

**Beyond the Book:
Contemporary Cultures of Reading
31st August - 2nd September 2007**

ABSTRACTS

in alphabetical order by surname

Hanna Adoni (Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Academic College of Emek Yezreel, Israel) and Hillel Nossek (College of Management Academic Studies Tel-Aviv, Israel)

Reading as a signifier of borders of identity: "Taste publics" and "taste cultures" among Israeli book readers

A key question in culture and identity research is how does participation in cultural, communication, and leisure activities, including reading, signify the boundaries of national, ethno-cultural, class, and gender identity (Morley & Robins, 1995; Schlesinger, 1993). In Israel, this question has become even more pertinent since the 1990s due to changes in Israel culture, society, and media. In view of these changes, this article examines the reading patterns of the taste publics among Israeli readers and readers' preference in books, which give rise to their own unique taste culture.

This article is based on data, which was collected over a number of years using several research methods: surveys of representative samples of the Israeli urban adult population in 1970, 1990, 1997, 2001; focus groups including men and women of different ages, different socio-economic status, secular / religious, new immigrants / veteran Israelis, Jews / Arabs, and on a content analysis of best-seller lists published between 2000-2002.

According to our findings, Israel contains four reading publics with clear boundaries of variable rigidity. The first taste public and the one this essay focuses upon, is the secular Israeli public, which reads books in Hebrew. The second taste public is the ultra-orthodox taste public; the third is the Russian taste public, and the fourth is the Arab taste public. Each taste public is further divided vertically, into taste publics with higher education and intermediate education, and according to readers' gender.

The findings shows that reading is likely to be a unifying factor as well as a differentiating and separating factor on the micro level of the reader, as well as on the macro level of the society in which the different cultural communities exist side by side. On the micro level, as Bourdieu, (1984), maintains, reading, like other cultural behaviors, contributes to the erection of boundaries between status groups. It does not bridge social gaps. Quite the contrary, it underscores and widens them. On the macro-social level, our findings support Morley & Robins' (1995) claim that besides being a unifying factor within each community as Anderson (2000) contends, cultural consumption may also be a factor that divides the communities from where the various reading public arise.

In our opinion, reading as cultural behavior may be far more of a dividing factor than other cultural behaviors. In contrast to reading national literature and reading in the national language, there are some cultural activities, both those considered high culture (for example listening to classical music) and those considered popular culture (e.g., watching television), whose contents are more universal and whose potential to divide is less than that of reading, though their unifying potential is not high (Nossek & Adoni, 1996; Adoni & Nossek, 1997).

Daniel Allington and Bethan Benwell (University of Stirling)

"I almost was crying": A discourse analytical approach to analysing reception

In this paper we outline the reasons for choosing a discourse analytical approach to studying reception of diasporic fiction and discuss a number of problems and limitations faced by the analyst adopting this approach.

The ethnographic data gathered by audience or reader studies (e.g. interviews) have tended to be treated as transparent and unproblematic; as a 'report' of reality rather than an account. This acknowledgement has led to an emerging '**crisis of representation**' (Moore 1993: 62) within the field whereby researchers have begun to question their ability to represent social reality with any objectivity. Radway's thought-provoking autocritique of her earlier study of readers of popular romance for instance, emphasises the contingent and 'nomadic' nature of readers' accounts, context-bound to particular discursive moments, and asks:

Can ethnography - which has tended to center its accounts on a conception of the individual as coherent, unified and present to the self - manage to capture the fluid, destabilised, ever-shifting nature of subjectivity produced through the articulation of discourses and their fragments? (Radway 1988: 368)

Arguably a study of reception needs to adopt methods of analysis which treats the evidence of reading responses and practices as rhetorical **accounts** not **reports**. An ethnomethodological, discourse analytical approach examines the sequential organisation of turns in interaction and assumes that the data (in this instance, book group talk) is 'constitutive of, performative of, and pervasively oriented to, the social interactional contingencies of whatever setting it is produced in' (Edwards and Stokoe, forthcoming).

One drawback of a strict ethnomethodological approach which views reception data as a situated and performative account, is its limited ability in recreating both the 'original', private context of reading, and indeed the 'nomadic' range of reading experiences. However, we argue that an ethnomethodological analysis of reading group data provides insight into an important and neglected aspect of reception: that of reading as a performative, interactional and collaborative activity.

Michelle Ariss (Université de Sherbrooke, Québec)

Reviewing power - review editors and their readers: A case study of *Books in Canada*, *The Canadian Review of Books*

Within the parameters of my doctoral thesis, which interrogates the cultural agency of editors of book review magazines, I am studying the nature of the relationship that review editors have with readers of books in general and with readers of their magazines specifically. In my paper, I draw upon the work of media and cultural theorists such as Marshall McLuhan, Stuart Hall and Gérard Genette, to present a case-study in which I focus on Olga Stein, the current editor of *Books in Canada: The Canadian Review of Books* (*BiC*), Canada's longest publishing independent book review magazine.

Working from an interview I conducted with Stein and from a selection of her recent "Editor's Note" columns, I bring to the conference a unique analysis of her relationship with readers and of her role as an agent of culture. Particularly relevant to this analysis is Stein's unprecedented decision to devote eighteen of forty-eight pages, a good third, of the December 2006 issue to a politically-charged, complex investigative essay – a pre-trial defence of newspaper mogul Conrad Black, Lord Black of Cross Harbour – that Stein co-authored with her husband, *BiC*'s publisher. In a manner reminiscent of Zola's masterful newspaper article "J'accuse," Stein explains in her Editor's Note that, as Black "is a writer in his own right . . . a full card-carrying member of the writing community," and as none of the mainstream press seems interested in investigating his side of the story in the allegations against him and his company Hollinger International, "We have stepped up to the plate in the hope that some shaft of light, some "truth" might come out of this story and influence the course of events." My case study addresses several of the reader-response questions raised by this provocative editorial initiative and by the contents of recent Editor's Notes columns. In what ways does a book review magazine form and inform readers? To what degree can it be a medium for social and economic change? These are two of several questions concerning book review editors, readers and reading that will be addressed.

Martin Barker (University of Wales, Aberystwyth)

What does it mean to 'visualise' a story? A report on some strange outcomes of the Lord of the Rings project

Within literary studies, the field of audience research is relatively undeveloped, despite the availability of a few valuable studies. Curiously, more work has appeared to have been done on the history of reading than on contemporary reading practices, even though there have been major advances in the available methods of research, and in ways of conceptualising audience engagements with media and culture. This panel would draw upon an opportunity provided by a project which initially had its focus elsewhere, but which produced a voluminous and exciting body of materials.

The Lord of the Rings has, to the irritation of many, repeatedly won readers' polls as their favourite 20th century or even all-time book. For instance, it won hands-down the BBC's 2003 *Big Read* competition, despite serious efforts to install Jane Austen in its place. As a case-study in reading practices, therefore, it invites a particular kind of attention. Across 2003-4, an international team of researchers, based in 20 countries, did just that, using the opportunity of the release of the third and final part of Peter Jackson's film adaptation of Tolkien's books. Centred on a complex questionnaire which combined a series of quantitative measures with opportunities for free discursive responses, the project generated almost 25,000 responses. While some aspects of the project were focused primarily on cinematic questions, the data and materials which the project gathered have allowed us to explore many previously untouched questions.

The topic of 'visualisation' has flickered in and out of attention within literary response research. Perhaps most notably, it became the central topic of Ellen Esrock's study, which spans brain research, cognitive psychology, and literary theory. Victor Nell, too, has offered an off-centre account of the ways in which readers get 'lost' in books, and the ways in which they conjure images and accounts of the stories they read, in the process. In the interview stage of our research, a very striking set of responses emerged which put to the test some of the standard claims about the meanings and functions of 'visualisation' in readers' responses. Through our materials, the focus has had to shift to the search for *completeness* (and the meanings of that), and to the ways in which people, in constructing 'visualisations' of the book, feel themselves to be taking part in a *collective project*.

Julie Barkway (Volunteers Project Manager, Get Into Reading/Wirral Libraries) and Susan O'Connor (Project Worker, Get Into Reading)

Working with other agencies: it's worth it

In this paper we will report on the valuable partnership between the GIR Project and Wirral Library Service, and discuss more general problems that arise when working with other agencies. Our emphasis will be that the modern library service is not stand alone and can only thrive when it plays a clear role within local authority strategies to promote learning and social cohesion. We will also report Get into Reading project's successful community volunteer programme - how we recruit, manage and use dedicated volunteers to encourage further expansion and the tremendous benefits to everyone involved. We will emphasise some recent work reading literature aloud to one specific group of learning disabled adults with a volunteer at the Riverside Day Care Centre in Birkenhead. It is something that has rarely been done before in any capacity and an ideal way of bringing books and reading to individuals who would not normally enter public libraries. In addition we will report on work delivered in a hostel for homeless people. Reading in a hostel means appreciating odds are somewhat stacked: the claims of anxiety or addiction, the sheer paralysis of apathy being more powerful than the appeal of an hour's withdrawal into a book. Yet when it succeeds the diversion of shared reading brings communal relaxation, a gentle involvement in something other than self. Even peace. Prison groups are similar. Hard as it is, both environments seem to need reading to be justified. This paper will look at the benefits as well as the problems of working with other agencies. We will argue that such measures can help tackle social exclusion and can contribute towards building community identity and citizenship.

Jo Bauwens and Valentine LeRouge (Vrije Universiteit Brussel - Free University Brussels)

'The pleasure is mine...': the production of the ordinary pleasure of reading through the campaign 'Everybody reads' of the Flemish Reading Foundation

On 27th October 2005 the Flemish Reading Foundation launched one of the largest campaigns in Flanders (Northern part of Belgium) to promote reading, called 'Everybody Reads'. Through several media platforms (print folders, podcasts, radio and website) the 'Everybody reads'-campaign aims to present reading as something enjoyed by ordinary people. In particular the online part of the campaign is heavily based on the construction or production of images of ordinary readers. A large part of these images (both visual and textual) are self-presentations. For instance, the book reviews (or book tips) all belong to the category of the so-called user-made content. Next to these textual images of ordinary reading pleasures, there are also photos and podcasts all featuring ordinary readers, but produced by the staff of the Reading Foundation.

This case raises a set of interesting questions about how the act of reading and the readers themselves are presented and how this might affect the way people perceive reading and readers. The following questions guide our case study: (1) How is the pleasure of the reading experience (both the actor and the act itself) constructed on the website of Reading Foundation? (2) What differences are there between the pleasure as spontaneously expressed by ordinary readers and the pleasure that is staged by the staff of the Reading Foundation? (3) How polysemous are the images of the reading experience which are produced on the website of the 'Everybody Reads'-campaign? And, (4) how are these images of the enjoyable reading experience perceived by different groups of readers and non-readers?

The research is based on a content analysis (manifest content) and semiotic analysis (latent meanings) of the visual and textual material on the website of the 'Everybody Reads'-campaign. Focus group interviews with different groups of readers and nonreaders help us understand and explain how people 'read' the reading campaign.

Stéphanie Bergeron (Université de Sherbrooke, Québec)

Réseau CJ reading club: Le plaisir de lire as art de vivre

The discourse on children and teenagers' reading habits, in Québec as well as in many other Western countries, is forged by an almost exclusively didactic critic: children don't read enough. In 1998, making reading an *art de vivre* became a Québec cultural policy, destined to the whole population, with an emphasis on children aged between 6-17. And yet, Communication-Jeunesse's slogans affirm, with exclamation marks and colourful, up to date illustrations, that "*Lire, c'est infiniment bon!*", "*planant!*" and "*spatial!*". In this age of thrill-seeking, the book, to gain in popularity and to increase its number of fans, has to take part in this culture of "the extreme".

Communication-Jeunesse, an organization for the promotion of Québec and Franco-Canadian children's literature, highly contributed to the institutionalization of this field since its founding in 1971. Through the setting up of conferences, writer-readers encounters and by creating reading clubs, Communication-Jeunesse occupies a privileged position among the agents of the book chain in Québec.

In this paper, we will examine the reading club *Réseau CJ*, designed for the 12-17 years old, and the strategies used by Communication-Jeunesse to seduce this young readership. Why read? With *Le plaisir de lire* as a leitmotiv, the organization offers to the reader festive and rallying activities that center around the book, such as reading marathons, literary raves and sit-ins. Communication-Jeunesse, by the structure of its clubs, the type of activities organized and the books that are suggested, promotes reading for enjoyment. Its very professionalized mediation work contributes to confine children's literature to a status of "*offre littéraire moyenne éloignée tant du populaire que de l'intellectuel*".

