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Augustus De Morgan's Anonymous Articles for the Penny Cyclopaedia: Curation of Mathematics for the Masses

The Penny Cyclopaedia spanned twenty-seven volumes and was published from 1833 to 1843. It was the product of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (SDUK), whose main goal was to provide clear educational material at a low price to those seeking educational self-improvement. Augustus De Morgan authored a variety of the SDUK's educational material and was one of the major contributors to its encyclopedic enterprise. In fact, De Morgan anonymously authored over seven hundred articles to the Penny Cyclopaedia, a contribution that represents around one-sixth of the encyclopedia's content.

Building on previous work by Olivier Bruneau, this talk will investigate how De Morgan curated mathematics for the wide and non-specialist audience of the Penny Cyclopaedia. Examining the mathematical topics De Morgan chose to write articles on and how he chose to structure these articles gives insight into how he believed mathematics and its history should be presented to the lay reader of early Victorian Britain.