Developing student engagement through online narratives:
The Cambridge Literature Timeline

The Cambridge Literature Timeline is an online timeline developed by The English Faculty Library using Tiki-Toki software to provide a visual aid to those studying English at the University of Cambridge.

foreword

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visualising the english tripos

- Students use timelines to revise, summarise and contextualise information throughout the course of their degrees.
- Feedback from Cambridge examiners: students need to 'deploy the knowledge of literary history they have acquired' (examiner report).
- Aim: an online timeline available to all, used as a framework for teaching first year students useful bibliographical skills.
- Support from University’s Teaching and Innovation Fund and local Director of Undergraduate Teaching, Dr Christopher Tilmouth.

Crowdsourcing Content

[Crowdsourcing] helps students to initiate a dialogue with the information, ... and begin to understand and take ownership of their own knowledge.


Our aim: use the group edit functionality of the timeline to involve students in the creation of an academic resource, allow them to engage with information as ‘producers’ as well as ‘consumers’ and ultimately have fun collaborating with each other.

The Shakespeare-a-thon

The Shakespeare-a-thon

Why Tiki-Toki?

- We had a key set of requirements for the timelines: they needed to be embeddable, have a group edit function and allow a large number of stories to be created and viewed.
- Tiki-toki fulfilled these needs whilst providing a visually appealing and easy-to-use interface.

Elizabeth Tilley and Charlotte Hoare

English Faculty Library

University of Cambridge

eat21@cam.ac.uk @effcam

Visit our Timelines!

Cambridge Literature Timeline: Shakespeare Timeline: Modernism Timeline: South African Literature Timeline:


Building Narratives

Timeline development: specific timelines tailored to particular papers, including American Literature, South-African Literature, Modern Poetry and Modernism.

Gathering feedback: students surveyed on the perceived usefulness of the timelines. Results: Fig. 3.

Promotion:

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Academic Applications: Looking to the Future

a. Engagement with academic community: work with academics on future crowdsourcing activity focussed on 18th century historical context.
b. Library skills workshops: co-led with academics to improve visibility of timelines
c. More timelines and more stories from more subject areas!
d. Timeline functionality: utilising print and email facilities for handouts. More media content from academics, e.g. audio and video.

Feedback from student survey

Fig 3 Feedback from student survey

What do you think would make the Literature Timeline more useful to you?

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Fig 2 American Literature timeline widget on resource guides, poster for teaching session

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