

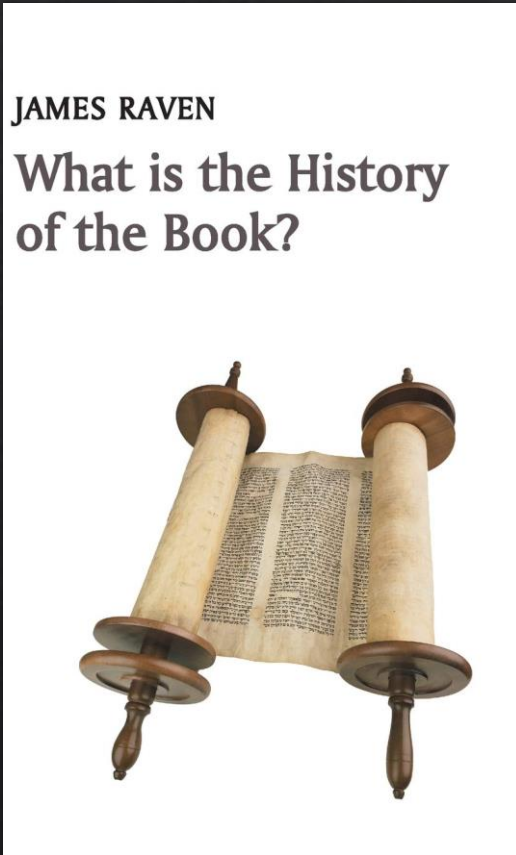
HISTORIES OF THE BOOK

HISTORIES OF READERSHIP
AND COMMUNICATION

Overview

1. History of the Book: Terminology and Historiography
2. Theories of Communication and Authorship
3. Digital Approaches to Book History and Histories of Reading

1. History of the Book: Terminology and Historiography



What is the history of the
book?

JAMES RAVEN

What is the History of the Book?



“Book history of ‘the history of the book’ aspires to study the historical consequences of the **production**, **dissemination** and **reception** of texts, in all the material [*and electronic – ed.*] forms, across all societies and in all ages.”

◊ But what is a book (anyway)?

◊ Why might this outwardly banal question be of consequence?

◊ What distinguishes books from other written media?

Book, n.

◆ A **portable** volume consisting of a series of written, printed, or illustrated pages bound together for ease of reading.

In modern use the pages are typically printed and made of paper, and are usually trimmed to a uniform rectangular or square shape, sewn or glued together along one side to form a flat or rounded back, and encased in a protective cover, but other materials and construction methods may be used. In early and historical use, and with reference to non-Western cultures, *book* may refer to a literary work in portable form written on a wide variety of other materials (**as vellum, parchment, papyrus, cotton, silk, palm leaves, bark, tablets of wood, ivory, slate, metal, etc.**), and put together in any of a number of forms (as a scroll, or as separate leaves which may be hinged, strung, stitched, or glued together).

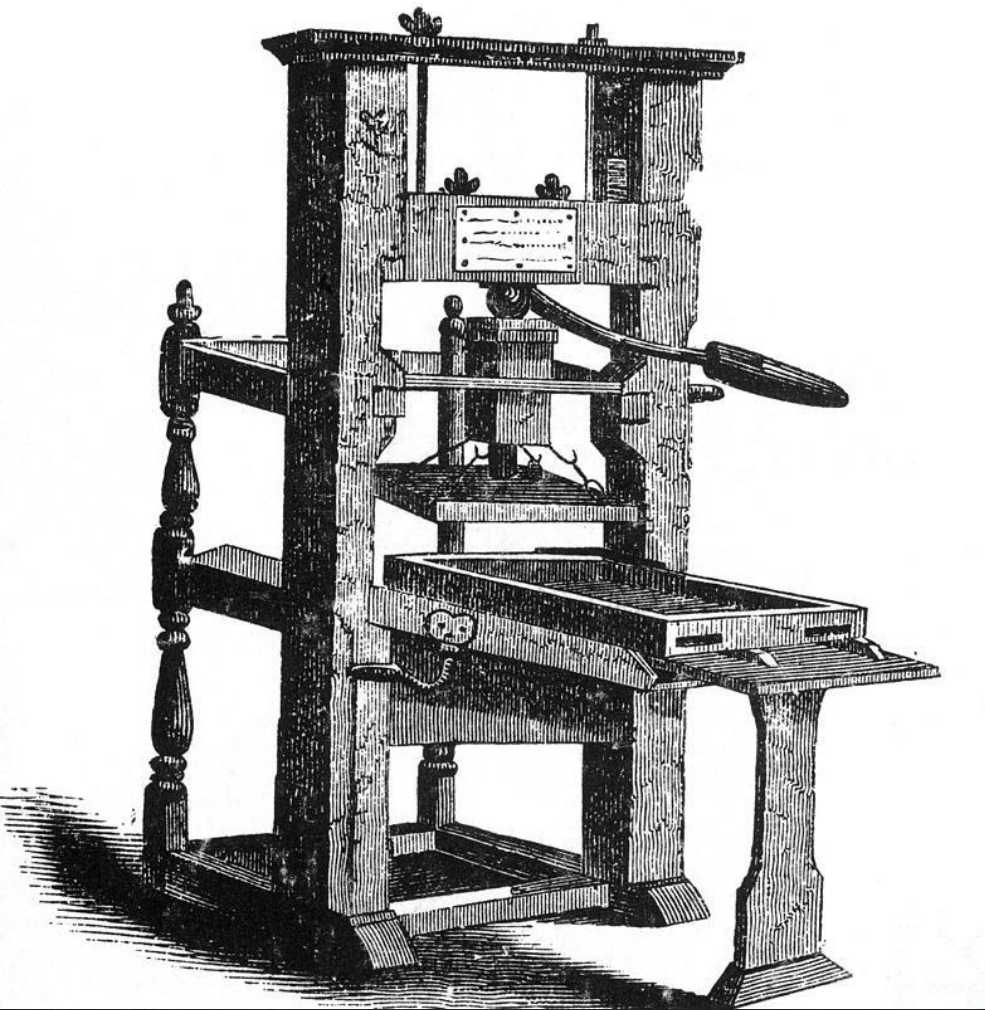
Book, n.

- eOE KING ÆLFRED tr. Gregory *Pastoral Care* (Hatton) (1871) Pref. 9 Ic bebiode..ðæt nan mon ðone æstel from ðære bēc ne do, ne ða boc from ðæm mynstre.
- OE *West Saxon Gospels: Luke* (Corpus Cambr.) iv.17 He þa boc unfeold [L. *revolvit librum*].
- c1225 (*?c1200) *Sawles Warde* (Bodl.) (1938) 10 A gret boc..iwwiten wið swarte smeale leattres.
- c1275 (*?c1250) *Owl & Nightingale* (Calig.) (1935) l. 1325 (MED) On ape mai a boc bi halde, An leues wenden & eft folde.
- c1300 *St. Dominic* (Laud) 26 in C. Horstmann *Early S.-Eng. Legendary* (1887) 278 His bokes he solde and al is guod.
- 1471 in J. Raine *Testamenta Eboracensia* (1865) III. 193 j bowk covered with rede velwett.
- 1519 W. HORMAN *Vulgaria* viii. f. 84 A volume is lesse than a bok; and a boke lesse than a coucher [L. *codice*].
- 1535 G. JOYE *Apol. Tindale* sig. C.iiii^v There were so many false printed bokis stil putforth & bought vp so fast.
- 1559 *Dunmow Churchwarden MS* 43 b A booke of parchment conteyninge in yt a Venite booke, an ymnall, and a boke for diriges and berialls.
- 1641 W. S. in *More's Hist. Edward V* (new ed.) Ep. Ded. sig. A3 There comming..into my hand a booke long since printed.
- 1674 A. MARVELL *Gen. Councils in Wks.* (1875) IV. 132 Would you anathemize, banish, imprison, execute us, and burn our books?
- 1733 I. WATTS *Philos. Ess.* xi. §ii. 263 The proxime Matter of a Book is its Leaves printed with Words, bound up in Covers: but Paper and Printer's Ink are the remote Matter of it.
- 1778 *Williamson's Liverpool Advertiser* 24 July The..two Books making a complete Travelling Companion, may be had bound together.
- 1845 *Penny Cycl.* Suppl. I. 220/2 Most well-bound books have a little appendage at the top of the back-edge, called the 'head-band'.
- 1892 H. JAMES *Lesson of Master* 186 A certain feeling for letters must have rubbed off on him from the mere handling of his master's books, which he was always carrying to and fro.
- 1904 *Blackwood's Edinb. Mag.* Mar. 345/2 His glance..travelled from the walls lined with well-bound books to the lamps modulated to the proper light.
- 1921 H. W. ELSON *Mod. Times & Living Past.* xviii. 248 The Romans wrote..on Egyptian papyrus, or on parchment, and in time the rolled book gave place to the book composed of sheets bound together.
- 1969 H. BRODKEY in *Stories in Almost Classical Mode* (1989) 133 Fennie had a special system for packing their books in alphabetical order so they could easily be arranged on shelves in Washington.
- 1996 *N.Y. Rev. Bks.* 19 Sept. 45/1 These cloth books and their sacred lore, the 'disciplina Etrusca', continued in use throughout the Roman era.
- 2005 *Bath Chron.* (Nexis) 17 Sept. 14 There is a bookshelf less than an inch above a fireplace shelf and it's crammed with books on Raphaelite and avant garde art.

A Book is (also) ...

- ◊ An **object**
- ◊ A **medium** for transmission of information
- ◊ A mode of **communication**
- ◊ A form of **technology**
- ◊ A composite of different organic **materials**
- ◊ A **personal** effect/belonging

What distinguishes books from earlier forms of written media?



Gutenberg Bible; printing press 'invented,' c. 1440s





Frontispiece of the Diamond Sutra from Tang-dynasty China, 868
ACE (British Museum), widely seen as the earliest extant printed
book

What distinguishes books from earlier forms of written media?

