

## Abstract and Introduction

### Abstract

The HMS "Chesapeake" was a ship that sailed during the height of the British Empire. This ship had many wonderful attributes, one of them being a handwritten newspaper, "The Young Idea". I grew curious about the literacy of the men in the navy through reading, transcribing, and coding this newspaper. Through looking at the types of slang and vocabulary used, I believe I can determine the class of the contributors, which in turn allows me to speculate on how literate they are.

### Introduction

"The Young Idea" is a shipboard newspaper from the height of the British Empire. This series of newspaper editions were all hand written, with a few passed around the to crew of the HMS "Chesapeake". Unfortunately, there were no surviving primary documents of "The Young Idea." There are, however, surviving witnesses of this handwritten newspaper. One is in the Chaplain's JWL Bampfield's personal diary, the other is a published book, *The Young Idea: A Naval Journal Edited on Board the H.M.S. Chesapeake in 1857, 1858 & 1859*. Using these two sources, I embarked on a voyage to answer my question: What was the average education level of the average sailor who contributed to the newspaper and is it possible to determine it through analyzing and transcribing these two witnesses? I decided to try to answer this question by looking at the different types of slangs used by the contributors to the articles.

## My SURF

My Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship started in September when my mentor, Dr. Mary Isbell, had the class I was taking with her read a review written in *The Young Idea*. She introduced us to the shipboard newspaper and what she enjoyed researching for it. She mentioned SURF to all of us and encouraged us to talk to her if we were interested, but quickly redirected our attention to the review. I was completely interested.

My research process was very difficult. It involved long hours of reading plain handwriting and engraved handwriting from the late 1850s and typing everything I saw into a plain text file. Once that was finished, I took everything I had transcribed, threw it into the Oxygen XML Editor application, and trying to make it so that the coding was all correct and the tags all made sense. I then took my coded information, compared it to my partner's coded information, and then corrected the first six editions of the newspaper.

Through this process, I learned more about *The Young Idea* and more about the HMS Chesapeake. Initially, I started off desperately wanting to know who was responsible for contributing to the newspaper. As an English major, and as an aspiring journalist, knowing who authored articles is incredibly important to me. My topic did end up changing to something else though. It became clearer that finding individual authors for each of the articles was going to be an extremely daunting task, and I was growing increasingly more interested in how well-educated these people were. So my question changed from "Who wrote what?" to "How edycated were the writers?" The way I am figuring this out is by looking at the use of jargon and slang in the writings.



