

## *RED Letter*

### The Newsletter of the Reading Experience Database



WINTER 2007

Edited by Rosalind Crone and Katie Halsey

2007 is an important year. It marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of Richard Altick's seminal work, *The Common Reader* (1957). Widespread recognition of the substantial contribution of this detailed study to book history and the history of reading is already evident in the conference, seminar and workshop announcements for this year. In *The Common Reader*, Richard Altick sought to uncover the reading practices of ordinary people in the past, largely focusing on the nineteenth century as this period witnessed the emergence of mass printing and mass literacy. The limits of Altick's study were perhaps best expressed in his oft-quoted exclamation, 'If only we had the autobiography of [a] pork butcher'(244). However, historians and literary historians readily took up this challenge. Such autobiographies have even been found and analysed, and an increasing wealth of studies exist that tackle questions about the common reader.

The opening of this anniversary year is an important moment to explore the ways in which the Reading Experience Database intends to extend such research even further. Or, in other words, to provide you with a sample of its contents in the lead up to its public launch later this year. In addition to more famous readers in history, we have been collecting important accounts of reading from the autobiographies and memoirs of working people. But, at the same time, we have also made some substantial efforts to look for evidence beyond these. Recognising that those working men and women who kept diaries and wrote of their experiences were a small minority, we have been searching for readers who did not keep a personal record. Even at this early stage, in this endeavour we have already enjoyed a small measure of success. The following is just a taste of what you might find in RED when it becomes searchable in the summer.

On 4 October 1834, Charles Bradfield, a foreman to a stable-keeper, went to the Bull Public House for breakfast. He gave his beef-steak to the servant to be dressed, and borrowed the newspaper purchased by the establishment for the use of their customers. As he was reading it, Thomas Mitchell came into the room and demanded the newspaper. Bradfield refused and a struggle broke out between the two men, during which Mitchell grabbed a knife from a table and stabbed Bradfield in the left breast. This fascinating account of a reading experience was found in the criminal court records for London, an invaluable resource for charting reading habits among ordinary Londoners. Evidence collected by social investigators in nineteenth-century

London can be equally enlightening. For example, during the 1840s Henry Mayhew interviewed a London 'sweet-stuff maker' who purchased paper for wrapping sweets from stationary or old bookshops. 'Sometimes, he said, he got works in this way in sheets which had never been cut, and which he retained to be read at his short intervals of leisure, and then used to wrap his goods in. In this way, he had read through two Histories of England!' (*London Labour and the London Poor*, vol 1, p. 204.)

And on to RED news. Over the last couple months we have been continuing our crucial technical upgrade in preparation for our public launch this year. We have now developed a new, more user-friendly online form. We are currently in the process of stress-testing it and hope to open it to the public in early March. We will issue an announcement to subscribers as soon as it goes live. Alongside this, we have developed a new hard copy form because we want to continue to provide contributors with the option to download the RED form and return it to us either by post or electronically. To avoid confusion, we plan to put the hard copy form on our website at the same time that the online form becomes live. However, if you would like to begin using this immediately, please contact us and we can send it to you.

Furthermore, we have some more important dates for the diary as we fast approach our target launch time in summer this year. We have set aside a two-week period for a trial of the input and search functions of the database in April. For two weeks, a set number of invitees will have access to the database via a link and password that we will issue. Participants will be asked to complete a feedback form to help us improve the scope and functions of the database. If you would like to be included on our list of participants, please get in touch. Finally, we have set a provisional date for the public launch of RED. We hope that the database will go live and be available to everyone from 27 June 2007.

The RED community also continues to grow through publicity. In particular, we would like to thank Alison Beer of Hillingdon Libraries, Berry Chevasco of University College, London, Marcus Waithe of the University of Sheffield, John Spiers and Warwick Gould of the Institute of English Studies, University of London, and David Finkelstein, Warren McDougall, Joseph Marshall and the rest of the committee of the Edinburgh Bibliographical Society for their kind assistance. Also, we would like to welcome and thank new volunteers who have joined the project. Their interests continue to be diverse and exciting. Not only have some chosen to focus on the memoirs and papers of famous readers, but others have offered material from private family collections and even some from their research on specific groups of readers. We would like to acknowledge again the great debt we owe to our volunteers and also to all those who have contacted us with various suggestions for the project and rich locations for material. We continue to be greatly encouraged by the interest and kindness of all and see this as a strong indication of how useful this resource will be to the research community.

