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REDLetter

The Newsletter of the Reading Experience Database



SUMMER 2009

Edited by Rosalind Crone and Katie Halsey

As this month (July) marks the end of three years of funding for RED from the Arts and Humanities Research Council, it seemed appropriate to use this issue of *REDLetter* to reflect on the achievements of the past three years and to outline our plans for the future.

As many of you know, RED was launched in 1996 at the Open University (UK). In this early phase, several dedicated individuals, including Bob Owens, Simon Eliot, Stephen Colclough, Caroline Sumpter, Alexis Weedon and Mary Hammond, supported by generous internal funding, worked hard defining the parameters of the project and collecting data to demonstrate its viability. In 2005, their efforts were rewarded with a substantial award from the AHRC, which enabled the appointment of ourselves as Research Fellows to work full-time on the project.

When we arrived at the beginning of July 2006, we were presented with a number of ambitious targets for the project which were necessary to ensure RED's success, usability and international presence. We are delighted to announce that we have achieved all of these targets. In June, we released version 3.0 of RED. Visitors to the site can now:

- **search for any keyword** in text fields across the whole database by using the 'basic search' option;
- **find records by using specific search fields**, in any combination by using the 'advanced search' option (fields now include: century of experience; name, gender, age, socio-economic group, occupation, religion, and country of origin of the reader; author, title, genre, form (print or manuscript), publication details, and provenance of the text being read; the time and place of the experience);
- **create a marked list of entries** to print in a reader-friendly format or to export to a specified email address;

- **browse** through the contents of the database by author or reader. Choose the ‘browse’ option on the homepage;
- abandon general searches to **follow specific authors or readers** through the database by following the hyperlinks within individual records;
- **contribute** entries to the database, in order to help further studies in readership history.

Over the course of the three years we have worked closely with our technical team at the Open University in order to produce this database, and they have proved to be nothing short of marvellous. In particular, we would like to thank David Wong for his hard work and especially for his patience.

Moreover, the mass of data we have now accumulated in RED will mean that searches by most researchers should reveal some surprising and unexpected results. In May 2009 we exceeded **25,000** entries, a target originally set with a view towards usability and impact. We hope that the collection of such a mass of data in one location will begin to help shape the field, to give us a better understanding of reading across the longue durée in Britain. We would not have been able to achieve this substantial milestone without the contributions of a large number of dedicated volunteers, the tireless input of our research assistants, Jenny McAuley and Sarah Johnson, and the pertinent suggestions made by members of the academic community. We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for all your hard work, and we hope that RED will prove to be a useful resource for teaching and research for you all.

This is not to say, however, that the RED project is at an end. We have barely touched the tip of the iceberg when it comes to sources of reading in the British Isles and of the reading of British subjects abroad during the period 1450-1945. And as we have always said, RED will only ever be as good as the material which goes into it. The contribution form continues to be an important part of the database, and we make this appeal to you: if, in the course of your own research, you come across a description of reading from any historical period between 1450 and 1945 (this can be as cursory as, for example, finding a simple record of an identifiable reader having read a particular book, or as extensive as finding a whole page of comments by an identifiable reader on the practice of reading, or a whole diary which records a person’s thoughts on what they read every day), please make a note of it, and fill in one of our forms. Similarly, if you are interested in working on a particular reader who lived in (or visited) Britain, or who was a British subject living in another country, during the period 1450–1945, and who left letters, diaries, annotated books, autobiographies etc. which contain references to their reading, you should also get in touch with us: RED is looking for volunteers to work their way systematically through such materials in order to catalogue the evidence of reading for posterity.

Finally, as RED will continue to have a presence at international events, we would like to take this opportunity to thank the organisers of the many conferences and seminars we were fortunate enough to attend over the past three years. And many thanks to the editors and publishers who have helped to disseminate research from the database in written form. Look out for the following publications!