Sarah Bromage (Napier University)

They opened up the world to us: Community libraries and community reading

This project reveals the centrality of the community library in the past for local readers. The project is a partnership between SAPPHIRE and Edinburgh Community Libraries. Edinburgh has had a long tradition of community libraries, some of them the result of charitable endowments, serving the needs of local people otherwise disenfranchised from sources of information and learning. The memories of the generation that used these libraries intensively and continues to express a debt of gratitude to them (as in the title of the project) are at risk of loss due to increasing age. This project aims to increase understanding, study and enjoyment of the heritage and history of the community library. Community libraries have been a major factor in informal and formal patterns of learning for previous generations; they have played an important role in underpinning the social, cultural and intellectual development of Edinburgh's citizens. At a time when many were excluded from established forms of learning, community libraries 'opened up the world' and promoted social inclusion well before the term was widely used.

Leo T.H. Chan (University of Lingnan, Hong Kong)

Text within a text: Reading a novel in translation and reading it in the original

Rather optimistically, it has been said that the primary purpose of translation is to introduce readers to a writer in another language that he has no knowledge of. It has also been said that, in this way, information is transmitted across linguistic barriers, allowing the monolingual reader to comprehend something (a novel, for example) originally written in a second language. But in literary translations at least, these propositions are difficult to sustain because of the intervention of the act of translation. There are sure to be disruptions of one kind or another—disruptions that appear, for instance, when elements of the source and target cultures are incompatible with one another. Then, too, Martin McQuillan has pointed out that "translation [can] undo the tropes and rhetorical operations of the original" (*Paul de Man*, London: Routledge, 2001, p.63).

The purpose of the present paper is to understand the differences between reading "foreign literature in translation" and reading "foreign literature" in the original language, a subject rarely explored in the field. It has been said, in a rather off-hand manner, that while the former invokes the principle of absolute Otherness, the latter invokes some familiarity with the culture and language. The actual situation is more complicated, of course. What if the reader is not aware that he is actually reading a translation? What if the original is not adequately, even incoherently, represented in translation? What if, to take an extreme case, a reader is being cheated when the author tells him he is reading a translation (as when *Memoirs of a Geisha* is said to be a translation by Jakob Haarhuis, a professor from New York University) when he is not? A number of examples will be taken from novels especially popular in English and Chinese translation, like Tanizaki Jun'ichiro's "The Portrait of Shunkin," Marguerite Duras's *The Lover* and Laura Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate*, with the aim of explicating the strategies used by the reader to construct meaning out of what he reads.

Vincent Taohsun Chang (National Chengchi University, Taiwan)

Popularising reading culture as textual consumption in advertising discourse: A cognitive-linguistic approach

This paper aims to explore the dialogic relations between form and function in advertising discourse by looking into the contemporary Chinese advertisements released by *Eslite*— the leading light of the bookstores in Taiwan. The rhetorical strategies of syntactic parallelism and repetition of name and metaphor are creatively manipulated through literary stylistic patterns within the ads to attract the audience's attention, to initiate cognitive poetic effects and advertising literariness, to perform diverse communicative functions, and to convey the significant/dominant ideologies. Placing quite little emphasis on the target commodity, they

invite/encourage an active/imaginative audience to consume the texts and spell out a variety of weak implicatures involving feelings, attitudes, emotions and impressions along these lines. They not merely position the readers as social elite and shape the corporate image/brand as a cultural polysemy and landmark of cultural empowerment, but trigger an emergent genre with communicative innovation in cultural industry and academic disciplines.

The audience's mental processes of comprehension and interpretation concerning poeticity in media communication are approached in Relevance framework (Sperber & Wilson 1986/1995, Noveck & Sperber 2006, Forceville 2005) by looking into *Eslite's* print advertisements. Take two of the data illustrated below (my English translation from the original Chinese texts):

(1)

Without knowing (Italo) Calvino. Without knowing love.

Without knowing body meteorology. Without knowing homosexual.

Without knowing women. Without knowing Marguerite Duras.

Without knowing Free Jazz. Without knowing death.

Without knowing millenium astrology. Without knowing Bauhaus.

Without knowing (François) Trauffault. Without knowing political power and struggle.

We therefore read.

<Eslite Reader>

(2)

Scenario of readers

Hemingway reads sea, finding out life is a fish required lifelong concern.

van Gogh reads wheatfield, finding out art resting behind the sun.

Freud reads dream, finding out one secret channel to sub-consciousness.

Rodin reads human body, finding out the beautiful coastal line found not by Columbus.

Camus reads Kafka, finding out the truth having been spoken a half.

Between books and non-books, we welcome various kinds of potential readers.

<Eslite Reader>

Being an epitome of *Eslite's* ads here, verbal communication with parallel exquisite wordings in longer texts is a leading strategy to attract reader's attention more strikingly. The addresser intends here to evoke the audience's emotions, the affective dimension to poetic effects, which is associated with weak implicature in the relevance theory account: "What look like non-propositional effects associated with the expression of attitudes, feelings, and states of mind can be approached in terms of the notion of weak implicature..." (Sperber & Wilson 1995: 222; Pilkington 1992: 45). The sociocultural aspect of language use, on the other hand, is further examined to see the inseparable relationship between language and social meaning. This functional linguistic study reveals that the selling motive could well be melted and/or hidden through such a stylistic pattern due to its implicitness, indirectness and vagueness, and that the cultural imperialism and linguistic hegemony reified within the symbolic domain of popular culture. The dialogic relations between form and function in advertising discourse reflect the social cohesion/interaction and cognitive dynamics of communicator and audience, thus maintaining the dialectical relationship between sociocultural structures and social practice/discourse (Fairclough 1995).

Choon Key Chekar (Cardiff School of Journalism, Media & Cultural Studies)

Managing books to manage better: Management-led reading campaigns in South Korea

In this paper, I will investigate a current trend of organisational reading culture led by the management in South Korean conglomerates focusing on its background and how this trend influences the wider society. As the importance of self-improvement is ever growing not just at a personal level but also with an organisational dimension in the era of the knowledge economy, many companies encourage their employees to develop themselves constantly and one of the most popular tools is reading. The intervention of the management goes beyond simply encouraging their employees to read: they select books (mostly managerial self-help books) on a regular basis and persuade their employees to read them. Rather than judging whether this trend is desirable or not, I intend to map out the various social and cultural factors involved in this trend and explore how multiple agencies intervene in the meaning-making process of reading with their own interest, and more importantly how these dynamics influence the meaning of reading. I would like to argue that, far from the self-explanation of the management on the purpose of encouraging reading, the practices of reading under such organisational pressure could be interpreted as a tool for disciplining workers. Moreover, with the collaboration of popular media and the publishing industry, the management strategy using books can be an effective method to spread their pro-capitalist ideology into the society in an unobtrusive way.

Bea Colley (Liverpool Reads Co-ordinator)

'City-wide Read Reaches Rehab': a report on Liverpool Reads and its impact in Walton Neurological Centre

Liverpool Reads is a city-wide reading initiative combining distribution of free books with public events and school and community projects. In partnership with Get into Reading (The Reader), we have been running a reading group at the Walton Centre for Neurology and Neuroscience for the last year concentrating mainly on poetry during the sessions. The initiative has been described by Director of Nursing at the centre as, 'one of the most well received developments the Trust has ever been part of.' All patients admitted to the Walton NRU have suffered a recent traumatic neurological injury, or an acute episode of a chronic neurological condition. As a result, the majority of people living in the rehab unit are coping with short-term and perhaps longer-term physical and/or mental impairment. The group has been the subject of a research project led by Dr Jude Robinson, Deputy Director of the Health and Community Care Research Unit at the University of Liverpool. In this paper, I will be talking about the fact that poetry appears to enable the readers and listeners to express themselves emotionally and to explore aspects of their own lives both before and after their recent admission. This aspect of the project has been noted by clinical staff, who had previously expressed concerns that conventional methods of rehabilitation focus on the physical aspects of recovery, such as the proper functioning of the body and restitution of speech, rather than on stimulating the patients' minds and helping them to recover their emotional lives.

Jane Davis (Editor, *The Reader* and Director, Get Into Reading, Liverpool UK)

Community Glue: Why Reading Aloud Holds Us Together

In this paper I will report on the genesis and progress of the Get Into Reading project, which started as an exercise in Widening Participation in 2001. The paper will describe the organic growth of the idea of communal 'real time' reading, where poems, stories, novels and plays are read aloud in weekly meetings. What happens when the text is 'brought to life' by a familiar human voice? Why doesn't it matter if members of the group are not very good or expressive readers? Why does difficult literature seem easier when shared? Drawing on five years' practical experience of read-aloud group development in diverse locations (from a Hospital staff room to the YMCA canteen) as well fifteen years work in University Continuing Education, this paper will outline my sense that if a community of readers meets regularly and often, sharing the book

through voice and collaborative thinking, a powerful and currently under-used human tool is reanimated. This culture of co-operative understanding might once have been available to communities through religion: to give just one example, in George Eliot's *Adam Bede* individuals in the parish of Hayslope have different ideas about religion, from the passionately evangelical to the mildly dismissive, but whatever they believe they share a knowledge of Bible stories, which gives them a common language for talking about serious matters. In our contemporary world there are few such communal languages – football supporters might be said to share the language of football, but they can't use that language to talk about their feelings or personal experience to fans of cross-stitch embroidery. This paper will argue that literature offers a widely resonant sharable human language, combining the personal and the social, with weekly groups providing a secure community.

Jane Davis (Editor, *The Reader* and Director, Get Into Reading, Liverpool UK)

Reading for pleasure with young people : Weatherhead School Reader in Residence

In this paper I will talk about the benefits to young people of encountering positive experiences of reading at an early age, particularly for those young people who have become disengaged with formal education. The aim of the Weatherhead School Reader in Resident project is to encourage reading for pleasure amongst pupils, staff, parents, feeder primary schools and the wider community. By working to develop the notion that reading can simply be fun, an enjoyable and beneficial activity regardless of the child's academic abilities, we aim to encourage the child to view reading as a lifelong pleasure and we attempt to lay the foundations that may lead them to return to reading later in life. I will be talking about the problems and challenges faced by facilitators working with disaffected young people who often have a negative view of any perceived authority figure and about the difficulties faced by the young people themselves, mired in a culture that does not view reading as 'cool' and often lacking any experience of books outside of the English curriculum. I will also talk about the benefits of an 'all-round' approach, working with parents and to promote a culture in which reading is considered a pleasure and books are valued.

Philip Davis (School of English, University of Liverpool)

The Shakespeared Brain

To the Romantics, Shakespeare was the supreme human example of the creative mind. The freedom of that creativity was often defended in terms of its apparent 'mysteriousness', its unpredictability in relation to the known and regular laws of mental association. But we argue that Shakespeare's creative power exists not in despite of those laws but in intuitive manipulation of them. 'The Shakespeared Brain' (the general name for our project) is concerned with the dramatic re-working of the laws and pathways of mentality in Shakespearian sentence-making.

The project is a collaboration between members of the School of English at the University of Liverpool and Professor Neil Roberts of MARIARC (Magnetic Resonance and Image Analysis Research Centre) also at the University of Liverpool, as well as Dr Guillaume Thierry, Department of Psychology, Bangor University. It aims to complement The Reader's outreach work, at the level of 'soft' social outcomes, but using scientific means to pursue changes in the brain at the level of its hard-wiring.

I will offer a report on research currently in progress on Shakespeare's use of functional shift - when one part of speech becomes another with different function but without change of form (often noun-to-verb). Functional shift is a tool that Shakespeare in particular often used to work off against the localized laws of grammar. It offers a small, powerfully compressed epitome of Shakespeare's thinking: it emerges from the fluid and inventive state of the language in Shakespeare's time and, as a rapid linguistic shift, is related to Shakespeare's gift for moving quickly from one sense to another in the sudden creation of metaphor. Experiments are ongoing using EEG, MEG and fMRI.

Beth Driscoll (University of Melbourne)

How Oprah's Book Club re-invented the woman reader

Through Oprah's Book Club, running in various forms from 1996 to the present, Oprah Winfrey has influenced the practices of hundreds of thousands of readers. This paper proposes that through its audience, book selections and model of reading, Oprah's Book Club stands for a particular package of literary values: female, commercial and middlebrow. This set of values was explicitly attacked by Jonathan Franzen in 2001, who characterized her selections as "schmalzy" and "one-dimensional", while identifying himself with the "high art literary tradition." Such juxtapositional framing recalls the work done by Pierre Bourdieu, who modeled the literary field as structured by the antagonistic poles of elite and mass production. Bourdieu's treatment of gender is minimal, but his model exposes the reasons for Oprah's Book Club disparagement. Winfrey is heir to cultural logics that have associated women with degraded literary forms since the moral panic that attended the birth of the novel. Winfrey is further implicated as an inhabitant of a specific literary tradition, the book club, which continues to be derided for its female, middle class and middlebrow tastes.