# Who Said What: Finding the authors of *The Young Idea*

Katelyn Sahagian

## From Page to Online

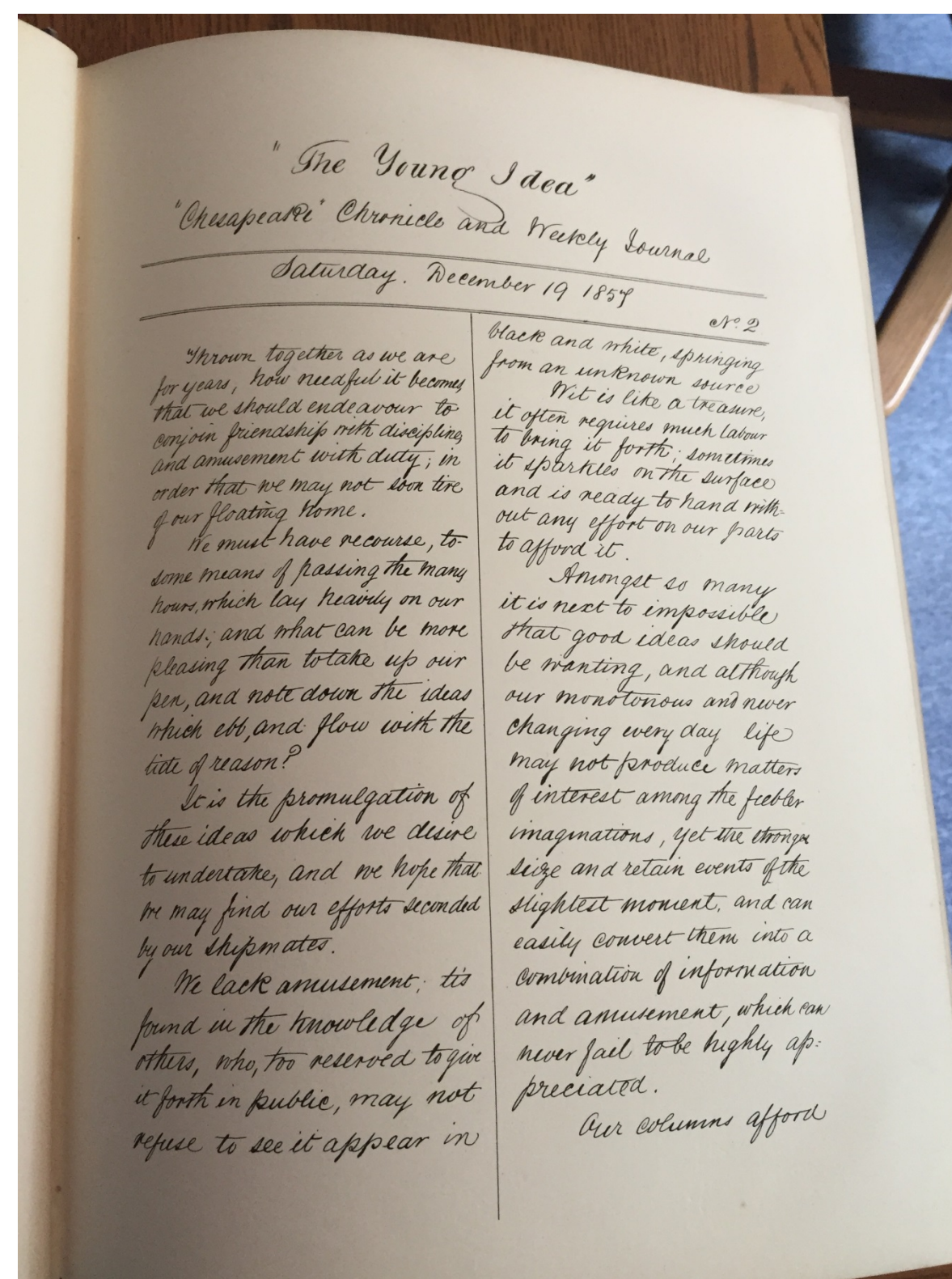
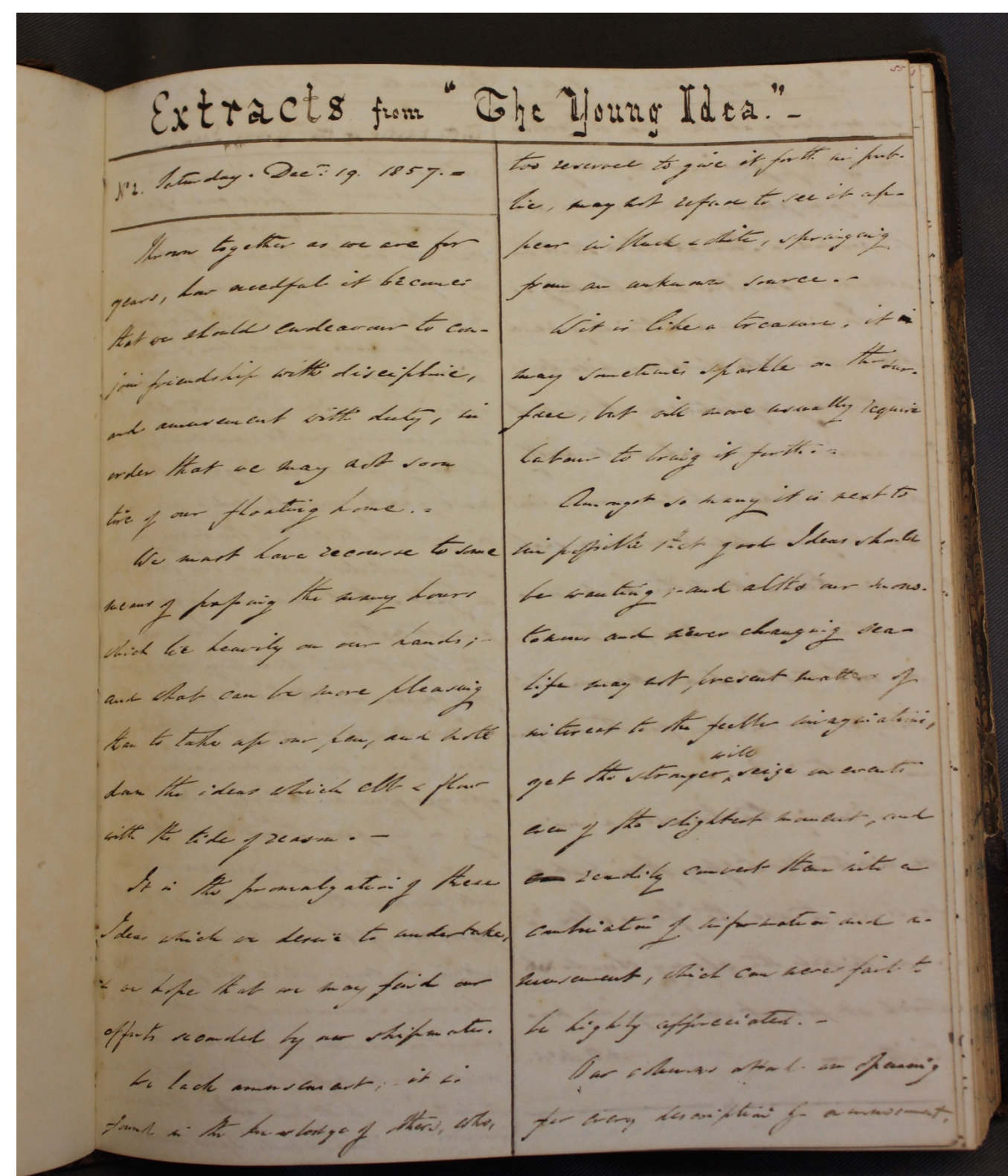
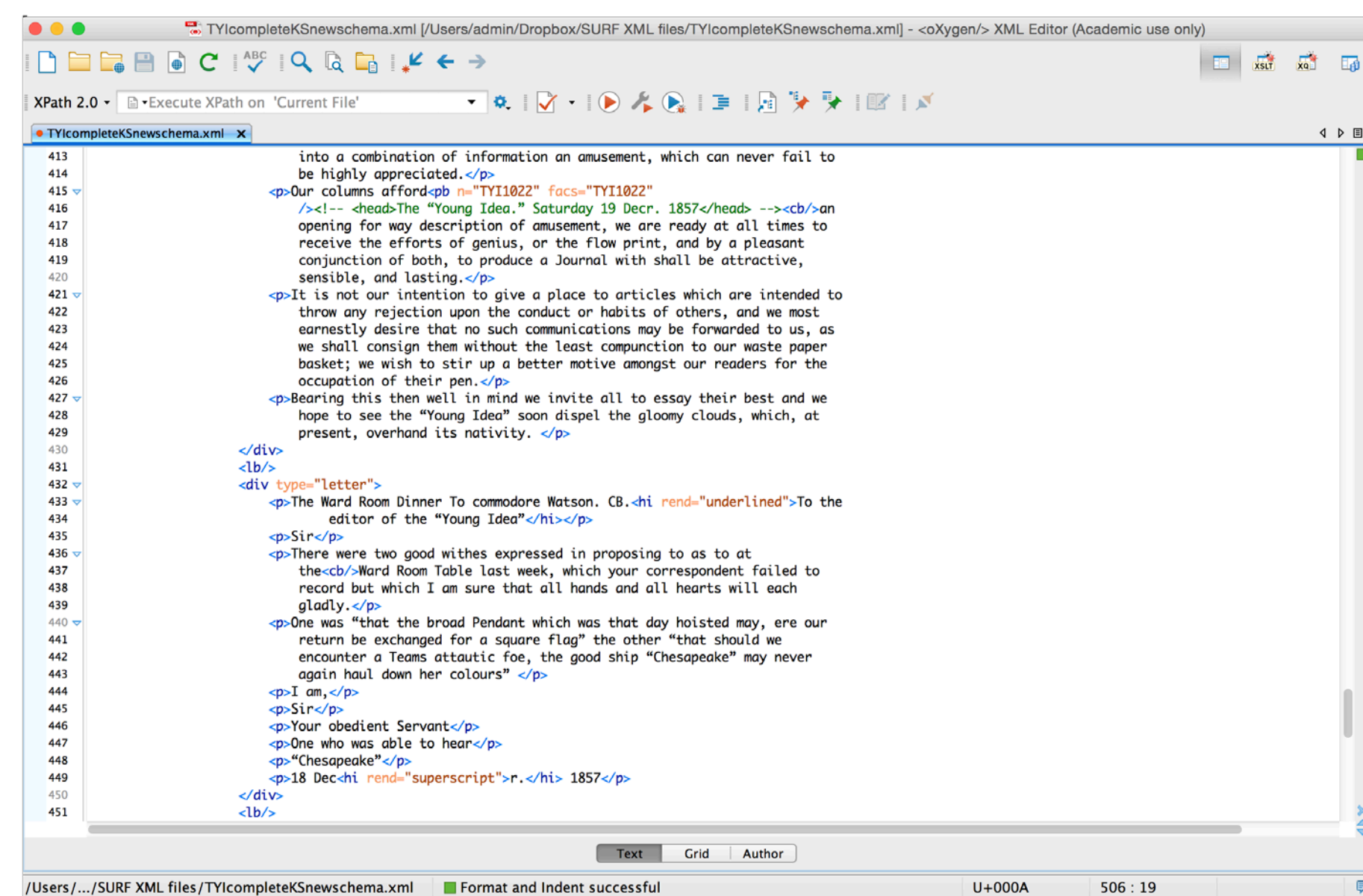