- Rosalind Crone, Katie Halsey and Shafquat Towheed (eds), *The History of Reading* (Routledge, forthcoming 2010)
- Katie Halsey, *Jane Austen and her readers* (Anthem, forthcoming 2010)
- Rosalind Crone, Katie Halsey and Shafquat Towheed, ‘Examining the evidence of reading: three examples from the Reading Experience Database, 1450-1945’ in Bonnie Gunzenhauser (ed), *Reading in History: New Methodologies from the Anglo-American Tradition* (Pickering & Chatto, forthcoming 2010)
- Chapters from Rosalind Crone and Katie Halsey in Adelene Buckland and Beth Palmer, *A Return to the Common Reader* (Ashgate, forthcoming, 2010)

Rosalind Crone and Katie Halsey

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

As Rosalind and Katie have said in their article above, the AHRC-funded period of development of RED ends this month, and with the end of this funding their contracts also come to an end. I wanted to take this opportunity to say an enormous thank you to both of them for the extraordinary work they have done over the past three years. That we have managed to meet, and indeed surpass all the targets we set ourselves, is due very largely to their efforts. No Director of a research project could have wished for more dedicated, hardworking, creative, congenial and productive Research Fellows. It has been a privilege to work with them both – and I'm happy to say that in the midst of all the work we have had a lot of fun together too!

At meetings of the RED Management Group and of the RED project team, warm tributes were paid to Katie and Rosalind by myself and my RED colleagues Simon Eliot, Shaf Towheed, Stephen Colclough, Mary Hammond and Alexis Weedon. Not the least important of the things Rosalind and Katie did over the past three years was producing this Newsletter. I know that many readers have appreciated hearing about the project through this medium, and have valued the information circulated by its means. I'm sure that you will also want to join me in thanking Katie and Rosalind for the marvellous work they have done.

I'm very happy to report that RED will by no means come to a standstill, but will continue to develop and expand, building on the work Rosalind and Katie have done. We have recently been successful in a funding bid to the Open University's Strategic Investment Fund, which will mean that we can appoint a Research Associate to work full-time with us for a further eighteen months or so. During this period, research activity will be concentrated on the theme of 'Transnational Reading during the First World War', with an initial focus on Britain and Australia, but with the intention also of extending the project to encompass other combatant nations. We look forward to working closely with Professor Patrick Buckridge and his colleagues at Griffith University, Brisbane, on this new project, and warmly invite other institutions with an interest in the project to get in touch. We would be delighted to hear from you.

Bob Owens, RED Project Director, The Open University

Contact Details:

The RED Team can be contacted at this email address: red-project@open.ac.uk.

Any postal inquiries should be addressed to: Dr Shafquat Towheed, RED Project, Department of English, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

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

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) and Dr Mark Towsey (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>

CONFERENCE

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 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/>

CONFERENCE

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 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.

CALL FOR PAPERS

Material Cultures 2010: Technology, Textuality, and Transmission

16 - 18 July 2010

University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh

Plenary Speakers: Roger Chartier, Jerome McGann, Peter Stallybrass

Following the Material Cultures conferences which took place at The University of Edinburgh in 2000 and 2005, the third in the series is scheduled to take place in July 2010. The key theme of the conference is 'Technology, Textuality, and Transmission', though proposals relating to all aspects of Bibliography and the History of the Book are welcome.

- Materiality and Textuality
- Electronic Text
- The Cultures of Print
- Censorship and Regulation
- Collections and their Preservation
- Readers and Reading Practices
- Technology and Transmission
- The Information Revolution
- Geographies of the Book

Proposals of 200-300 words are invited on these or any other topic related to the history of the book, to be sent no later than NOVEMBER 30, 2009, to Material Cultures, Centre for the History of the Book, University of Edinburgh, 22a Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh, EH8 9LW or by email to materialcultures@ed.ac.uk

Organised by The CENTRE for the HISTORY of the BOOK: <http://www.hss.ed.ac.uk/chb>

CALL FOR PAPERS

SHARP 2010: Book Culture from Below

17-21 August 2010

Helsinki, Finland

The conference is pleased to present two keynote speakers:

- Professor Martyn Lyons (University of New South Wales)
- Professor Ruth B. Bottigheimer (Stony Brook University, New York)

The conference will also include three panel discussions on the main theme Book Culture from Below:

- Conceptual re-evaluations from below
- Exposing the oral and literary background of fairy tales
- How the aspect "from below" changes book history

The conference theme Book Culture from Below emphasizes the book culture of peasants, the laboring classes and other under-represented and oppressed groups, especially their independence and initiative in creating, using and deciphering printed works and print culture. In keeping with the SHARP spirit, we welcome proposals on all aspects of book history, but especially those that address issues and questions related to the conference theme, for example:

- How can the "from below" perspective be applied to book history? How does this perspective intersect with class, race, gender and ideology?
- Who are the readers, writers, publishers and distributors "from below"? Which forms of authorship and educational practices have been available to them?
- How can differences and interactions among educated, autodidactic and uneducated readers, writers and publishers be conceptualized?
- How can the various forms of literacy and illiteracy be recognized and analyzed?
- Which kinds of writings and publications are relevant for studying book culture from below? Which bibliographical and book history methods and approaches can we use to study them?
- How can the complex interaction between folklore and book culture, orality and literacy be re-evaluated? What are the functions of the manuscript medium in relation to the oral and the printed media?