What is meant by the following terms?

◆ Manuscript

◆ Codex

◆ Codicology

◆ Calligraphy

◆ Palaeography

◆ Cartulary

◆ Incunabula

◆ Bibliography

What distinguishes books from earlier forms of written media?

What is meant by the following terms?

- ◆ **Manuscript** – ‘handwritten’ document
- ◆ **Codex** – bound volumes of vellum, papyrus and other materials
- ◆ **Codicology** – study of codices as physical objects
- ◆ **Calligraphy** – handwriting as a visual art
- ◆ **Palaeography** – study/analysis of historic handwriting
- ◆ **Incunabula**
- ◆ **Bibliography**

Incunabula = ‘books’ made before 1501

- ❖ 1500 as the limit of the period of incunabula first adopted in 1643 by Johann Saubert's his history of the Nuremberg library (*Historia Bibliothecae Noribergensi*) – an early exercise in the history of the book
- ❖ Fairly arbitrary cut off – but the product of early attempts at the history of the book (or bibliography)



Varieties of Bibliography (as in the study of books)

Enumerative = gathering together all information relevant to a book's theme/topic

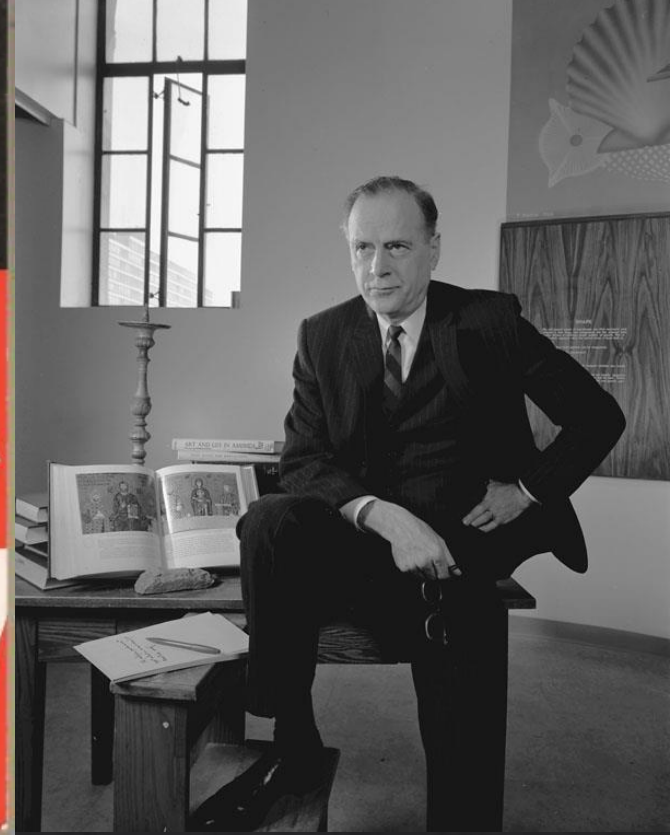
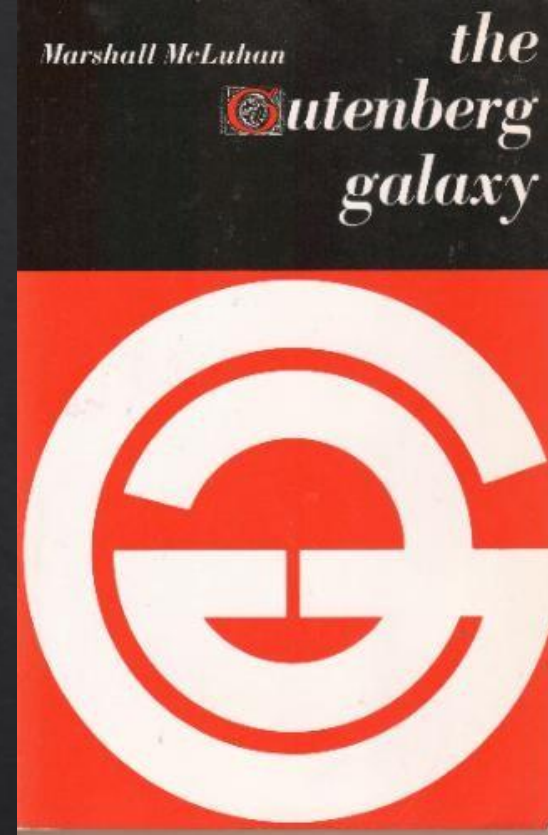
Descriptive = close physical description of books and other printed objects: a systematic report concerning their type, paper, printing, illustrations, and binding, and how the circumstances of their publication and distribution may have affected their physical appearance

Textual = interpretation of a book's printed content; analysis of text's transmission from author to print edition(s); goal of recovering most accurate text as originally conceived by an author perhaps with intention of producing a new critical edition

Historical = exploring social, economic, political context in which books were produced, using external source

Four epochs of book history

1. Oral tribe culture
2. Manuscript culture
3. Gutenberg galaxy
4. Electronic age
(of 'the global village')



“The invention of typography confirmed and extended the new visual stress of applied knowledge, providing the first uniformly repeatable ‘commodity,’ the first assembly-line, and the first mass-production.”

- Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962)

2. Theories of Communication and Authorship



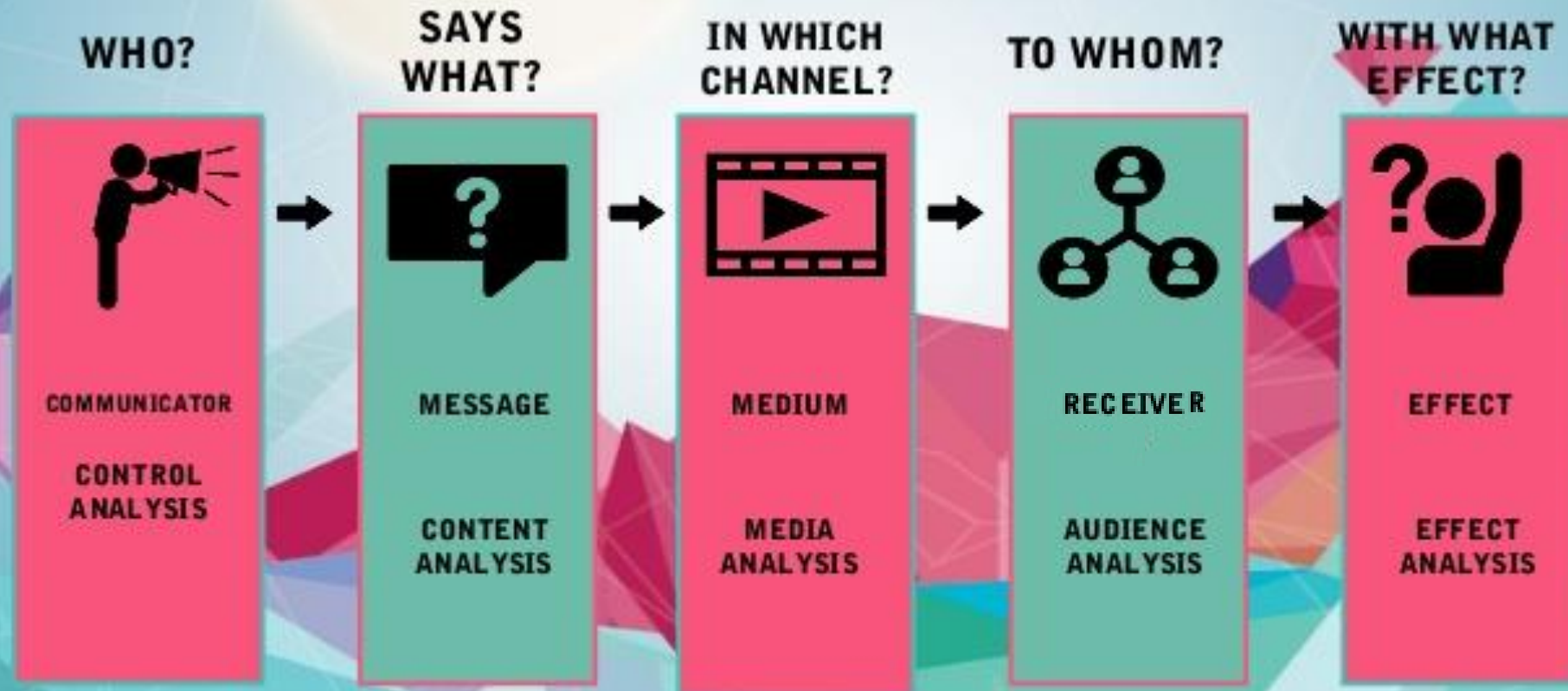
Harold Lasswell (1902–1972)

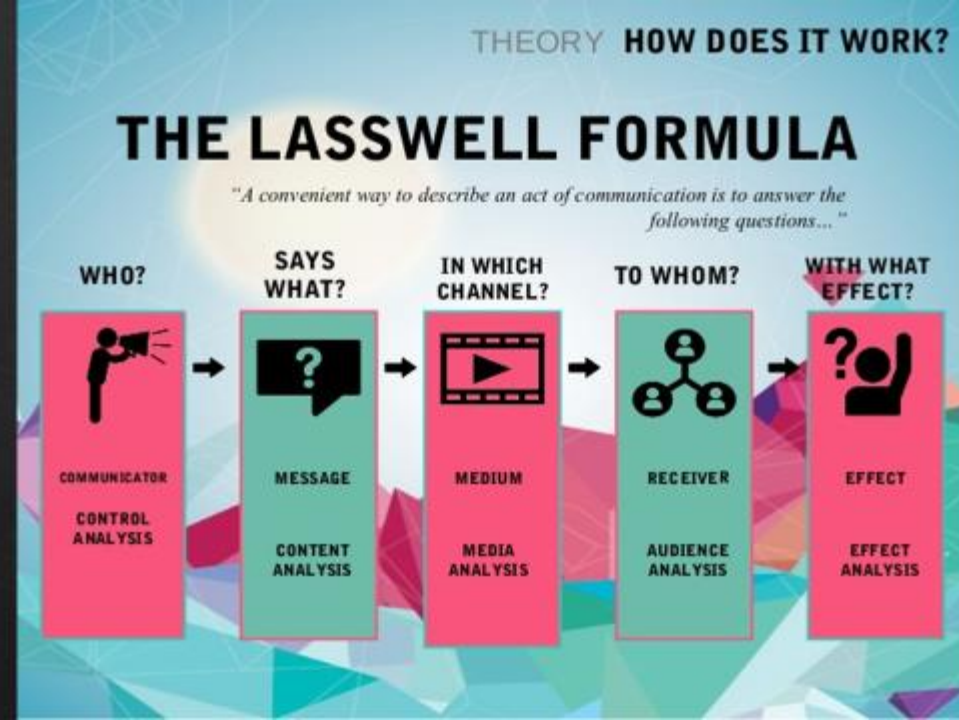
Lasswell's
Model of
Communication
'5Ws'
"Who says What
to Whom in
Which Channel
with What
Effect".

