Ossian Online is a project to publish the various editions of the sequence of eighteenth-century works known collectively as the Ossian poems. Initially presented by Scottish writer James Macpherson as fragments of original manuscripts he had found on journeys around the Highlands of Scotland, the Ossian poems grew into a body of work that inspired readers, courted controversy, and profoundly influenced the literature of the Romantic period.

The project will make the complex textual development of Ossian available to a new generation of readers and researchers. The online archive allows the reader to view and compare the multiple incarnations and permutations of Macpherson’s corpus—from the first edition of Fragments of Ancient Poetry in 1760 to the ‘carefully corrected and greatly improved’ 1773 edition of The Poems of Ossian. Ossian Online permits readers to read different editions, to view the differences between editions, and to make analyses and interpretations informed by variation and revision. The site will also facilitate the interdisciplinary annotation that the work demands, by means of a crowdsourced annotation tool.

Though much discussed, Ossian is still rarely read: Ossian Online will make the primary sources available in a reliable and freely accessible scholarly format. By providing the stimulus for a collaborative network of commentators inside the academy and beyond, Ossian Online will open Macpherson’s work to a genuinely interdisciplinary and transnational community of readers and researchers.