- What are the intersections of subaltern and post-colonial studies with book history?
- In which ways does the "from below"-perspective challenge hegemonic national histories? What are the possibilities of transnational studies in this field?

We invite not only researchers of print culture but also those studying manuscripts (whether medieval or modern era) to the conference.

Proposals

The conference is open to both individual presentations and complete panel proposals (including three speakers and a chairperson). Each speaker will be given 20 minutes for the presentation and 10 minutes for discussion. All sessions will last 90 minutes. The proposals should be sent in English, which is the main language of the conference.

Proposals can be sent only by using the proposal form available on the conference website. The official on-line submission process will be opened on 15 September 2009. The deadline for submissions is 30 November 2009. No proposals will be considered after the deadline.

Participants must be members of SHARP in order to present at the conference. It is the responsibility of presenters to ensure that they are members by the time of the registration. For information on membership, please visit the SHARP website at www.sharpweb.org.

Travel grants

SHARP is able to provide a limited number of travel grants to graduate students and independent scholars. If you wish to be considered for such a grant, please state this when submitting your proposal.

Contact addresses

For more information, please visit the conference's website at www.helsinki.fi/sharp2010

The conference website and information can also be found via www.sharpweb.org

Inquiries concerning the conference should be sent to [sharp-2010 \(at\) helsinki.fi](mailto:sharp-2010@helsinki.fi)

SYMPOSIUM

Stuart Poetry - Sources, Readers and Editions: A Symposium on Editing Seventeenth-century Verse

15 September 2009

Jesus College, Cambridge

The textual study and editing of Stuart poetry stands at a crossroads. In the last five or so years, and in the five or so years to come, we have seen (or will see) new editions of the poetry of Herrick, Herbert, Jonson, Donne, Shirley, Waller, Pulter, Greville, and others. The time is also manifestly ripe for editions of other poets (Corbett, Randolph, Carew, Crashaw, etc.) that will build upon the labours of earlier scholars. In many cases work for such editions is already underway. Meanwhile, developments in the study of early seventeenth-century poetry have encouraged us to see this verse as the product of networks and communities, as convivial, sociable, and/or institutional. This critical work has also reinforced our understanding (not always shared by earlier twentieth-century editors of these poets) that the manuscripts and miscellanies in which these poems appeared in the early seventeenth century are just as important as their printed editions to any study of their authorship and social context, their reception and transmission.

How, then, should editing respond to these new ways of understanding this verse? How should the practical business of scholarly editing reflect, or influence, new editorial and textual theory, and how does it shape our continued reading of the texts of Stuart poetry?

This seminar will bring together new and experienced scholars, representatives of existing editorial projects and those embarking upon editions and studies of their own. The symposium will be structured around round-table discussions, and we look forward to the contributions of those attending, as well as those providing papers. Discussion will cover the following areas, and more:

- Editing and the sociology of Stuart poetry. How can we edit the works of Stuart poets to provide our readers with a proper understanding of their place in communities and networks? What is the role of single-author editions in a contemporary scholarly tradition that emphasizes communality, transmission, and sociability?
- Editing the material texts of Stuart poetry. How should editions record the material transmission of Stuart poetry? Is there a place for an editorial practice focussed upon the material book (often the material miscellany), rather than (or as well as) individual poems? How should we edit the Stuart anthology?
- New approaches to editing Stuart poetry. How do innovations in editorial theory and practice allow us to re-assess, or re-appraise, older traditions of textual scholarship and editing? How are digital resources and online facsimiles restructuring contemporary editing practices? And how do we, or how should we, read these new editions? Are we in danger of producing editions that outstrip our capacity to make best use of them?
- Publishing Stuart poetry. How do the needs and interests of publishers shape our editing practices? What changes do publishers see in the forthcoming ten, or twenty years? How can we work with publishers to ensure the lasting use, and interest, of the editions that we are preparing?

Registration for the symposium is £5, which will cover the cost of lunch; this may be paid on the day of the event. Anyone wishing to attend, or with any questions about the symposium, should contact Christopher Burlinson (cmb29@cam.ac.uk) or Ruth Connolly (ruth.connolly@ncl.ac.uk).