THEORY HOW DOES IT WORK?

THE LASSWELL FORMULA

"A convenient way to describe an act of communication is to answer the following questions..."



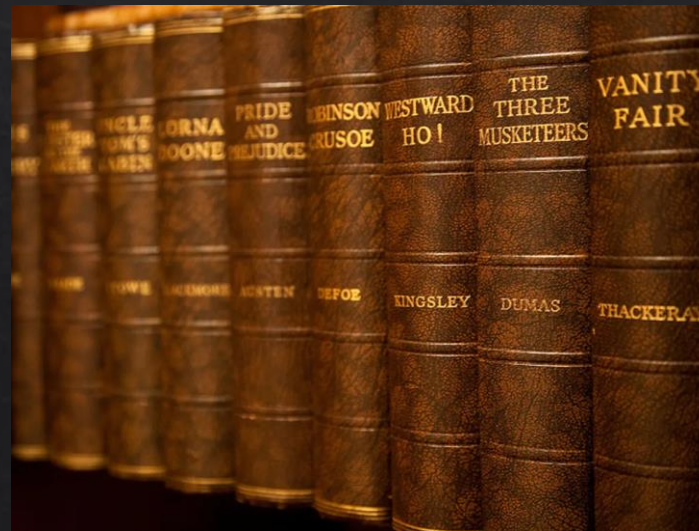


How are the above relevant to historians of the book?

What methodological and theoretical considerations might complicate the '5 ws's?

Says What?

‘The recovery of the **‘what’** challenges a number of given precepts, supplementing ideas of a ‘canon’ ... research has flourished on medieval manuscripts that are far removed from those of ‘canonical authors’ ... such work contributes to the questioning of accepted canons.” (p. 110)

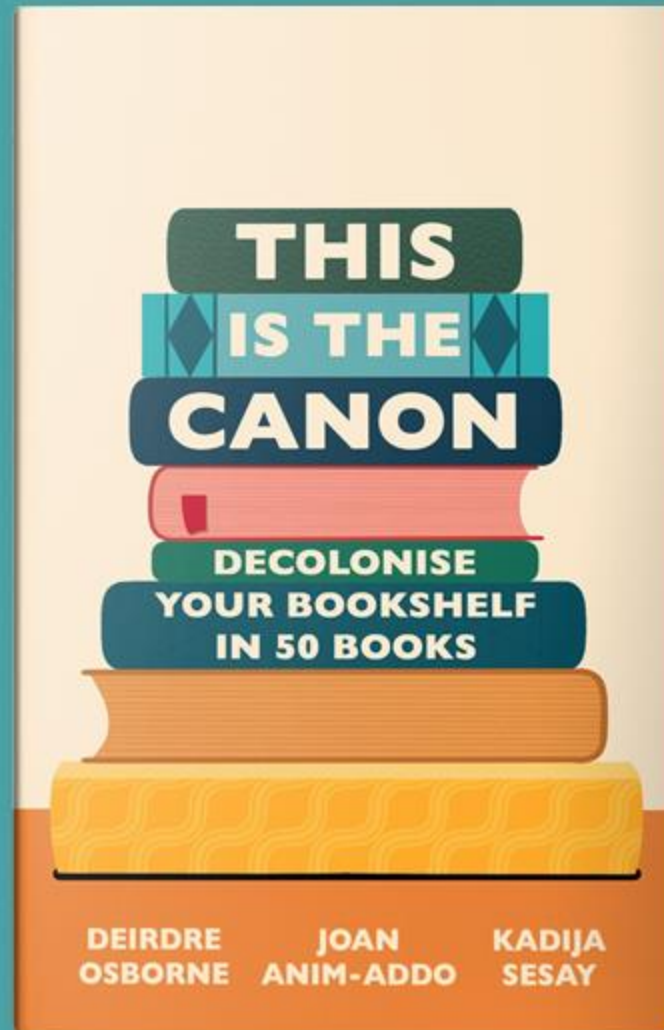


JAMES RAVEN

What is the History of the Book?



**THESE ARE
THE BOOKS
YOU SHOULD
READ.**

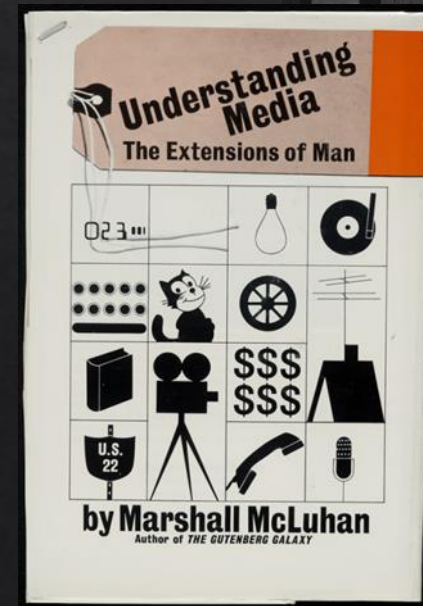


***THIS IS THE
CANON.***

In **Which Channel**

“In a culture like ours it is sometimes a bit of a shock to be reminded that, in operational and practical fact, **the medium is the message**. This is merely to say that the *personal and social consequences of any medium—that is, of any extension of ourselves— result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology.*”

- Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (1964)



The Medium is the Message

“The meaning that text conveys is crucially affected by the material form of the book Form actually *affects* meaning.”

JAMES RAVEN

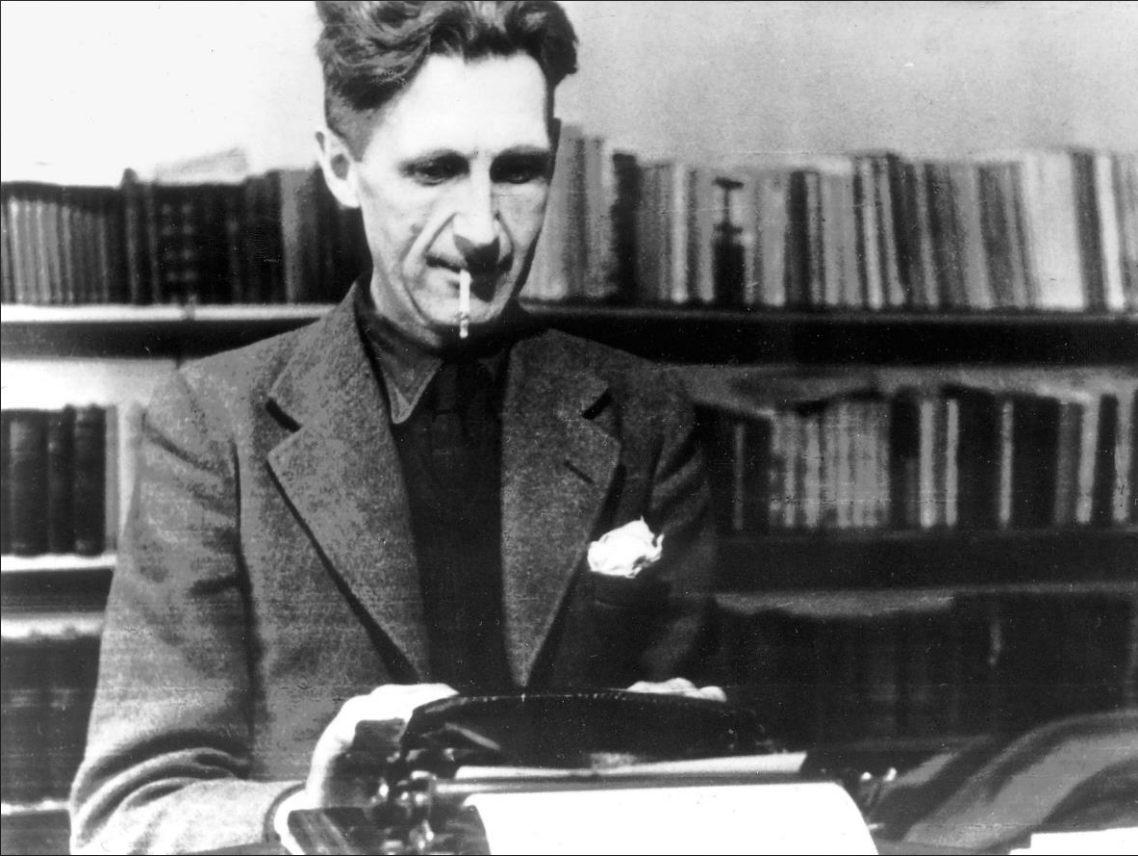
What is the History
of the Book?