We are also continuing to update the RED website regularly, especially our events page with details about relevant calls for papers, essay collections and forthcoming conferences, seminars and workshops. If you would like to advertise an event on the site, please contact us. We have also been updating our publications list and we have plans to upload a new page this month with reviews of recent publications in the history and theory of reading. If you have a book for review, or if you would like to review a particular book for the website, please get in touch.

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## **FORTHCOMING EVENTS AND CALLS FOR PAPERS**

### **SEMINAR SERIES**

Publishing Periodicals: Seminars in Book History and Bibliography 2006  
University of London, Institute of English Studies, School of Advanced Studies  
Organised by the Book History and Bibliography Research Group, the Open  
University, and the Institute of English Studies, University of London  
Mondays, 5:30-7pm

Venue: Room ST273 (2nd Floor, Stewart House), Senate House, Malet St, London,  
WC1E 7HU. Tel: 020 78628675

### **Programme**

January 29th, 2007

Suzanne Paylor and Jim Mussell (Birkbeck, University of London)

“‘A picture or a Thousand Words’”: the use of images in the nineteenth-century  
periodical press and how they are reproduced today’

February 12th, 2007

Joanne Shattock (University of Leicester)

‘The Reviewing Culture 1830-1860’

February 26th, 2007

Bernard Capp (University of Warwick)

‘Cheap print and the stars: almanacs and the almanac-trade in early modern England’

March 12th, 2007

Michael Sanders (Manchester University)

“‘A Jackass Load of Poetry’”: The editorial policy of the Northern Star's Poetry  
Column, 1838-1852’

Organiser: Dr Mary Hammond, the Open University  
([m.e.hammond@open.ac.uk](mailto:m.e.hammond@open.ac.uk))

## CONFERENCE

The Books of Venice: A Conference on the Book in Venice  
Venice, Italy, March 9-10, 2007

Venice's books, like the buildings described by Ruskin, have long been considered one of her greatest glories. Venice and the Veneto were hosts to some of the earliest book printers in Italy; the workplace of master publishers from Aldus Manutius in the sixteenth century to the Remondini in the eighteenth; the home of remarkable libraries such as those of Cardinal Bessarion and Girolamo Ascanio Molin; and the subject of countless works of fact and fiction. The Society for the History of Authorship, Reading, and Publishing (SHARP) announces a conference to bring together in Venice scholars of Venice to consider its remarkable roles in book history, including but not limited to such topics as:

- The book trade in Venice
- Print and manuscript in Venice
- La Serenissima Stampata: Venice in books and prints
- Fictional Venice
- Venice and Beyond

The papers selected will be presented in three half-day plenary sessions at the Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti.

The keynote addresses will be given by Lilian Armstrong (Wellesley College), Neil Harris (Università di Udine) and Marino Zorzi (Biblioteca Marciana). There will also be a half-day lecture and workshop called "Printing in the Shadow of Aldus Manutius." It will be led by Peter Koch of Editions Koch, and will give participants an introduction to their work, including their new fine-press edition of Joseph Brodsky's Watermark.

The conference is sponsored by the Biblioteca Marciana and the Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti and generously supported by the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation.

## CONFERENCE

The First International Making Books, Shaping Readers Conference  
University College, Cork, April 18th - 20th 2007  
<http://www.ucc.ie/en/mbsr>  
Theme: "Making an Audience"

The research project Making Books, Shaping Readers (<http://www.ucc.ie/en/mbsr>) invites papers for a conference on "Making an Audience". This conference will explore how different publications of the material text posit not only different audiences, but also different notions of an audience. Papers might focus on the kind of

audiences texts invite; on how shifts in the methods of textual production record a shift in the role of the reader from medieval to contemporary times; on how the act of reading is inscribed in the book; ways in which the production of a text defines its ideal audience; and on how a text's transmission over time effects how it is read. We are also concerned with tracing the actual reader/audience of a text through, perhaps, marks and annotations in the text. The analysis of how audiences are both inscribed in, and inscribe, the material book demands an interdisciplinary approach, therefore we invite papers from scholars in all disciplines. We are interested in all aspects of how audiences are made via the various forms of textual materialities, including e-texts.

