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MAKING BOSWELL'S *LIFE* *OF JOHNSON*

*An Author-Publisher
and His Support Network*

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Making Boswell's *Life of Johnson*

An Author-Publisher and His Support Network

Elements in Eighteenth-Century Connections

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Abstract: This Element throws new light on James Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson* by investigating its early publication history. Despite precarious psychological and financial circumstances and other limitations, Boswell was both author and publisher of the two-volume quarto edition that appeared in 1791. This study utilizes little-known documents to explore the details and implications of Boswell's risky undertaking. It argues that the success of the first edition was the result not only of Boswell's biographical genius but also of collaboration with a devoted support network, including the bookseller Charles Dilly, the printer Henry Baldwin and his employees, several newspaper and magazine editors, Boswell's "Gang" (Edmond Malone, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and John Courtenay) and other members of The Club, and Sir William Forbes. Although the muddled second edition (1793) suffered from Boswell's increasing dysfunction in the years before his death in 1795, the resilient Boswellian network subsequently secured the book's exalted reputation.

Keywords: James Boswell, Samuel Johnson, *Life of Samuel Johnson*, support network, author-publisher

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