

‘Only the ephemeral is of lasting value.’

How short-lived newspapers offer new perspectives on the history of the nineteenth-century press.

Matthew Stephens

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Edge Hill University/British Library

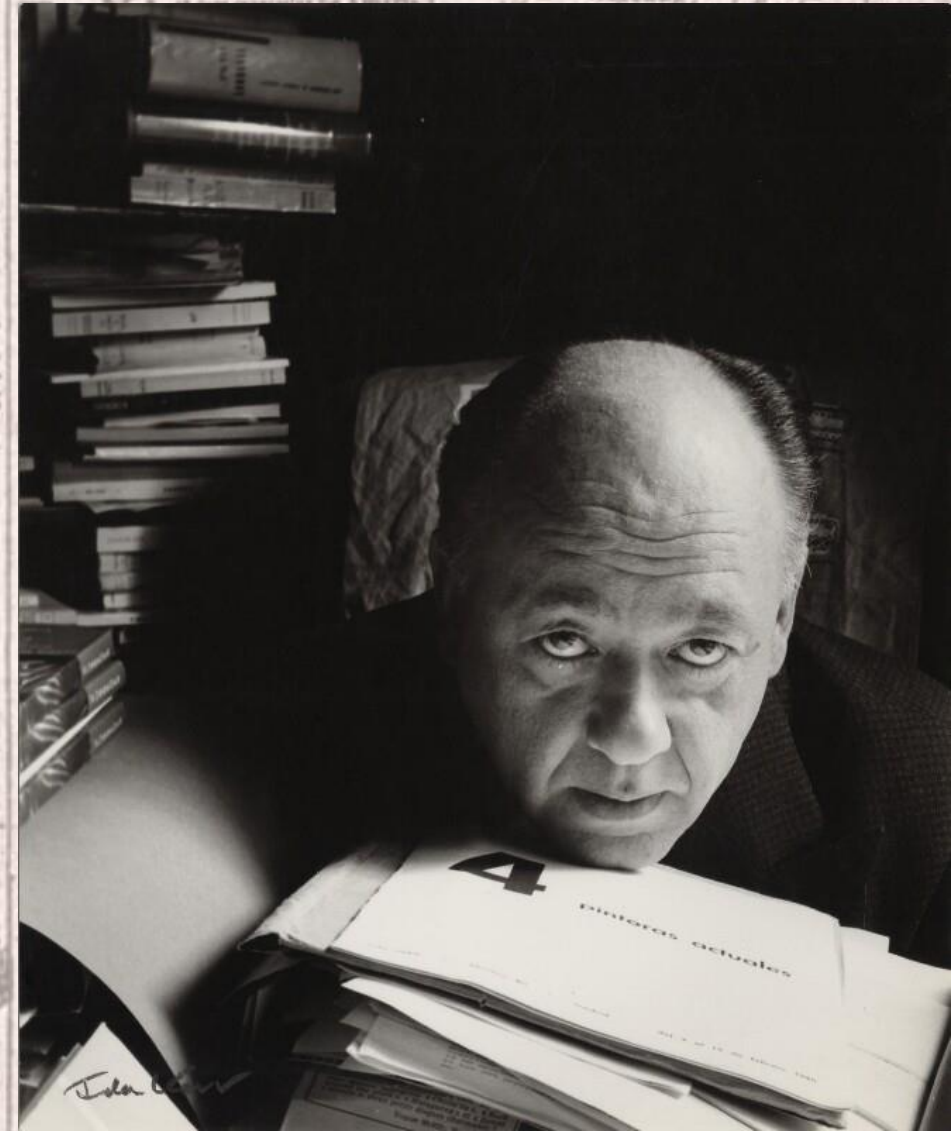


Edge Hill University

BRITISH LIBRARY

Only the ephemeral?

- Attributed to Eugene Ionesco, twentieth-century Romanian-French playwright.
- Exponent of the 'Theatre of the Absurd'
- Provocative for a reason...



ONE HUNDRED YEARS TODAY

Prime Minister's message to the News Chronicle

TODAY this newspaper is 100 years old.

Into the News Chronicle office in Bouverie Street, London, hundreds of messages of congratulation have arrived from all over the world.

Tonight a dinner is being held in London. It will be attended by leading men of the Government, the Press, science, the arts, the professions and industry.

The messages of congratulation came by post, by telegram, by cable and by hand.

Had enough?
 The British Government has had enough of the present situation in Persia, it is believed. It is reported that the British Government is preparing to call a meeting of the Council of the League of Nations tomorrow to discuss the situation in Persia.

Persia: Security Council may call meeting tomorrow
 By Edward Montgomery
 The Security Council of the League of Nations is expected to call a meeting tomorrow to discuss the situation in Persia. The British Government is believed to have proposed this meeting.

Atoms energy
 The discovery of the atom has opened up a new era in science. The energy of the atom is being used in many ways, including the production of electricity and the treatment of cancer.

Century of Service
 The News Chronicle has been celebrating its centenary for many years. It has been a constant presence in the lives of its readers, providing news and information for over a century.

Thorough Independence
 The News Chronicle has always been known for its thorough and independent reporting. It has been a leading voice for the people, providing news and information that is unbiased and accurate.

Big U.S. Strike Has Begun
 A major strike has begun in the United States, involving thousands of workers. The strike is expected to have a significant impact on the economy.

Nonpolitical
 The News Chronicle is a nonpolitical newspaper. It provides news and information from a neutral perspective, without any bias or prejudice.

John White
 John White is a well-known author and journalist. He has written many books and articles, providing insight into various aspects of society and the world.

Atoms energy

Thorough Independence

Nonpolitical

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The centenarians' club



1821



1827



1855

Monday, October 19, 2003, 11p. 10p. 9p. 8p. 7p. 6p. 5p. 4p. 3p. 2p. 1p.

Subscription prices: £120 per annum (UK), £135 (Europe), £150 (Rest of World).



Keep calm and colour in

100 in the blanks with the week's top 100 sports themes



Northern exposure
Ready World Cup
ruled by the warts
(over)

Spies guard nuclear sites from China cyberattack

GCHQ role is revealed on eve of state visit

Specialist cyber units have been used to guard nuclear sites from a Chinese cyber attack, it has been revealed.

