



Arts & Humanities  
Research Council



The Open University

## *RED Letter*

The Newsletter of the Reading Experience Database



SPRING 2009

Edited by Rosalind Crone and Katie Halsey

Over the last couple of weeks, the longer days combined with a stretch of very good weather in England have prompted me to start thinking about summer reading. I have wasted some significant time at my desk staring out the window at the garden, longing for rising temperatures so that I can go outside to read a book, and also daydreaming about reading under palm trees on beaches while breathing in fresh sea air. But such thoughts have also encouraged me to take advantage of some of the new search features in RED to explore reading patterns during the summer months in times past. The large number of entries in RED (now approaching the 25,000 mark) certainly meant that the results from my searches were numerous and diverse. But even more than this, they pushed me beyond my original, and rather basic, research question, namely about the similarities and differences in summer reading over time, to a range of much more interesting lines of enquiry.

There are, unsurprisingly, a number of entries in RED of men and women reading while on a summer holiday, and some readers indicate in letters and diaries that they have more time to read during the summer. Henry James wrote to his mother in April 1879 that whilst he had received a copy of his father's book, 'really to read it, I must lay it aside till the summer'. Yet it is crucial to note that more time for reading for many of the lower orders was not provided by holidays, but instead by the extra hours of daylight. Simon Eliot's recent work on artificial light has drawn our attention to the financial sacrifices made by a large number of people in the past in order to read, as well as the potential dangers of reading

beside a naked flame and the way in which illumination could shape the reading experience. Entries in RED highlight the importance of natural light. For instance, collier lad Thomas Burt (b.1837) took advantage of the early sunrise during summer, rising at four to go into the fields to read Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* before he had to begin work in the coal mine. Similarly, although Stuart Wood's days at Maidstone Gaol were governed by bells and a strict routine, the light which streamed through the small window of his cell during the early morning and evening meant that he was able to devour works by Locke, Hume, Berkeley, Kant, Hegel, Fichte, Shelling, Schopenhauer, Fechner and Lotze in 1914.

The warmth provided by the sun could also, for some readers, increase their enjoyment of the reading experience. Patricia Beer remembered her mother reading novels to her sister and herself in the meadow beyond the garden on warm summer evenings during the interwar years. A century earlier, journeyman tailor Thomas Carter retreated to Hyde Park or Kensington Gardens on hot summer afternoons to read poetry under the shady trees. But, especially for readers in the colonies, summer heat could be oppressive, and shape reading experiences in a very different way. John Buckley Castieau, a prison governor in Melbourne, recorded in his diary on 23 January 1870 that he dreaded 'going to bed, everything smelling hot and stuffy, laid down for a time on the sofa, then got up and read till I was tired then went to bed.' In this case, reading could help to provide some relief, but at other times unbearable heat could discourage reading altogether. For instance, the very next day, Castieau went to the Mechanic's Institute in the evening to read the newspapers, but only managed to glance at the pictures in the English comic periodicals as 'The Reading Room was very hot and I could not bring my mind to read'.

With summer approaching, the RED Team is looking towards the launch of version 3.0 of the database. As almost all of our planned search functions are up and running, what can you expect to see added to the site during July? At present, we are working on a facility which would allow users to create a marked list of entries, and to export these in a print-friendly format to specified email addresses. We also hope to create a browse function, to give users an overall picture of the contents of the database before searching for more specific fields. The large quantity of data now stored in RED has meant that the site has already become a valuable research tool. However, our vision is that RED will continue to grow, encourage new lines of inquiry and shape research. And this is only achievable if scholars and other interested members of the public remain committed to contributing entries. If you have evidence of reading in the past, or if you would like to get involved in research in the history of reading, please do get in touch with us (contact details below).

In addition to database development, the RED Team has also played host to another very successful event, on women and reading during the nineteenth century held at the Institute of English Studies on 26 March. We would like to thank our speakers, Christina de Bellaigue, Ella Dzelzainis, Naomi Hetherington, and Mark Towsey for their extremely illuminating papers, and our panel respondents, David Finkelstein and Gill Sutherland, for their expertise in drawing out the connections between the papers. And we would like to thank our participants, who ensured that discussion was thought-provoking, focused and helpful.