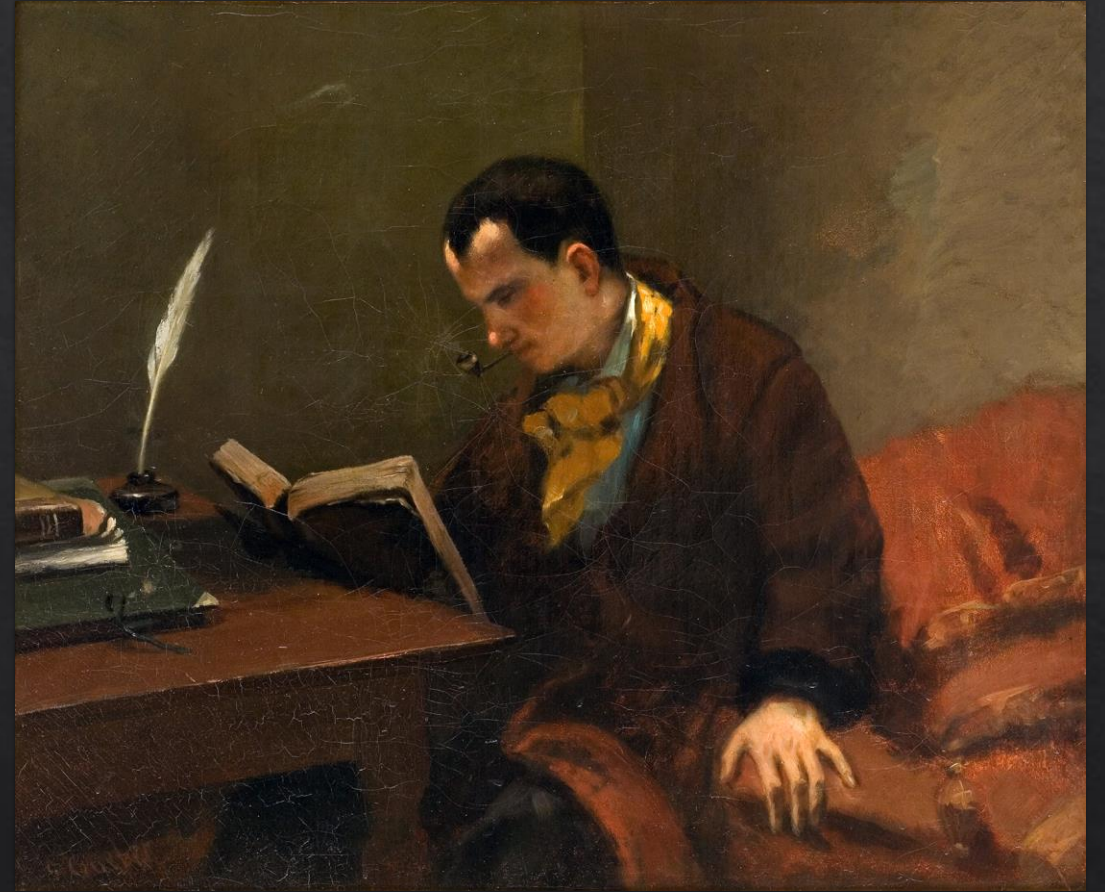
"Who says What to Whom in Which Channel with What Effect".

◊ Who are 'the who' in the first part of the formulation? Who 'makes' a book?

The Author (*L'auteur*)



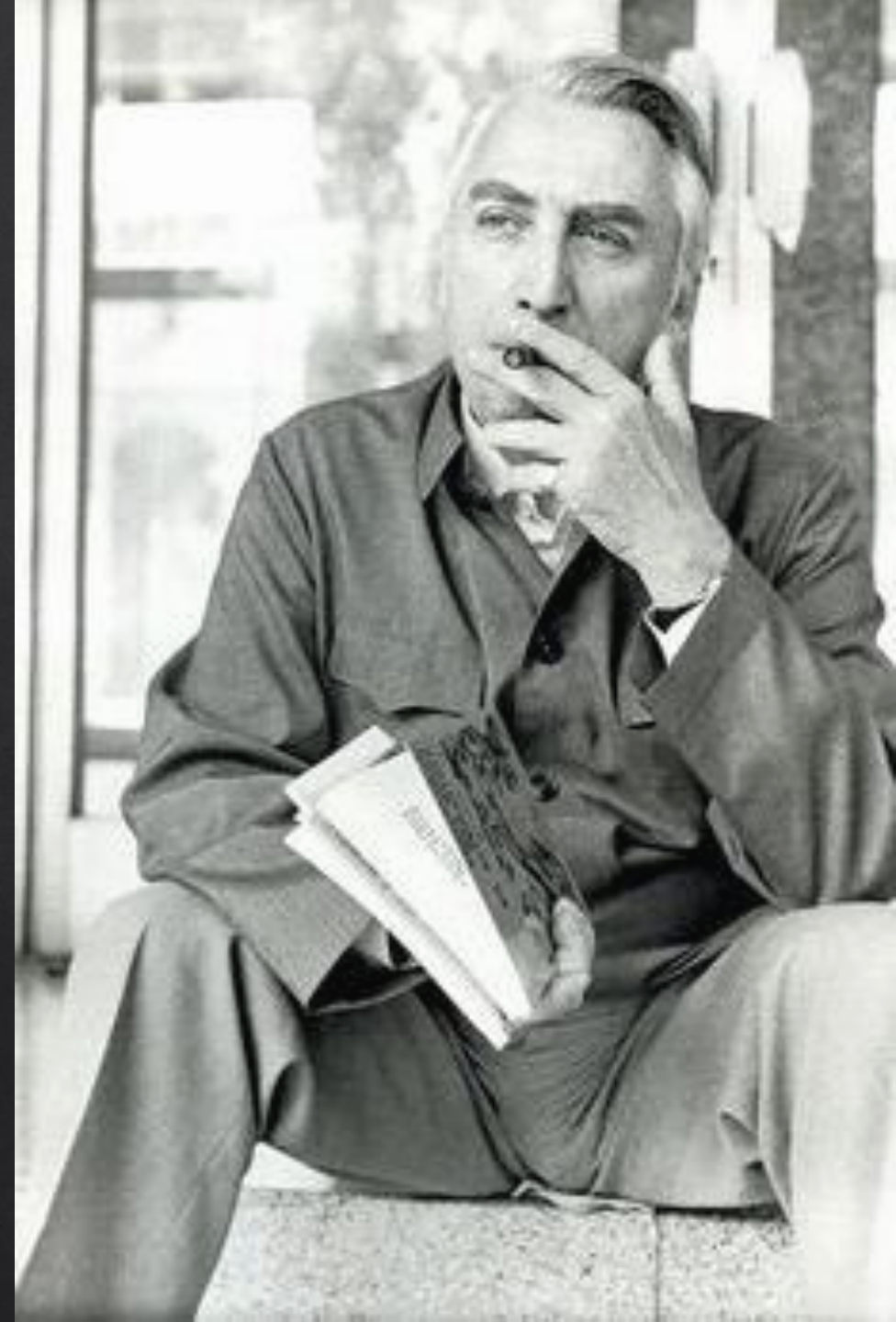
George Orwell



Gustave Courbet,
Portrait of Charles Baudelaire, c. 1847

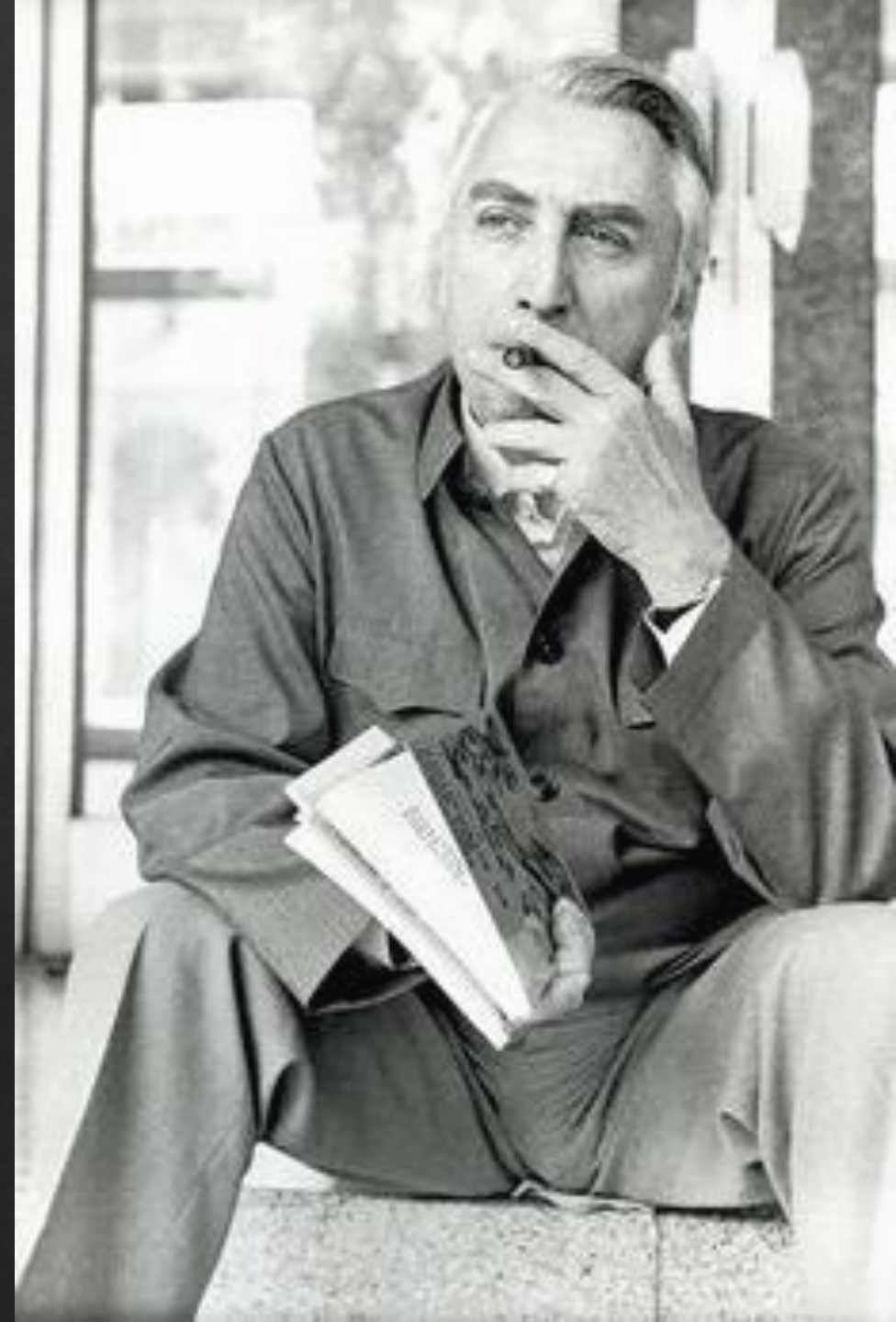
Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author' (1967)

'The author rules in literary history, in biographies of writers, in magazine interviews, and even in the awareness of literary men, anxious to unite, by their private journals, their person and their work; the image of literature to be found in contemporary culture is tyrannically centred on the author, his person, his history, his tastes, his passions.'



Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author' (1967)

'The **Author** is supposed to feed **the book** — that is, he *pre-exists it, thinks, suffers, lives for it*; he maintains with his work the same relation of antecedence a **father** maintains with his child.'



But who *else* 'makes' a book?

- ◊ Author
- ◊ Scribe
- ◊ Typist
- ◊ Patron
- ◊ Commissioning editor
- ◊ Copy editor
- ◊ Peer reviewer
- ◊ Typesetter
- ◊ Software engineers
- ◊ Paper manufacturer
- ◊ Cover artist
- ◊ People who transport books
- ◊ Booksellers
- ◊ Authors of previous books -
intertextuality

Late Medieval English

Scribes



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Find What?

Search by

keyword



GO

Late Medieval English Scribes is an online catalogue of all scribal hands (identified or unidentified) which appear in the manuscripts of the English writings of five major Middle English authors: Geoffrey Chaucer, John Gower, John Trevisa, William Langland and Thomas Hoccleve.

The easiest place to start is to click on the link "Manuscripts" in the menubar above and begin navigating your way to a particular library.

422 manuscript descriptions

528 scribal profiles

17468 images of letter forms

451 images of manuscript pages

Your randomly chosen scribe is:

Unknown from USA, San Marino, California, Henry E. Huntington Library, HM 135



Scribal Profile

John Brode

Profiles for this Scribe: [1. England, Manchester, John Rylands Library MS English 113](#)
[2. Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 39](#)
[3. Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Digby 181](#)

Current Manuscript: [Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 39](#)

Identification: May be John Brode

Sampled Folios: 3v, 47v

Example Page: [Display a full page showing this scribe's hand](#)

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A



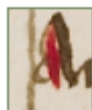
Usage: [vengeaunce](#)

this version of 'a' is within a word. The letter stands way above the other letters and this is a feature of this scribe's hand.



Usage: [take](#)

a more normal shape for 'a'.



Usage: [And](#)

the initial letter of the line.



Usage: [alwey](#)

D



Usage: [did](#)

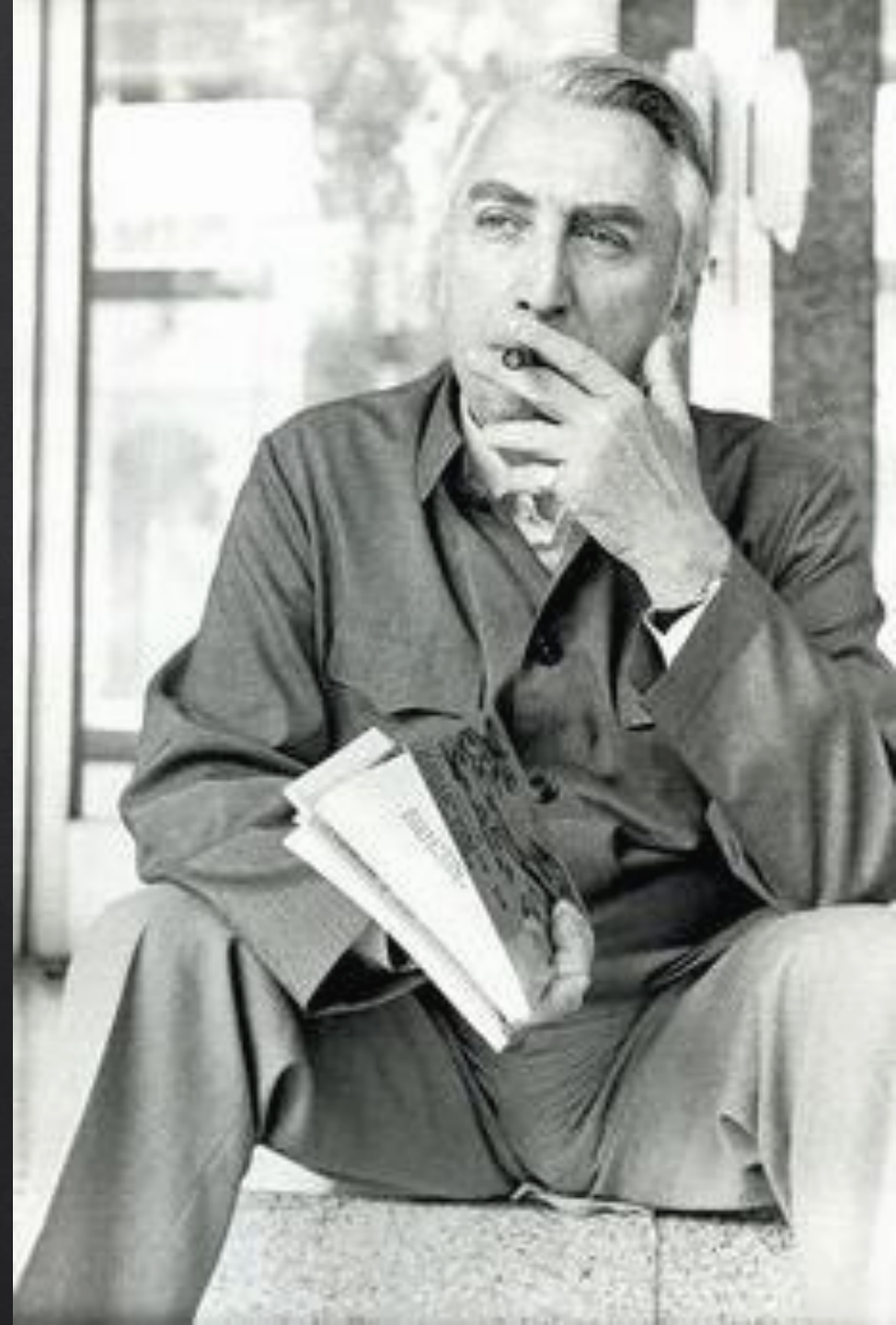
when used in initial position as in this word, the lobe of 'd' has a point at the left side.



Usage: [mayde](#)

when used within a word, the lobe of 'd' tends to be rounded.

Author privileged in literary history despite the fact that: 'We know that a text does not consist of a line of words, releasing a single "theological" meaning (the "message" of the Author-God), but is a space of many dimensions, in which are wedded and contested various kinds of writing, no one of which is original: the text is a tissue of citations, resulting from the thousand sources of culture.'



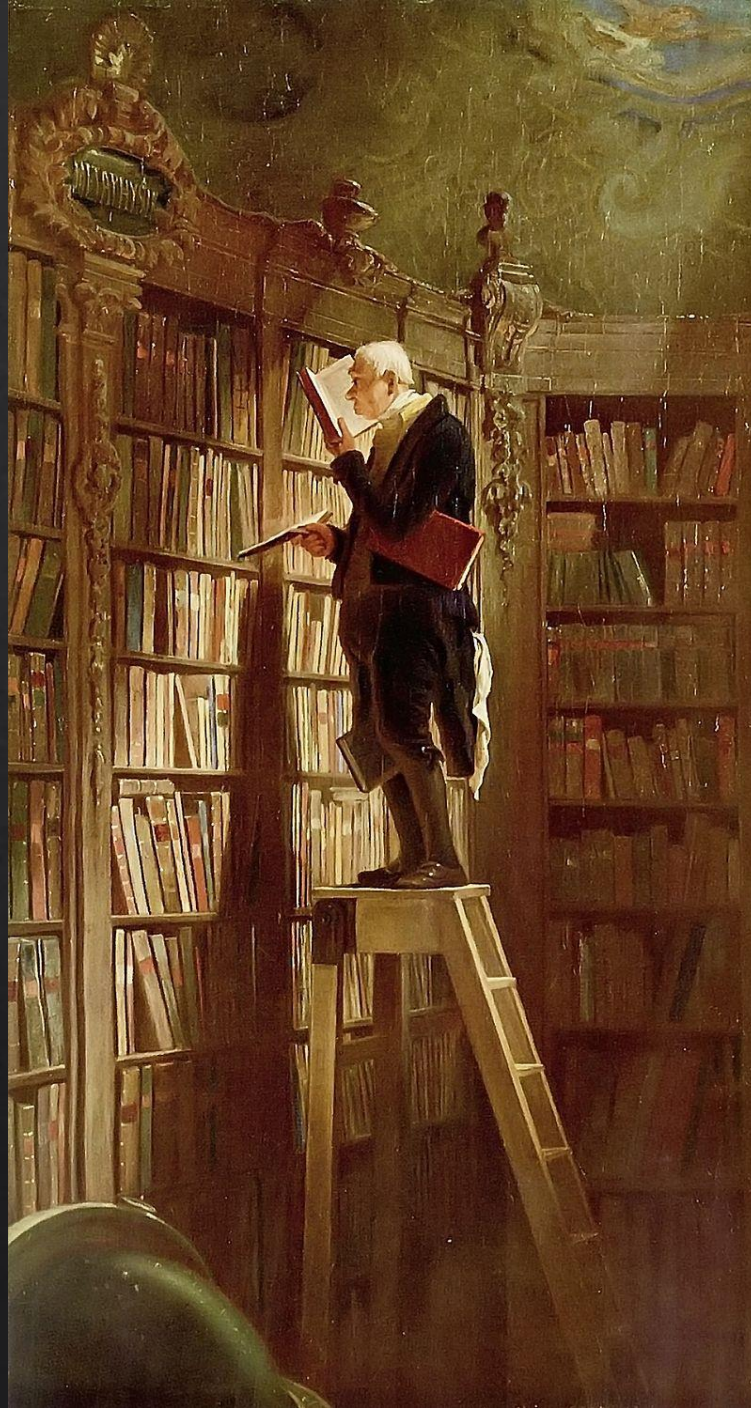
Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author' (1967)

Whereas ...

