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**“What is maths without a challenge!” – Reporting on how undergraduate mathematics students in an Irish university worked with original sources in a novel context.**

**Abstract**

In 2016, the author curated an online exhibition of the mathematical works in the Edward Worth Library in Dublin. Of about 4400 works, dating from 1475 to 1733, in the library, about one hundred are mathematical, the earliest of these printed in 1538. The process by which the exhibition was created involved working with twenty undergraduate students (on a three-year BA programme) who were taking a module in the History of Mathematics. As part of this module, students were required to contribute to the exhibition. Specifically, they were asked to choose one mathematical book from the collection and explore it in whatever way they could.

The background to the exhibition, students' reaction to their initial visit to the library, an overview of how students were supported in their work, and a summary of the eventual shape of the exhibition are all reported previously (at CERME 10). In this presentation the author reports on how the students coped with unfamiliar and challenging original material (mainly in Latin, but with some books in French and English).

In particular, three stages in the project are highlighted: students' initial work on their author and book, their revised work (an 800-1200 word draft entry for the exhibition) and the necessary editing to ensure coherence of the exhibition itself. For the revision (phase 2) of their work, students were provided with feedback on phase 1 and asked to check out resources on the web and in the (university) library relating to their chosen book, its author and the context of his life.

Inevitably students' approaches to the project varied greatly, as did the level of engagement. It cannot be claimed that the insights reported here might apply to another 'similar' cohort of (mainly) Irish students, and, even less, to students elsewhere. Nonetheless, it is hoped that a detailed presentation of the experience of working with these particular students will contribute to the discourse of working with original sources in an undergraduate programme where the students have some mathematical background but no prior exposure to the history of the subject.

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