We would also like to take this opportunity to advertise another event we are organising for autumn. On 29 September, we are holding a special event at the British Library in London to mark the end of the period of AHRC funding for RED and to look towards the future of the database as a research and teaching tool for the history of reading. More details will be posted on the RED website shortly: [www.open.ac.uk/Arts/RED](http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/RED).

Finally, we would like to thank the following people for their help and support over the last quarter: Matthew Bradley, Juliet John, Karen Attar, John d'Arcy, Lord Margadale, Tom and Elizabeth Heydeman, Angus Vine, William St Clair, Felicity Stimpson, Jenny Hartley, Shane Malhotra, Julie Watt, Olive Classe and Richard Dury.

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## FORTHCOMING EVENTS AND CALLS FOR PAPERS

### SEMINAR SERIES

#### *Seminars in Book History and Bibliography*

Organised by the Book History Research Group, the Open University, and the Institute of English Studies, University of London.

Organiser: Dr Shafquat Towheed , Open University.

#### **2008-2009: Transatlantic Publishing**

Many thanks to all the speakers who took part in this year's seminar series.

The theme for the **2009-2010** seminar series will be '**The History of Reading**'. If you are interested in giving a paper please contact Dr Shafquat Towheed: [S.S.Towheed@open.ac.uk](mailto:S.S.Towheed@open.ac.uk)

### CALL FOR PAPERS

#### ***Women Readers/Educational Texts 1500-1800***

A three-day international conference at the University of Liverpool  
14-16 April 2010

The recent upsurge in interest in the history of reading has opened numerous new interpretative avenues for scholars. Women's reading has attracted particular attention, in specific regions and time periods. Much of this critical interest has focussed on the idea of leisure reading, however, with the reading of literary texts an especially common theme.

This interdisciplinary conference seeks to explore the range of representations and reading practices contained within and encouraged by works which had a solely or largely pedagogical purpose. What vision of female nature did they propose? How were their textual and editorial strategies specifically adapted to fulfil the perceived needs of the female reading public? How did individual female readers respond to these representations and proposed practices? And how did reading advice and practices change over time?

Points of departure include but are not limited to:

- textual and editorial strategies for advising women
- moral aphorisms for women

- the interplay between educational and leisure reading
- the role of reading in developing women's civic and domestic duties
- reading as a means to women's moral and social advancement
- specific reading practices proposed by educational texts or adopted by individual readers
- the 'feminisation' of traditionally 'masculine' reading practices, including commonplace books, books of extracts etc.

Contributions which treat any language area are welcome. Papers which compare and contrast more than one language area are particularly encouraged.

Proposals for 20-minute papers should be sent to Dr Pollie Bromilow ([pollie.bromilow@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:pollie.bromilow@liverpool.ac.uk)) and Dr Mark Towsey ([m.r.m.towsey@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:m.r.m.towsey@liverpool.ac.uk)) by Friday, 28 August 2009.

It is envisaged that this conference will form the basis of a co-edited volume.

This conference is jointly organised by the University of Liverpool's History of the Book Research Group and the Eighteenth-Century Worlds Research Centre.

For further information, please visit the conference website:

<http://www.liv.ac.uk/soclas/conferences/WomenReaders/index.htm>

## CALL FOR PAPERS

### *The History of Books for Children and Young Adults*

16 June 2009

University of Bedfordshire

See: <http://www.beds.ac.uk/research/rimad/hockcliffeconference>

The University of Bedfordshire is hosting a forthcoming one-day conference on the history of books for children and young adults to be held on the 16th June 2009 at the Polhill Campus, Bedford. The Hockliffe archive comprises works of fiction and non-fiction for children from the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These include a wide range of literary genres, from fables and fairy tales, through periodicals and instruction books, to poetry and fiction, as well as books on games and pastimes, natural science, history, mathematics, geography and travel, (amongst others).

