Getting Involved

By participating in the project, you will be the first to transcribe original Bentham papers.

As your contributions will be stored online you will be making Bentham’s thought accessible to the world at large, and contributing to the preservation and presentation of our national heritage.

You can share your thoughts on Bentham by interacting with other users in our discussion forum.

Ultimately your contributions will help the Bentham Project in its task of producing a new authoritative edition of the Collected Works of Jeremy Bentham.

You can begin transcribing Bentham’s works simply by visiting: www.ucl.ac.uk/transcribe-bentham

You can create a user account to keep track of your contributions and interact with other users. You can also find additional information on Bentham and his ideas. Guidelines and a training video are available to help first-time transcribers.

For more information please do not hesitate to contact us:
Tel: +44 (0)20 7679 1407 (Administration)
Fax: +44 (0)20 7679 1424
E-mail: transcribe.bentham@ucl.ac.uk
Web: www.ucl.ac.uk/transcribe-bentham
Twitter: #TranscribeBentham
Facebook: www.facebook.com/TranscribeBentham

Who was Jeremy Bentham?

“The greatest happiness of the greatest number is the only right and proper end of government.”

Jeremy Bentham devised the doctrine of utilitarianism, was a major thinker in the fields of legal philosophy and representative democracy, and originated modern ideas of surveillance through his scheme for a panopticon prison.

There are 60,000 papers written by Bentham in UCL’s library but 40,000 of these papers, potentially of immense intellectual significance, have yet to be transcribed and studied.

Getting Involved

Transcribe Bentham is a participatory initiative hosted by the Bentham Project at University College London in collaboration with UCL’s Centre for Digital Humanities, the University of London Computer Centre and UCL’s Library Services and Media Services.

It is an ambitious and ground-breaking project whose aim is to engage the public in the online transcription of original and unread manuscript papers written by Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), the world renowned philosopher and reformer.

Funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council’s Digital Equipment and Database Enhancement for Impact (DEDEFI) scheme, the initiative will link existing transcriptions to corresponding digital images of the manuscripts.

It will encode these transcriptions in TEI – compliant XML; it will capture a further 12,500 images; and it will develop an online tool to allow volunteers to view and transcribe Bentham papers. Ultimately, the project will create a searchable digital resource of unparalleled historical and philosophical importance.

Visit Bentham

In his will Bentham left his body to medical science. He also requested that his body be preserved and this Auto-Icon, as Bentham called it, was gifted to UCL in 1850 by Bentham’s surgeon, Thomas Southwood Smith.

Today Bentham, dressed in his own clothes and sitting in his chair, is visible in the South Cloisters of UCL’s main building. You can visit the Auto-Icon 07.30 – 18.00, from Monday to Friday.

An example of a Bentham manuscript from box 21 in the Bentham papers