Photo Courtesy to Dr. Mary Isbell and National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, England

Above are pages from Bampfield's Journal (left) and *The Young Idea: A Naval Journal Edited on Board the H.M.S. Chesapeake in 1857, 1858 & 1859*. (right)

Below is a screenshot from the coding process (left) and a photo of me conducting research at the Bienecke Reading Room at Yale Library (right)



## My Research

My research is centered around the idea that jargon and slang are class dividers. People are often put into groupings based around how they speak, and many people who use slang are often seen as less intelligent than those who always use proper vocabulary. An example for this would be, for the time period, someone who is of a certain social standing will have an understanding of what the term "Let's have a butcher's" means versus someone who does not. This is an example of rhyming slang used in the poorer parts of London, so it would be easier to assume that the author who wrote that would be of a lower social class, and thereby less educated.

The problem with this methodology is that there is very little written about slang. Slang is more often spoken than written, but this is where jargon comes into play. Jargon, specifically nautical jargon, shows understanding and proficiency in a subject area. People who are more educated in that area are more likely to use jargon to explain what they see going on around them, especially in a newspaper written by and for the members of the British Navy aboard the ship.

Through looking for both of these aspects of vocabulary, I will hopefully find an answer to my question of how well educated these men were.

## What's Next

Our team has many plans once SURF is complete. Dr. Isbell has invited me to serve as a co-editor on a selection from the digital edition that will be published at ScholarlyEditing.org because the work I did this summer has proven crucial to that project.

Our team also has plans for conferences that we will ideally attend once we complete our research. There is a conference being put on by the Nineteenth Century Studies Association in Nebraska that would be an amazing experience to present at. It is much more extensive and would require me continuing my research throughout the year in order to prepare to present at it. It would be a phenomenal experience to be around people who study and are experts on what I have been studying this summer. The money originally put towards the trip to Lyon, France would be used on this trip.

Another, more local event is being held at the University of Connecticut in March. It is called The Humanities and Technology Camp (THATcamp). This conference specifically discusses and aids humanities researchers interested in studying maritime research topics. It is much more informal than the other conference, but it would still be an incredible experience, no matter the formality of the situation.

With both conferences, I still have to continue researching, reading, and studying jargon, slang, education, and class structure and how all four relate, and then hopefully be able to show how those findings relate to *The Young Idea*