Winfrey may embody derided literary values but her widespread recognition from literary critics, publishers and novelists is evidence that she has reinvigorated the formerly pejorative association between women and commercially successful literature. Winfrey's skilful use of television and the internet presents reading as a communal, rather than a solitary, activity. The televisual approach further tends to gloss over the difficulties of a text in favour of its more affective qualities, broadening the base of potential participants. Thus, Winfrey reshapes the class of readers and the value of literature in society. Her ascendancy exposes the shifting power balance in Bourdieu's literary field, towards commercial success and away from more symbolic consecration, in the unstable arrangement of literary values in contemporary culture.

Kate Egan (University of Wales, Aberystwyth)

"My Dad really wanted to see it with him": A report on some complexities in the 'maleness' or 'femaleness' of a story

For a long time, *The Lord of the Rings* was seen by many women as a 'boys' story'. Clearly with many exceptions, nonetheless, there is much evidence that readership was heavily skewed to men. But the phenomenon of the film appears to have caused a wholesale shift in this perception, such that this fantasy world is now as much, if not more, accessible to women as it is to men. This raises interesting questions about the general nature of gendered readings, to which there has been much general attention. However, most of that attention has been devoted to texts that belong almost entirely in one gender-domain or the other, rather than crossing boundaries between the two. This presentation would explore what can be learnt from, for instance, the frequent reports that fathers used the film of *The Lord of the Rings* to introduce their daughters to a book that they have long loved.

Kate Eichhorn (Ryerson University, Toronto)

Blogging poetics: The circulation and reception of poetry in the blogosphere

When poet Ron Silliman started blogging in August 2002, he worried that there may be no audience for his endeavour, but remained optimistic about this relatively new form of writing: "The fact that the blog has the potential to carry forward the best elements of a journal and seems inherently prone to digression gives me hope that this form might prove amendable to critical thinking" (Ron Silliman's Blog, August 2002). Since its modest inception, Ron Silliman's blog has received over 900,000 hits, and his daily reviews and commentary have had a profound impact on his own profile and the profile of poets across North America. His blog may be exceptionally popular, but it is in no way an exception. A growing number of poets are blogging, often on blogs named after their latest print publication. While the blog can be an effective

marketing tool and means of fostering and managing one's author-function, are literary communities enriched by this new practice of writing? Literary blogs not only contain book reviews and critical commentaries, but also posts on everything from public performances and gestures to private conversations. What was once ephemeral – the performance, gesture, dialogue, and ritual – has acquired a new fixity. What was once private – the act of writing itself – has become increasingly public. This paper examines the effects of blogging on the circulation and reception of poetry and poetics, and on their small press supporters.

J. Daniel Elam (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill)

Book Groups in a Digital Age

Both reading novels and surfing the Internet are considered to be socially isolating events, but this is not the case. In her work on women's book groups, Elizabeth Long shows how women especially have used book groups to unite and form a separate community separate from their male counterparts. Books form the foundation for socialization in conversation and unification around a certain text or interest as represented by a collection of texts. Online communities behave in the same way; although the medium is potentially isolating, its users tend to unite and form communities. Both the Internet and the printed word have the power to unite people across time and space, allowing communities to form unaffected by geographical and temporal constraints. Online book groups allow the user to connect with other readers to both discuss a shared enjoyment of a particular work but also to connect on a more personal level and create relationships that, although they exist in virtual space, are indeed very real. How does a participant in an online reading group reconstruct his/herself and his/her identity within the context of a virtual meeting space? What are the effects of an online community on both real communities and the users that actively participate in such reading groups? This paper examines the various book groups that are created both as individual sites and through community sites (like MySpace), as well as the ways their members create identity and community despite the boundaries of time and space.

Juliet Eve (University of Brighton)

From Playstation to Pullman: boys' reading in public libraries

The promotion of literacy, and in particular, boys' literacy, has become both an area of popular social comment and a feature of public library provision over the last few years. Initiatives such as 'YouthBOOX', a partnership project between The Reading Agency and the National Youth Agency, for example, aim to reach socially excluded young people and impact on their attitudes to libraries and reading. Public libraries are increasingly attempting to become more relevant, by actively engaging with communities (including those in their communities who have traditionally not used their services), and by demonstrating their contribution to the 'Shared Priorities' of national and local government, including improving the life of children and younger people, and creating safer and stronger communities. Recent research suggests that young people's perceptions of public libraries are deeply negative, and that libraries need to work to change the culture and 'modernise' their services.

This paper reports on one such innovative development in Medway Library Authority, which saw the establishment of a playstation club for teenage boys. The project monitored the effects of introducing a playstation tournament on a bi-weekly basis, and using the session to encourage boys' reading habits. Prizes, in the form of free rentals, were given for winning and for good behaviour, and the boys had to take out a library as well as their free rental. Books and graphic novels were left in the play area for those not currently playing a game to browse. Evaluation took place via semi-structured interviews and in-depth analysis of borrowing records. Results indicate that not only has this activity helped temper the disruptive behaviour (including vandalising of library property) previously experienced, but that it has successfully encouraged boys to engage more with reading, and improved their perceptions of the library.

Jin Feng (Grinnell College, USA)

Have mouse, will travel: Reading serialized Chinese time-travel romances

This paper investigates the pleasure of reading serialized time-travel romances published in the Chinese-language website Jinjiang by examining its essential devices of serialization, instant feedback and comments, and its well-regulated ranking system. By providing readers with the chance to comment on each installment, this website creates the illusion of direct communication between authors and readers, and among the readers themselves. It thus establishes the "imagined community" of affective identification and emotional support sought by the typical romance reader. Because of the serialized nature of these novels, readers' comments and authors' responses also facilitate negotiations about plot and characterization, and hence grant some power of determination to the reader's own imagination. The trope of time travel allows readers not only to suspend their prosaic everyday routine for an escape to exotic past, but also to project themselves onto characters with modern skills and knowledge, and thereby gain a sense of omniscience and even omnipotence in pseudo-historical settings.

These web-based time-travel romances differ somewhat from traditional popular print romances. Not only have homosexual romances proven to be very popular, in heterosexual romances one also invariably finds one woman pitted against multiple powerful male figures such as kings, emperors, and leaders of other organizations. While the adoration lavished on the heroine by these embodiments of traditional masculinity can be interpreted as a fulfillment of the reader's wish for a combination of "power and nurturance" in a super-masculine hero (Radway), these novels also endow the heroine with traditionally masculine characteristics such as intelligence, public prominence, sexual promiscuity, and moral ambiguity. Ultimately, the obvious popularity of these novels not only provides some clues into the contemporary consumer psychology of web-based popular literature, but also enables us to explore issues such as cultural fragmentation and niche marketing demonstrated by this kind of appropriation and distortion of history.

Linda Fleming (Napier University)

Scottish readers remember

The study of reading and reception as social phenomena is now central to our understanding of literature, history and culture. It has become an established field within Book History. 'Scottish Readers Remember' represents the first sustained and focused attempt to record the reading experiences of Scots in the twentieth century and, from them, to analyse not only changing tastes, practices, and habits but also the contribution of reading to an individual and collective sense of identity. Transcribed interviews, spread across communities in Scotland, form the core of evidence and are complemented by use of archival and other sources. Various clusters of readers have been identified that extend and enhance the general sample. This paper outlines the methodology of this AHRC-funded project and presents preliminary results from it.

Barbara Godard (York University, Canada)

Fictions of reading: Practices of reading in Canadian and Quebec women's fiction

"So much depends, she thought, upon distance: whether people are near us or far from us" (Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* 249)

From *Histor[ies] of Reading* (Manguel) to *Theories of Reading* (Littau), the act of reading has been of increasing interest to theorists of different persuasions. Issues of identity have impelled such interrogation in regard to both the practice and the politics of reading. For, as Paul de Man observes in *Allegories of Reading*, to focus on the acts of writing and reading is to attempt to reconcile the internal structures of language with their external public effects: we speak about reading as getting "inside a text" which was once alien and of making it our own through "an act of understanding" which gives representation to an "extra-textual meaning" (3, 12). Or, as Lynne Pearce formulates this dialectic, such an act of reading is an experiential encounter with an other

wherein we "project ourselves" onto the page to become the creators and divas of our own stories as the personal and the structural intersect (*Feminism and the Politics of Reading* 252).

Investigation of the role of reading in the formation of identity, both individual and collective, has been a key concern of feminist artists and theorists, especially in the constitution of subcultures or textual communities through validation of "previously unarticulated knowledges" (Fuller *Writing the Everyday*). In the film *Forbidden Love*, Lynn Fernie revealed the importance of lesbian pulp fiction in the 1950s in bringing lesbians together in a more public community. Earlier, Ellen Moers had written in *Literary Women* about the importance of women as readers of other women's writing as this empowered their creative acts and the critical insights into the subordinate feminine condition which, so articulated, transmitted across generations the knowledge that would take public form in feminist political demands. Such practices have not only been the object of contemporary criticism and theory, however: they have been the subject of writing itself. Scenes of reading have long been depicted in literary texts, from the time of the Greeks at least, as Manguel observes. But the activity of reading as making sense by internalizing the markings on an external surface has been of especial importance within modernity. In the 4th century, Ambrose's practice of silent reading was sufficiently unusual for Augustine to note it in his *Confessions*, an autobiography considered an important precursor of modern subjectivity. Such acts of reading have been both the subject and the object of the novel from its inception, observes Nancy Armstrong in *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, an activity identified with the feminine from at least the fictions of Fielding that has been productive of a particular mode of interiority constitutive of modernity. The opening scene of *Jane Eyre* dramatizes this modern dialectics where Jane is both enclosed in the "double retirement" of her curtained window seat in the drawing room, isolated in her resistance from the social demands of the household, yet projected through her reading into northern landscapes of frost and snow, a vast world beyond through which she will journey in becoming "herself," the mistress of the manor when, intensity of experience domesticated, the *unheimlich* becomes *heimlich*.

In this presentation, I want to draw on my earlier work on practices of reading in regard to the dialectics of reading as writing (*Tessera* 2 1985), of proximity and distance ("Becoming my Hero, Becoming Myself" 1986, 1990) and to the epistemology of the secret in narrativized scenes of reading ("Pedagogical Fictions" 1992), to analyze three figures of reading prevalent in contemporary Canadian and Quebec women's novels. Strong readings, all three scenes convey the dynamism in any epistemological project, the inversions, reworkings, transformations enacted in the construction of critical knowledge. Rewriting the texts and lifestories of earlier women has been a longstanding practice of Canadian women writers whose writer-narrators generate their own fictions through a critical reading of pioneer authors, as does Margaret Laurence's Morag in *The Diviners* (1974) where her investigation of narrative forms entails a revision of Catherine Parr Traill's domesticity in a self-affirming move. Marian Engel's archivist in *Bear* (1976) exemplifies another mode of reading at a distance, one which also effects a disjunction with dominant narrative models of historiography, in its dramatization of the epistemology of the archive, the play of fragment and encyclopedia, of document and monument, of past and future in an undermining of the *arche* as site of power. Like the other two readers, Maude Lares, the translator of/in Nicole Brossard's *Le desert mauve* (1987), attempts to get under the skin of another woman through her act of reading outside her own time and place which transforms her vision of herself even as it extends and illuminates the text for others in her recreation of it. Through the alchemy of reading, a shift in the scene and scale of measurement, all three practices multiply the possible meanings of antecedent texts and, consequently, the potential readers for these texts. In this way, they negotiate literary value, forging textual communities as intratextual echoes are transformed into extra-textual practices.

Many more novels by contemporary Canadian women writers could be analyzed in relation to these three figures of reading: rewriting, archiving, translating. In my presentation I could either focus on analyzing variants in these modes of reading in relation to the conference theme of "reading practices" or reflect more generally on the theoretical implications of these acts of reading in relation to the conference theme "the production of readers and/or reading." In either case, my principal concern is with the epistemological impulse of these fictions. Additionally, the focus on these acts of reading at a distance will attempt to extend Armstrong's reflections on reading and the creation of a modern disciplined subject to consider how reading across time and space performatively constitutes national as well as gendered subjectivity.

Katie Halsey (Institute of English Studies, University of London)

Recording reading cultures: a discussion of methodological problems and strategies in the development of the Reading Experience Database, 1450-1945

The Reading Experience Database (RED) is an AHRC-funded project that aims to collect as much evidence as possible about the reading of British subjects from 1450 to 1945. Although its subject matter is historical, the database is a direct product of the present: it was formed and is perpetuated by growing contemporary interest in reading cultures both inside and outside the academy. And, as such, it provides a uniquely valuable resource that illuminates reading experience.