This conference encourages a broad interpretation of the notion of an audience in keeping with the etymology of the word. The term audience, which derives from the Latin *audenita*, "a hearing, listening", from *awis*, "to perceive physically, to grasp", and from the nineteenth century transformation of the sense of the word to "readers of a book", reflects the way in which technologies of the word have changed throughout history, from oral, to manuscript, to print. Selected papers may be included in an edited volume of essays, and accepted abstracts will be published on the MBSR website prior to the conference.

All queries can be directed to the organisers, Siobhán Collins, Carrie Griffin and Mary O'Connell, at [mbsr@ucc.ie](mailto:mbsr@ucc.ie)

## **CONFERENCE**

New Developments in Textual Culture  
Department of English Studies, University of Stirling, UK  
Saturday 17th February 2007 9.00 am - 5.30 pm

Keynote speakers: Prof. Ron Scollon (Georgetown), Dr Peter D. McDonald (Oxford)

Textual Culture is a cross-period, interdisciplinary field of enquiry focused on the production, circulation, and use of texts conceived in material, discursive, and economic terms. It brings together several strands of existing research interest, principally book history, publishing studies, discourse analysis, and reader/audience study. This one-day symposium, intended as an exploration of the continuing development of these research traditions and the relationship between them, follows the highly successful Textual Culture conference of 2005 and precedes the Autumn 2007 launch of the Master of Research (M.Res) degree in Textual Culture at the University of Stirling.

## **CONFERENCE**

SHARP 2007  
Open the Book, Open the Mind  
Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA July 11-15, 2007

The fifteenth annual conference of the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing (SHARP) will be held in Minneapolis at the University of Minnesota on July 11–15, 2007. The conference is organized in cooperation with the College of

Liberal Arts, University of Minnesota—including the Department of English and the Institute for Advanced Study; University of Minnesota Libraries; Minneapolis Public Library; Minnesota Historical Society; and Minnesota Center for Book Arts —a part of Open Book.

The conference theme, “Open the Book, Open the Mind,” will highlight how books develop and extend minds and cultures, and also how they are opened to new media and new purposes. However, individual papers or sessions may address any aspect of book history and print culture.

Pre-conference, July 10, 2007: Book Arts and Artists' Books

A pre-conference of practical workshops and a plenary session devoted to book arts and artists' books will be held at the Minnesota Center for Book Arts, near the University of Minnesota campus, on Tuesday, July 10, 2007.

The conference program and online registration will be available in February 2007.

Travel and Accommodations

The conference will be held on the Twin Cities campus of the University of Minnesota, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA. Minneapolis–St. Paul International Airport is well served by nonstop flights from London, Amsterdam, Tokyo, and other major cities. The airport is close to the Mall of America, one of the largest shopping malls in the world.

A block of sleeping rooms has been reserved at the Radisson University Hotel. Reservations must be reserved by June 17, 2007, and can be made by contacting the hotel directly at 800-822-6757.

About Minneapolis and St. Paul

Recently Minneapolis has welcomed several outstanding new buildings for the arts and learning, including the Guthrie Theater (designed by Jean Nouvel), additions to both the Walker Art Center (by Herzog & de Meuron) and Minneapolis Institute of Arts (Michael Graves), the Minneapolis Central Library (Cesar Pelli), as well as the Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum (Frank Gehry). The remarkable Elmer L. Andersen Library houses one and a half million books and related archival materials in giant vaults carved into the banks of the Mississippi River literally below the campus of the University of Minnesota. The Andersen Library is part of the University of Minnesota Libraries, a system that owns more than 6.2 million books. The University of Minnesota is one of the largest university campuses in the United States. Minneapolis, where the conference will take place, is adjacent to St. Paul, the state capital, where the library of the Minnesota Historical Society houses extensive print and manuscript records. Both cities boast fine theaters, concert halls, and restaurants, as well as outstanding parks, many of which surround lakes. More than 10,000 other lakes lie within a several hours' drive, including vast Lake Superior and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, which stretches along the Canadian border. Chicago, with its many cultural attractions, is only 90 minutes away by plane. July is the warmest month of the year in the Twin Cities; daily high temperatures average 84 F (28 C).

