Dr. Katherine D. Harris, Assistant Professor
Dept. of English & Comparative Literature
San Jose State University

One Washington Square
San Jose, CA 95192-0090
kharris@email.sjsu.edu

DIGITAL PROJECT
Forget Me Not: **A Hypertextual Archive of Ackermann's 19th-Century Literary Annual**

For the First Annual Nebraska Digital Workshop, I propose to demonstrate a hypertextual archive that focuses on both the material text and its literary contents: The "*Forget Me Not*: A Hypertextual Archive of Ackermann's 19th-Century Literary Annual" (hereafter "Forget Me Not Archive") represents the initial phase of a project that will eventually digitize an early nineteenth-century textual and literary phenomenon, the literary annual – a genre that was incredibly popular in Britain 1823-1860 but has been much maligned by twentieth-century scholars because of its pejoratively marked "feminine" form and supposedly beatific contents.

Literary annuals are early nineteenth-century British texts published yearly from 1822 to 1860, primarily intended for a middle class audience due to its moderate retail cost. Initially published in duodecimo or octavo, the decoratively bound volumes – filled with steel plate engravings of nationally recognized artwork and sentimental poetry and prose – exuded a feminine delicacy that attracted a primarily female readership. They were published in November and sold for the following year, which made the annual an ideal Christmas gift, lover's present or token of friendship.

From the first title in 1822, Ackermann's *Forget Me Not*, the genre experienced a wild, popular frenzy that drove the success, failure, and recognition of authors, publishers, and editors alike. In 1828, 100,000 copies of fifteen separate annuals earned an aggregate retail value of over £70,000. By November 1829, the number was up to forty-three different titles published in Britain alone; not until 1840 did the number of annual titles fall below forty. Within the first decade of the annual's success, male editors, authors, and publishers presented readers with an idealized femininity that approximated the propriety, education, and social instruction offered by earlier conduct manuals. However, the intended effect of both the literature and engravings caused a subversively empowering phenomenon for female readers.

Despite the genre's overwhelming popularity in the nineteenth century, book history scholarship and literary criticism about the genre has been sporadic throughout the twentieth century until academia's

1970s significant drive to recover women's "lost" writing. The volumes themselves, including each volumes' 30-50 authors and over 75 pieces of prose and poetry, are veiled behind inadequate catalogue descriptions, blurry microfilms of a volumes' physical characteristics and difficulty in locating the "real," material object. I partially remedy this problem with a hypertextual archive of the first British-published literary annual, which digitizes several components from the 1823 through 1830 *Forget Me Not* volumes including bibliographical details (cover, binding, spine, size), and content (engravings, poetry, prose) in an attempt to recover from obscurity the literary genre, its authors, its contribution to book history, and women's authorship in early nineteenth-century England.

As my essay in the December 2005 *Publications of the Bibliographic Society of America* shows, the *Forget Me Not* defined the annual and set the trend for what all the others would look like in the explosion of literary annuals published in Britain and America between 1822 and 1860. *Friendship's Offering* was one of the first to mimic the *Forget Me Not*, the *Literary Souvenir* expanded the genre's format, and the *Comic Annual* was the first to parody it. All of these volumes will eventually be included within the *Hypertextual Archives of British Literary Annuals*, housed and indexed within *The Poetess Archive* (http://unixgen.muohio.edu/~poetess/)*,* and made part of the NINES (the Networked Infrastructure of Nineteenth-Century Electronic Scholarship <www.nines.org>) and *Romantic Circles* (www.rc.umd.edu) resources. The Forget Me Not Archive will serve as a template (design, navigation, structure, TEI templates, and database encoding) for the *Literary Souvenir, Friendship's Offering, Comic Annual,* and *Bijou*. My goal is to standardize presentation of the *Forget Me Not* literary annual so that the best aspects of the current "Forget Me Not Archive" are preserved while bringing the *Forget Me Not* edition into alignment with the standards for online publication developed by NINES and subscribed to by *Romantic Circles*.

I have been working with Laura Mandell (General Editor of the *Poetess Archive*) to create TEI masters of each volume with engravings and page images, just as has been done for the *Bijou* literary annual (www.orgs.muohio.edu/anthologies/bijou/); XSL transformers transform individual texts in those documents into their own Web pages which are then be linked to each annual's tables of contents. XSL transformers extract from these TEI masters data about editors, writer-contributors, engravers, engravings,

artists, titles, dates that will become part of the British Annuals database but will also provide data fed into the frames (dynamically, upon being called up) of the Forget Me Not Archive. I will thus create and preserve separate interfaces for the annuals, but also will allow these sites to have their indices and contents automatically updated as we type in and scan the texts for the literary annuals, one by one. The database and the individualized sites are essential for this electronic scholarly edition to do all that it wishes to do: present material searchable in innumerable ways, but also separate editions in their own right, with specific bits of contextualizing information, annotation, and metadata arranged by human hands, as it were, around the basic text.

The full run of all of these annuals will be available for the first time in one place, the *Hypertextual Archives of British Literary Annuals,* and its elements (authors, titles, pictures, page images) will be explained and made part of *The Poetess Archive*'s searchable database. By using these archives, scholars, and students will be able to view color images of text, engravings, and boards scanned at a high resolution (300 dpi) and printable from a Web browser. With a visual representation of annual titles in their full runs, students, and scholars will gain a better understanding of the reciprocal relationship between authorship and textual object as well as an integral view of public desire, literary development and authorial consciousness. They will be able to examine writings which are difficult to obtain, hidden in mis-named categories and not preserved in their original form. Armed with basic information regarding the construction and evolution of the literary annual, both scholars and students will be able to pursue studies of women authors, women readers, canonical authors, cultural debates, literary movements, and editorial and publishing innovations. The *Hypertextual Archive of British Literary Annuals* will resolve these access issues by providing not only the literature, but also the literary object, its historical impact, and its cultural value – opening doors for future scholarship.

This entire project relies upon the architecture of and content within the Forget Me Not Archive. To facilitate discussions surrounding the Archive's pedagogical uses, scholarly importance, and necessary development, I will demonstrate its structure, content, and relationship to the material text.