

Institution: Newman University Birmingham		
Unit of Assessment: History		
Title of case study: Mapping the Scottish Reformation: Visualising Data on Clerical Ancestors		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2016-20		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Chris R. Langley	Reader in Early Modern History	August 2014 to present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2020-1		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>Mapping the Scottish Reformation has made tracking clerical ancestors in early modern Scotland easier and more accessible. The project website allows users to explore a period that can be difficult for family historians to reach. The website democratises access to considerable amounts of manuscript material and visualises the careers of clerics between 1560 and 1689.</p> <p>Through the project website and engagement with genealogical communities in the UK, North America and Australasia, MSR became a key tool for those searching for their pre-modern Scottish ancestry and offered new ways to search through and visualise complex data.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>Mapping the Scottish Reformation is an international digital humanities collaboration. The project is led by Chris R. Langley (Newman University, Birmingham) and Michelle D. Brock (W&L University, USA) with team members Mackenzie Brooks (W&L University, USA), Stewart Cromar and Hristo Meshinski (Interactive Content Team, University of Edinburgh, UK). MSR grew out of the respective research interests of the project directors, including Chris R. Langley's ongoing work on religious cultures in early modern Scotland. In particular, the research questions guiding the project were derived from Langley's work on the region of Lothian and Tweeddale, as well as his book <i>Worship, Civil War and Community, 1638-1660</i>.</p> <p>Funded by a grant of \$49,959 from the National Endowment for the Humanities, between 2018 and 2020, the core project team collected data relating to clerical careers in Scotland between the Reformation of 1560 to the Glorious Revolution of 1689. To test the feasibility of the project, the first stage of research focused on the area of Lothian and Tweeddale: a significant region around Edinburgh. This amounted to over 10,000 pages of manuscript material housed in the National Records of Scotland (NRS), Edinburgh, being parsed. The project team collected datapoints on the names of clerics and their family members, the universities at which they studied, the parishes they served, the dates when they moved, and significant events like suspension and deposition. By the conclusion of data collection, the project team had gathered information about 654 clerical careers, almost 1,000 individual tenures, and over 400 clergy wives from 124 parishes across seven presbyteries in Lothian and Tweeddale.</p> <p>The methodology devised to capture clerical lives was the result of Langley and Brock's research into the complexities of early modern religious life. The project team imported raw data into Wikidata, an open repository for structured data. Working closely with Ewan McAndrew, the Wikimedian in Residence at the University of Edinburgh, the project team created profiles for each cleric in the dataset and developed a data structure that allowed for the capturing of the complexities of the clerical lifecycle, as well as recording full references to the extant archival material. This data was then queried using the programming language SPARQL and the Wikidata</p>		

Query Service to extract five distinct aspects of clerical lives: tenures, journeys, education, families, and key events. The full MSR dataset is freely available for other research projects to use on Wikidata.

Liaising closely with family history communities *Scottish Indexes* and the Aberdeen and North East Scotland Genealogical Association, the project team developed a public-facing website that visualised this complex data in an accessible manner. Funded by a grant of £4,110 by the Strathmartine Trust, version 1.0 of the website launched in December 2020 and was updated (v.1.1) in March 2021. It is live at maps.mappingthescottishreformation.org.

The website is designed to allow easy engagement with complex source material, requiring no expert knowledge in the field to view and manipulate the data. Clerical careers are arranged visually on map tiles sourced using the National Library of Scotland Historical Maps API. A tranche of tools allows users to search for clerical careers by name, place of residence, year, or even archival reference. Powerful aggregations of data on each map give users a broader picture of the clergy – from typical patterns of residence to the average distance travelled from a cleric's alma mater to his first permanent ministerial post. In March 2021, a new feature was added to the website, allowing users to download the results of their search for future reference.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

All Chris R. Langley:

'Decorum, emotion and moderation at the Glasgow Assembly, 1638', *Historical Research*, 93 (2020)

'Reading John Knox in the Scottish Revolution, 1638-42', in Chris R. Langley (ed.), *The National Covenant in Scotland, 1638-1689* (London: Boydell, 2020)

'"In the execution of his office": Lay officials and the exercise of ecclesiastical discipline in Scotland, c. 1600-1660', *The Seventeenth Century*, 33 (2018)

'Sheltering under the Covenant: The National Covenant, orthodoxy and the Irish Rebellion, 1638-1643', *Scottish Historical Review*, 96 (October, 2017)

(ed.), *The Minutes of the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale, 1648-1659* (London: Boydell, 2016)

Worship, Civil War and Community, 1638-1660 (London: Routledge, 2016)

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Reach

Since its launch in December 2020, the MSR maps website received 1,539 users over 2,197 separate sessions. 42% of the website's users were drawn from the UK, with just over 33% from the United States. Around 5% of the website's users were from Canada and Australia. In total, the website drew the meaningful attention of visitors from over twenty different countries (excluding visits from web crawlers or other bots). The average visit is just under three minutes in length.

