

Centre for Teaching and Learning



Brainard the Fox

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Interactive Bibliography: Early British History paper (HBI 1)

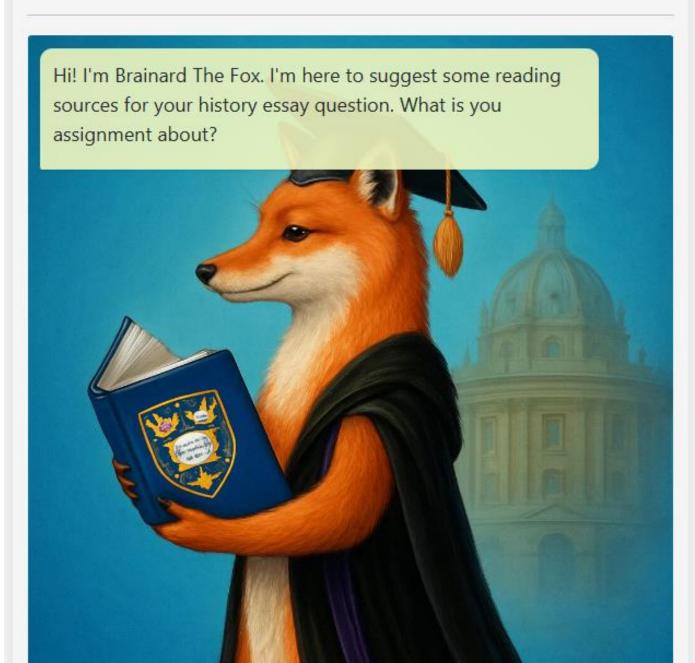
Hi! I'm Brainard the Fox











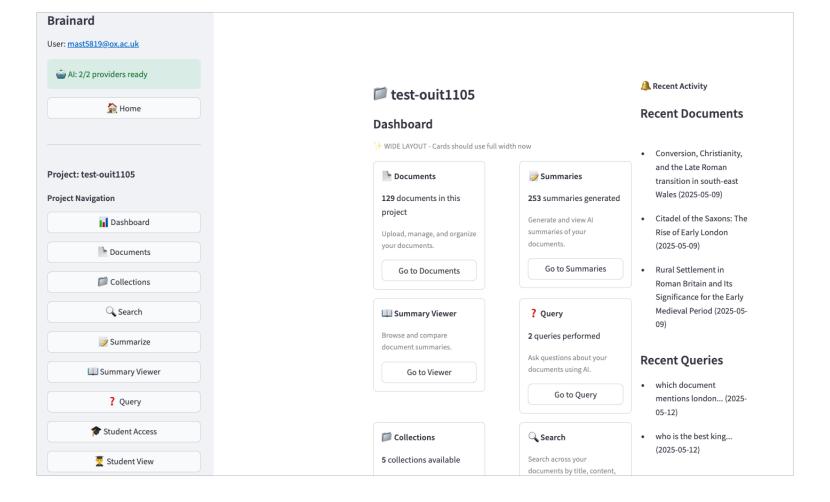
What was the problem we were solving?

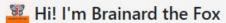
Medieval History papers, especially History of the British Isles 1 (HBI 1; c.300 - 1086), span hundreds of years and come with overwhelming bibliographies, making it hard for UGs, especially fresh out of school.

What were our goals?

- Help UG students (History and JS)
 navigate the course material by making
 an interactive bibliography based on HF's
 recommended reading lists;
- Increase accessibility, efficiency, and student engagement through generative Al-based interactions with scholarly texts;
- Research and test how to produce consistent summaries of 100+ scholarly items and now to introduce guardrails to prevent the bot from producing an essay and from hallucinating.

Our solution design











Hi! I'm Brainard The Fox. I'm here to suggest reading sources for your HBL1 history essay questions. I cannot search the internet and do not have access to full source texts, only summaries which allow me to make suggestions. What is you assignment about?

How was Alfred the Great viewed in later sources?

Summary

To answer how Alfred the Great was viewed in later sources, it is important to analyze both the primary sources created during his reign (which heavily influenced subsequent tradition), and the ways later historians, chroniclers, and biographers interpreted and reinterpreted his legacy. The readings below provide a comprehensive view: they address the creation of Alfred's image, the propagandistic nature of his own sources, the subsequent influence of his biography and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, and the ways later generations—both immediate successors and much later historians—have shaped the perception of Alfred as an exceptional king, intellectual, and cultural figure.

List of readings

Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and other contemporary sources

Authors: Asser, John and Keynes, Simon and Lapidge, Michael

One sentence summary

A collection of primary sources on Alfred's life and reign, including Asser's biography and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, providing direct evidence for how Alfred was portrayed in his own time and immediately after.

ow can I help...



Findings

"Within the constraints of what it's designed to do, and asking it to do the things it is designed for, it can provide really helpful answers. I asked it some questions about medieval masculinity, and it was able to produce a helpful, succinct summary of texts with indicative quotes."

"It's amazing! I only asked 4 questions, and it seemed to me that it is a really useful tool and will save students loads of time. The length of the summaries and key quotes are helpful but in no way sufficient to mean that students can just rely on this to write an essay."

"I found the answers surprisingly rounded and well expressed, including definitions of the limits of the Brainard's remit and terms of reference - there was an engaging modesty there!

I liked the fact that you could download your chat history and thought the references seemed useful and relevant."

Next Steps

Use in teaching next term

• Explore uses for other subjects

Explore uses in archival research

Improve back end for end users

Explore Canvas integration