# *Transcribe Bentham* questionnaire

**Introduction**

*Transcribe Bentham* is an award-winning crowdsourced scholarly manuscript transcription project. It makes available online high-quality digital images written and composed by the philosopher and reformer Jeremy Bentham (1748 – 1832), a figure of outstanding historical and philosophical importance.

We recruit volunteers from around the world to transcribe unpublished Bentham manuscripts, of which there are 60,000 manuscripts folios (an estimated 30 million words) held by UCL Library’s Special Collections. Volunteers are also asked to encode their manuscripts in Text-Encoding Initiative compliant XML, for preservation and interoperability purposes. Volunteer transcribed manuscripts have two purposes:

* They will feed into the editorial work of UCL’s Bentham Project, which is producing the new, authoritative edition of *The Collected Works of Jeremy Bentham*.
* They will be uploaded to UCL Library’s digital Bentham Papers repository, where the entire collection will ultimately be stored and made searchable.

*Transcribe Bentham* is thus a partnership between volunteer transcribers, historians, editors, digital humanists, digital curators, and IT professionals, and makes a genuine contribution to scholarship.

You can read more about *Transcribe Bentham* in these two articles:

* T. Causer and V. Wallace (2012), [‘Building a Volunteer Community: Results and Findings from *Transcribe Bentham*’](http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/6/2/000125/000125.html), *Digital Humanities Quarterly*
* T. Causer, J. Tonra, and V. Wallace (2012), ‘[Transcription Maxmized; Expense Minimized? Crowdsourcing and Editing *The Collected Works of Jeremy Bentham*](http://llc.oxfordjournals.org/content/27/2/119.short?rss=1&amp%3bssource=mfr)’, *Literary and Linguistic Computing,* vol. 27 (2)

**Questionnaire**

Thank you for helping us asses the *Transcribe Bentham* user interface. Go to the *Transcribe Bentham* blog at <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/transcribe-bentham>, which is probably the main point of entry for most users.

What are your first impressions of the site’s:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 (Poor) | 2 | 3 | 4 (Attractive) |
| Design and layout? |  |  |  |  |
| Content? |  |  |  |  |
| Ease of navigation? |  |  |  |  |

What three adjectives would you use to describe the website?

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Do you have any further comments about the site?

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What do you think the purpose of the site is? Does it achieve its purpose?

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Please have a quick read of a few entries on the blog. We have attempted to reach as wide an audience as possible, from academics to the general public. Have we achieved the correct tone? Is the content appropriate? Should we include more/different content?

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**The Transcription Desk**

Access the *Transcription Desk*, where volunteers transcribe material: <http://www.transcribe-bentham.da.ulcc.ac.uk/td/Transcribe_Bentham>. In its barest essence, the site is a customised MediaWiki, and so familiar to the millions of people who use Wikipedia each day.

What are your first impressions of the site’s:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 (Poor) | 2 | 3 | 4 (Attractive) |
| Design and layout? |  |  |  |  |
| Content? |  |  |  |  |
| Ease of navigation? |  |  |  |  |

What three adjectives would you use to describe the website?

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Do you have any further comments about the front page?

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If you have not already done so during the *Digital Resources for the Humanities* class, please click on ‘[Log In/Create Account](http://www.transcribe-bentham.da.ulcc.ac.uk/td/index.php?title=Special:UserLogin&returnto=Transcribe_Bentham)’ in the grey bar at the top of the screen. Please [create an account](http://www.transcribe-bentham.da.ulcc.ac.uk/td/index.php?title=Special:UserLogin&type=signup&returnto=Transcribe_Bentham) – you will receive an automated email, containing a link which you will need to click to gain editing privileges. Watch out: some providers such as Hotmail or Yahoo! may direct this email to your junk folder. Once that’s done, please log in.

Click on ‘Transcription Guidelines’ in the navigation box on the left of the screen. These are the extensive guidelines and instructions for encoding and transcribing material. There are a lot of them!

Consult the condensed ‘Getting Started’ guidelines (<http://www.transcribe-bentham.da.ulcc.ac.uk/td/Getting_Started>), and watch the ‘Transcribe Bentham: Getting Started’ video, before looking at the remainder of the guidelines.

What do you think about the instructions? Bear in mind that we are trying to appeal to as wide an audience as possible.

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|  | 1 (Disagree) | 2 | 3 | 4 (Agree) |
| Are the ‘Getting Started’ instructions useful? |  |  |  |  |
| Are the ‘Getting Started’ guidelines too complex? |  |  |  |  |
| Is the instructional video useful? |  |  |  |  |
| Are the full ‘Transcription Guidelines’ useful? |  |  |  |  |
| Are the full ‘Transcription Guidelines’ too complex? |  |  |  |  |

How can we strike a balance between ensuring that the guidelines are useful, comprehensive enough to cover all of the encoding/transcription issues, and yet ensure that they are digestible and don’t put people off before they have started?

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Do you have any further comments about the instructional material? How could it be improved?

