



[World War One Centenary : Continuations and Beginnings \(University of Oxford / JISC\)](#)

## Every day another (hi)story

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You may remember that back in April 2012 WW1C ran a live-tweeting experiment to relay the events of the Battle Arras in real time. The initiative aimed to use social media to raise awareness about this historic turning point of the First World War, and to engage the Twitter community in discovering online resources that could be use for teaching and learning. You can read about @Arras95 [on this blog](#). Earlier this year I was delighted to welcome the Master students of [European Contemporary History at the University of Luxembourg](#), who paid us a visit to share their plans for a much more ambitious endeavor [@RealttimeWorldWar1](#), a long-term activity firmly embedded within an Higher Education course. Below Mechthild Herzog and Natalia-Ioana Costea outline their plans:

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A battle in 140 signs. A whole peace negotiation put into two lines. History written in tweets. The interest in dates and facts of contemporary history is growing, going beyond academic circles. The Master students of European Contemporary History at the University of Luxembourg made it their business to go beyond ' via social media. To present some curious historical facts. The cause: In only a few months, the beginning of World War I is exactly 100 years ago.

Inspired by Allwin Collinson's project @RealttimeWWII, the students will offer a collection of World War I stories and facts on Twitter. The aim is to make history easy to assimilate with little means. What makes the 'real time' projects especially fascinating is that events are posted on the exactly same date and, if possible, even time, if reproducible in source material.

This source material is of crucial importance: A lot of stories on World War I can be found in the extents of the world wide web. One of the students' most important aims is to offer reliable source documents for every date they tweet. These sources are not necessarily governmental documents ' though these are appearing as well. But besides official events, stories shall be told about the individual people being affected by the war, about soldiers and nurses, queens and prisoners. So their diaries, letters, poems, photographs are taken to tell another, less known side of the history of World War I.

Of course, it is impossible to cover the whole World War with this method. But the Master students try to enlighten several aspects of a historical context influencing the every day life in many personal stories. The different national backgrounds of the students made the consultation of a wide range of source documents possible, in many different languages ' English, French, German, Luxembourgish, Spanish, Portuguese, Serbo-Croatian, Romanian, Greek, Italian.

To catch some interest for the project, [@RealttimeWorldWar1](#) already started to tweet: 100 years ago, the

Balkan region was shaped by several conflicts. So right now, some dates and facts about the Balkan Wars are released via the Twitter account. Students will work on the project until 2017/18 - they feed a database, add and edit tweets. With every tweet, a link to a source document is offered. Furthermore links lead to the Master's own homepage where more information on certain personalities and events can be found. Thus, the students invite their visitors and followers to focus on everyday life during World War I. The tweets are the tidbits that shall awaken an appetite to learn more about the historical context.

Such tidbits are, however, only little fragments of the whole. The limitative Twitter format does not allow widespread examination of a subject. On the one hand, the risk of decontextualisation and misinterpretation is significant. On the other hand, it prompts the students to find out what is the quintessence of a historical event. Thus, they can learn how to really focus on certain circumstances ' and how to attract a reader's interest in it while exploring the possibilities of a new tool.

Besides a row of other valuable projects on the World War I centenary, as the University of Oxford project '[Europeana 1914-1918](#)', @RealttimeWorldWar1 tries to bring events of high historical importance back on the level which they had 100 years ago: the everyday life of the European people. Thus, a perspective is offered that brings the reader face-to-face with contemporary witness of the war period. World War I is one of the oldest periods we can reconstruct with the support and background of modern media as photographs and films. There are even some, though fewer and fewer, time witnesses left. This range of sources offers the opportunity to have an insight into more than a history of winners and losers. It opens the way to an understanding of the meaning of war for the most different people. The 'World War I goes Twitter' project of the Luxembourgish Master students lets this meaning breath through short sentences. Thus, the events may gain importance for a wide range of today's readers.

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