Introduction

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The field of print culture studies—which brings together scholars from a range of disciplinary backgrounds—is rapidly evolving. It employs innovative methodologies in order to understand the production, dissemination, and consumption of written communication in a wide range of historical settings. The same questions that motivate scholars of print culture have also stimulated scholars of new media, researchers being increasingly interested in digital texts and the ways

in which online communication continues to transform book and publishing culture. Under the broad rubric of ‘print culture studies’, therefore, scholars from a range of disciplines are furthering our understanding of written communication, in both its printed and digital forms.

This special issue has its origins in the conference ‘New Directions in Print Culture Studies’, at Oxford Brookes University in May 2017, which explored where the discipline of print culture studies is heading

and reflected on how the study of publishing and book history contexts provides new insights into traditional disciplines. This issue of *Logos* seeks to highlight some of the 'new directions' that emerged during the conference. Some of the articles are primarily historical, employing new or often neglected approaches in order to shed light on original case studies. Other articles deal with contemporary issues and are often forward-looking, discussing how authorship, publishing, and reading are evolving in a digital context. In doing so, they address the possible directions that publishing and print culture may take in future.

New approaches in print and publishing history

The first section of this issue comprises articles that address specific historical case studies. The first, by Jonathan Roscoe, clearly demonstrates why historians of publishing should pay more attention to the history of marketing. Through a discussion of Victor Gollancz's embrace of modern marketing methods during the 1930s, including his work with the innovative typographer Stanley Morison, Roscoe reveals how Gollancz helped to revolutionize the British publishing industry during this period.

Kate Macdonald's article, like Roscoe's, also discusses a step in the communications circuit (Darnton, 1982) which has not always received great attention—in this case, bookselling. Through an analysis of the archives of W. H. Smith, Macdonald reveals how the prominent British bookseller became an influential interface between publishers and readers, one that had the power both to shape and to restrict the public's reading preferences. Bookselling, as Macdonald demonstrates in her analysis of the firm's retailing policies during the 1960s and 1970s, is also central to our understanding of literary censorship during this period.

Elizabeth Lovegrove's article, the final in this section, turns to another stage in the communications circuit by exploring reader responses to *Honey*, a magazine aimed at girls and young women. As Lovegrove notes, studies of periodicals have more often addressed issues of production and content rather than ones of readership. Through analysing readers' letters to the magazine, Lovegrove reveals how the publication was received by its readers and how these readers engaged with topical debates about the value of motherhood during the 1970s.

She foregrounds reception studies as central to our understanding of the relationship between magazines, their readers, and the historical context in which they were produced.

New technologies, new media

The second part of this special issue concerns the contemporary state of print culture and publishing and identifies the possibilities and challenges that new media and digital technologies present to authors and readers. The first two articles in this part consider how print culture is adapting in response to innovations in storytelling practices. Alexis Weedon's wide-ranging article examines the focus on 'storytelling' in recent years and reviews how stories are now being utilized across a range of media for a wide variety of purposes: entertainment, marketing, therapeutic, and political. She explores how the primacy of print culture as a medium for storytelling has been systematically challenged during the past century by the introduction of new media and reflects on the ways authors have embraced the possibilities of new media in telling their stories. Maintaining that 'Print is only one of the social systems of a culture and if there are to be new directions in print culture these need to reach into the complexity of the encoding systems in film, media, and graphic and performing arts', Weedon shows how media convergence is both a historically established and inevitable feature of storytelling.

In her study of a specific aspect of digital storytelling, Leah Henrickson addresses the way in which computer-generated fiction subverts the 'hermeneutic contract' between author and reader; how it alters the underlying assumption that a text embodies the author's intention and communicates a particular message to the reader. This new fiction is compared to the conceptual writing of Anthony Burgess, Samuel Beckett, and others which deliberately challenges literary, syntactic, and semantic conventions. With reference to a computer-generated novel by Darius Kazemi, Henrickson analyses whether this new fiction is part of a long literary lineage of deliberately obfuscating texts or else presents a new challenge to 'modern understandings of authorship' and reading.

The final two articles consider—in sharply contrasting contexts—how digital technology is disrupting the way that texts are valued and judged. Stevie Marsden's

article focuses on a new online literary venture: Kim Kardashian-West's recently established Book Klub. She analyses public responses to this enterprise on social media, and questions whether the criticism that Kardashian-West incurred is symptomatic of a long-established tradition of derogation of female readers and cultural intermediaries. The article examines how the Kardashian-West Book Klub, despite generating considerable public ridicule, was nonetheless utilized effectively as a means of self-promotion and rebranding. Marsden compares public reactions to Kardashian-West's book club with responses to those of other female celebrities, for example Oprah Winfrey's and Emma Watson's, and draws conclusions about how female cultural and literary legitimacy is judged.

Samantha Rayner's article on the current state and future prospects of the academic book in the arts and humanities addresses related questions about how books are assigned value in contemporary society and who are the appropriate mediators of this process. Her candid review of the findings of the recent Academic Book of the Future project reflects on the key matters of contention in this project: the nature of the academic book and the way that it is evolving, the ongoing debates about the role of academic publishers in assigning academic value and in quality control, and the validity of open access publishing. Identifying an undue emphasis on 'accessible research', or research with impact, over 'good research', Rayner reflects on the current problems

facing both academics and publishers in reconciling this tension. For, she states, 'Academic work must be visible. But it should also be valid, and validated.'

Drawing together research by established and new scholars, the articles in this special issue utilize a variety of models and methodologies—historical, literary critical, digital humanities, media and cultural studies—that may be applied to future work in this area. The special issue thus seeks to make new interventions in print culture studies, by suggesting fresh approaches to research in this discipline while also analysing the radical changes that are affecting contemporary print culture and publishing practices. ■

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Reference

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