British spies will continue computer attacks and cyberespionage in nuclear sites, both in Chinese computers and from the Internet, it has been revealed. Britain's top spy agency, GCHQ, is generating reports about the attacks, which are being passed on to the US, Canada and other allies.

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Lord and Lady... (Caption text is partially obscured)

Cricket's bright idea: green balls

By Alan... (Author name is partially obscured)

Cricket's governing body has considered introducing a 'green ball' that is visible in daylight, it has been revealed.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) is considering a 'green ball' that is visible in daylight, it has been revealed.

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IN THE NEWS

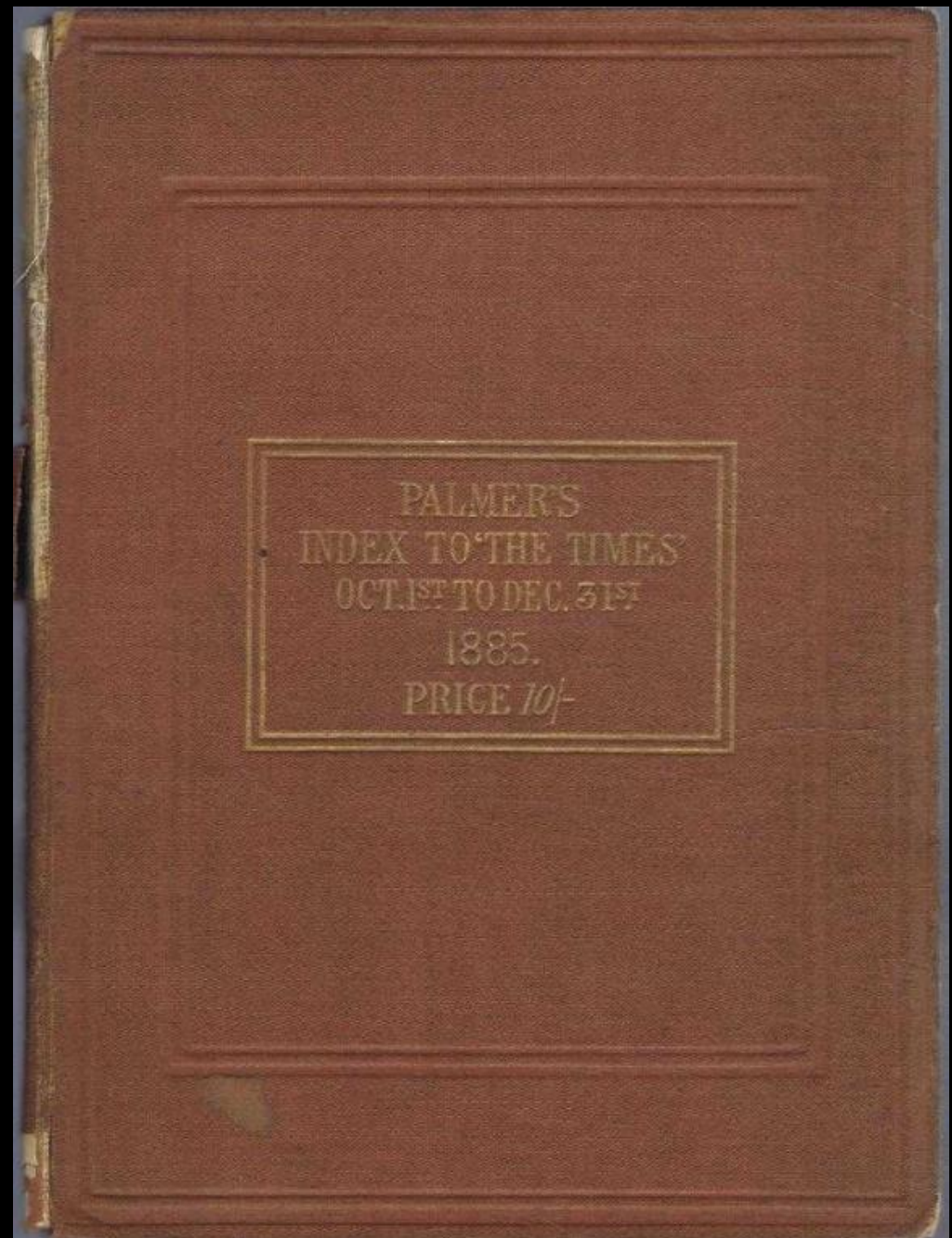
Confronting jihadists
A report on the... (Text is partially obscured)

Hospital staffing fear
A report on the... (Text is partially obscured)

Barry hit pensioner
A report on the... (Text is partially obscured)

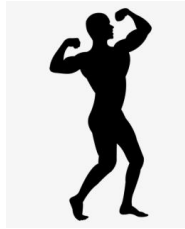
EU boost for Turkey
A report on the... (Text is partially obscured)

Banking trial of risk
A report on the... (Text is partially obscured)



The prevailing view...

'Survival of the fittest'



Capitalist economic theories



- ❖ Long-established papers are/were successful.
- ❖ This paper (insert title) was short-lived.
- ❖ Therefore, this paper was not successful.

But should longevity be considered the sole – or main – criterion for success?

BRITISH MUSEUM.

CATALOGUE

OF

PRINTED BOOKS.

SUPPLEMENT.

NEWSPAPERS

PUBLISHED IN GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND,
1801-1900.

London:

PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED,

DUKE STREET, STAMFORD STREET, S.E., AND GREAT WINDMILL STREET, W.

1905.