This paper discusses the methodologies that underpin the RED project, particularly focusing on the development of intricately related categories of information for the collection of evidence. These are designed to shed light not only on the historical act of reading, but also on the various agencies and networks that permitted and shaped that act, in other words, created the experience. We record, for example, not just the title of the text read, but anything that is known about the physical details of the artefact – was it print or manuscript? What sort of text was it – book, magazine, broadsheet, poster, ticket, handbill, advertisement, even cereal packet? Was it read as serialised instalments, three-decker Victorian novel, or an abridged illustrated children's version? Who published it? Where did the reader get hold of the text – from a circulating library, a bookseller, a friend? Or did the reader just find it, or read it surreptitiously as they stood in a bookshop? We record details too, of the reader, and the circumstances of the reading experience, including the reader's name, date of birth, socio-economic group, occupation, religion and nationality. We are interested in the location of the reading experience – was the reader at home in bed? On the train? On a Grand Tour around Europe? – and in the time of day or night it took place. We are also interested in what sort of reading experience it was – was the reader alone, or in company? Reading aloud, or perhaps being read to? Was the reader participating in a reading group, and reacting not only to the text itself, but to the ideas of other members of the group? And we also, of course, record the reader's responses to what he or she read. We want to know, in other words, not only what, but why, how, where, when and with whom readers of the past read their books and other texts. The accumulation of this range of detail is crucial: to understand readers of the past and, by extension, something about readers of the present and the future, we need the fullest possible picture of their reading experiences. Moreover, in a discipline typically characterised by case studies of unrepresentative readers, the accompanying focus on breadth in the construction of RED means that the database is designed to uncover important patterns and commonalities in reading experiences across time.

Finally, the paper will conclude with a visual demonstration of RED which will highlight its use for a wide range of professional researchers and its potential role in an analysis of contemporary cultures of reading.

Christine Hardy (Nottingham Trent University)

Women's reading constructs and their impact on reading behaviours

Despite the real and perceived benefits of reading - cognitive, social and psychological - many women do not choose to read, particularly books, as a regular leisure activity. In this paper, using empirical evidence and Personal Construct Psychology as the framework, it is argued that women develop reading constructs that, by the time of adolescence, become core constructs forming part of the self-concept that remains stable throughout the life span. These constructs are shaped by the individual's environment, particularly family and friends and influence their perception of their reading behaviour and skills. When considering the reading construct, it is a common belief that a reader is someone who reads books and a non-reader is someone who either reads nothing or reads other materials, eg magazines. A woman, who believes herself to be a reader, may read books throughout her lifespan; whereas a woman who believes herself to be a non-reader will

probably not read books after her primary schooling is completed. Women who consider themselves to be non-readers may change their reading behaviour as adults if there are certain conditions present to encourage them to start, but they exercise limited agency in their reading practices.

Jenny Hartley (Roehampton University) and Sarah Turvey (Roehampton University)

What Can a Book Do Behind Bars?

Reading groups are now on the agenda of reader development in prisons. Sarah Turvey and Jenny Hartley have been involved for over eight years with groups in a range of prisons: Coldingley, Bullingdon, Wandsworth, Send and Huntercombe YOI. With grants from various sources, we have helped to set up groups and to train those interested in working with them.

Over the past few months we have been exploring prison reading groups across the country to see how different groups organise themselves, what kinds of books they read, how they choose them, and what members enjoy about both the books and the meetings.

We will be reflecting on these findings and making a case for the distinctive benefits of reading groups in prisons. Specifically, we will explore the cultural 'connectedness' they promote, and the ways they combine the pleasures of private reading and reflection with the social skills fostered by discussion and debate.

Elaine Hawkins (Birkbeck, University of London)

Intimate engagements? Reading and identities

This paper is based on an in depth comparative study of how women readers' diverse identities become implicated in their reading experiences. I will be referring to a series of one to one interviews with women of different ages, sexualities, ethnicities and social class backgrounds and to some recordings of book group discussions. Juxtaposed with this will be a discussion of my research into the reading experiences of a diverse group of mature women students who are 'returners' to learning on English Literature courses in formal educational settings. (Access to Higher Education; First Year undergraduate). Underpinning the research project as a whole is the question of whether we can currently speak about English studies as 'inclusive'. And, if not, what might an 'inclusive' curriculum and pedagogy for English studies look and feel like? What prompts this question is the evidence from my research which contradicts the confident assertion in the British Benchmark Statements for undergraduate English Literature (QAA, 2006) that : 'The confidence and self esteem that an advanced level of literacy imparts have made English a popular and *empowering* subject among mature students and other non traditional entrants in HE.' (my italics) My paper explores the challenges to pedagogy that an exploration of reading as simultaneously a cognitive, emotional, bodily and imaginative experience refracted through diverse and unstable identity positions poses. The paper will attempt to model as well as report some tentative suggestions for development of practical ideas for teaching and learning about reading as a social practice.

Vivian Howard (Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia, Canada)

Teens and pleasure reading: Young teens in Halifax speak out about why they read for pleasure and why they don't

A 1995 survey by the National Center for Educational Statistics in the United States, Services and Resources for Children and Young Adults, concluded that almost 25% of public library users are teenagers; in other words, one out of every four individuals entering a public library is between the ages of 12 and 18. (U.S. Department of Education, 1995). Clearly, teens are an important public library user group, with needs and concerns very distinct from those of either children or adult users. However, as Virginia Walter (2003) very effectively demonstrates in her recent article "Public library service to children and teens: A research agenda," the research community has

spent little time investigating either the information needs or the reading habits of teens. This gap is certainly as true for Canadian teens as it is for their American counterparts. There are currently 4.4 million teens in Canada, making them the second largest demographic group in the country. However, the reading habits of Canadian young adults are not well understood. While this topic was the subject of several quantitative studies in the 1970s, it has not been investigated in the new social and technological context of the twenty-first century.

This paper reports on the first phase of a two-part research study into the role of recreational or pleasure reading in the lives of Nova Scotia teenagers. Phase one, a quantitative survey, analyzes whether there is a significant relationship between age, gender, and level of parental education and teenagers' reading, book purchasing, and library usage patterns in the province of Nova Scotia. Findings are discussed in the context of similar studies by a range of Canadian and international researchers from the 1970s to the present day. The specific survey described in this paper explores a wide range of issues of relevance to an understanding of the information-seeking behaviour of teens in their selection of pleasure reading materials and provides essential background context for the second phase of this study, which will provide a detailed and critical exploration of teen information-seeking behaviour for a wide range of pleasure reading materials. Phase two, currently underway, uses qualitative methodology (focus groups and interviews) to illuminate and enrich the findings from the preliminary survey research.

Patricia Huion and André Mottart (Ghent University, Belgium)

Screening fiction: the representation of reading and reading groups

At Ghent University, we are dealing with a major project about narratives and about the importance of implementing literary works in educational settings. As a part of the project, we focus upon a series of present-day fiction, dealing with reading in general and reading groups in particular. We will introduce the research design and the first results of our work-in-progress.

In the first part of our project, the following research questions are highlighted: (1) how are reading and reading groups represented in fiction? (2) which interpretations and personal narratives are 'activated' by reading group participants when confronted with fiction about reading and reading groups? (3) how does fiction function in educational trajectories for the avid reader wishing to become a reading group leader?

In order to answer these questions we make use of different methodological approaches: (1) a textual analysis of how reading and reading groups are represented in our collection of novels; (2) reception studies on how reading group participants received the novels; (3) online focusgroup discussions about the surplus value of implementing fiction to train reading group leaders. To analyse our data we introduce concepts from discourse analysis such as interpretative repertoires (Potter & Wetherell 1992), metaphors (Lakoff 1980) and narratology (Bruner, 1994).

Lynette Hunter (University of California, Davis)

Roget falls in love

The passionate consequences of being impressed, plus other embossings and cuts and sutures. gatherings, stitchings, foldings. it's one for the books.

Anne C. Ihata (Musashino University, Tokyo & University of Birmingham)

Reading in English: Japanese university students

Teaching reading skills for reading in English as a foreign language to university students in Japan may challenge the native speaker teacher's preconceived notions concerning the act of reading in itself and the knowledge and abilities that the learners bring to the process.

Japanese young people are generally not much interested in reading at all, even in their first language. They are only likely to do much reading of comic books or music/movie/fashion

magazines. They are, however, mostly very interested in English-language movies and music, and seem to have a lot of access to western cultures through them. Yet, they often do not demonstrate much intercultural understanding in reading tasks. And, considering their fondness for overwhelmingly visual media, these learners often apparently fail to access information from illustrations accompanying a text and integrate it with what is written.

The presenter is currently engaged in PhD research* into these learners' difficulties in reading in English, particularly their apparent failure to bring extra-textual knowledge and information in visuals into play in the act of interpreting a written text. Type of illustration is likely to be a factor, as are general intellectual ability and second language proficiency, but there is also the issue of whether the outcome is different when attention to visual material is conscious rather than unconscious. The present study deals with these and related issues, such as finding an efficient research methodology in terms of both data collection and practicality.

LaCoya Katoe and Rebecca Brown (Facilitators, Literature For All of Us)

Literature for All of Us: a community activist group in Chicago working with vulnerable teens

While book groups continue growing in popularity, they are typically available to those who are already literate and privileged. They usually take place in private homes or in bookstores located in middle class communities. They are not accessible, or necessarily welcoming, to young people who are struggling with economic survival, academic failure, and/or early parenting.

Our work demonstrates that book groups provide an active approach to reading that engages even hard-to-reach youth and those struggling with low literacy. Chosen for their relevance, the books we use often have situations and characters that are reminiscent of experiences and people in our participants' own lives. For most, this is the first time they have recognized aspects of themselves in literature.

In our program, participants are able to share their personal and aesthetic responses to the texts, to work out text meaning as a group, to learn to support and challenge different viewpoints, and to hone their critical thinking and communication skills. By opening new worlds through literature and poetry writing, we nurture the creative spirit in young people and help them cultivate skills that will serve them in life.

Research demonstrates that programs such as ours provide learning experiences that engage the minds and hearts of young people. Their growing knowledge of themselves means the world starts to make sense in new and larger ways. This is literacy – being able both to understand society and one's place in it. In our book groups, young people "make sense of the world" as they "make sense of the word."

For example:

When our group first began, Shantea, a 14 year old pregnant teen, was non-responsive: sitting outside the circle, and only begrudgingly reading aloud. With time, Shantea responded to the nurturing environment of book group and became fully engaged—eagerly awaiting group, developing a love for the books she received, and discovering genuine personal connections to the literature, as reflected in her poem:

Life is...

Wonderful, I enjoy it

Given, be thankful

Dangerous, be careful

Colorful, look around

A game, so play

Precious, remember it

Love, show it
Unlimited, keep going

Shantea Threatt, 14

(Inspired by Iyanla Vanzant's "Life Is...")

Literature for All of Us brings the rewards of reading and writing through book group discussions to teen mothers and other young people in underserved neighborhoods. We build communities of readers, poets, and critical thinkers. We develop family literacy by providing children's literature and child development resources to teen parents. We open worlds by opening books.

Anna Kiernan (Kingston University, London)

Not the only fruit: The significance of the rise of the book prize as cultural capital and sales tool for women authors, new reading communities and the literary establishment

Book prizes are now embraced by the bookselling industry as a means of reaching new readers and thus selling more books. They have replaced the literary review as the primary opinion maker in the world of books. But book prizes remain controversial in terms of their recognition of merit, basis of attribution and impact on audiences. In a recent article in the Observer, Jason Cowley stated that: 'Prizes create cultural hierarchies and canons of value... We like to think that value simply blooms out of a novel or album or artwork - the romantic Wordsworthian ideal. We would like to separate aesthetics from economics, creation from production. In reality, value has to be socially produced.'

The Orange prize has been widely criticized ('Germaine Greer sneered and Auberon Waugh called it the lemon prize') since its inception for ghettoising women's writing and for foregrounding gender over literary quality. Set up after the 1991 Booker shortlist was revealed to be a men-only affair, recent winners such as Lionel Shriver, author of *We Need to Talk About Kevin* (which has sold over 400,000 copies) conversely suggest that writers like her would continue to be marginalised if it weren't for awards such as the Orange Prize.

This paper will consider the implications for authors and evolving readerships of the shifting landscape of literary production and reception, in which women's fiction now dominates the bestseller lists (alongside non-fiction targeted at a male audience) and women readers are the dominant market for books.

Annina Klappert (University of Cologne)

Reading with/over gaps: Hypertextual reading, reading in hypertexts

The overwhelming majority of hypertext theory states that hypertexts are completely new forms of text which require completely new forms of reading. "Hypertext calls for an active reader" (George P. Landow), is the main thesis, which means a somehow more 'powerful' and 'freer' reader who has to take decisions over the text and, thus, 'creates' it.

The paper does not follow this thesis, nevertheless it takes serious the fact of a new textform which requires special reading practices: in hypertexts there is a necessity to decide which link to take, which way to go, so it is not that the reader *might*, but that he *has to* choose. The paper claims though that the reading practice is neither 'completely new' nor that the reader is 'more' active. It is going to show that there is no augmentation of activity, but a different interest of activity: an interest in the material order of textual elements, which is just the same possible in equivalent paperbased textforms.