The MSR blog – offering analysis of historical and technical aspects of the project – has attracted over 13,000 unique visitors since its launch in July 2018. The launch of the project website on 11 December 2020 was seen over 79,000 times by users of Twitter.

Family History and Professional Genealogy

The principles behind MSR were designed in concert with an international community of professional genealogists and family history enthusiasts. In 2019, the project team met with family history librarians in Virginia to discuss online resources that explored Scottish ancestry. The project team disseminated its initial ideas in articles in the popular history magazine *History Scotland* (R6) in April 2019 and the open-access *International Journal of Scottish Studies* later the same year (R5). As web development began in earnest, the project team liaised with family history communities via *Scottish Indexes* in August 2020, the Scottish Genealogy Network AGM in September 2020, and the North East Scotland Genealogical Association in December 2020 to discuss the tools that would prove useful to family history research. Over 4,000 people watched the MSR presentation at the *Scottish Indexes* online conference in August 2020 and around 80 professional and amateur genealogists attended a discussion with the project team on Zoom to discuss design ideas. A report of our discussions with the ANESFHS appeared in the Society's quarterly journal (distributed to around 5,000 members). All of these critical friends were given advanced access to the MSR website one week before launch, to allow users to see how their feedback have affected the website's design.

The launch of the MSR website received significant attention from the genealogical community. In December 2020, Scottish genealogist Chris Paton commented that MSR would be 'of massive interest to many' researching their family history. The Society of One Place Studies featured the launch of the MSR website in their December 2020 digest of 'new and interesting websites' for local historians and the project was featured in *Who Do You Think You Are?* magazine in February 2021 (R4).

The search tools offered by the MSR website make the process of doing Scottish family history easier. Hitherto, there was no searchable index to help genealogists find clerical ancestors. MSR offers easy-to-use search filters that allow users to search by name, parish, region, or even archive accession number. Queries that would previously take hours of painstaking work in an archive can now be completed in seconds by a non-specialist user. The founders of the Scottish Indexes genealogical service have estimated that a search for clerical ancestors that would have previously taken between eight and ten hours of archival labour can now be performed in seconds on MSR (R1). This has fundamentally changed how genealogists do their research. The service is now listed in the GenGuide for genealogists as one of the most prominent ways to find clerical ancestors online (R7).

For those outside Scotland, MSR gave access to manuscript material that was only available in archive reading rooms in Edinburgh. Following the closure of the National Records of Scotland and National Library of Scotland in March 2020 in response to the coronavirus pandemic, MSR took on an outsized significance in helping family historians in the UK gain access to datapoints from manuscript records that were suddenly inaccessible. The chair of the Brisbane branch of the Aberdeen and North-East Scotland Family History Society commented that family historians outside of the UK could use MSR 'to access the National Records of Scotland from our home' (R2). Similarly, the website's use of the National Library of Scotland Historic Maps API allows visitors to the website to see clerical careers alongside historical cartography, raising the profile of the NLS map collection (R3).

MSR's easy to use, but powerful, visualisations offered new ways for researchers to analyse clerical careers. In a survey of March 2021, 57% of respondents reported that, out of all of MSR's features, its visualisations of clerical lives had affected their research most. Our commitment to explaining the historical and technical processes behind these visualisations resulted in MSR being awarded Second Runner Up in the annual Digital Humanities Awards (best blog post or series of blog post award) in March 2021.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

R1 Scottish Indexes support letter

R2 Aberdeen and North East Scotland Genealogical Association support letter

R3 NLS support letter

R4 R. Collins, 'Database of Scottish clergy launched', *Who Do You Think You Are?*, 171 (2021), p. 12

R5 M. D. Brock & C. R. Langley, 'Mapping the Scottish Reformation: Tracing careers of the Scottish clergy, 1560-1689', *International Review of Scottish Studies*, 44 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.21083/irss.v44i0.5834>

R6 M. D. Brock & Chris R. Langley, 'Mapping the Scottish Reformation: Using technology to understand the clergy, 1560-1689', *History Scotland*, (April 2019)

R7 'Clergymen records', <https://www.genguide.co.uk/source/clergymen-records-including-scotland-occupations/>