We do not, however, wish to restrict papers to work on books actually in the collection, although papers on these are of course very welcome, but instead we wish to use the conference as an occasion to celebrate the long and vibrant history of publications aimed at children and young adults, and the increasingly multi-disciplinary areas of research with which this has been associated. We therefore welcome contributions that centre on the following very broad topics and themes:

- Academic approaches to children's, young adult (YA) and crossover literature
- The history of children's book illustration, including work on picture books, comics and graphic novels
- The representation of children and childhood in fiction and non-fiction
- Multi-disciplinary work in the fields of childhood and youth studies
- The history of instruction books for children, from bible stories and hymns, through books on history, geography and travel, to natural science and mathematics
- Children's oral culture, including folklore, myths and legends

- Pedagogic theory and practice, from ABC books, to postgraduate courses on children's literature and culture and creative writing for young and YA readers
- The history of children's play and leisure, including research on toys, games, and sports
- Multi-media childhoods, including work on the history of children's television, film and computer games

Please note that proposed papers from postgraduate students are welcome.

The day's proceedings will end with readings by one or more contemporary children's writers (please check the **conference website** for updates on this).

Other related topics and themes will be considered for inclusion in the conference programme. Please submit a 250 word abstract, accompanied by contact details and a brief biography, to be received by 17th April 2009, to the following address:

The Hockliffe Conference  
 c/o Dr Clare Walsh  
 Division of Performing Arts & English  
 University of Bedfordshire  
 Polhill Avenue  
 Bedford  
 MK41 9EA  
 Or by email to: [hockliffe@beds.ac.uk](mailto:hockliffe@beds.ac.uk)

## CALL FOR PAPERS

### *Reading Anthologies in Sixteenth-Century France*

A study day at the Sydney Jones Library, University of Liverpool  
 Friday 20th November 2009

Organised by:

Dr Sara Barker (Department of History, University of Lancaster)  
 Dr Pollie Bromilow (French Section, SOCLAS, University of Liverpool)

Renaissance anthologies took many different forms: 'recueils', 'oeuvres', 'poésies choisies', song books, joke collections. Whether in printed or manuscript form, many kinds of these anthologies circulated in sixteenth-century France both in Latin and the vernacular. This study day seeks to explore the imperatives that governed the production, circulation and reception of anthologies as opposed to single works in sixteenth-century France. What editorial and commercial imperatives drove their appearance? What cultural practices arose from their publication? How are the cultural practices of the anthology related to or different from those of collected and multi-part works?

Points of departure include but are not limited to:

- collected works ('oeuvres') & 'poésies choisies'
- multi-part works and the development of 'brands' eg. the Amadis de Gaule, histoires tragiques and histoires prodigieuses
- the interplay between Latin and vernacular anthologies
- the interplay between printed and manuscript anthologies
- commercial imperatives
- editorial practices

- the role of translation in producing anthologies
- bibliographical approaches and methodologies

The proceedings of this study day will form the basis of a co-edited volume.

Abstracts for 20-minute papers should be sent to Dr Sara Barker and Dr Pollie Bromilow at [pollie.bromilow@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:pollie.bromilow@liverpool.ac.uk) by **Friday 3rd April 2009**.

This Call for Papers can also be found on-line at:

<http://www.liv.ac.uk/soclas/conferences/Anthologies/index.htm>

## CONFERENCE

### *Romantic Circulations: The 11th biennial International conference of the British Association for Romantic Studies (BARS)*

23-26 July 2009

Roehampton University, London, UK

Some of the most productive recent work on the literature and culture of the Romantic period has explored ideas of circulation. The range of scholarship influenced by this approach includes studies of sociability, reading, publishing, anthologizing, conversation, visual and verbal cultures, the history of affect, medicine and disease, and colonialism and slavery. This aim of 'Romantic Circulations' is to investigate the transmission of Romantic ideas, knowledge, cultural forms and literary discourses in the context of changing relations between artist and audience, writer and reader, producer and consumer, elite and popular, national and trans-national.