For describing the ways of reading, that textforms like hypertext require, I propose two reading practices, whose relationship is not only dialectic, but also complementary: The 'practice of

reading the gaps' on the one hand, and the 'practice of reading the links' on the other. These are meant to be two focuses on text, which can be combined or alternated. To illustrate, how they might function in hypertexts, I am going to give exemplary lectures of some hyperfictions. The distinction and description of these two practices might clear up not only the possibilities of how to read hypertexts, but also of two reading perspectives of texts in general.

Sara L. Knox (University of Western Sydney, Australia)

'Not on the same page': the representation of men's book clubs

In the 'group response' of the Belper Book Group in Birminghamshire to Karen Fowler's *The Jane Austen Book Club* the writer wonders, "do men in book groups . . . really all carry big books?" As imagined here, the male reader fits a well-known phrase, if slightly amended: 'walk softly, but carry a big book'. Another reader complains about the representation of book clubs as "mumsy". After all, says he, "we may read slightly different books from an all women's reading group, but in the end the books that stand out are often the same." Both these readers look to the book (as object of— and reason for—both reader and club) to answer a question that is otherwise left hanging: what, if anything, is distinctive about the male reader, and about men who read in groups? This question remains unanswered despite a small but rich scholarship on the social and cultural phenomenon of group reading. Elizabeth Long's study of the identity work done by women in reading groups in the United States (2003) is the foremost example of this scholarship, and there have been ethnographic studies done of women's book groups in other cities of the U.S. (Gregory, Malin) and Canada (Rehberg-Sedo 2004, 2006) and Australia (Devlin-Glass, Howie, Poole). Given that the above scholarship has looked to the constructive powers of group reading—its gendered social practices and rituals— it is all the more startling that *gender* has been so narrowly treated. This is a puzzling partiality given the ready reflex to stereotype of commentators characterising the group *male* reader (those quoted above are relatively genteel examples). This paper examines the figuring of the male reader, and his confederation, in the online blogs and sites that render him visible.

Anita Lam (University of Toronto)

Looking for X in Hamilton: One Book, One City and neoliberal governmentality

This paper examines how local civic leaders have constructed and given meaning to the act of reading in the current One Book, One City (OBOC) reading initiative undertaken by Hamilton, Ontario. Using a textual analysis of representations of the OBOC project found in promotional materials, local media coverage and on-line websites run by the project's organizing sponsors, this paper will examine how this OBOC program is built into a pre-existing civic initiative- namely, Hamilton's War on Poverty.

If the meaning of this OBOC initiative arises from both the local context and the larger sociopolitical context of neoliberalism, then the underlying logic of this OBOC project has been influenced by the neoliberal governmentality first embedded in policies associated with Hamilton's War on Poverty. In short, this paper examines how this mass reading initiative is understood by a form of politics that attempts to go beyond the State. If neoliberal governance focuses on the "community" as a means for government, then individuals' emotional allegiances to the community are instrumentalized as a means for responsabilizing and making active the citizens of Hamilton. While the act of reading has been previously associated with a transformative experience associated with self-help discourse, this form of self-help has been reconfigured in neoliberal terms as responsabilization, such that individuals have a personal responsibility to invest and participate in their communities, especially in a OBOC initiative that is meant to empower the community by providing and producing new power-knowledge to solve the local problem of poverty. Thus, reading the OBOC novel becomes the act of an active, responsible, empowered citizen in the Hamilton community.

Christiana Lambrinidis (Independent Scholar and playwright)

Kill you, kill you not: detoxifying comprehension to improvise knowledge among women in Athens

Are there parameters in between fe-[male] violence(s)? Are the narratives of violence empowerment for women and self-awareness for men? Within a stage of the unspeakable, violence becomes a language, a strategy of articulating rage and not destruction. The usefulness of this methodology is played out in constructing a subversive theater of testimony where book reading transforms soundless monologues to dialogues and impasses to solutions. I would like to discuss an 11 year old women's literature seminar as a vibrant reading space that has undergone amazing changes over the last decade yet continues to produce social change.

Anouk Lang (University of Birmingham)

Real readers, virtual spaces: theorising new forms of reading

This paper considers how new technologies are changing the ways in which people read, in both social and solitary contexts, and suggests ways of understanding the kinds of social and hermeneutic work that are being carried out in conjunction with these new practices. Beginning with an overview of some of the new ways in which readers engage with each other and with texts over the internet – for example online book groups, interactive fanfic sites, online retailers' use of book reviews, and book swapping sites – I suggest ways in which these technologies may be both changing reading patterns and practices, and illuminating aspects of the act of reading which may not be easily visible when carried out in the more familiar context of codex book reading.

As bewildering as these rapid changes and transmogrifications of the act of reading are, I argue that they are useful for those attempting to gain access to the complex of interior processes – intellectual, social, psychological, ideological – that occur when individuals read, both alone and with others. Furthermore, advances in digital technology have made public and permanent many interactions that would once have been conducted in private and ephemeral ways, something which has obvious ethnographic advantages.

Using several examples of technology-mediated reading formations, I consider what these suggest about internet-mediated reading more generally in terms of its potential to engage, connect and transform readers in ways as yet unobserved in face-to-face contexts. Rather than attempting to set out a taxonomy of a diverse constellation of organically developing practices, I seek a methodology for determining how these forms differ from and resemble each other, and for discovering what readers might be seeking when they engage in one of these modes and not others.

Mary Leontsini (University of Crete, Greece)

Women's reading groups in the European context: social capital niches or cultural capital indicators?

Scholarly research on collective reading practices is often related to the making of public sphere and to the potential for collective action they are susceptible to generate. Contemporary reading groups (or book clubs in the U.S) have long been denied institutional recognition by scholars, despite the fact that during the last decade, regular social gatherings devoted to discuss views on a book start gaining accrued visibility among reading audiences, thanks to digital (and conventional) media, literary creation, cultural policies and market-driven initiatives of publishing groups. However, in the European context, there is little information on the ways reading groups are formed, function, invest meanings and constitute an integral part of the social life of their – mostly female - participants. If reading fiction is itself 'a women's thing', participation in reading groups is a heavily gender-segregated practice, sometimes regardless of (implicit or expressed) members' feminist orientation, which could eventually generate anguish and/or fear to potential male members. Women's practices considered as not leading to political participation remain still

devalued (if not denigrated) within the scope of scholarly research. Reading groups are places of meaning production, texts' appropriation and creation of normative frameworks, which are often challenging institutional and/or official ones. In this presentation, I am planning to analyze the function and social implications of women's reading groups in the European context drawing examples on ethnographic research conducted in a long-standing reading group in Paris. In the light of recent scholarship on issues of social capital and cultural capital formation, my purpose here is to discuss how activities and practices developed by reading groups are susceptible a) to enrich scholarly research on the gendered dimension of social and cultural capital issues (and their potential intersectionality) b) to shed light on the possible connections among these analytical tools, provided that women's uses of reading become a legitimate object of study.

Kathleen Liddle (University of Toronto)

Filling the cultural toolkit: Feminist bookstores as cultural toolshops

Within the sociology of culture, research related to books and reading tends to focus on how the production process impacts content, how readers use or interpret texts, and – to a lesser extent – how the increasing concentration of bookselling impacts the diversity of titles. Little attention, however, has been given to the spaces in which readers encounter books.

Through qualitative analysis of interviews, surveys, and archival materials, I use the case of feminist bookstores to develop a concept that I term the *cultural toolshop*. Following Swidler's (1986) metaphor of the *cultural toolkit*, used to describe the storehouse of cultural resources that individuals actively use in various combinations, I argue that the *cultural toolshop* is a particular type of space that facilitates and enhances the acquisition of cultural tools. While feminist bookstores provide cultural tools – in the form of books and the ideas contained therein – they also endeavor to create a space explicitly marked as "safe" for exploration, observation, and experimentation. Particularly important for lesbian and bisexual women who are in the process of coming out, and for women beginning to embrace a feminist identity, these spaces offer opportunities to see cultural tools deployed (through workshops and performances, by other customers and staff), to ruminate on them in a safe space, and to try them out (through store-sponsored activities or through informal interactions).

Theoretically, this project sheds light on an aspect of the book world understudied by sociologists: the way that the space in which books are acquired impacts the reader and contextualizes the experience of reading. It also raises questions about the way that other book acquisition spaces (*e.g.*, other specialty bookstores, libraries) impact readers and about what happens when such spaces disappear, as with the documented decline in North America of independent bookstores in general and feminist bookstores in particular.

Stephanie Maatta (University of South Florida)

Something about Oprah: Television book clubs and intimate connections

Call it charisma, emotional intelligence, leadership – whatever you call it, there is just something about Oprah. Oprah's book club started in September 1996. Since that time, much has been written about the impact Oprah has had on books sales. Fewer articles have examined how Oprah impacts sales, although some have proposed that it is related to the intimate connections she establishes with her audience members. This paper intends to: 1) Examine the qualities unique to Oprah's style, compared to other talk shows, which allow her to develop an intimate connection with her audience members; 2) Explore the notion that it is Oprah's unique relationship with her audience members that has made her so successful in influencing book sales; and 3) Demonstrate that Oprah's impact on book sales is greater than the impact of other television book clubs, such as Good Morning America or the Today Show.

This research uses comparative data from the *New York Times Best Sellers List*, *USA Today Best Seller List* and other similar resources to examine rankings and potential popularity factors of the

books recommended by the various television book clubs. Initial data analysis suggests that the titles recommended by Oprah appear on the best seller lists sooner, remain on the lists longer, and are frequently ranked higher than those that are recommended by Good Morning America and the Today Show. The question that remains to be answered is whether the recommended titles would have achieved best seller status without the influence of Oprah or other recognized celebrities.

Angela Macmillan and Katie Peters (Project Workers, Get Into Reading project, University of Liverpool)

'At the quiet limit of the world': reading with old people

This paper examines the benefits of reading groups in homes for the elderly, and looks at two distinct client groups: the mentally alert but physically frail, and those suffering from dementia.

While active age centres offer a full programme of stimulating activity for the active in body and mind, there are large numbers of elderly people in care for physical reasons, who continue to be intellectually alert. Provision for this group is often severely limited. The purpose of setting up reading groups with these groups is primarily for increased well-being and I will report on the real benefits for mental health. The paper will argue the necessity for trained group facilitators; the importance of flexibility in the running and organization of the group and the consequences of choosing the right and wrong texts. Nostalgia and sentiment play a large part in the literature of these reading groups. Far from being worn out dead ends, I will argue that they are the means of reassessing the sum of past experience in order to give it its full value and place in present, ongoing life.

We will report also report on a group suffering dementia which meets twice weekly, spends an hour reading aloud together and looking at a diverse selection of material from Shakespeare through to A.A. Milne. The reading is shared in the purest possible sense as members take turns to read aloud but also read passages out altogether to enable less confident members to take part. this report will focus on the interesting distinction in the response to poetry and prose and consider the special connection members of the group have with poems, especially ones which they learnt in their childhood. In our work with this group we have found that old familiar poetry can start off a chain of thinking and remembering and affords moments of clarity and insights into a past life which has been lost from memory. We will outline the key benefits which we believe the experience has afforded to both patients and staff attending the group and put forward suggestions for how this project could be replicated on a larger scale.

Anthony Martin (Waseda University, Japan)

Empire of Signs?: The Reading Practices of Japanese University Students

This paper reports on part of a study of the reading and research practices of Japanese university students and academics in their use of English. The study is being conducted using a range of methods, including reading logs and diaries, surveys and questionnaires and follow-up interviews. In this paper I will consider the responses to surveys on reading and the reading logs completed by three groups of students (first-year undergraduates, final-year undergraduates, and postgraduates). The surveys and reading logs were designed to elicit data on how much students read for research and class purposes, and for leisure, contrasted with their use of online reading (for educational purposes and for leisure). Moreover, the participants were asked to rate their reading experiences for ease of use, for effectiveness (in research and study), and for the importance such practices play in their daily lives. The study thus covers areas of reading research (Guthrie, Mikulecky, Smith), and also considers how far theories of electronic textuality and cyberculture (Negroponte, Castells, Duguid and Brown) are borne out in the experiences of a digital generation. From the early days of theorizing about the effects of digital technology on

cultural practices, Japan has been represented as something of a hi-tech, cyborg other to the West; both in its use in fictional representations such as the movie *Bladerunner* and the novels of William Gibson, and in various theoretical impressions, such as Roland Barthes' *Empire of Signs*. One major result of the study so far has been to reveal that younger Japanese adults function fluently and discretely in print culture and electronic culture, and indicate a marked preference to keep the two reading experiences separate.

