

Manchester: Cradle of Statistics

Exploring the Legacy and Evolution of the Manchester Statistical Society



Manchester, 1870. Chronicle / Alamy Stock Photo

Historical Context of Statistics

Overview of 19th Century Statistics

Emergence of quantitative methods for social, economic, and scientific phenomena.



The Rise of Statistical Societies

Formation of societies dedicated to the collection and analysis of statistical data.



Selected Local Context

Manchester Statistical Society (1834)



Manchester Statistical Society

Founding Members

- Unitarians, Whigs
- Industrialists, mill owners
- "The great and the good"



Initial Contributions

Early work on population statistics and the study of social conditions.



Ordinary Meetings

- Meetings with invited speakers
- Collaboration and dissemination of research
- Also "study groups" e.g. South India (1837), Industrial, Mathematical Statistics (1860), etc (1870)



Now and Next

Bequests

- Henry Gurney's bequest
- Charles Booth's bequest
- "The great and the good"



Strategy and governance

- Strategic vision
- Governance structure
- Operational framework
- Financial sustainability

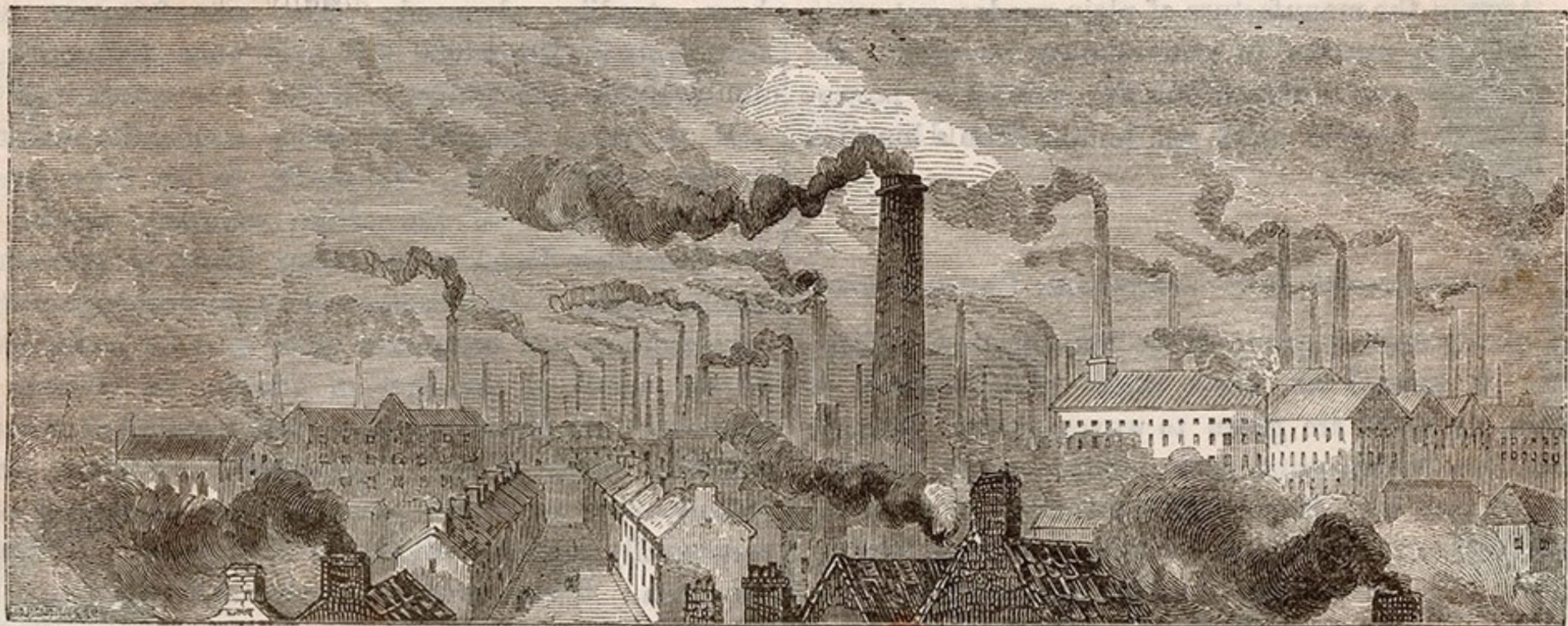
Recent activities

- AI Study Group (Jan 2024)
- Conference travel grants
- Online meetings
- Campaign grants to support research



Campaign grant: NLP for Social Housing Complaints

Research project funded by the Manchester Statistical Society, focusing on the use of Natural Language Processing (NLP) to analyze social housing complaints.