Topics might include, but not be limited by the following:

- The circulation of sympathy: models of the social as a system of circulation.
- The circulation and transformation of ideas: Conversation and sociability; lectures and debating clubs; education, Sunday schools.
- Reading, reception and audiences: studies of the transmission and reception of visual and verbal texts in the period.
- Visual Circulation: the dissemination of paintings and prints; extra-illustration, marginalia and Grangerization; public spectacle and galleries.
- Circulation of print: Anthologies, pamphlets, publishing, libraries, lending and borrowing; circulation through translation.
- Economies of circulation: money as a material object; economic theory and political economy; the circulation of objects.
- Travel and Technologies of circulation: Transport by road, river, canal, balloon; the post.
- Metaphors of circulation: water, fountains and light.
- Circulation and the body: Blood and medical circulation; contamination and disease; sexual circulation: libertinism and prostitution.
- Trade, commerce and empire: Romantic colonialism; utopias; slavery; orientalism.

Conference organisers: Ian Haywood, Susan Matthews

Conference website: <http://www.roehampton.ac.uk/romanticcirculations/>

## CALL FOR PAPERS

**RSS Conference on Reception Study**  
Sept 11-13, 2009 -- **note change of date**  
Purdue University, West Lafayette, Ind.

**Keynote Speakers:**

James Phelan, Humanities Distinguished Professor, Ohio State University.

"Rhetoric, Ethics, and Audiences in Fiction and Nonfiction: Austen, Didion, and Others."

Steven Zwicker Stanley Elkin Professor in the Humanities, Washington University,

"The day that George Thomason collected his copy of the 'Poems of Mr. John Milton, both English and Latin, Compos'd at Several Times'."

Barbara Klinger, Professor of Communication and Culture, Indiana University.

"Global Titanic: Film Piracy and Transnational Reception in Central Asia."

Michael Bérubé, Paterno Family Professor in Literature, Pennsylvania State University.

"What Happened to Cultural Studies?"

Suggestions for panels and papers in all areas of English, American, and other literatures, media, and book history are welcome. For a list of possible topics and panels, see the RSS website. The deadline is **May 1, 2009**. Please submit proposals of 250 words or less to Philip Goldstein at [pgold@udel.edu](mailto:pgold@udel.edu) or University of Delaware, 333 Shipley St., Wilmington, DE 19801, or visit the website:

<http://www.English.udel.edu/RSSsite>.

Selected conference papers will be published in the RSS journal *Reception: Texts, Readers, Audiences, History*, an on-line, refereed journal focusing mainly but not exclusively on the literature, culture, and media of England and the United States. Submissions are welcome at any time. See the RSS website for vol.1 of *Reception*.

The Reception Study Society promotes informal and formal exchanges between scholars in several related fields: reader-response criticism and pedagogy, reception history, history of reading and the book, audience and communication studies, institutional studies, and gender, race, ethnic, sexuality, postcolonial, religious, and other studies.

**C O N F E R E N C E**

***SHARP 2009: Tradition & InnovatioN - The state of book history / Le point sur l'histoire du livre***

23 - 27 June 2009

St. Michael's College, University of Toronto, Canada

The conference theme, Tradition & InnovatioN, provides an opportunity to explore developments in the field of Book History. Professor Natalie Zemon Davis (Princeton and the University of Toronto) and Professor Dominique Kalifa (Paris 1) will deliver plenary addresses.

In keeping with previous SHARP conferences, we welcome proposals on all aspects of book history and print culture, but especially those that address issues related to the conference theme, such as:

- the future of the discipline
- methodologies: theory versus case studies?
- the legacy of material bibliography
- the 'newmedia' and book culture
- trans-national approaches
- the technologies of reading / assessing readerships
- the evolving nature of authorship
- book history and publishing studies

Presenters must be members of SHARP (by the time of registration) in order to present at the conference. For information on membership, please visit the SHARP website at <http://www.sharpweb.org/>  
Conference website: <http://www.utoronto.ca/stmikes/sharp2009/>