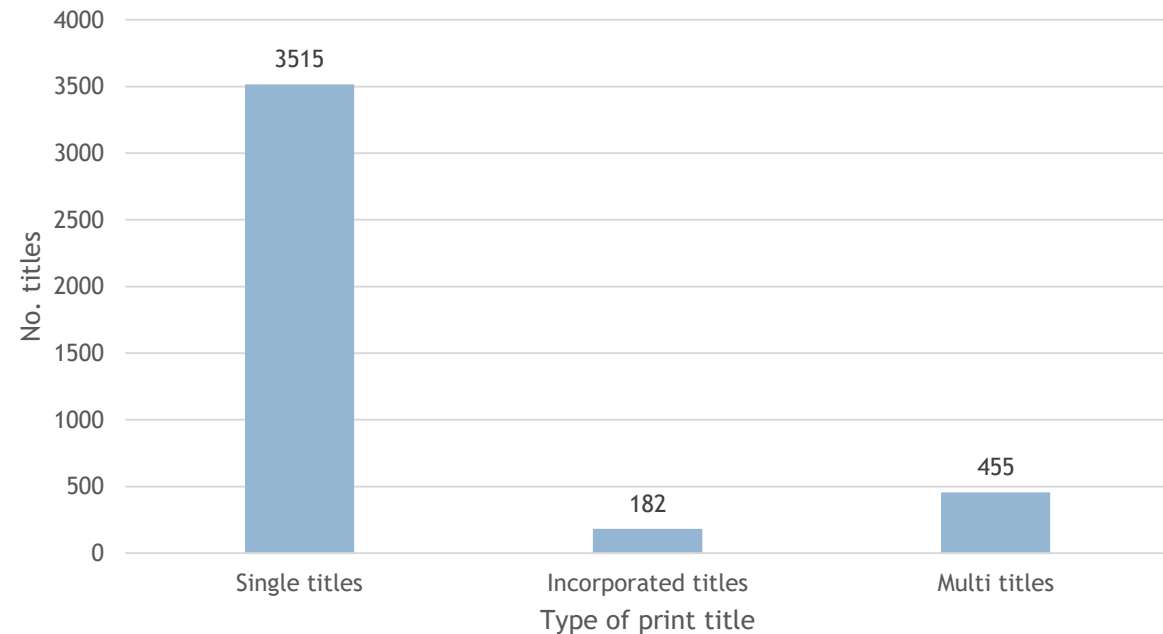


LELAND STANFORD JUNIOR
UNIVERSITY
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Was longevity the exception rather than the rule?

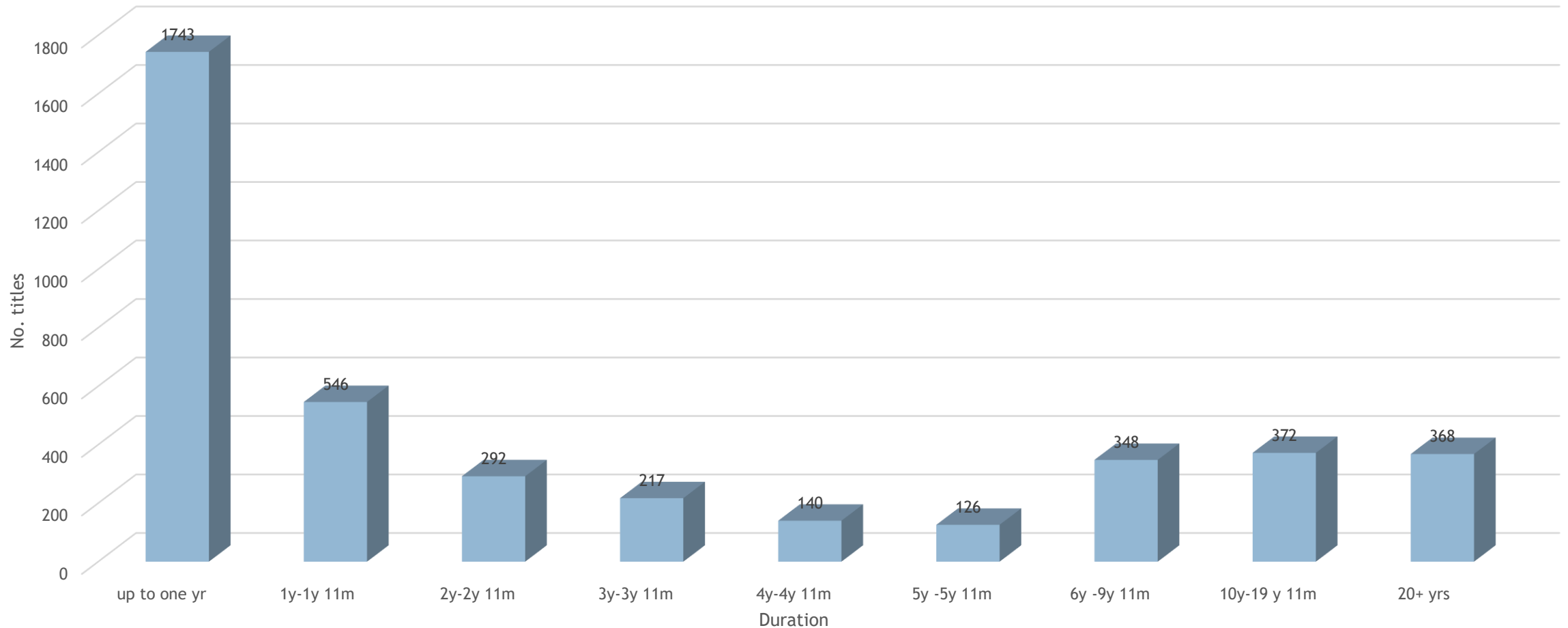
4,152 titles in the 'London and Suburbs' section - includes title changes.

British Museum Catalogue - totals by type of publication.