MANCHESTER, FROM THE ENTRANCE TO THE LONDON AND NORTH-WESTERN RAILWAY.

Historical Context of Statistics

Overview of 19th Century Statistics

Emergence of quantitative methods for social, economic, and scientific phenomena.



Sir Benjamin Heywood, lit by William Bradley, 1844.
Manchester Art Gallery

The Rise of Statistical Societies

- Goals:
- To collect and classify facts about the current state of society
 - To promote statistical inquiries and discuss political and social economy ("*alio extenendum*", "to be threshed out by/for others", see also Radstat Issue 98, 1994)
 - 15-25 local statistical societies in 1830s, almost all abandoned by 1840*

*See also: The statistical movement in early Victorian Britain: The foundations of empirical social research (2006, 2013) and Historical and Modern Statistics and Society in the Nineteenth Century (2009, 2010)



"Catalogue of the library of the statistical society", 1864
Manchester Statistical Society archive, 1970

Selected Local Context

- Lit & Phil (1781)
- Portico Library (1806)
- Peterloo Massacre (1819)
- Mechanics Institute (1824)
- British Association for the Advancement of Science (1831)
- Cholera outbreak, Reform Act (1832)
- City of Manchester incorporated (1838)



The Illustrated London News, 1832. Wellcome Collection gallery

Overview of 19th Century Statistics

Emergence of quantitative methods for social, economic, and scientific phenomena.



Sir Benjamin Heywood, Bt by William Bradley, 1844.
Manchester Art Gallery

The Rise of Statistical Societies

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- To promote statistical inquiries and discuss political and social economy ("aliis exterendum", "to be threshed out by/for others", see also Radstats Issue 98, 1994)
- 15-25 local statistical societies in 1830s, almost all abandoned by 1840*

*See also The statistical movement in early Victorian Britain: The foundations of empirical social research (Cullen, 1975) and Victorians and Numbers: Statistics and Society in Nineteenth Century Britain (Goldman, 2022)

