



Study day | Nov. 7, 2025

Pictorial *Punch* Treasures from the Archive

British Library (London, UK) | Foyle Room, The British Centre for Conservation



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PAUL MELLON CENTRE
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This project is supported by the French government through funding managed by the National Research Agency under the France 2030 initiative (reference ANR-23-EXES-0001), and by the Normandy Region.

For over 150 years, *Punch* magazine was renowned for its original and provocative satire. From early cartoons such as John Leech's anti-establishment "Substance and Shadow" (1843) to its later conservative social commentary, *Punch's* pithy observations on both national and international affairs ensured the longevity of its success and confirmed the brand as a cornerstone of the British popular press. As a mass media trailblazer for both the visual and verbal, moreover, the magazine's innovative branding model enabled its publishers to branch out into new markets and alternative formats such as the almanack and the pocket book.

The *Punch* Archive attests to the historical and cultural import of the brand and its evolving publication portfolio through its eclectic range of print culture materials and artefacts. Acquired by the British Library in 2004, it comprises three sub-fonds – the records of *Punch*; the financial archive of Bradbury and Evans, and Bradbury, Agnew and Co., successive owners and publishers of the magazine; and the papers of Richard Geoffrey G. Price, a *Punch* contributor – all of which, to this day, remain largely unknown to both the academic community and the wider public. Among these resources is the Henry Silver bequest which, besides personal correspondence, notebooks and diaries, comprises hundreds of unexplored original preparatory drawings and proofs by *Punch* artists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Archive also includes a full collection of *Punch's* Pocket Book (1843-1881), a lavishly illustrated annual which, over a period of forty years, efficiently promoted the brand.

In line with *Punch's* Pocket Book Archive, an international digitisation project which proposes to deliver an open-access database based on a full run of these annuals, a symposium entitled "**Pictorial *Punch* – Treasures from the Archive**" will take place at the **British Library on 7 November 2025**. Organised by the *Punch's* Pocket Book Archive team with the support of the Archives and Manuscripts Department, the event seeks to explore the breadth and diversity of this unplumbed material, and provide an opportunity for experts and enthusiasts alike to discover and discuss the Archive's extensive catalogue, as well as other related items within the British Library's collections. It will feature keynote presentations by two renowned specialists of nineteenth-century periodical studies, Dr. Patrick Leary, historian of the Victorian press and author of *The Punch Brotherhood. Table Talk and Print Culture in Mid-Victorian London* (The British Library, 2010), and Pr Julia Thomas (Cardiff University), Principal Investigator of the AHRC/NEH-funded *Finding A Place: A research project to advance digital methods and unlock the use of digitized bookillustrations in cultural institutions*, and a high-profile expert on Victorian visual and material culture.

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With support from the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art

PROGRAMME

9:30-9:50: Welcome breakfast

9:50-10:10: Official welcome and introduction

Alice Zamboni - Curator of Modern Archives and Manuscripts, 1601-1950. The British Library.

Françoise Baillet - Principal Investigator of the *Punch's* Pocket Book Archive project, Université Caen Normandie.

10:10-11:40: Session 1 - Illustrators, Engravers and the Sensational

Chair : **Françoise Baillet**

Lorraine Janzen Kooistra (Toronto Metropolitan University) - "Reading Pictorial Initials in *Punch*, 1841-1891"

Anne Anderson (Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London) - "'Mr Punch' and the Pre-Raphaelites: Image and Text"

Emma Liggins (Manchester Metropolitan University) - "'Now Ladies if you Please': George du Maurier's Visualisations of mid-Victorian femininity in *Punch* and illustrated editions of Elizabeth Gaskell's 1860s sensation fiction"

11:40-11:55: Break

11:55-12:55: Keynote Presentation - Patrick Leary - "The Education of Henry Silver"

Respondent: **Clare Horrocks**

12:55-2:00: Lunch

2:00- 3:30: Session 2 - Decadence, Celebrity and Social Networks

Chair: **Sonja Lawrenson**

Bethany Dahlstrom (Independent scholar) - "'[E]ndless holocausts of small fowl': Mr Punch's *Designs After Nature*".

Clare Horrocks (Liverpool John Moores University) - «Into the Archive: the Illustrations and Correspondence of Linley Sambourne»

Jane Harrison (University of Portsmouth) - "'The Lion Huntress of Belgravia': The Victorian society hostess and her presentation in *Punch*".

Nick Freeman (Loughborough University) - "'What would life be without coffee?': *Punch*, Decadence, and Ambivalence during the Fin de Siècle"

3:30-4:30: Keynote Presentation - Julia Thomas - 'In Search of Punch's Pocket Book: A Digital Treasure Hunt'
Respondent: **Bethany Qualls**

4:30 – 4:45 - Break

4:45 – 5:45 Session 3 - Bradbury and Evans Panel
Chair: **Francoise Baillet**

Christopher Gangadin Anderson (Independent scholar) - "Mayhew's *Punch*"

Elliot Andrews (University of Leicester) - "A Wretched Arithmetician: John Leech and the Etiquette of Money in the *Punch* Brotherhood"

Katy Birch (Aberystwyth University) - "Researching Female *Punch* Writers in the Contributors Ledgers"

5-45: Closing remarks

7:30: Study Day dinner at GA KingsX (registered participants).