Shannon Mattern (The New School, New York)

Poetry's Architecture: Reading and Listening in The Woodberry Poetry Room

Turning their attention away from the text on, or in, the page or the screen, some scholars, like Janice Radway and David Morley, focus on the social and material environments in which media consumption takes place. Media ethnographers Faye Ginsberg and Purnima Mankekar suggest that the specific site of media reception – the sitting room or the movie theater, the city or the settlement – cultivates particular consumption practices and defines the ideologies underlying them. Meanwhile, Thomas Doherty writes, film scholars working within the growing field of "exhibition studies" focus not on what's on the screen, but on the "scene of the screen itself," including the details of the physical exhibition site. Lynn Spigel has similarly examined the concurrent evolution of an architectural type and a medium – the post-war suburban home and television – and the kinds of spectatorship and values these technologies together engendered.

This focus on the "material text" – common within media studies and increasingly prevalent within literature programs – raises further questions about how that text is constituted and consumed in particular material spaces. And how might this scholarship inform the design of reading, listening, and viewing spaces that facilitate access and fruitful interactions between people, media, and architecture?

In this paper, I will examine Finnish architect Alvar Aalto's 1949 interior design for the Woodberry Poetry Reading Room at Harvard's Lamont Library, which recently underwent a controversial renovation. The room, designed for reading and listening to recordings of poetry, is regarded as a "total design," integrating finishes, furnishings, and lighting conducive to poetry "reception." How do these design elements cultivate particular practices, and embody certain ideologies, of access and reading? Furthermore, how is the space uniquely suited to the appreciation of poetry?

Sally Maynard (Loughborough University)

Young People's Reading in 2005

The paper discusses the findings of a survey of what young people in England are reading, and what they say their reading means to them. The study, funded by the Arts Council, was carried out by the National Centre for Research in Children's Literature (Roehampton University) and the results collated and analysed by LISU (Loughborough University).

The survey is concerned with finding out what children like to read rather than with reading ability. Issues covered include:

- how children come into contact with all kinds of reading matter (from comics and magazines to fiction and non-fiction books)
- preferences for favourite books and authors
- satisfaction with the kinds of publications available
- the kinds of people influencing young people's choice of reading matter
- how young readers select what to read
- where children buy what they read
- the place of reading in relation to other out of school/leisure activities

This is the second in a series of surveys, and as such can provide a 'snapshot' of young people's reading relating to the particular period covered by the survey as well as allowing the identification of trends in juvenile reading habits. The project provides opportunities to look objectively at the effect of the various high-profile, government-funded initiatives (such as the Year of Reading and the establishment of the Literacy Hour) aimed at promoting reading and improving literacy.

The 2005 survey enjoyed the participation of 22 primary and 24 secondary schools. Intriguing and varied conclusions are drawn, including:

- magazines were important as reading material for pleasure and as a source of information to both boys and girls
- reading is clearly one of many activities enjoyed by the children and in some cases is being usurped by the more visual technologies, particularly for the boys

Alistair McCleery (Napier University)

Can Read, Won't Read: Children's Reading in 1989 and 2007

A 1989 report provided both a snapshot of the contemporary role of reading in children's lives and a basis upon which policies could be developed in order to encourage reading. The motivation for this work was both pragmatic and aspirational: a reverse in the decline of the number of readers would result in increased revenues and independence for writers and publishers and a reduced need for subvention; and the study was informed by the view that reading was 'an enriching experience'. Its focus was not illiteracy but 'aliteracy', not an inability to read but an unwillingness to read. It limited the field to reading 'literature' in a broad sense rather than reading for education, instruction or information in a narrow one: Stephen King counted, Haynes car manuals did not. The major consequence of this study was that reading for this age-group went to the top of the agenda for educational and cultural policy-makers, writers and publishers. More resources were put into initiatives targeting children. The 'Harry Potter' phenomenon – the first book appeared in 1997 – gave hope that the number of children with a reading habit was actually on the increase. Writers and publishers were no longer underestimating children's ability to deal with sophisticated themes, emotions and ideas. Ten years on a further study of children's reading habits and practices in Scotland was undertaken to provide a longer-term comparison and this paper presents the preliminary results of this study.

Kate McDonnell (Assistant Project Manager, Get Into Reading, University of Liverpool) and Mary Weston (Project Worker, Get Into Reading, University of Liverpool)

Evaluating community group reading: Feel better with a book? Then prove it ...

This paper will focus the problems associated with evaluating two specific groups: Feel Better With A Book, a specialist Get Into Reading group for mental health service users, and GIR work with recovering drug abusers in residential rehab. The paper will explore the challenges faced in observing and recording reading group member outcomes, which included changes in behaviour both within and outside the sessions. It will begin by describing the ethos of the groups, the 'friend/professional' role of the facilitator and go on to discuss the various methods employed to capture the reading group experience. I will argue that although individual case histories or 'stories' may be our preferred method of recording what is happening when people meet each week to journey into a book together, there are particular difficulties in any type of documentation, including both confidentiality, and a sense that the delicacy of individuals and the shared dynamics of a collaborative and creative reading group session may be damaged by overhandling.

Lynne McKechnie (University of Western Ontario and University of Washington), Paulette Rothbauer (University of Toronto) and Catherine Ross (University of Western Ontario)

Empty shelves: Readers speak of the challenges of finding good books to read

Having access to reading materials is recognized as central to the development and support of individuals as lifelong readers (see, for example, Meek 1982). Yet the child, teen and adult readers who participated in our ongoing studies of readers, often identified finding a good book to read as a significant challenge. While it may be argued that cost impedes book purchasing, the ready availability of free public library services makes this finding somewhat perplexing.

This paper will draw on three data sets: Catherine Ross's interviews with more than 220 adults who read for pleasure; Paulette Rothbauer's interviews with over 60 adolescent readers; and Lynne McKechnie's interview and observation studies of 75 child readers 4 to 12 years old. Preliminary analysis of the data suggests that in addition to physical availability, access has many more dimensions from the perspective of readers. For example, children differentiate between required and freely chosen reading as well as school-sanctioned and out-of-school reading. Young adults report it is easier to borrow books from friends than to negotiate the public library hurdles of borrowing and describe library catalogues as useless for identifying what they want to read. Adults speak of the difficulty of finding new authors and titles especially when confronted with large and overwhelming library collections and book store stocks.

Our paper will deconstruct the concept of "access to reading materials" by exploring its multivariate dimensions as described by readers themselves.

Lynne McKechnie (University of Western Ontario and University of Washington)

"Spiderman is not for babies" (Peter, 4 years): The "boys and reading problem" from the perspective of the boys themselves

As girls continue to outperform boys on standard tests of reading achievement parents, educators and librarians are actively searching for ways to help boys develop a skill seen as essential for success in life. This study explores the "problem" of boys and reading using qualitative methods to capture the perspective of the boys themselves.

Situated within the rubric of reader response theory, this study regarded the boys as being experts in their own reading practices. Sixty Canadian boys, four through fifteen years old participated. The boys' personal collections of books and other information materials were inventoried. Each boy then participated in a 30 minute qualitative semi-structured interview which explored his reading practices. A grounded theory approach was used to analyze the data to identify emergent themes.

Results indicate boys have personal collections of reading materials which they use. However, many of the collections included materials that are not privileged as "real" reading by libraries and schools. The boys own novels but also nonfiction books, computer magazines, comic books, graphic novels and role playing game manuals. This trend was evident even in the collections of younger boys. On the day of his interview, the most prized item in four-year-old Peter's collection was his new *Spiderman* book. Part of the boys and reading problem then may lie in what we count as reading. The results of this study have implications for educators and also for public libraries. Through broadening their understanding of what constitutes "real" reading and developing collections and services that support the *real* reading interests of boys, children's librarians are positioned to play a central role in legitimizing the reading practices of boys.

Nickianne Moody (Liverpool John Moores University)

Genre, categorisation and cultural practice: The decision to re-stock romance in four UK bookshops

The romance genre is frequently chosen for academic study because it makes the cultural politics of gendered experience visible. The romance narrative stays current by exploring the renegotiation of personal, cultural and political meanings associated with the attainment and maintenance of sexual monogamy. By the end of the twentieth century however, romance as a marketing term had been virtually effaced in favour of broader categorisations demonstrating an uncertainty about the readership for romance fiction.

As a research term genre often denotes an intersection that occurs between academic analysis, production concerns and audience activity which is vitally relevant to understand the commercial, cultural and social practices of popular fiction. Cultural tension in the 1990s placed greater emphasis on narratives addressing the post-nuptial stage of heterosexual relationships at the same time, economic pressures on publishers encouraged them to seek authors for serial narratives and both developments are better suited to other forms of formula fiction than romance. Therefore romance blended its highly focussed narrative concern on the couple with other styles and imperatives such as comedy, the thriller, fantasy and detective fiction. In the late 1990s, the flexibility of categorisation practiced by Amazon and Borders stood in contrast to decisions made by WH Smith and Waterstones about where to place romance fiction within their shops.

Currently the displacement of romance by traditional retailers is being reversed. Waterstones' overt decision to restock romance is a new approach to marketing the genre which appears to be connected to the perception of a reading career (McRobbie, 1981) for popular female audiences. Moreover, a new policy which groups together 'women's interest supernatural and fantasy fiction' in Forbidden Planet also demonstrates a more reflexive understanding of audience taste and appreciation of sub-genres which are concerned with romance and contemporary sexual identities.

Over 2006 romance as a genre category in Britain has become more accessible in bookshops and publishers and retailers have become prepared to vary the way that it is presented to co-existing groups and cultures of readers. This paper maps the changes that are taking place in how romance is retailed. The case studies reveal a definite change in how readers of genre fiction are perceived in an increasingly competitive market place. From this position the discussion assesses the impact that the new approach to marketing has on the industry and potential readership in Britain.

Vanessa J. Morris (Clarion University of Pennsylvania)

Inner city teens *do* read: Their lives represented in urban fiction

Philadelphia is the 5th largest city in America, with a population of more than 40% African Americans. Many Philadelphian African Americans live in inner city neighborhoods like North Philadelphia and West Philadelphia. In North Philadelphia, the Strawberry Mansion neighborhood boasts at least 10 schools (pre-K, public and parochial) within a 2-mile radius. The population of Strawberry Mansion boasts 34% under the age of 20. This means that there is a considerable population of children and teenagers living and growing up in Strawberry Mansion generation after generation. With such a large youth population that are school age, it has been important to understand how literacy plays a part in the growth of the children's academic, social and civic lives.

This paper proposes to explore the follow research questions: "How is literacy defined for African American teen youth in Strawberry Mansion?" "What do urban youth read?" "Why do they read what they read?" "How do their reading habits reflect how they view their representation in urban life?"

This paper will trace the adolescent development of teens in inner city Philadelphia, citing the influences of poverty, racism and educational issues. This paper will cite a book club experience that I facilitated as a Young Adult librarian in a neighborhood branch library in the Strawberry

Mansion neighborhood. In this bookclub we explored urban fiction; the whys of reading it, the impact of reading it, and the approach of teaching critical literacy to the teens to empower their reading of the genre. The presentation will conclude with a synthesis of urban culture with book culture to promote the reality that for urban teens, urban fiction is a representation of who they are and what they observe within their daily experiences in an inner city environment. Therefore, urban fiction is a critical tool in giving its readership space to have voice in how their culture is represented in literature.

Samantha Naidu (Rhodes University, South Africa)

Eroticising the exotic: South Asian women and romance fiction

Recent years have seen an increased popularisation of South Asian culture and the 'Asian experience' in the form of global cultural commodities such as movies, television sitcoms, and popular literature. BBC sitcoms such as "Goodness Gracious Me" and the "Kumars at No. 42" have become household media phenomena, whilst movies like "East is East" and "Bend it Like Beckham" have enjoyed international success. The Bollywood cinema industry has played a key role in this popularisation process, extending its market to the USA, UK and South Africa. In the literary arena novels which conform to the genres of popular literature, but with South Asian, usually diasporic content, have been produced, and can be seen as part of this trend. Some of these novels are clearly modeled on the western romance paperbacks of the Mills & Boon or Harlequin variety. Others contain certain elements of the genre but deviate to introduce other aesthetic forms or to address varying historical and social issues, such as diaspora and female identity. My paper examines how the South Asian diasporic romance novel extends and revises the already evolving romance genre. The paper acknowledges how romance has been a persistently popular mode in western literature for centuries, but how in the mid-twentieth century it has evolved into "a concerted programme of market research, mass publication and multi-media advertising" (Rosalind Jones 1985: 198) directed at a female audience. My central argument is that feminist inroads are being made into the genre, and I am arguing that South Asian diasporic women writers are making a considerable contribution to this foray, with intriguing consequences.