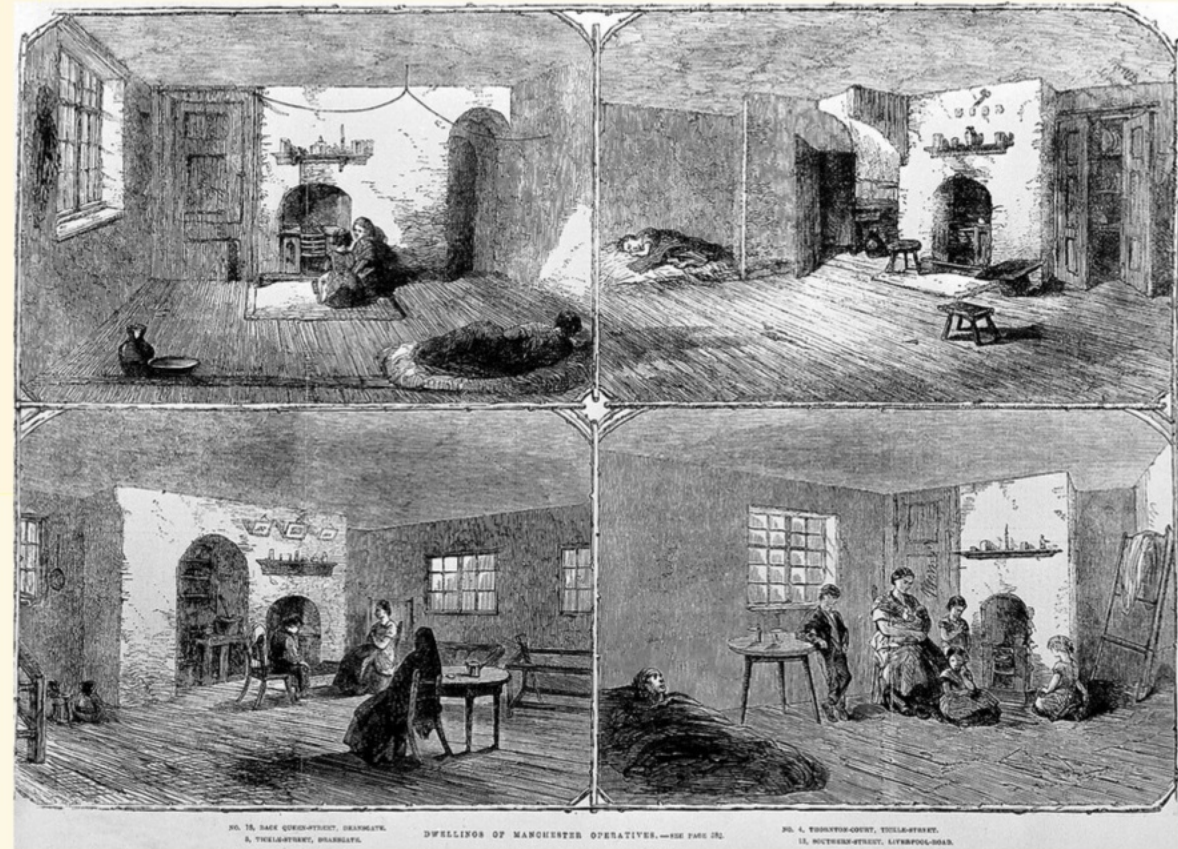


"Catalogue of the library of the statistical society", 1884

Manchester Statistical Society archive, 1970

Selected Local Context

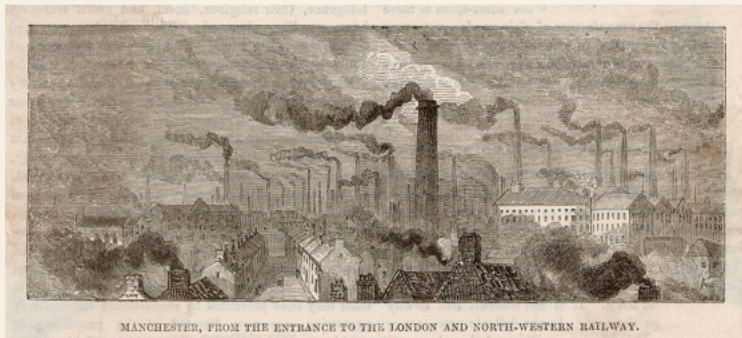
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The Illustrated London News, 1862. Wellcome Collection gallery

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Historical Context of Statistics

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Emergence of quantitative methods for social, economic, and scientific phenomena.



The Rise of Statistical Societies

Formation of societies dedicated to the study and application of statistics.



Selected Local Context

Key figures and events in the history of statistics in Manchester.



Manchester Statistical Society

Founding Members

- Unitarians, Whigs
- Industrialists, mill owners
- "The great and the good"



Initial Contributions

Early work on the application of statistics to social and economic problems.



Ordinary Meetings

- Meetings with invited speakers
- Collaboration and dissemination of research
- Key "study groups" e.g. Social Science (1851), Industrial, Mathematical Statistics (1860), etc.



Now and Next

Bequests

Henry Gurney's bequest (1851) and other donations.



Strategy and governance

Current strategy and governance of the Manchester Statistical Society.

Recent activities

- AI Study Group (Jan 2024)
- Conference travel grants
- Online meetings
- Campaign grants to support research



Campaign grant: NLP for Social Housing Complaints

Supporting research into the use of Natural Language Processing (NLP) to analyze social housing complaints.



Manchester Statistical Society

Founding Members

- Unitarians, Whigs
- Industrialists, mill owners
- "The great and the good"

Table: Names of the first members										
1	Wilson, James	1793	1818	1818	1818	1818	1818	1818	1818	1818
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MEN WHO COUNTED: THE FIRST MEMBERS OF THE MANCHESTER STATISTICAL SOCIETY
By Christopher D'Arcy

Initial Contributions

- Elementary education was then controlled by the Anglican Church and failing to serve many communities.
- Campaigns for unsectarian public education in 1830s.
- Conditions of working people: Social survey of 4,302 families, based on house-to-house research.
- Free trade and repealing the Corn Laws in 1840s.
- Statistical Community, publishing Transactions and sharing data internationally.



St Peter's Fields, 1819. Manchester Libraries

"In Manchester, statistics derived a sectarian and class-based agenda of issue and value which was delivered periodically in the course of the 1800s for a mass campaign for free trade on the one hand, and, on the other, by the placing of one of the founders of the Society in a position of influence over national education at the heart of government." (Giddens, 2002)

Ordinary Meetings

- Meetings with invited speakers
- Collaboration and presentation on projects
- Also "study groups" e.g. Steam Power (1837), Industrial, Mathematical statistics (1950s), AI (2020s)



MSS Ordinary Meeting, Joshi Herrmann, Feb 2025, by Guy Marshall

Founding Members

- Unitarians, Whigs
- Industrialists, mill owners
- "The great and the good"

Table 1 Members and their activities

	A	B	C	D	E	G	F	H	MLPS	PL
Birley	2			Y	Y				1834	
Boothman	1			Y					1824	
Brailey	2									Y
Cheetham	1					Y				
Darbishire	1		1	Y				Y	1822	Y
Douglass	1			Y		Y			1832	
Dugard	2									Y
Ewart	1			Y	Y					Y
Fielding	2		1							Y
Fletcher	2									Y
Gibson	2		1							
R.H. Greg	2							Y	1817	Y
S. Greg	1		4*	Y						
W.R. Greg	1		7*	Y		Y			1833	
B. Heywood	1	1833-34	2			Y			1815	Y
J. Heywood	2	1853-55	7						1833	Y
Houldsworth	1	1849-50			Y				1824	
Kay	1		5	Y		Y			1829	
J. Kennedy	1				Y			D	1803	Y
Shaw Kennedy	1	1834-36								
Langton	1	1841-44, 1867-69	14	Y		Y			1830	Y
Levysohn	1					Y				
McConnel	1		1	Y	Y			Y	1827	
Melly	1									Y
Merz	2			Y					1834	
Murray	1				Y			D	Y	
Neild	2	1850-51			Y			Y	1822	
Newbery	1							D	1839	Y
Parkinson	2								1833	
R.N. Philips	1	1851-53						Y		
S. Philips	1	1839-40						T		Y
Robinson	1	1847-49	3			Y			1822	
Romilly	2		1	Y					1837	
Slater	1			Y						Y
Tayler	1		1	Y					1821	
Tootal	1									Y
Turner	1			Y		Y			1836	
Walker	1							Y		
Wood	1			Y		Y			1836	Y
Worthington	1								1840	Y
Total	40	9	49	16	7	10	3D,1T	7	23	18

Key

- A Joined the Society; 1= 1833-34; 2= 1834-35
- B President of the Society
- C Number of papers presented to the Society (*plus one joint paper)
- D Members of the Committee to examine the state of the day, charity and infant schools in Manchester (N.Gardner was also a member), reporting in 1835
- E Members of the Committee on the use of steam power, reporting in 1837
- F Director (D) or Trustee (T) of Manchester & Salford Banking Co. (founded 1836)
- G Lecturer on a course of lectures on political economy at the Manchester Mechanics Institute, March to May 1834
- H Members of the Manchester Anti-Corn Law Association Council 1839-40
- MLPS Year when became a member of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society.
- PL Member of the Portico Library, Manchester

Initial Contributions

- Elementary education was then controlled by the Anglican Church and failing to serve many communities.
- Campaigns for unsectarian public education in 1830s.
- Conditions of working people: Social survey of 4,102 families, based on house-to-house research.
- Free trade and repealing the Corn Laws in 1840s.
- Statistical Community, publishing Transactions and sharing data internationally.

"In Manchester, statistics denoted a sectarian and class-based agenda of issues and ideas which was delivered successfully in the course of the 1840s by a mass campaign for free trade on the one hand, and, on the other, by the placing of one of the founders of the Society in a position of influence over national education at the heart of government." (Goldman, 2022)



St Peter's Fields, 1819. Manchester libraries

Ordinary Meetings

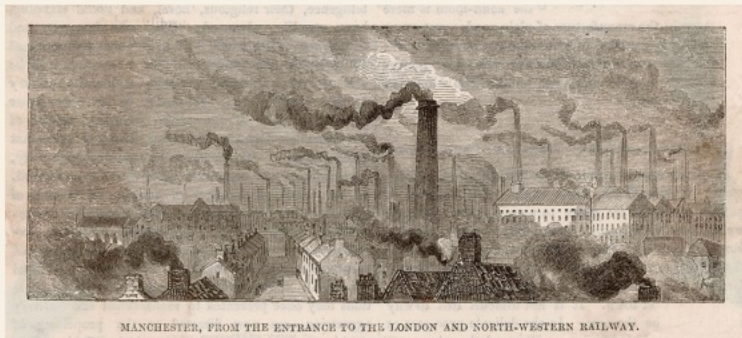
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MSS Ordinary Meeting: Joshi Herrmann. Feb 2025. by Guy Marshall