Planning Committee

Michael Hancher, Professor of English, University of Minnesota - Chair  
Douglas Armato, Director, University of Minnesota Press  
Thomas Augst, Professor of English, University of Minnesota  
Betty Bright, Independent Scholar and Curator  
Patrick Coleman, Curator and Acquisitions Librarian, Minnesota Historical Society  
Edward Griffin, Professor of English, University of Minnesota  
Wendy Pradt Lougee, University Librarian, McKnight Presidential Professor  
Marcia Pankake, Professor, Academic Programs, University of Minnesota Libraries  
Donald Ross, Professor of English, University of Minnesota  
Ann Waltner, Professor of History and Director, Institute for Advanced Study,  
University of Minnesota

For more information, please contact  
Electra Sylva  
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conferences5@cce.umn.edu

## **CONFERENCE**

Collectors and Collecting: Private Collections and their Role in Libraries  
Chawton House Library, 19-20 July 2007.

This event is jointly organised by Chawton House Library, the University of Southampton English Department, and Goucher College, Baltimore.

There are many examples of collections put together by individuals that are now valuable assets of the libraries to which they have been donated and to the wider cultural heritage. Such collections include the Henry and Alberta Hirshheimer Burke collection of rare editions of Jane Austen's novels and related materials at Goucher College, and the John Charles Hardy collection of eighteenth-century novels, a substantial part of which now forms a part of Chawton House Library.

This conference will focus on individual collectors of books and manuscripts and their collections. Plenary speakers are Reg Carr (Director of University Library Services and Bodley's Librarian at the University of Oxford), Robert H. Jackson (Collector, author, and lecturer on literature, rare books, and collecting; founding member of the Fellowship of American Bibliophilic Societies), James Raven (Professor of Modern History, University of Essex) and Bruce Whiteman (Head Librarian, William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, Center for 17th and 18th Century Studies, University of California - Los Angeles).

## **CONFERENCE**

Beyond the Book: Contemporary Cultures of Reading  
A conference at the University of Birmingham, UK  
1 & 2 September 2007

Keynote Speakers:  
Janice Radway (Duke University) & Elizabeth Long (Rice University)

Book groups, Lit Blogs, on-line bookstores, book festivals, reader magazines, 'One Book, One Community,' Reader's Guides, 'Richard & Judy's Book Club,' Book TV, 'Canada Reads,' the 'Nancy Pearl Action Figure,' 'Tuesday Night Book Club,'... reading is hot!

This conference will explore the diverse formations, mediations, practices and representations of reading and readers in the contemporary moment. Cultures of reading are dynamic and complex: they involve not only readers reading, but also multiple agencies including publishers, booksellers, broadcast networks, national, regional and municipal governments, and educational institutions. The aim of the conference is to interrogate the relations among these agents and their investment in the meanings of reading. The study of readers and reading encourages, maybe demands, multi- and interdisciplinary analysis. We therefore invite scholars from across the humanities and social sciences to consider the contemporary meanings and experiences of reading in any culture or location. Selected papers will be included in an edited collection on contemporary cultures of reading/book cultures.

Beyond the Book is a three-year collaborative interdisciplinary AHRC-funded research project investigating contemporary cultures of reading. The transatlantic BTB team are: DeNel Rehberg Sedo (Mount Saint Vincent University, Canada), Danielle Fuller, Anouk Lang & Anna Burrells (University of Birmingham, UK).