Sue Needham (Birmingham Central Library)

Story Lounge project at Birmingham Central Library

Birmingham Central Library hosted a "Story Lounge" during December 2006. The idea was to offer readers a space away from the main library, and the Christmas shopping, to relax, broaden their reading experience and chat about books with enthusiastic staff or with each other. Writers and poets would be on hand some of the time to perform their work or simply talk to users about creative writing. The space was furnished with comfortable sofas and chairs and a great selection of best sellers and attractive paperbacks. Reader development websites were promoted via the P.C. Hot and cold drinks were offered and food was allowed. Staff were on hand to encourage the use of the lounge, chat about reading, answer any queries and assist users to join the library if necessary. This project was very successful; people of all ages were enthusiastic about a welcoming space where they could explore reading choices in a relaxed atmosphere.

Staff learnt a great deal about how people used the space and about the reading preferences of a range of visitors with a wide range of ages and cultural backgrounds; there were quite a few surprises. It also enabled staff to gain confidence in simply talking about books and reading and interacting with users. This project will inform future planning of new and renovated libraries in Birmingham.

Patricia Neville (Mallow College of Further Education, Cork)

Helping self-help books: Moving towards a sociological analysis of self-help books

Self-help books are one of the most prolific and commercially successful book genres of the past thirty years (Smith, 2002). Though originally described as books that outline a particular problem in its leading title which was then followed by its remedy in its sub-title, the self-help genre has also undergone substantial diversification to include inspirational pamphlets, affirmational daily journals, audio books and miniature books (e.g. The Little Book of Hope). According to Bowker's Books InPrint database there are currently 31,073 books classified as self-help books in print in America with 2,924 new self-help titles published in 2005. It has been recorded by the Association of American Publishers that self-help books generated book sales of over \$1.2 billion in the US in 2003. This strong consumptive relationship with self-help books is not an exclusive American phenomenon but can also be found to be on the increase in Britain as well as Japan, China, India to name a few.

Despite the sizeable presence of self-help books in contemporary popular culture, the practice of consuming and reading self-help books has yet to receive the scholarly attention that this phenomenon deserves. This paper will attempt to rectify this academic shortcoming and challenge the intellectual hegemony of the Frankfurt School and its quick dismissal of the claims made by many self-help readers that self-help books are meaningful texts that can help change peoples lives for the better. This research will argue that self-help readers are active readers whose experience of reading these texts reveals the existence of a complex interplay of personal, social, and economic variables. I will attempt to show this by:

1. Introducing and discussing how the combined insights of the interpretative tradition can be applied to counter-balance the functionalism of the critical tradition.
2. Present an overview of the existing research that has been carried out on self-help readers and my own qualitative research into self-help readers and their reader responses.

Jennifer Nolan-Stinson (University of Maryland)

Locating reading: What the placement of books in a reader's home reveals

In order to better understand reading as a cultural practice, we need to study the lived experiences of individual readers. One important but largely ignored area of research involves exploration of how readers organize their books and reading spaces within their homes. My research uses an ethnographic life history approach to study reading practices of self-described "avid readers," which enables me to paint detailed portraits of each reader's cultural influences, practices, and habits. Understanding the role that reading and books play within a reader's home is proving to be an essential component of my approach. Exploring, through interviews and participant observation, where books are placed, and why, helps reveal not only what type of reader a person is, but also what type of reader a person wishes to be perceived as in relation to prevailing social attitudes towards certain types of books within the cultural worlds that each reader inhabits. The readers with whom I work organize their books and reading spaces differently in ways that reflect their own complex classifications of these books, but how they think the books will be perceived by others is a salient factor for each in determining where they place them. Thus books chosen for display in social spaces, such as living rooms, are only partial indicators of a person's reading interests and often exclude many books the person most enjoys reading. Furthermore, reading spaces created for the use of others, such as in guest rooms, reveal much about how readers construct and understand other readers and themselves. Examining the role that reading plays within the lived environment of readers adds an important dimension to understanding reading as both a personal and social activity.

Anna Notaro (Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design, Dundee)

Storytelling & new media

This paper's theoretical framework is rooted in contemporary debates about what is generally known as the 'digital revolution'. Computer and software development have given birth to a whole

new field of digital texts, which are not bound to the book as a medium. These texts can be read from computer screen, or increasingly, from different reading devices, so called e-books. It is my contention that digital textuality opens an infinite field to expand literary expression, especially when it comes to the city (urban metaphors are not surprisingly abundant when describing the Internet). Often digital textuality is seen as an alternative medium for literature, there is, however, literature which uses digital textuality much more effectively. They integrate aspects of digital dynamics as part of their signifying structure and widen the range of literary expression. I am referring to 'digital storytelling' which brings together the ancient art of storytelling and multimedia technology. This essay argues that such a type of narrative has recently known a revival which has taken different shapes: in some cases hypertextual narrative structures bring about an interbreeding of literary genres and visual arts, in others (the ones I am concerned with) the impact of the geographical 'locale' and of a well-established trope 'the city' make them hybrid texts, occupying a new space between printed text and multimedia presentation. The paper will survey a few innovative literary projects, before focusing in particular on the one by Thomas Beller, who uses a virtual map of New York as a navigation device. His web site "Mr. Beller's Neighborhood" (<http://www.mrbellersneighborhood.com/>) is based on satellite photographs of Manhattan, the city has been divided into nine sections, and each neighborhood has red dots marking specific locations that are linked to stories by Beller and many others about events connected to each spot. In 2002 a selection of stories, which had first appeared on the web site, was published in a collection entitled 'Before and After: Stories from New York', thus providing a splendid opportunity for readers to compare the two experiences.

S  verine Olivier (Universit   Libre de Bruxelles - Free University Brussels)

Guilty seduction: Romance readers and publishers

In France, romance readers have always been despised. Even in the today French women's magazines and newspapers, their portrait, when considered, is not very positive. Although it doesn't comply with the reality, it contributes to reinforce the prejudices. Why does the French critical community keep on regarding the romance readers as alienated and stupid people in danger? We are personally convinced that it is the fault of romance publishers like Harlequin. Their marketing strategies and the way they provide romance novels explain for the most part the bad opinion of the scholars about romance readers. But do the publishers have a real impact on the readers? Do they actually manipulate them? Do they influence the reading? If they ensure the visibility of the books (coloured and romantic covers), facilitate the reading (simplified translations, cutting of long descriptions), try to create customer loyalty and enlarge their public readers, they cannot control everything. Having to make a profit, they have to respect the readers' desires. Therefore, how do the French romance readers respond to the publishers and to their marketing strategies? A sociological survey into French-speaking romance readers and the study of a French website on the romantic novels will help to analyse the impact of the publishers on the reading. In the prevailing mass culture, understanding how the readers, the true agents of cultural transformations, respond to the book industries is essential.

Dru Pagliassotti (California Lutheran University)

A better romance: Reading boy's love in the west

"Boy's love" is used to refer to male/male homoerotic texts, particularly manga, created by women for women. As received in the West, Japanese BL manga are almost always in tank  bon, or graphic novel, form, whether they're "scanlated" (scanned and translated by fans) or officially licensed, translated, and published. A survey of 478 Western readers of BL addressed how they consume and understand BL manga and participate in the BL fan community as readers and producers of BL texts.

Western BL readers engage with the texts on a variety of levels. First, they must learn how to read Japanese-origin manga: negotiating panels that run from right-to-left, learning graphical and sound-effect conventions, and understanding cultural references or terms (e.g., senpai/kohei relationships). In addition, although most Western readers classify BL as romance, they differ from

Western romance readers in their expectations about sexual violence and happy endings. Like slash readers, they find BL's male/male romances more enjoyable and less gender-stereotyped than heterosexual romances.

Western BL readers also engage with the text at a subcultural level. Despite the recent boom in BL publishing, most still obtain texts online through fan scanlations, requiring at least minimal complicity in this "underground" endeavor. Many are active in the BL fan community: they talk about BL; create BL stories, images, videos, or translations; play BL games; and support BL in other ways, such as running websites or reviewing BL products. In the United States, BL publishers and readers interact online and at conventions; publishers often self-identify as fans and ask fans for suggestions about which titles to license and translate next. In return, fans encourage deleting licensed titles from scanlation sites and purchasing printed books to encourage BL publishing in their countries. Thus, reading BL manga is an intercultural and popular cultural event in the West.

Sarah Pedersen (The Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen)

Now read this: Male and female bloggers' recommendations for further reading

Weblogging or 'blogging' has joined e-mail and home pages as a mass use of the internet. Blogs are usually defined, following Blood[1] as 'frequently updated, reverse-chronological entries on a single webpage'. The original blogs were filter-type web pages, directing the reader to other blogs and websites on the World Wide Web and offering commentary and often the opportunity for readers' discussion. While blogging was initially restricted to those who had the necessary programming skills, the introduction of cheap and easy-to-use software, such as the commonly used Blogger, has resulted in the explosion of the 'blogosphere' in the past few years.

This paper investigates and contrasts male and female bloggers' use of a specific part of a blog - its blogroll. The blogroll is where a blogger recommends his or her own favourite blogs as further reading. The research investigated the blogrolls of 60 US and 60 UK bloggers, analysing both the sex and the geographical location of each linked blog. Findings suggest that US bloggers are far more likely to link to other US bloggers while British bloggers are more willing to recommend overseas blogs to their readers, including a high number of US blogs. In addition, male bloggers are more likely to recommend other male bloggers to their readers. Such practices support the continued dominance of US bloggers, and in particular US men, at the more popular end of the blogosphere and are also discussed in terms of cultural isolation and national identity.

The proposed paper reports on research undertaken between September 2006 and April 2007 and funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) in the UK.

Anne Peoples (Assistant Chief Librarian, Western Education and Library Board, Northern Ireland)

Divided City: A Cross-Border Development Project

This case study describes the experience of delivering *Divided City*, a One Book programme, as a major initiative within the framework of a cross-border reader development partnership *Inspiring Readers*. The project was funded by the Special European Union Partnership Board, an EU fund established to promote peace and reconciliation in Ireland following the Good Friday Agreement. The two main partners were the Western Education and Library Board (UK) and Donegal County Council Library Service (Ireland).

This paper is based on our experience of delivering an integrated programme in two authorities, in different countries, to communities separated by physical borders and sectarian divisions. The case study outlines how the One Book programme strand was used to directly address issues of sectarianism, exclusion and cultural diversity and gives an overview of the project

delivery. Drawing on the external evaluation report findings, the case study demonstrates the potential of library based One Book programmes to address sensitive and contentious issues by providing a mass reading activity linked to opportunities for meaningful discussion.

It concludes that reading can support inclusion and diversity and that libraries can move from passive neutrality to dynamic engagement.

Ike Picone (Vrije Universiteit Brussel - Free University Brussels)

Experiencing e-news: profiles of the online newsreader

Since a few decades, the newspaper industry has been in a downturn. The reasons for this are complex but the role of complementary news channels like radio and television and recently the internet and mobile networks can not be denied. Mainly young people prefer sites, blogs and online communities to newspapers when it comes to get informed. Blogging, rating, commenting, sharing and participating in making the news are only but a few features publishers offer their audience on their websites in order to bind them to their brand. However, while these aspects are much hyped as part of the upcoming web 2.0, history teaches us that the needs and uses of the public will play an important part in the success or failure of these applications.

In academic research on media and news audiences we find a wide range of audience profiles like the couch potato, the news enjoyer, the plug-in reader or the lean-forward reader. Through new ways of consuming news concepts like the prosumer, the citizen journalist or the blogger emerged. These various types will read the news differently depending on what they are planning to do with it. This paper wants to look at the factors that motivate people read and use news in new ways.

The case study will be the attitude of the Flemish newspaper audience towards online news services by means of qualitative research of lead users (heavy readers of both new media and newspapers). First we will give an overview of the existing and new academic concepts on newsreader profiles. Secondly, the results of the interviews will be analysed focusing on the questions when and why readers turn to online news consumption. Finally, we will try to link these results to the reader profiles.

Julian Pinder (University of Sydney, Australia)

Online literary communities: A case study of LibraryThing

While, at first glance, LibraryThing (<http://www.librarything.com>) appears merely to offer a means for readers to catalogue their book collections online, the site in fact demonstrates the potential for the Internet to offer an entirely new culture (or entirely new cultures) of reading. Taking the online personal library cataloguing website LibraryThing as its primary example and focus, this paper examines how the Internet opens up new avenues for the generation and development of multiple, intersecting (global) communities of readers. By cross referencing each user's collection with those of other users, uniting readers with similar reading interests (based both on their existing libraries and declared interests), suggesting works on the basis of those similar reading interests, and opening up avenues for discussion about those works and those interests, LibraryThing generates a dynamic, communitarian space to explore literature that is distinct from (but overlaps with) the academic and commercial spaces that otherwise dominate the Internet.