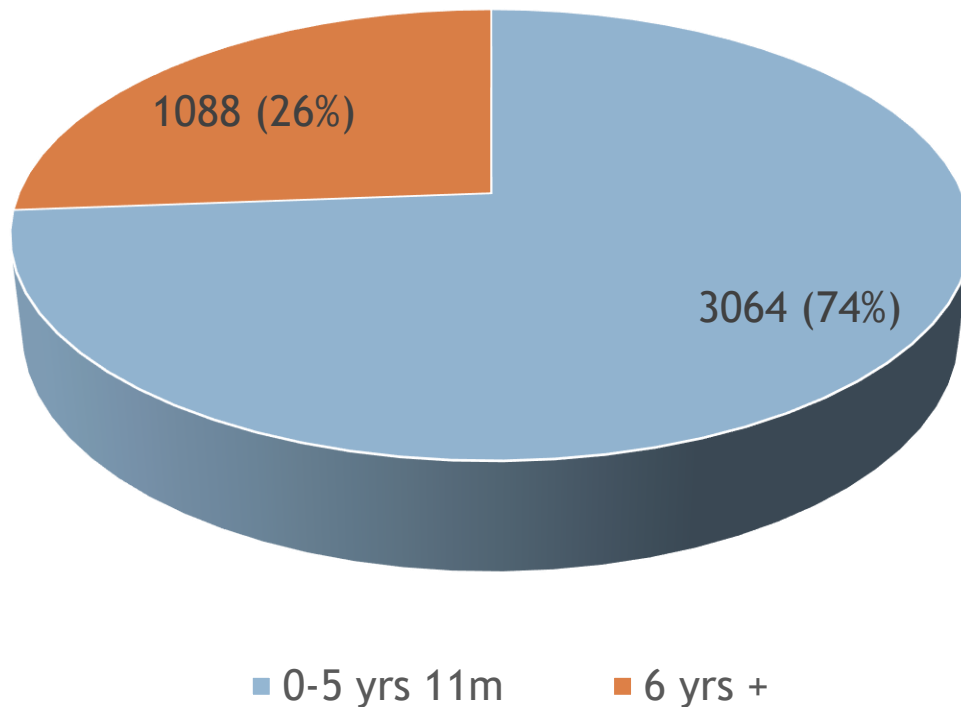
Was longevity the exception rather than the rule?

British Museum Catalogue - No. titles by duration.



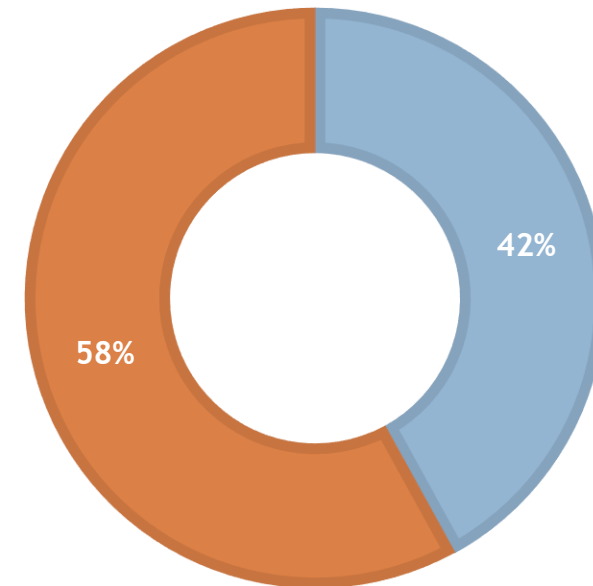
Exceptional longevity

British Museum Catalogue -
preponderance of short-lived newspapers



% SURVIVING UP TO ONE YEAR/MORE
THAN ONE YEAR

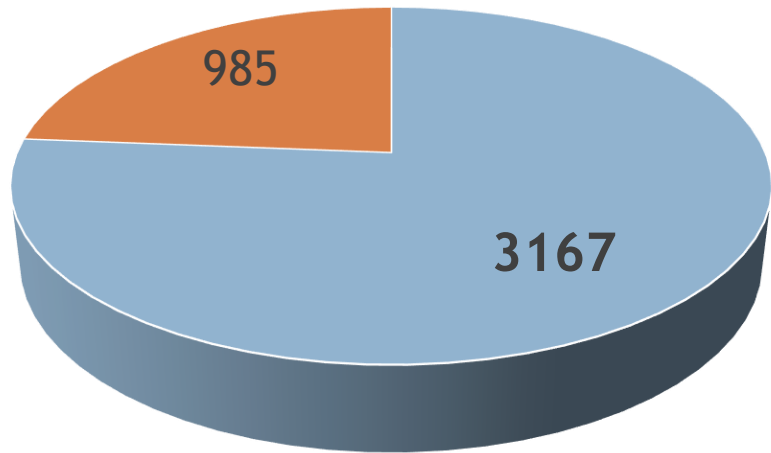
■ Up to one year ■ More than one year



Adjusting to include only C19th newspapers

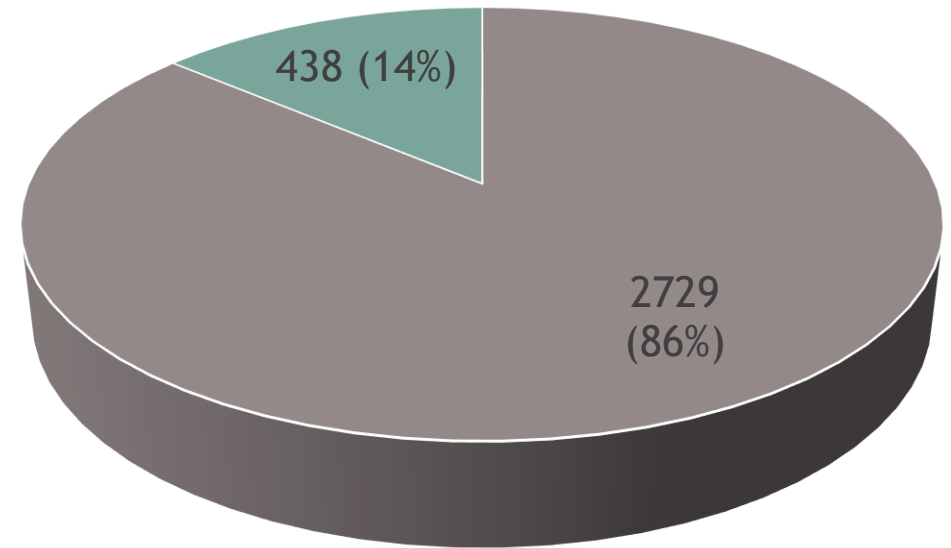
British Museum Catalogue

3167 titles ended to 1900
985 continued into C20th (and beyond...)



■ Pre-1901 ■ Post-1901

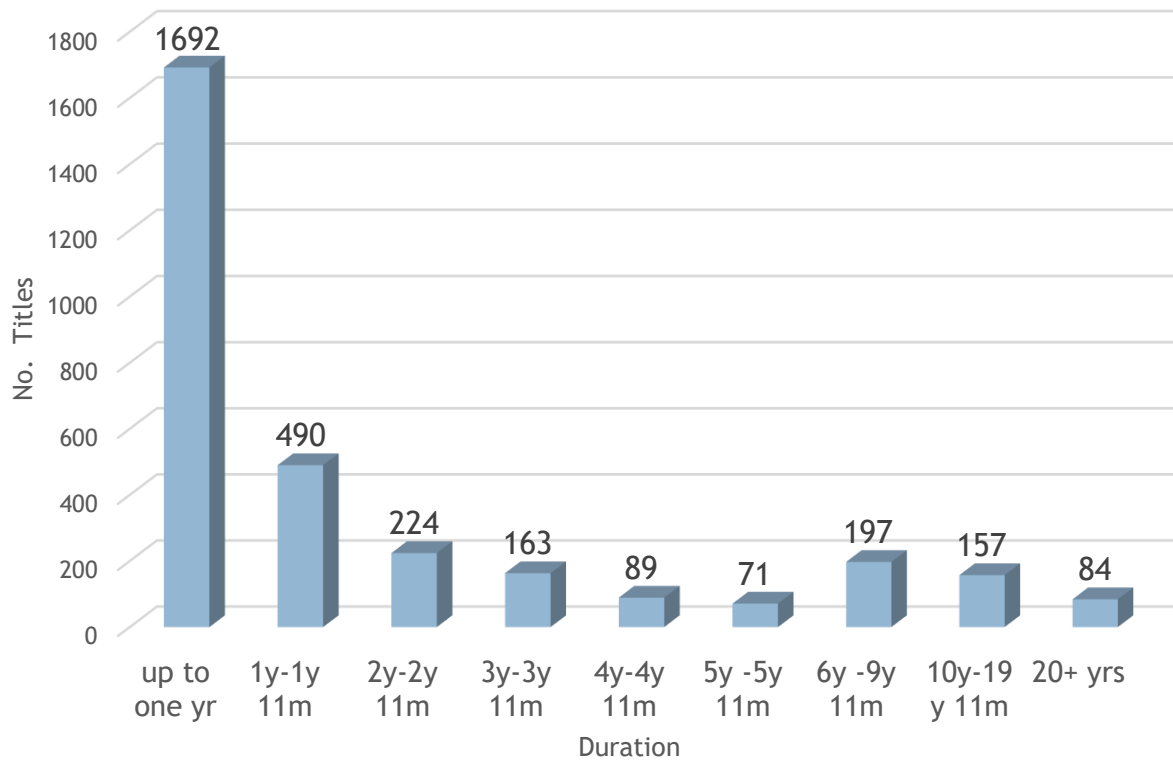
British Museum Catalogue - preponderance of short-lived newspapers (to 1900)