OUR KEYNOTES

Dr Patrick Leary

Historian of the Victorian press and author of *The Punch Brotherhood. Table Talk and Print Culture in Mid-Victorian London* (2010)

"The Education of Henry Silver"

Abstract | In this talk we will take a tour of the most remarkable document in the *Punch* Archive: Henry Silver's "diary" of the talk at the Sunday dinner meetings of the staff and proprietors of *Punch*. Almost everything we know about the week-to-week operation of the magazine at mid-century comes from this unassuming notebook with its torn, fading cover and its pages and pages of tiny scribbles. Central to that operation was the sometimes vigorous debate about the theme and form of the vastly influential full-page political cartoon – the Big Cut – and we will explore the intimate and sometimes contentious connections between those discussions and the cartoons that eventually appeared. But there is much more to Silver's diary, for it represents one of the few sustained records of actual middle-class conversation that have come down to us from the period. And as for the self-effacing Henry Silver himself? Something of a mystery, as we'll see, but one worth a closer look.

Professor Julia Thomas FLSW, FRSA

School of English, Communication and Philosophy / Ysgol Saesneg, Cyfathrebu ac Athroniaeth
Cardiff University / Prifysgol Caerdydd

In Search of *Punch's Pocket Book: A Digital Treasure Hunt*

Abstract | Join me on a treasure hunt as we try to discover digital images of, and from, *Punch's Pocket Book*. On the way, we will reflect on the value and significance of different ways of making nineteenth-century illustrations searchable online so that they can be retrieved by users. We will look behind the scenes (or screens) of digital archives and explore the advantages and disadvantages of methods for image searchability, including manual 'tagging' or marking up pictures, crowdsourcing, and the latest computer vision and AI tools. These methods play an increasingly large part in how we research and engage with historical illustrations. They will be analysed not as mechanical or neutral activities, but as critical interventions, which involve actively interpreting these images and rendering them visible or invisible.

As with any event, our treasure hunt will involve a risk assessment. As we move from a digital to an AI culture, what are the potential pitfalls in terms of access to and retrievability of nineteenth-century illustrations? The paper argues for the vital importance of *Punch's Pocket Book Archive* in this new environment. This project will make it possible for us to find our treasure.

TEAM

Punch's Pocket Book Archive – Phase 1 (2024-2026)

The creators:

Françoise Baillet is the Principal Investigator of Punch's Pocket Book Archive (2024-2029), and a Professor of British History and Culture at Université Caen Normandie. A specialist of nineteenth-century print culture and a long-standing Punch scholar, she is the author of *Visions et divisions. Discours culturels de Punch et ordre social victorien, 1850-1880*. Recent activities include contributions to edited collections *Issues and Singularity in the British Media and British Writers*, *Popular Literature and New Media Innovation, 1820-1845*.

Sonja Lawrenson is Senior Lecturer in English at Manchester Metropolitan University, where she co-directs the Long Nineteenth-Century Network and hosts the North-West Long Nineteenth-Century Research Seminar. Her research centres on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women's writing in Ireland, and more broadly on Irish transnationalism, global imperialism, theatre history, and popular print culture. She has published on a range of Irish Romantic writing, including the works of Frances Sheridan, Maria Edgeworth, Sydney Owenson, and Charles Robert Maturin.

Clare Horrocks (FRHistS), Liverpool John Moores University. Clare has been Co-Investigator for the *Punch's Pocket Book Archive* during its formative pilot years (2024-2026). She has been Principal Investigator on a major collaboration with Gale Cengage Publishers—appointed as Academic Advisor for the online *Punch Historical Archive*—and has pioneered a number of attribution projects on Punch. Plans for 2025-27 include a major public engagement project with Sambourne House, for which she has received a British Academy Small Research Grant.

Bethany Qualls, Université Caen Normandie. Bethany is the first postdoctoral fellow for *Punch's Pocket Book Archive* (2024–2026). A scholar of British periodicals in the long eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, she also works on gossip, new media, print culture, sex work history, and feminist archival recovery. Her scholarship has been supported as a Lewis Walpole Library fellow (Yale), American Society of Eighteenth-Century Studies Women's Caucus Catharine Macaulay Prize winner, and UC Davis Mellon Public Scholar.

The technical experts:

Julia Roger, Pôle Document Numérique, Université Caen Normandie: One part of our dynamic duo of digital humanities technical experts, Julia has worked on open-access digital projects ranging from Corpus Descartes, an online edition of René Descartes' works and correspondence, to the *The Digital Library of the Mont Saint-Michel*.

Subha-Sree Pasupathy, Pôle Document Numérique, Université Caen Normandie. The other part of our dynamic duo of digital humanities technical experts, Subha has contributed to open-access digital projects such as *Les Écrits de l'abbé Castel de Saint-Pierre*, an online edition of Castel de Saint-Pierre's work; the register of deliberations for the eighteenth-century French anti-slavery group *Société des Amis des Noirs*; and *DicoMarine*, a virtual library of French language marine dictionaries from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries.

The administrator and advisor:

Pascal Buléon - Research Director at CNRS. Pascal is the Head of Caen Normandie's Digital Centre of Excellence for the Humanities and Social Sciences (CAeSAR), a funding managed by the French National Research Agency under the France 2030 initiative, and by the Normandy Region. He is a member of the Scientific Council of CNRS Humanities.

Géraldine Gradel - Head of Strategic International Partnerships. Géraldine designs and implements dedicated partnerships strategies and assists the researchers in their partnership approach. With a background in both Museology (DESS from Ecole du Louvre) and Fundraising (Master's degree) she serves as intermediary between institutional missions, researchers, and philanthropists.





The State

THE ROYAL FAMILY OF ENGLAND.

QUEEN ALEXANDRINA VICTORIA (Acc. June 20, 1837) . May 24, 1819
 Prince Albert Francis Augustus Charles Emmanuel . May 24, 1819