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We attempted to include social media functions into the project, and have used:

* a discussion forum: [http://www.transcribe-bentham.da.ulcc.ac.uk/td/Special:AWCforum](http://www.transcribe-bentham.da.ulcc.ac.uk/td/Special%3AAWCforum)
* a Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/TranscribeBentham>
* a Twitter account: <https://twitter.com/TranscriBentham>
* volunteer leaderboard (on the front page)
* user pages (click on a few from the leaderboard)

What do you make of our use of these features? How could they be improved? Is there any way in which we could encourage volunteers to make better use of them?

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Return to the front page of the Transcription Desk, and note the project progress bar, which shows how much of the material uploaded to the site has been transcribed so far. Click on the link to the ‘Benthamometer’ underneath the bar (<http://www.transcribe-bentham.da.ulcc.ac.uk/td/Benthamometer>), which shows the overall state of progress.

What do you think? Is there any other way in which we could display this information more attractively?

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**Selecting a manuscript to transcribe**

We will now have a go at transcribing something. Click on ‘Select a Manuscript’ in the navigation box (<http://www.transcribe-bentham.da.ulcc.ac.uk/td/Manuscripts>)

We arrange material by subject, chronology, difficulty level, box number, and folio number. Volunteers can also select a random manuscript by clicking the ‘Random Page’ link in the navigations box.

Volunteers often tell us that they are frustrated by being unable to find an untranscribed manuscript to work on, so we created a list of manuscripts which have yet to be transcribed: [http://www.transcribe-bentham.da.ulcc.ac.uk/td/Category:Untranscribed\_Manuscripts](http://www.transcribe-bentham.da.ulcc.ac.uk/td/Category%3AUntranscribed_Manuscripts)

How would you rate the:

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 (Poor) | 2 | 3 | 4 (Excellent) |
| Ease of finding a manuscript to transcribe? |  |  |  |  |
| Ease of navigating between the various categories of manuscript? |  |  |  |  |

How could we make it more straightforward to navigate the manuscripts, and select something to work on?

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**Transcribing**

We’ll now have a go at transcribing something. (If you are having trouble finding a manuscript, or can’t find one which you can read, either click on ‘Random Page’ until you have found something reasonably decipherable, or go to [http://www.transcribe-bentham.da.ulcc.ac.uk/td/Category:Untranscribed\_Manuscripts](http://www.transcribe-bentham.da.ulcc.ac.uk/td/Category%3AUntranscribed_Manuscripts), click on ‘Box 116’, and select anything from JB/116/63x/xxx onwards).

Once you have selected a manuscript (make sure you are logged in), press ‘click here to edit’. This will open up the transcription interface proper. On the left you will be presented with a text box into which you enter your transcript, and on the right the manuscript image. Above the text box is the transcription toolbar: we realised that many users would be unfamiliar with XML or TEI, and so the toolbar was developed to automatically produce the encoding. Volunteers simply highlight a portion of text, or place in the text, press the required button, and the tags are generated.



Have a go at transcribing your manuscript. If you have trouble with the image viewer, switch to the Javascript viewer.

How would you rate:

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 (Poor) | 2 | 3 | 4 (Excellent) |
| The image viewer’s ease of use? |  |  |  |  |
| The image quality? |  |  |  |  |
| The transcription toolbar’s ease of use? |  |  |  |  |
| The transcription toolbar’s practicality? |  |  |  |  |
| The ease of distinguishing between text and markup? |  |  |  |  |
| The transcription process overall? |  |  |  |  |

Do you have any further comments on the transcription interface?

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We have identified several potential improvements to the transcription interface, which we plan to implement during the next seven to eight months. Volunteers have also provided other ideas, as noted here: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/transcribe-bentham/2012/10/01/help-improve-transcribe-bentham/>. For example, our research shows that one of the main factors which dissuades participation is the addition of XML markup. Creating a What-You-See-Is-What-You-Get interface would allow the markup to be hidden from view, and allow volunteers to concentrate on transcription.

Please rate these potential changes in terms of which you think would be most useful for volunteers:

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 (Unimportant) | 2 | 3 | 4 (Important) |
| Introduction of a What-You-See-Is-What-You-Get interface, with the XML hidden from view (e.g. like typing in a word processor) |  |  |  |  |
| A more flexible image viewer (ability to rotate/resize the image) |  |  |  |  |
| Image viewer to go on top of text box, so image is viewed in widescreen and transcript can be seen in context |  |  |  |  |
| A pop-out transcription toolbar |  |  |  |  |
| A pop-out image viewer |  |  |  |  |
| Facility to download images |  |  |  |  |
| Colour coding to distinguish between transcribed and untranscribed material |  |  |  |  |
| Filtering of untranscribed material (e.g. ability to find all ‘hard’ panopticon material |  |  |  |  |
| Semantic markup to link subjects/people |  |  |  |  |
| Removal of locked transcripts from ‘Random Page’ stream |  |  |  |  |

Do you have any other improvements/modifications which you think should be made to the transcription interface?

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Do you have any further comments about *Transcribe Bentham* in general?

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