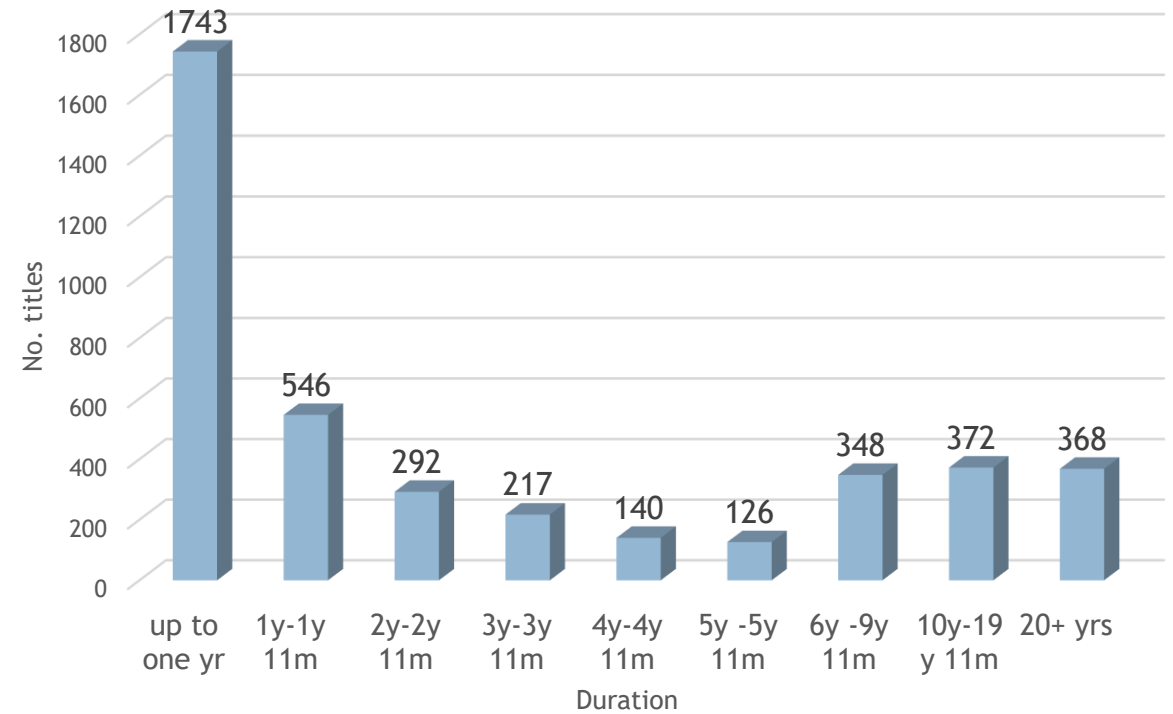
■ 0-5yrs 11m ■ 6 yrs +

Comparing the patterns in the catalogue

British Museum Catalogue - by duration to 1900

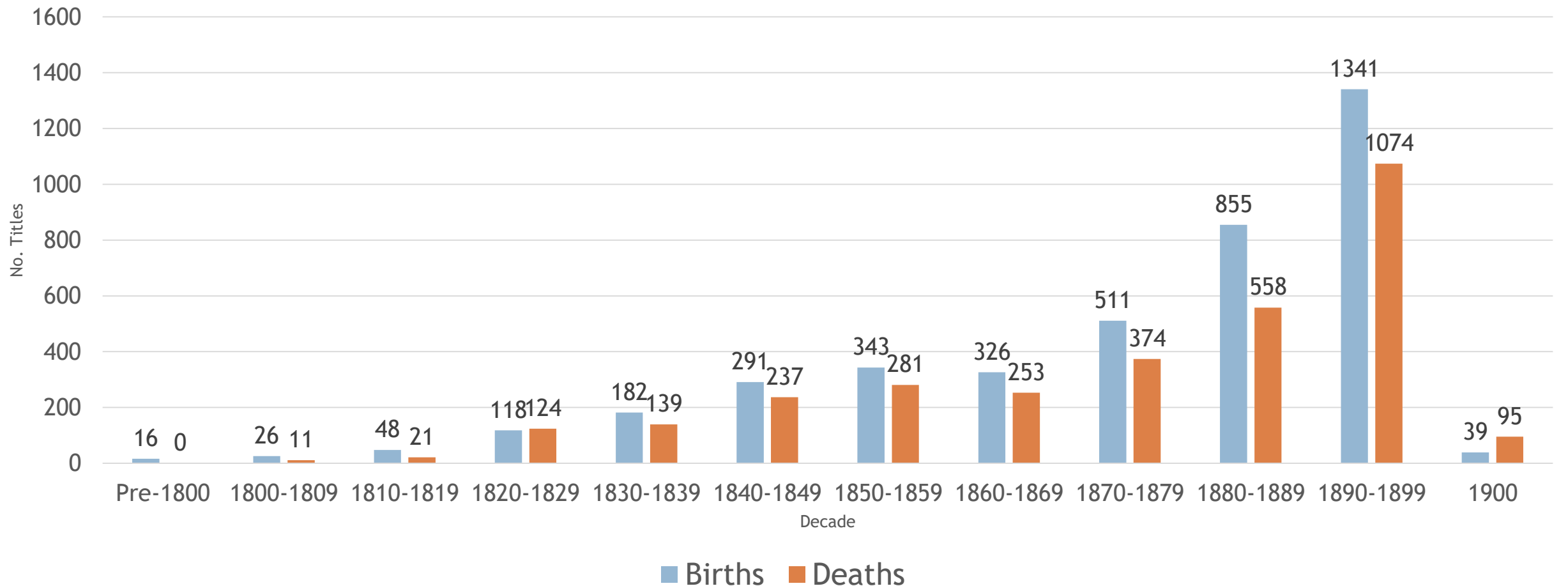


British Museum Catalogue - No. titles by duration (all)



Newspaper 'births' and 'deaths' by decade

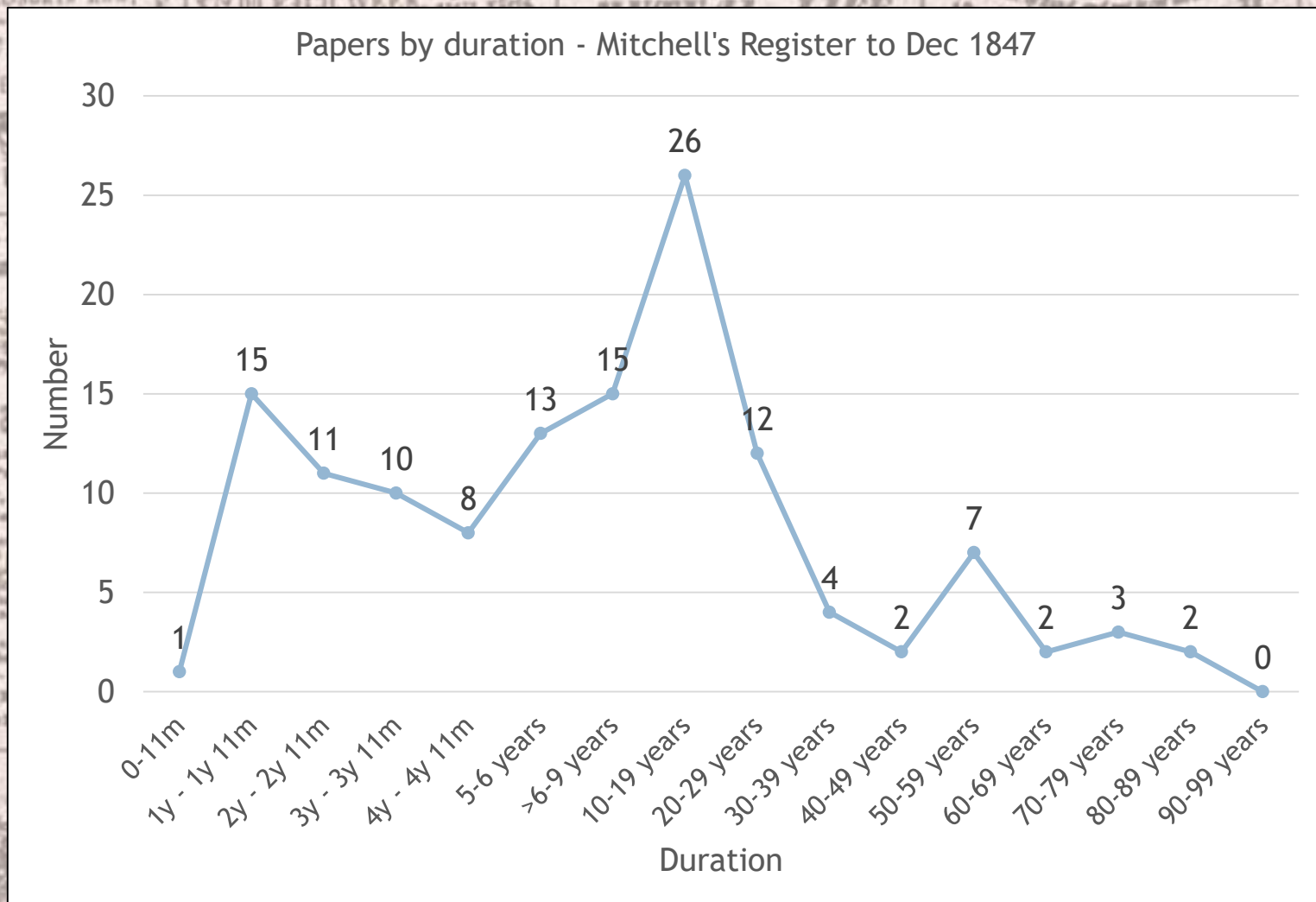
British Museum Catalogue - newspaper 'births' and 'deaths' to 1900



A corroborating source?