## **CONFERENCE**

Making Connections Between Library, Book, Reading and Information History  
7-8 June 2007  
Innovation North: Faculty of Information & Technology, Leeds Metropolitan  
University

A Conference Organised by the Information History Group, Leeds Metropolitan University, in association with the Library and Information History Group of the UK's Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) and HIBOLIRE (The Nordic-Baltic-Russian Network on the History of Books, Libraries and Reading).

Scholars researching in the history of print culture, communication and knowledge organisation often confine themselves to niche colleges of scholarship within what is a broad, developing and, it might be argued, increasingly integrated area within the humanities. This conference aims to bring scholars from these distinct yet overlapping colleges together to exchange ideas and explore synergies.

Conference fee: £20. (Concessions: please apply).

## **CALL FOR PAPERS**

'Print Networks' Conference: Print culture in the provinces: the creation, distribution  
and dissemination of word and image  
24-26 July 2007  
University of Chester, Chester



The twenty-fourth annual 'Print Networks' conference on the History of the British Book Trade will take place at the University of Chester on 24-26 July 2007. The theme for the conference is 'Print culture in the provinces: the creation, distribution, and dissemination of word and image'. Provincial-metropolitan inter-trade connections will be acceptable or on aspects of trade relations with any part of the former colonies & dominions.

A selection of the papers will be published in July 2008 as part of the 'Print Networks' series, published by the British Library and Oak Knoll Press. Papers should be of up to 30 minutes duration. An abstract of the offered paper and a brief CV, (no longer than one side of A4 in total) of the likely contents should be submitted by **31 January 2007** to:

Dr Lisa Peters  
Learning Resources  
University of Chester  
Parkgate Road  
Chester CH1 4BJ  
l.peters@chester.ac.uk

It is understood that papers offered to the Conference will be original work and not delivered to any similar body before presentation at this Conference. Please be advised that presenting your work at conference offers no guarantee that it will be accepted for publication. Furthermore, it is part of the agreement with the publishers that papers will not be published in any similar collection for one year after their appearance in the appropriate volume; in effect they must not appear elsewhere before July 2009.

A Conference Fellowship is offered to a postgraduate scholar who wishes to present a paper at the conference. The fellowship covers the cost of attending the conference and possibly some assistance towards costs of travel. A detailed submission of the research being undertaken accompanied by a letter of recommendation from a tutor or supervisor should be sent to Dr Lisa Peters by 31 January 2007.

More information on the Conference Fellowship may be found at:

<http://www.bbti.bham.ac.uk/PrintNetworks.htm>

### **CALL FOR PAPERS**

The Culture of the Publisher's Series 1700-2000  
A major International Conference to be held on  
18 -19 October 2007  
Institute of English Studies, University of London

In the early 18th century, British publishers began gathering books together in themed series and packaging and marketing them as distinct, recognisable groups. The effects of this phenomenon were remarkable; by the mid-nineteenth century there were upward of 3,000 publishers' series in Britain alone, and the phenomenon is of course still with us today. During this 200-year period the culture of the publisher's series has opened up new possibilities for authors, publishers, distributors and readers,

helped to establish a wide range of traditions from the establishment of national literary canons to the development of feminist lists, and influenced the kinds of literature we teach to the next generation of scholars.

While some publishers' series have been investigated in depth, there have been few opportunities for the work of individual scholars to be placed in meaningful dialogue. This major two-day conference seeks to encourage International scholars from all disciplines to examine the culture of the publishers' series with a view to furthering understanding of its historical, ideological, generic and geographical reach.

Confirmed Speakers Include: Robert Fraser, Mary Hammond, Elizabeth James, Andrew Nash, John Spiers

We welcome offers of individual papers or paper panels from both new and established scholars. Topics may include (but are not confined to): the development of individual or linked publishers' series; changes in National and International copyright law; emergent readerships and genres worldwide; changes in production and transport methods; changing literacy rates; notions of literary taste; canon formation; education reform; social and political change.

Abstracts of no more than 300 words and short speaker biographies to be sent electronically by March 31st, 2007 to both organisers at the following addresses:

Dr Mary Hammond (m.e.hammond@open.ac.uk) and Professor John Spiers (jr.spiers@virgin.net).

**DEADLINE:** 31 March 2007