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Ordinary Meetings

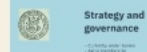
- Meetings with invited speakers
- Collaboration and dissemination of research
- Also "study groups" e.g. South India (1837), Industrial, Mathematical Statistics (1860), etc (1870)



Now and Next

Bequests

- Henry Gurney's bequest
- Joseph Wilson's bequest
- "The Society's fund"



Strategy and governance

- The Society's Strategy
- The Society's Governance
- The Society's Financials
- The Society's Membership

Recent activities

- AI Study Group (Jan 2024)
- Conference travel grants
- Online meetings
- Campaign grants to support research



Campaign grant: NLP for Social Housing Complaints

Research project funded by the Manchester Statistical Society, focusing on the use of Natural Language Processing (NLP) to analyze social housing complaints.

Now and Next

Bequests

- Henry Campion, enabling modest research grant awards
- Paul Berry, TBC



Sir Henry Campion
by Walter Stoneman
bromide print, July 1957
NPG x766342
© National Portrait Gallery,
London



Paul Karlott Berry
by Keith Heron



Strategy and governance

- Currently under review
- Aging membership
- Bequest utilisation
- Opportunities around data, debate and dissemination

Recent activities

- AI Study Group (Jan 2024+)
- Conference travel grants
- Ordinary meetings
- Campion grants to support research



AI Study Group, Joshi Herrmann, Feb 2024, by Krystyna Ambrosz



midjourney generated cover art

Campion grant: NLP for Social Housing Complaints

Natural Language Processing is increasingly integrated into statistical methods to extract insights from large datasets. The society focuses on innovative NLP solutions to analyze trends and patterns, improving data interpretation.

Bequests

- Henry Campion, enabling modest research grant awards
- Paul Berry, TBC



Sir Harry Campion

by Walter Stoneman
bromide print, July 1957
NPG x166342

© National Portrait Gallery,
London



Paul Karfoot Berry

by Keith Heron



Strategy and governance

- Currently under review
- Aging membership
- Bequest utilisation
- Opportunities around data, debate and dissemination

Recent activities

- AI Study Group (Jan 2024+)
- Conference travel grants
- Ordinary meetings
- Champion grants to support research



AI Study Group: Joshi Herrmann. Feb 2025. by Krystyna Ambroch



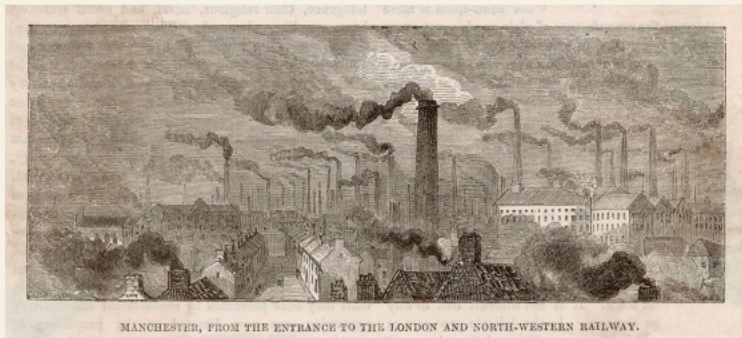
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Selected Local Context

Local initiatives and organizations that influenced the development of statistics in Manchester.



Manchester Statistical Society

Founding Members

- Unitarians, Whigs
- Industrialists, mill owners
- "The great and the good"



Initial Contributions

Early work on data collection and analysis, including the publication of the first statistical report.



Ordinary Meetings

- Meetings with invited speakers
- Collaboration and dissemination of research
- Key "study groups" e.g. Quaker Census (1831), Industrial, Mathematical Statistics (1860), etc (2016)



Now and Next

Bequests

- Henry Gurney's bequest
- Joseph Wilson's bequest
- The Gurney Trust



Strategy and governance

- The Society's Strategy
- The Society's Governance
- The Society's Financials
- The Society's Impact

Recent activities

- AI Study Group (Jan 2024)
- Conference travel grants
- Online meetings
- Campaign grants to support research



Campaign grant: NLP for Social Housing Complaints

A campaign grant to support research into the use of Natural Language Processing (NLP) to analyze social housing complaints.