'The reader is a man without history, without biography, without psychology; he is only that someone who holds gathered into a single field all the paths of which the text is constituted. ... The reader has never been the concern of classical criticism; for it, there is no other man in literature but the one who writes. We are now beginning to be the dupes no longer of such anti-phrases, by which our society proudly champions precisely what it dismisses, ignores, smothers or destroys; we know that to restore to writing its future, we must reverse its myth: the birth of the reader must be ransomed by the death of the Author.'

To Whom...

Carl Spitzweg, *The Bookworm* (1859)



Histories of Reading

- ◆ In what sense might 'the reader' be 'without history'?
- ◆ What methodological challenges might be associated with histories of reading? Are there any challenges which might relate to the medieval period specifically?
- ◆ How does one write a history of reading?

3. Digital Approaches to Book History

- ◆ How might digital technologies enhance histories of books and readership?
- ◆ What methodological potentialities might be available through websites, databases and suchlike?

Digital Approaches to Histories of the Book

◆ Short Title Catalogue (STC) = systematic (and coded) record of printed books extant in libraries and collections

◆ Eighteenth-Century STC developed on CD-Rom 1992

◆ Subsumed into English Short Title Catalogue

◆ Enumerative approach

The English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC) lists over 480,000 items

- published between 1473 and 1800
- mainly, but not exclusively, in English
- published mainly in the British Isles and North America
- from the collections of the British Library and over 2,000 other libraries

The screenshot displays the English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC) website. The header features the British Library logo and the title 'ENGLISH SHORT TITLE CATALOGUE'. A navigation bar includes links for Home, About, Search, Results, Previous searches, and My folder. Below the navigation bar, there is a section for 'Full Record' with a 'Permalink' link. The record details include:

- Format options:** Standard format, Summary, MARC tags, HOLDINGS DETAILS
- Record 8 out of 144** (with navigation arrows)
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- ESTC Citation No.** T128379
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- Title** Explanatory remarks upon The life and opinions of **Tristram Shandy**; wherein, the morals and politics of this piece are clearly laid open, by Jeremiah Kunastrokius, M.D.
- Publisher/year** London : printed for E. Cade in Ave-Mary-Lane, Ludgate-Street, MDCCLX. [1760]
- Physical descr.** 59,[1]p. ; 8°.
- General note** Jeremiah Kunastrokius = Laurence Sterne.
- Uncontrolled note** Author attribution from NUC
- Surrogates** Microfilm. Woodbridge, CT Research Publications, Inc., 1983. 1 reel ; 35mm. (The Eighteenth Century ; reel 765, no. 4).
- Person as subject** Sterne, Laurence, 1713-1768. Life and opinions of **Tristram Shandy**, gentleman.
- Copies - Brit.Isles**
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 - Cambridge University Library (includes Sir Geoffrey Keynes Collection, British & Foreign Bible Society, & Peterborough Cathedral)
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- Copies - N.America**
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 - Harvard University, Houghton Library
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 - Indiana University, The Lilly Library
 - McMaster University
 - University of California, Berkeley, Bancroft
 - University of California, Los Angeles, Department of Special Collections
 - University of Tulsa
 - Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
- Electronic location** Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale Group ;

At the bottom, there are links for 'Previous record' and 'Next record', and a footer with 'Accessibility Terms of use © The British Library Board' and the number '62'.

EEBO

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Search tips

Early English Books Online (EEBO) features page images of almost every work printed in the British Isles and North America, as well as works in English printed elsewhere from 1470-1700. Over 200 libraries worldwide have contributed to EEBO. From the first book printed in English through to the ages of Spenser, Shakespeare and of the English Civil War, EEBO's content draws on authoritative and respected short-title catalogues of the period and features a substantial number of text transcriptions specially created for the product.

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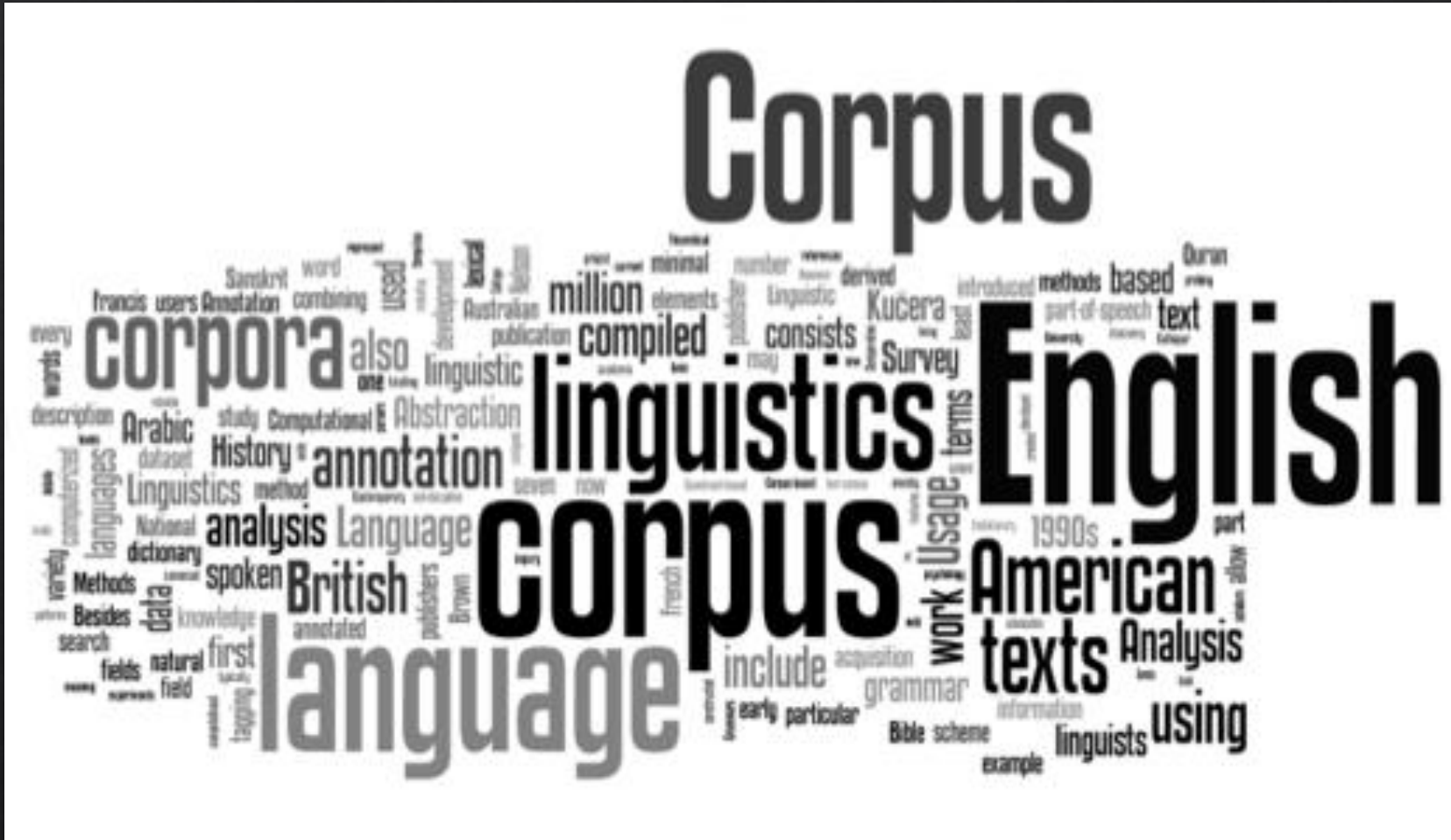
‘How to Think About EEBO’

‘The story, in a nutshell. Catalogues took books off the shelves. Microfilm took pages out of books. Transcription and markup freed words from the page. Collection and standardization dissolved those words into data. Early print’s realization as data opened a new horizon of study that we’re still just beginning to survey.

‘... Now that we have EEBO in full-text form, what do we do with it?’

- Michael Gavin, 'How to Think About EEBO,' *Textual Cultures*, 11:1–2 (2017 [2019]): 70–105.

Corpus Linguistics



‘Death of the Document’?

CODED FILES:

‘When combined with the archival research of the short-title catalogues (themselves scholarly projects of the highest quality) the result is **a collection of files — files, not documents nor texts** — that fold discourse into history in a remarkable way, combining “real life” sociological information about names, books, places, and dates, with the formal and lexical features of the texts that record that information. Scale is absolutely essential here. It matters that these projects aspired to comprehensiveness.’

Michael Gavin, 'How to Think About EEBO,' *Textual Cultures*, 11:1–2 (2017 [2019]): 70–105.

‘Death of the Document’?

