that day or any day that you are clicking on. If you scroll down to the bottom there will be a dialogue box where you can leave the comment so you would type: “comment here.” And click the bottom, “Submit Comment” and the very first time one goes to the page, the comment does not show up because what happens is it gets sent to the administrators of the blog who approve it. Once that first comment is approved, every successive
comment by any user will show up. It’s simply a gateway we have to make sure that spam doesn’t get into the site.

Another option we have here is the “Request Annotation” button. What we have done is we’ve gone through the site and we’ve linked significant terms or very often not very significant terms, but terms that we thought people would have an interest in annotating. We’re fully aware of the fact that there are probably several of these that readers will come across that they’d like to annotate that simply aren’t linked at this point. If you come across one of those terms, you simply click on the button “Request Annotation” and that will bring up a form where you can enter the term you want annotated and you can enter an initial annotation and your username at the bottom, and when you click “Send Request,” that will send an e-mail to the administrators of the site who will then, most likely, approve it. Then it will be posted on the site and that term will be linked from that point on for future annotations as well.

Other features of the site we have on the left side of every page are “Guidelines for Users,” information “About This Project” – how it got started, what its theoretical background is, and what we are trying to achieve here, some background information about the Review itself, mostly historical information from before the Review’s publication and surrounding its initial publication. We have a page for announcements and news, a page for acknowledgements that discusses all the people who helped us put this site together, and finally there is a contact page that basically gives my e-mail address and allows you to send any comments to there.

On the right hand side of the page we have information such as Defoe’s Preface to the Review. This wasn’t published as a typical number so it’s in its own special place, and Defoe’s Introduction, which was actually written as the first number of the review. So, it’s in more than one place on this site, but we wanted it to be something that people could call up at a moment’s notice. And finally we do have the title page facsimile for those who want to have a view of what the actual artifact looks like.

Underneath this we have “Topics.” The numbers next to each topic refers to how many times that topic is listed for one of the entries, so, how many entries go under a topic would be a better way to put that probably. Beneath that we have 18th century links, so what we do is have links to several sites outside the Review site that we think are of interest to our readers. One of the major influences on the site has been the Diary of Samuel Pepys. So if you click on there it takes you directly to Phil Gyfford’s excellent site. You can see that and many of these, others are very important sites such as the Defoe Society site, and various others you can see here. Okay. So with the guidelines for using the site at the top left and this video, hopefully that gives anybody interested in Defoe’s Review an adequate beginning to what is going on here and how to use it.