THE
NEWSPAPER PRESS
Directory:
CONTAINING FULL PARTICULARS RELATIVE TO EACH
JOURNAL PUBLISHED IN
THE UNITED KINGDOM
AND
THE BRITISH ISLES;
TOGETHER WITH
A Complete Guide
TO
THE NEWSPAPER PRESS OF EACH COUNTY,
ETC. ETC. ETC.
FOR THE YEAR 1847.
[SECOND ANNUAL IMPRESSION.]
BY CHARLES MITCHELL.
(CORRECTED ANNUALLY.)
PUBLISHED BY C. MITCHELL,
AT HIS TOWN AND COUNTRY ADVERTISING OFFICE,
RED LION COURT, FLEET STREET, LONDON;
AND MAY BE HAD OF ALL BOOKSELLERS.

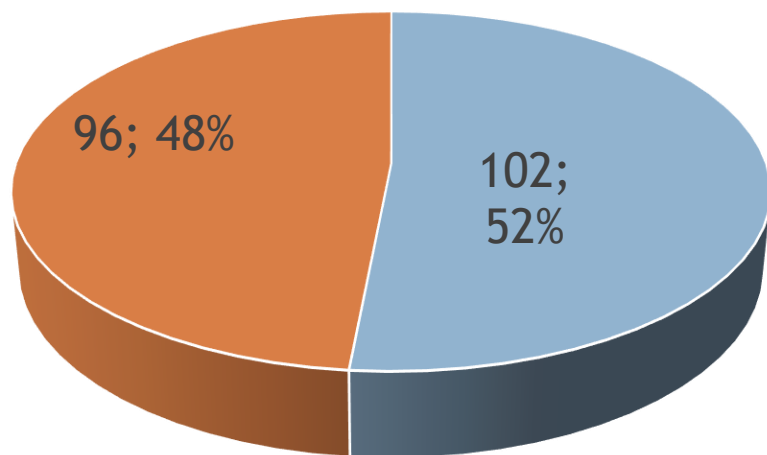
[Entered at Stationers' Hall.]



Of 132 titles listed for London, 58 had been in existence for up to six years.

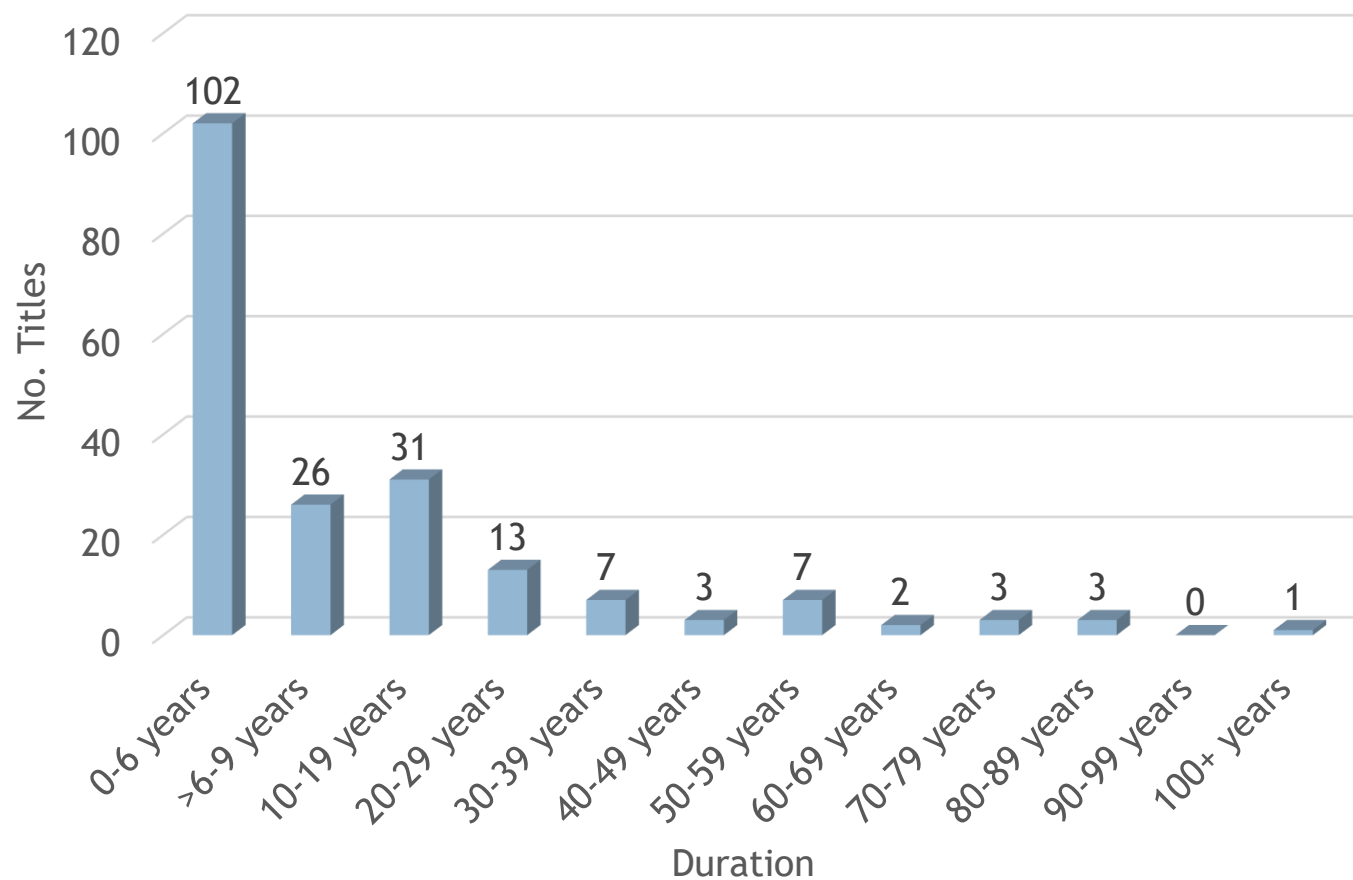
Combining the 1847 data

Proportion of papers short-lived
(Mitchells + BM combined) to 1847



- Combined in circ 0-6 yrs up to Dec 1847
- Combined in circ 6 years + up to Dec 1847

Papers by duration - combined to Dec 1847



Why does this matter?