In its examination of LibraryThing, this paper explores 'literary networking' as an emerging concept, contrasting an ethnographic account of literary networking with a more theoretical approach, one which locates literary networking at the intersection of existing theoretical models generated by hypertext theory, post-structural theory and information technology theory (particularly the larger social bookmarking phenomenon). I will also explore the implications for reading, literature and literary study arising from this literary networking paradigm; specifically, the implications for:

- 'canon' formation;
- reading practices; and
- concepts of literary 'taste' and influence;

as well as the interface or connectivity with other related reading/literary practices, such as blogging, online book-selling, and academic research and study.

Izabela Potapowicz (Université de Montréal, Québec)

Meeting through the screened text: The mediation of women's identity in daytime literary shows (USA/France)

This paper will examine the ways that televised *literary programs* create complex interfaces allowing a mediation between their audiences and the selected texts, while engaging notions of personal and group identity. It will be centered around three day-time programs: the American *The Oprah's Book Club* (ABC, CTV, 1995 -), *Aujourd'hui Madame: des auteurs face à leurs lectrices* (TF1, 1974-81), and *Le Club des lectrices* (France2, 2006-). All three literary programs are part of daily morning shows; all three explicitly target female audiences and routinely present female readers from various socio-economic backgrounds as role models.

In these programs, reading is portrayed as a noble yet fun activity compatible with daily responsibilities, that not only allows these women to "take time for themselves", but also to (re)connect to a larger community of readers. My analysis will allow a glimpse at the differences between the North-American and European programs in the last fifty years – both in their intermedial evolution and in the proposed ideal woman (reader, wife, mother, emancipated individual, etc). It will also explore the twofold transfers and mediations present in the programs: the first lying on the level of multiple media interactions with the public, the second on the level of values and roles associated with printed literature and the kinds of "literary friendships" made possible through reading together, thus enabling us to examine some contemporary implications of reading in the United States and in France.

Suzanne Pouliot (Université de Sherbrooke, Québec) and Noëlle Sorin (Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières, Québec)

Publishers and young readers in Québec (1970-2005)

Publishers' discourse concerning books for young readers in Québec has undergone several transformations since the first children's books were published in Québec during the 1920's. For example, what began as a highly moralistic discourse had, by the end of the 1960's, shifted to a broad knowledge-based discourse. Édith Madore, a respected children's literature scholar, has been illustrating children's books since 1990 and has observed the rapid expansion of this market. The vast range of titles published by more than thirty different publishing houses in Québec today enables us to analyse the nature of the discourse being transmitted by these cultural mediators who are both *editor* and *publisher* (Michon 2002).

In our paper, we analyze what five of these contemporary publishers (Éditions Héritage, Les éditions de la courte échelle, Soulières éditeur, Éditions de l'Isatis, Imagine) have to say about young readers and what they believe their various novels, picture books, tales, and Internet publications have to offer children. We discuss ways in which the contents of books published by these houses have been shaped by reader-response theories (Jauss, 1978; Iser, 1976; Eco, 1985) and by the reading guidelines put forward by the Ministry of Education, Recreation and Sports in its French programs (1979, 1994 et 2001) and its literature guides (1980-1981-1991). Finally, we position the targeted publishing houses on one of the four axes defined by Iganace Cau (cultural, economic, cultural-economic and ideological). We propose that they represent what Bourdieu refers to as symbolic capital and we briefly describe the concept of reading that they have conveyed to young readers between the ages of 0 to 16.

James Procter (Newcastle University)

Devolving Diasporas: Reception and migration in central Scotland, 1980-present

Reception has emerged as a loaded concept in twenty-first century Europe, associated with refugees, asylum seekers, Sangatte, Oakenfield: "Shadowy figures roaming the track at the entrance to the Channel Tunnel. Afghans, Iraqis, Chinese and Moroccans washed up on Mediterranean shores to be rounded up in their hundreds into grim reception centres: routine and familiar images of the wretched of the earth knocking desperately at Europe's door" (*Guardian* May 24 2002). More recently, Jack Straw has said that "[t]his [the wearing of the veil] is an issue that needs to be discussed because, in our society, we are able to relate particularly to strangers by being able to *read* their faces and if you can't *read* people's faces, that does provide some separation." (my emphasis). Our project consciously evokes this dual sense of reception as on the one hand an issue of diasporic *hospitality* (e.g. reception centres) and, on the other, an issue of *hermeneutics*, interpretation, or reading (e.g. the veil as a menacing sign of inscrutability, the illegible, the unreadable). This paper introduces the project, and its exploration of the role of the contemporary reader, and reading acts in the UK, Africa, the Caribbean, Canada and India through an exploration of responses to diasporic literature.

Despite the current interest in diasporic 'texts' (e.g. *Small Island*) and 'authors' (e.g. Zadie Smith), little is yet known about the actual 'readers' of diasporic literature and of how they make sense of the texts they read. Still less is known about the consumption and production of meaning in relation to these texts beyond the metropolitan centre. The paper will conclude with a consideration of how we hope to 'devolve' or move outwards from the established centres of meaning production, whether that is the diasporic author/text, or the city of London.

Julie Rak (University of Alberta)

Reading the Shelves: Genre and Bookselling in Canada

Genre pervades human lives. As people go about their business, interacting with others and trying to get along in the world, they use genres to ease their way, to meet expectations, to save time. People recognize genres, though not usually the power of genres. – Amy Devitt, *Writing Genres*

In a society such as ours...there are manifold relations of power that permeate, characterize and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse. – Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*

In the beginning, before there is reading, often there is the acquisition of a book, and the contemporary bookstore's role in getting books to readers. Like reading itself, bookstores have cultures and aim to encourage the production of certain kinds of reading subjects who want to read (and buy). At the heart of this transaction between potential readers and booksellers, I argue, is an understanding of genre as a social production which organizes knowledge in the bookstore and determines how books make their journey from writers, to publishers, to sellers and finally to readers. In this paper, I take Amy Devitt's contention seriously that genres are a way of "getting along" in the world because they have power contained within them, but I also contend that they are part of practices which form the heart of the Foucauldian power/knowledge nexus within the context of everyday activity. In other words, genres are part of everyday knowledge, but they are also epistemic: they organize the possibilities of certain types of knowledge without calling attention to their own importance, or even to their existence. Although Foucault most often looked at the limits of epistemic knowledge formations in order to critique the redeployment of power within the status quo, Carolyn Miller and other New Rhetorical theorists have pointed out that genres specifically can also be a type of social action that can form a counter-practice to the status quo, depending on how they are deployed (1994). As social action, genre *acts* in the world because its effects are spatial and temporal. They are part of everyday communicative life and they often provide rules for how to live, how to "know" one's place socially and how to act inside or outside a system.

I focus on the scene of book selling in Canada as a way to think about genre as social action *intimately connected with the ideologies of space and materiality* within the context of global and local capitalist systems. In interviews with the staff of ten independent stores across Canada, I have found that the reorganization of generic types within the physical environment of independent stores forms part of a loose set of tactics which independent bookstores use in order to survive, and thrive, in the wake of the arrival of big box bookstores. I will compare these tactics to the ways in which Chapters-Indigo, the largest chain bookstore in Canada, understands generic classification and its relationship to the activities of large publishers.

Archana Rampure (Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia, Canada)

The Circulation of Fictions: The Case of Commercial Circulating Libraries in Postcolonial India

Major recent research projects such as the SSHRC-funded *History of the Book in Canada* and the American Antiquarian Society's *History of the Book in America* show that analyzing print culture provides for new understandings of the connections between cultures, economies and educations. But there is still much to learn about how economies of culture operate in places like India, places that are now increasingly important nodes in the global circulation of knowledges and identities. This paper is an overview of my current research, which is an examination of the role of private lending libraries in postcolonial India from Independence (1947) to the present. My investigation suggests a pivotal role for commercial circulating libraries and the middle-brow books they stock in the formation of a literate, English-speaking elite class in India between 1947 and 2000. This class of Indians, currently engaged in critical debates over the trajectory of the Indian nation-state, are born into literary and cultural realms wherein circulating libraries form a common access point for texts and contexts; it is within these libraries, and through the reading cultures that they produce, that much of contemporary Indian culture comes into being. The middle-brow *reading cultures* that form around private circulating libraries shed new light on historically important debates over contested notions of national identities, gender roles and class mobility in contemporary India.

Adam Reed (University of St Andrews, Fife)

'Expanding Henry': an anthropological approach to contemporary cultures of reading

This paper will focus on my work with a British literary society: the Henry Williamson Society. It aims to present an ethnographic account of a reading culture and more broadly to locate the distinctive contribution social and cultural anthropology can make to the study of literature and literary cultures. This includes an anthropological take on the material culture of books and other literary artefacts such as land [scape]. Members of the Henry Williamson Society talk of what fiction reading does for them. Their experience of literature is connected to their appreciation of the author Henry Williamson as a central and mythic figure. How "Henry" is composed determines the kind of actors readers can be and also explains the capacities assigned to the Williamson artifacts—books and land—that they principally identify. I explore the role of literature as an instrument of social agency and focus on the relationships that Society members draw out around solitary acts of reading and literary society activities, including the way they assign causation within a matrix of relations. Part of my attention will fall on the appeal to ethnography made by scholars of reading cultures working in other disciplines [such as Radway and Long] and how an anthropological approach might connect and/or differ in emphasis.

Fanny Renard (Université Lyon 2, France)

The construction of reading expectations during teenage years

The social variation of the way people appropriate texts proves that there is not one comprehension and appreciation of text which follows from the words. Historians or sociologists have shown that typographic marks, the distribution network or the reader's life determine the

appropriations too (R. Chartier, 1985 ; J. Radway, 1991; R. Hoggart, 1970). However, the practical construction of reading and telling one's ways of reading has hardly been studied.

That is what we do in our thesis. We analyse the constitution and the realization of the ways of reading. For this research, we met 77 boys and girls from secondary school with different social origins and schoolings. We interviewed them thoroughly about their academic and extra-academic readings, past and present reading relationship, library frequentation habits, and so on. We attended their literature classes and analysed the official instructions.

In this paper, we propose to treat specifically with the academic and extra-academic constitution of "participative" ways of reading. A reader can be captivated by the story and the suspense, not want to know the story before reading, cry or laugh when reading, express empathy with the characters, get informed by the press... We will show how this constitution is realized: firstly, through exercises and school activities in French classes; secondly, through family, friendly or professional relationships, or through affinity to a commercial network of distribution. We will see, for instance, how schoolchildren progressively associate reading expectations of suspense with detective novels or thrillers by memorizing some relative's advice like: "Read this formidable book, there is a lot of suspense, I'm sure you'll appreciate!", "If I tell you the end, I spoil your pleasure", and so on.

Besides the results, we will show theoretical and methodological viewpoints on which our approach is based.

Chris Richards (London Metropolitan University)

From readers to writers? Rethinking 'young adult' fiction

'Young adult' fiction, like 'children's literature' is assumed to be a designation of its readers and not, unless exceptionally, of its writers. Unlike 'chick lit' or 'women's writing', both of which, though not always and necessarily, designate the shared gender of both readers and writers, 'young adult' fiction implies the production of texts for such readers by adults. Difference, in terms of age and status and power, is thus integral to the text-reader relations defining the category. In practice, it may be that 'young adult' serves to classify particular texts as 'not for children' and thus facilitates the work of selection and mediation by adults – parents, teachers, librarians, and bookstore staff. And meanwhile teenagers, self-positioning as 'not adult' and indeed as 'not child', may find the fixing of that indeterminacy, as 'young adult', unwelcome.

As the category title appears thus to be a means of regulation, rather than designating a unified phenomenon, the age profile of the readership for 'young adult' fiction can hardly be settled empirically. But the central assumption that the field is constituted by adult authors producing texts for younger readers can be subjected to some scrutiny. With the expansion of the Internet, there is now a medium in which 'young adult' fictions can be written, and circulated, by young adults themselves. If readers can now also be writers in the public domain then 'young adult' fiction might be written by, and not only for, young people themselves. This paper explores these issues and addresses the key question: is there now an online reading – and writing – culture produced between young people without adult intermediaries?

Judith Robertson (University of Ottawa)

"I read the way a thief steals, it's a little covert": A study of literary culture in Newfoundland

This presentation examines the collective reading experiences of female book club readers to determine what regulatory dynamics constitute their meaning making processes. My longitudinal, qualitative study focuses on the cultural dynamics of populist group reading experience, gendered subjectivity, and spatiality in Newfoundland and Labrador women. The goal is to understand how regional gendered identity in female readers located in isolated coastal communities of Canada's North Atlantic intersects with and disrupts imperialist ideological constructions for its existence. My research participants are zealous lovers of story, ages 40-90, confronting economic devastation

and out-migration. Strangely positioned between Europe and postcolonial America, they occupy a contradictory space of migration, invasion, colonization, national belonging, separatist fantasies, nomadism, emigration, and tourism. My inquiry, ranked by the Social Sciences and Humanities Council of Canada in the top five for innovation in the competition for educational research funding in 2004, is a study of literary culture intensely and reflexively mediated by time and place. