



Hello and thanks for having me. This is a variant of a talk I gave a decade ago which wound up being about something else. This is the talk I kind of wanted to give then.

Moss is Awesome

librarian.net/talks/moss



Hi my name is Jessamyn and like all good librarians this talk has a bibliography, and like all good bibliographies it's ON THE INTERNET. Here's the web address. You can go there right now and skip this talk entirely!

No-pet librarian

So this is me.

I can't knit

Also me.

I kill plants*

** used to, don't know what changed*

This was me at the time I started with this hobby, it's less me now. I wish I knew why.

Off-screen hobby needed

- Cheap or free
- Low effort, high return
- Can be done at home
- Maaaaaybe helps me exercise?



I needed a hobby that got me offline, that had a few other important qualifications....



I used to live in Seattle which is where I went to University of Washington for library school. There's a rainforest out on the coast there called the Hoh Rainforest, one of the only rain forests in the continental US where it rains 3 and a half meters per year. I went there with my sister and we had a good time making jokes about the Hall of Mosses hiking trail. Could there be a more boring hike?? Moss?? Turns out it was AMAZING.



And so I wanted to find a way to work this into a hobby, though maybe on a smaller scale.

Moss?

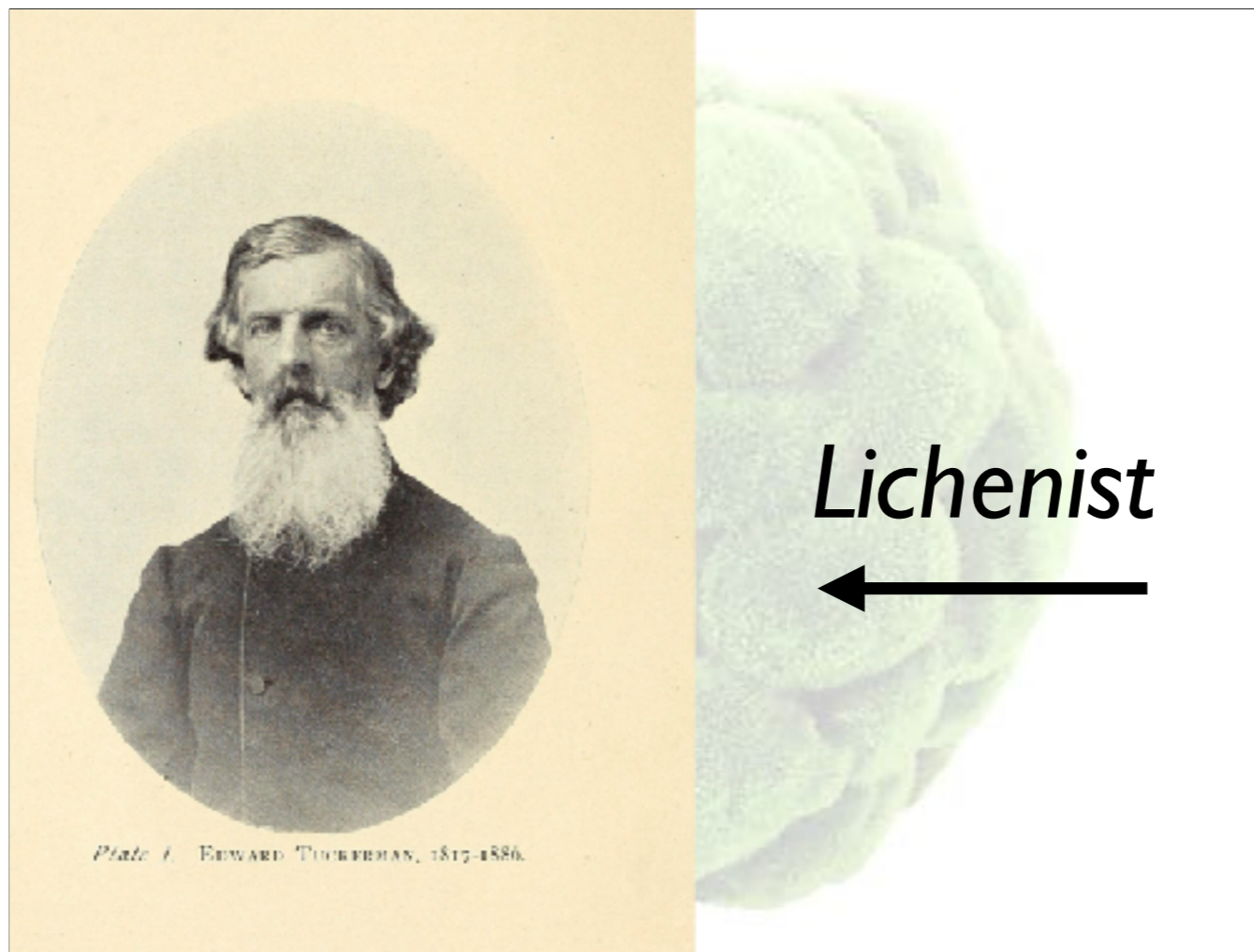
Like any geek I started my "research" with the Google before I even walked out the door. Have you noticed that since 9/11 especially people always call Google searching "doing research"? I'm not sure whether to be happy or sad about this, as a librarian. So, the moss is outside, and here I am inside, typing. Check me out, not solving the problem. The trick, as I see it, is reaching escape velocity to stop reading about the thing and go DO THE THING.

Bryology!

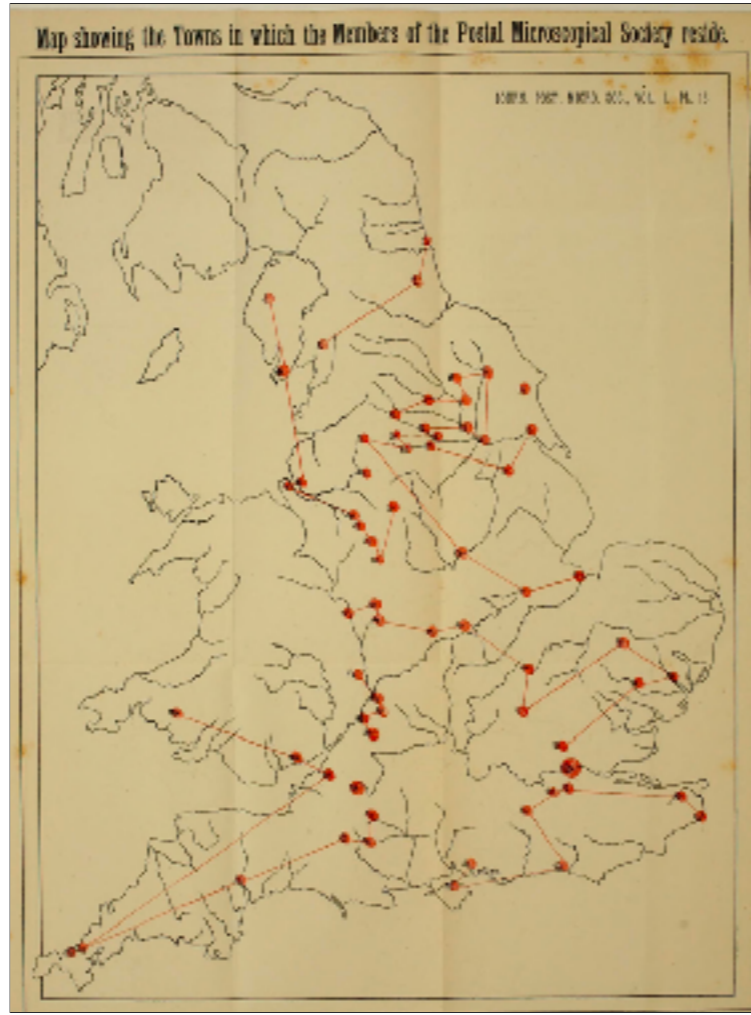
- Was a big deal in the... 1860s?
- People studied moss and had MOSSERIES
- Many good puns around "lichen it"



People who study moss are bryologists and they've had a journal going since 1898. Apparently, according to wikipedia, there was a brief "mossery" fad in the late 19th century where people would build north-facing exterior rooms with slatted walls and keep them moist and fill them with moss.



This guy!



Postal Microscopy!

And this thing! Back in the day after microscopes but before there were a lot of ways to easily get to other places, there were these groups of people who would MAIL SLIDES to one another (around the UK which is where this picture is from) and then discuss them over the post.

Iceland Moss Jelly.

Put an ounce of Iceland moss into a quart of tepid water and let it stand all night. Boil it until reduced to a pint, strain it, flavour with wine and lemon juice, and sweeten to taste. Or, the plain jelly may be taken in milk or cream.

A few other things you can do with moss. It can be used kind of like carageenan (sp?) to make... goo.



There are reports you can grind it up, mix it with a fertile medium like buttermilk and paint with it. There is a linked instructable on the links page. My feeling is "Imagine the smell" but it takes all kinds....

Mossariums

I decided to do something fairly simple. Terrariums, but with moss. That's a thing, right? Kinda.



You can do it without too many parts, and without spending too much time. This was a "mossarium kit" i made for a friend.



First part is moss. The good news is that moss operates kind of like a fungus or a kind of colony so you can take some without it impacting the overall health of the ecosystem too much, and many kinds of moss are really adaptable.



You need a jar, really any kind of jar and it has to have a top.



Rocks can be aquarium rocks, driveway rocks, just something to create some space for the water to hang out.



*Spanish
moss*

It's kind of a joke that it takes moss to get moss but you need spanish moss or something that creates a bit of a layer between the wet layer and the plant layer. Spanish moss is good for this. You can get it at any craft store.



Activated charcoal

There's an open debate if this is a necessary part of mossariums but charcoal, like the kind you find in an aquarium filter, can keep fungal growth down. You can read what people say online, some of them say it's not necessary. I use a little.



*Assemble
Add water
Close it up*

Stack it. add water to the top of the rock layer, add charcoal (or not) put spanish moss on top, moss on top of that, close it up. Don't open it again.



*Add water
every few
months
(not much!)*

you really don't need to add much water, maybe a teaspoon every month or so? Don't drench it. Put it somewhere shady— moss will burn— and enjoy looking at it.



This is my favorite one that I made. They won't last forever, but they last a pretty long time.

thanks!