‘The archive of early print is now **remediated** as a collection of networked particulars. **Everything is connected to everything else**, at both the supra-textual levels of biographical and geographical metadata, as well as at the sub-textual levels of parts, down to the individual words and characters. **Each item in the collection exists in relation to every other and is therefore available for re-formulation as data.**’

Michael Gavin, ‘How to Think About EEBO,’ *Textual Cultures*, 11:1–2 (2017 [2019]): 70–105.

World Digital Library



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Search **19,147 items** about **193 countries** between **8000 BCE** and **2000**:

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About this Collection

This collection contains cultural heritage materials gathered during the World Digital Library (WDL) project, including [thousands of items contributed by partner organizations](#) worldwide as well as content from Library of Congress collections. The original World Digital Library site (preserved in [LC's Web Archives here](#)) and all descriptive metadata were translated from English and made available in six additional languages: [Spanish](#), [Portuguese](#), [French](#), [Arabic](#), [Russian](#), and [Chinese](#). All item records include narrative descriptions submitted by the contributing partners and enhanced by WDL researchers to contextualize the item and its cultural and historical importance. Books, manuscripts, maps, and other primary materials in the WDL collection are presented in their original languages; more than 100 languages are represented, including many lesser known and endangered languages.

Launched in 2009, the World Digital Library was a project of the U.S. Library of Congress, with the support of UNESCO, and contributions from libraries, archives, museums, educational institutions, and international organizations around the world. The WDL sought to preserve and share some of the world's most important cultural objects, increasing access to cultural treasures and significant historical documents to enable discovery, scholarship, and use.



Arrival of Emigrants [i.e. Immigrants], Ellis...

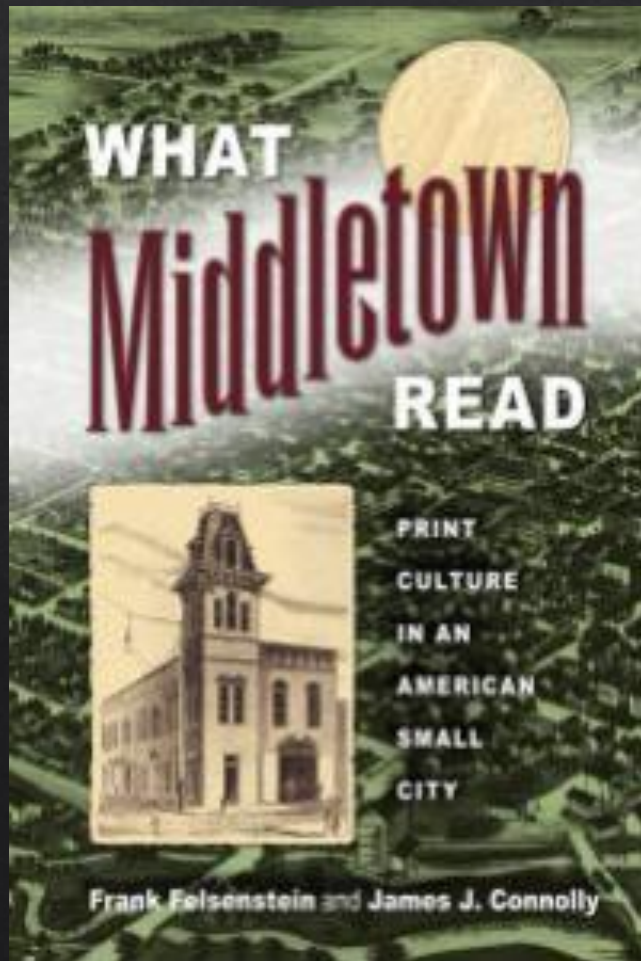
A Modern and Complete Map of the World ...

Christian Doctrine, in Spanish and Tagalog

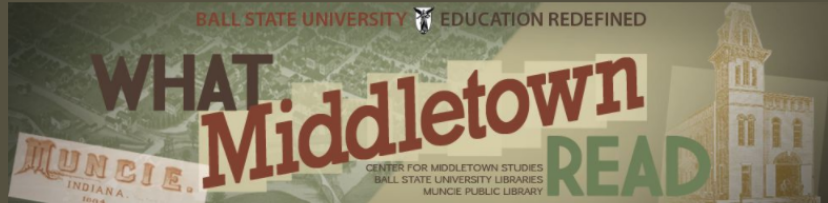
Time Zone Chart of

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Digital Approaches to History of Readers



BALL STATE UNIVERSITY EDUCATION REDEFINED



CENTER FOR MIDDLETOWN STUDIES
BALL STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
MUNCIE PUBLIC LIBRARY

KEYWORD

Basic

Advanced

Find Records!

Clear Form

☐ Include Non-Circulating Records

Welcome to the What Middletown Read Project:

"What Middletown Read" is a database and search engine built upon the circulation records of the Muncie (Indiana) Public Library from November 5, 1891 through December 3, 1902. It documents every book that every library patron borrowed during that period, with the exception of one gap from May 28, 1892 to November 5, 1894. For more details, follow the links below.

This project is the result of a collaborative effort between the [Muncie Public Library](#), the [Center for Middletown Studies](#) at Ball State University, and [Ball State University Libraries](#). It is made possible through the financial support from the [National Endowment for the Humanities](#), the [Gladys Kreible Delmas Foundation](#), and the following units at Ball State University: the [Office of the Provost](#), the [College of Sciences and Humanities](#), the [Honors College](#), the [English Department](#), and the [History Department](#).

Read the Book! [What Middletown Read: Print Culture in an American Small City](#) by Frank Felsenstein and James J. Connolly is now available from the University of Massachusetts Press. For details and ordering information, go [here](#).

Related Resource: To explore the Main Street Public Library Database, which reproduces the collection records for five Midwestern public libraries between 1890 and 1970, [go here](#).

The recommended settings for using the "What Middletown Read" search engine are:

- One of the following browsers (with JavaScript enabled):
 - Internet Explorer 8+
 - Firefox 3.6+
 - Chrome 8+
 - Safari 4+
 - Opera 10+
- A display resolution of 1024x768 or above

Other browser/display settings should provide necessary functionality. However, some display issues may occur, and there may be some loss of extended features.

About WMR

Project Staff

Acknowledgements

Feedback/Problems?

User Guide/Help

Links

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Author/Contributor: Dickens, Charles, 1812-18; Title: Publisher: Where Published [?]: Subject(s): 	Name of Patron: Race: Sex: Marital Status: 	Birthplace [?]: Birth Year to Occupation [?]: Occupation Classification: 	Transaction Date Start End
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☐ Include Non-Circulating Records

To view results, please select from the options below.
[Show All](#)

Search Results:

Book
 Results ☒

Patron
 Results ☒

Transaction
 Results ☒

+Book (36)

-Patron (438)

Show entries

Search:

Patron #	Original Document	Date Joined	Name	Residence
6	View Page	Friday, May 28th, 1875	Albert Carpenter	Washington
24	View Page	Monday, May 31st, 1875	G H Andrews	Jackson St
76	View Page	Saturday, June 5th, 1875	Sarah McConnell	Adams St.
78	View Page	Saturday, June 5th, 1875	Kate Wilson	Washington St.
102	View Page	Saturday, June 12th, 1875	Carrie Andrews	282 High St
175	View Page	Saturday, July 24th, 1875	Frank Everett	W. Jackson St.
266	View Page	Friday, November 19th, 1875	Mrs. W. J. Boyden	E Washington Street
329	View Page	Wednesday, February 2nd, 1876	Joshua C Bacon	Adams St.
699	View Page	Tuesday, May 8th, 1877	Zulena Wilcoxon	94 High & Dumont
957	View Page	Saturday, January 12th, 1878	Mary J. Luick	Cor Charles & Franklin

Showing 1 to 10 of 438 entries

+Transaction (672)

UK Reading Experience Database (UK-RED).



The Open University | Study at the OU | About the OU | Research at the OU | Search the OU
Listen to this page | Accessibility



the experience of reading in Britain, from 1450 to 1945...

Home | Explore | Search | Browse | Wiki | About UK RED | FAQs | Contact Us



Welcome to UK RED, the Reading Experience Database...

What did United Kingdom residents and British subjects living or travelling abroad read between the invention of the printing press in 1450 and the end of the Second World War in 1945? How, and in what circumstances did they read? Search or browse our database to find out...

UK RED captures the reading tastes and habits of the famous and the ordinary, the young and the old, men and women. The texts range from books and newspapers to ephemera such as playbills and tickets, and from illuminated manuscripts, novels and poetry to tombstone inscriptions and graffiti.

Entries in UK RED illustrate the diversity of reading experience and practice as well as patterns within particular periods and across time. The evidence of reading is drawn from a multitude of sources, including diaries, memoirs, commonplace books, marginalia, sociological surveys, and criminal court and prison records.

Reading, however, is not confined by national borders. In recognition of this, RED has become an international project. To visit other national REDs, or to search for readers, authors or texts across all the linked databases, click on the logos on the right.

[copyright and citation guide](#)

Search:

Keyword:

Browse:

By Reader:

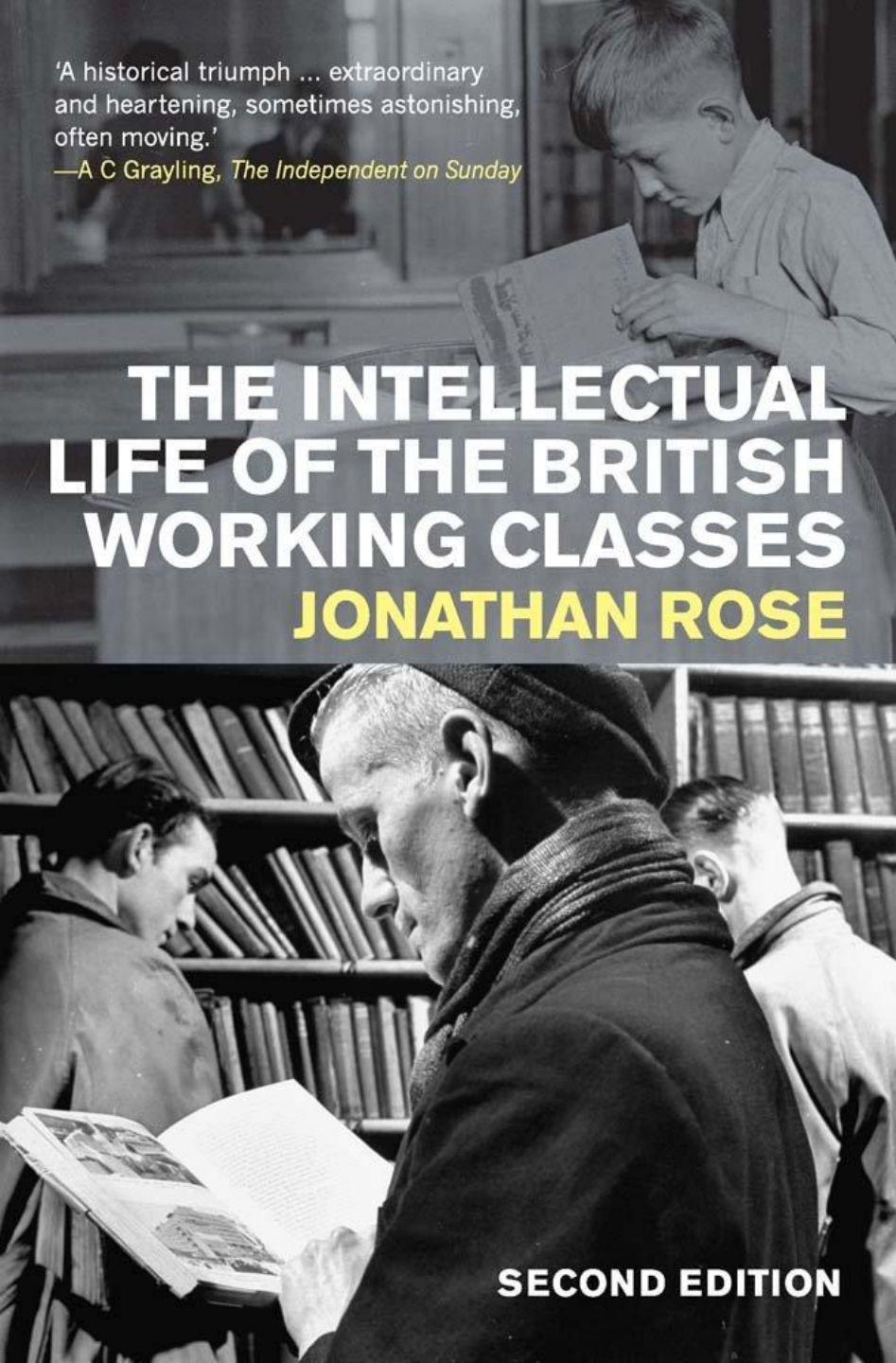
By Author:

Reading through the centuries:

1400-1499 - In 1477 William Caxton presented his "History of Jason" to the 6-year-old future Edward V. Edward IV, the little prince's father, had instructed the child's governor that during dinner he should listen to "such noble stories as behoveth a prince to understand and know". [\[more..\]](#)



1400 - 1499 | 1500 - 1599 | 1600 - 1699 | 1700 - 1799 | 1800 - 1899 | 1900 - 1945

The book cover features a black and white photograph of a young boy in a light-colored shirt looking down at a book he is holding. In the background, a man in a dark jacket and scarf is also looking at a book. They are in a library or bookstore, with bookshelves filled with books visible. The title and author's name are printed in large, bold, white and yellow letters over the image.

'A historical triumph ... extraordinary and heartening, sometimes astonishing, often moving.'

—A C Grayling, *The Independent on Sunday*

THE INTELLECTUAL LIFE OF THE BRITISH WORKING CLASSES

JONATHAN ROSE

SECOND EDITION

‘History of Audiences’

- ◆ Response to historians’ conclusions about methodological problems with discussing reading habits of working people
- ◆ Rose used oral histories, school records, library records, sociological surveys, letters, newspaper letter sections diaries and memoirs to recover working-class intellectual life
- ◆ Evidence of diverse reading habits – highbrow and lowbrow, Classics, history, contemporary politics, etc.



The book and beyond



Getting Started

Where previous weeks introduced students to fundamentals of reading and using manuscripts and handwritten documents, we now turn our attention to printed books. Our class will present an overview of the histories of books and reading habits as areas of scholarship, and challenge students to think about books as physical, organic artefacts as well as textual resources. The follow-up activities ask students to navigate two important online repositories of book/reading history: Early English Books Online (EEBO) and the UK Reading Experience Database (UK-RED).

Seminar Recordings

A recording of the seminar will be uploaded here.

Activities

Below are a selection of activities for students based on the EEBO and UK-RED collections.



EEBO Activity: Canterbury Tales



EEBO Activity: Canterbury Tales submission



RED Activity 1: Chaucer's Readers



RED Activity 1: Chaucer's Readers



RED Activity 2: Working-Class Readers



RED Activity 2: Working-Class Readers

EEBO Activity: Canterbury Tales



This activity familiarises students with EEBO by asking them to look at examples of one of the most celebrated texts from the medieval period: Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. For the purposes of this task, you don't need to read the text themselves all that closely; rather the objectives are to a) familiarise yourself with the website and the information on its database; b) make informed observations and deductions by looking at the book as an object (albeit in digital form).

Task:

- [Login to EEBO](#), using your UWTSD library account.
- Choose a suitable set of search terms to try and find editions of *Canterbury Tales*
- Refine your search so that you find texts by Chaucer and eliminate ones that only make extraneous reference to *Canterbury Tales*.
- Find the earliest printed edition of *Canterbury Tales* on EEBO, and make notes on the questions below.
- Find an illustrated edition of *Canterbury Tales*, and make notes on the questions below.
- Submit a short summary of your findings (bullet points are fine) via [Turnitin link](#).

Questions to address:

- What was the date of the earliest printed edition of *Canterbury Tales* on the EEBO database?
- By whom and where was the edition published and why might this be significant? Were later editions published by the same printer and is there anything significant about them?
- What comments can you make about illustrated editions of *Canterbury Tales*? What images are contained in it?
- What (if anything) can you find out about the history and provenance of the editions you looked at? To which collection or library do the physical editions of the editions belong? Is any information provided about the digitisation process?
- What insights might these digital editions offer about the history of the book?

RED Activity 1: Chaucer's Readers



This activity familiarises students with RED by asking them to look at evidence of how Geoffrey Chaucer and the *Canterbury Tales*, were received by later generations of readers. The objectives are to a) familiarise yourself with the website and the information on its database; b) make inferences about how, and by whom, Chaucer was read. *Sadly, as RED is a relatively old website some of the below is more fiddly than it might otherwise need to be.*

Task:

- Go to the [UK-RED website](#).
- Choose a suitable set of advanced search terms to try and find information about when, where and by whom Chaucer was read.
- Make notes on the questions below.
- Submit a short summary of your findings (bullet points are fine) via [Turnitin link](#).

Questions to address:

- What is the earliest reference to Chaucer's works on RED? Who was the original owner of the book which acts as the source of this reference? What else can you infer about the owner of the book based on the information provided on the website? What other books did they own, for instance?
- Are there any examples of famous historical persons reading Chaucer? What can you infer about their impressions of Chaucer based on the information provided on the website?
- Can you find examples of artisans, servants or labourers having read Chaucer? If so, choose one and try and find out as much as you can about the reader. Where were they from, for example? What other books did they read?
- What insights might your different searches provide into histories of the book and reading habits?

RED Activity 2: Working-Class Readers



One of the nice features of RED is that it offers insights into the habits of non-elite readers. This task asks students to do a bit of research on an individual reader from what could be categorised as a working-class background. The aim is to find out as much as you can about the reader and what they read, and in turn to make informed inferences as to what this can tell us about this histories of working-class reading habits. *Sadly, as RED is a relatively old website some of the below is more fiddly than it might otherwise need to be.*

Task:

- Go to the advanced search of the RED website.
- Find the section headed 'Reader/Listener/Reading Group.'
- In the section headed 'Socioeconomic Group,' choose a search using one of the following options: 'servant,' 'labourer (agricultural),' 'labourer (non-agricultural)' or 'clerk/tradesman/artisan/smallholder.' You may also choose to refine your search further according to the other criteria listed.
- Once you have made the search, choose an individual working-class reader to research. You can do this by looking in the column headed 'Name of Reader/ Listener/Reading Group' and finding an individual's name. Make a note of the name, and then then refine your advanced search according or clicking on the evidence hyperlink and then from there scrolling to the link where it gives the reader's name under the heading 'Reader/Listener/Reading Group. Make notes on the below questions.
- Submit a short summary of your findings (bullet points are fine) via [Turnitin link](#).

Questions to address:

- Who was your chosen reader?
- Where were they from?
- What type of socioeconomic background did they have?
- What profession (if any) were they employed in?
- What types of books and/or other materials did they read?
- Can you identify any particular books that your reader liked/disliked?
- Is there any information about where and how your reader did their reading?
- What insights might your different searches provide into histories of the book and reading habits?

NEXT WEEK



Edit ▼

Required Reading

Some readings on medieval news.



Birkett, News in the Middle Ages

Edit ▼

Reference: Helen Birkett, 'News in the Middle Ages: News, Communications and the Launch of the Third Crusade in 1187–1188,' *Viator* 49:3 (2018), pp. 23–61



Fletcher, 'News, Noise, and the Nature of Politics'

Edit ▼

Reference: Christopher Fletcher, 'News, Noise, and the Nature of Politics in Late Medieval English Provincial Towns,' *Journal of British Studies* 56 (April 2017), pp. 250–272.