- ❑ Much of our knowledge of the C19th press is, inevitably, derived from longstanding publications.
- ❑ Detailed records are available in these papers own archives as well as archival collections
- ❑ Continuity of publication lends authority
- ❑ Current scholarship may be argued to be incomplete, being unduly focused on the mainstream 'success' stories (c.f. Hobbs' 2013 article on the 'Deleterious Dominance of *The Times*').
- ❑ Research into the role played by marginal/ephemeral newspapers – as more representative of the century's print media – might reveal overlooked factors, adding significantly to historical knowledge.
- ❑ This may also suggest alternative judgements of 'success' or 'failure'.

The short-lived newspaper collection

- ❖ Approximately 180 titles (not dailies)
- ❖ Lifespan of <1 to 6 years
- ❖ Mainly published/distributed in and around London (but local?)

‘In an important sense, the great majority of early- and mid-Victorian newspapers were local.’ [Aled Jones, ‘Local Journalism in Victorian Political Culture’ chapter in Brake et al (eds) *Investigating Victorian Journalism* (1990)].

‘While some academic studies of the local and regional press take note of locale, few have paid attention to locality in the metropolitan (London) press, a large category of print during the nineteenth century.’ Laurel Brake, ‘Markets, Genres, Iterations’ chapter, *Routledge Handbook* p.245

- ❖ 1800 – 1881 (with one exception)
- ❖ Many newspapers experience changes (title, proprietors/publishers, mergers)

Vol. III.—No. 18.

THE TORY THIRTIENERS.
TO ADVERTISE!
The Tory Thirteners, who have been so long and so loudly advertised in the columns of the Police Gazette, are now about to be introduced to the public in a new and more complete manner than ever before. They have been so long and so loudly advertised in the columns of the Police Gazette, are now about to be introduced to the public in a new and more complete manner than ever before.



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Launched 1835 as a Radical, unstamped, London weekly. John Cleave soon arrested!

Relaunched 1836 as Cleave's Weekly Police Gazette and Journal of News, Politics, and Literature.

And then?

THE POLICE GAZETTE.
The Police Gazette, which has been so long and so loudly advertised in the columns of the Police Gazette, are now about to be introduced to the public in a new and more complete manner than ever before.



26/12/1835

Cleave's Weekly Police Gazette and Journal of News, Politics, and Literature 1836



London 18/09/1836

Merged with

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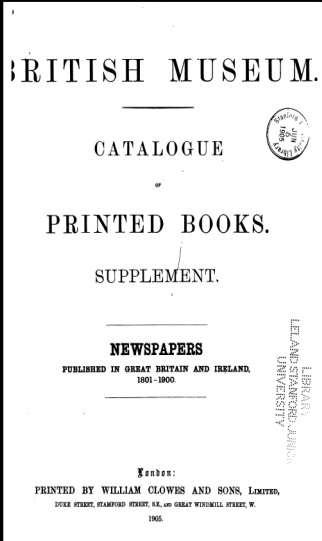


17/09/1836



Newcastle, 21/10/1837—
19/12/1840

became



Great Northern Advertiser
1840—1848

Main body of the newspaper containing various news articles, advertisements, and official notices.

The Standard, opening edition, 21st May 1827

TO THE PUBLIC.

Aware that in our character as Journalists, we were not unknown to the people of England, and with voluminous testimonies before us, that we were not uninvited to the task in which we were about to engage we at first supposed that we might waive the usual ceremony of an address to our countrymen. The employment of similar opportunities by most of our predecessors in foolish bombastical dissertations, *de omni seibili*, or in arrogant pretensions, confirmed us in the resolution, to waive a ceremony so often and so disgustingly abused.

It has, however, been suggested to us that this more agreeable course might, like all omissions of decent ceremony, subject us to imputations of arrogance, though of another kind,—we shall, therefore, with all brevity, proceed to explain,

“Cur tamen hoc libeat potius decurrere campo;”

why, possessing and directing the *St. James's Chronicle*, the most popular evening Journal in the empire, we encumber ourselves with the additional labour and responsibility of another Journal. If we fulfil our intentions, this explanation shall be short, humble, and not without the usefulness which always arises from obtaining right notions upon important subjects.

When upon a late occasion that person who has, with undesigned truth, been called “the type of the order,” the Premier Gentleman of the Press, seized upon the reins of Government by means still incomprehensible to any human being but the party who employed them; means of which we only know that they were dishonest and dark; upon that critical occasion did the London Daily Journalists afford that field for free discussions, to afford which is the proper function of the engine at their command? It is notorious that they did not—it is notorious that the new Minister, in faithful imitation of those who had subverted the liberties of Athens and Rome, occupied our British *Pnyx* and *Forum* by his stipendiaries and slaves. That, in imitation of other invaders, he extinguished the signals by which the country might be warned of its danger and its scattered defenders, apprised of their collective strength, and rallied to the contest. In the case, did not the voice of the country call for a more efficient vehicle of public opinion, than any which the daily press of London afforded? “That voice, which,” to use the words of one, who, though the greatest orator the world ever heard, ranked equally high as a statesman; “that voice which is heard ever loudest in the silence of the customary speakers.” * To that voice we have yielded. To the services of our country we have devoted a Daily Journal, which, if the opponents of Mr. Canning’s policy be not as “contemptible in talents and number,” as he once described them, must afford a barrier to the further success of his pestilent ambition. With this offering, we devote also what more we have—*English* and *Protestant* principles, and *inflexible* integrity and resolution in maintaining them—qualifications that would seem humble were they not unfortunately so rare.

“To the services of our country we have devoted a Daily Journal, which, if the opponents of Mr. Canning’s policy be not as ‘contemptible in talents and number,’ as he once described them, must afford a barrier to the further success of his pestilent ambition.”

A short-lived government...

- George Canning
- Represented Liverpool for the Tory party – but born outside the ‘governing class’ and not popular within his own party.
- Prime Minister from May 1827
- Died in office 8th August 1827
- Mission accomplished for *The Standard*?



From the margins...

- AIM: to provide more balanced view of the dynamic, fast-evolving C19th newspaper industry.
- Considering the longstanding titles as *exceptions* invites a recalibration of the criteria for success in the print media of the century – the ‘value of the ephemeral’.

- Ongoing findings shared on  @c19thnewshound

- Newspaper images courtesy of:

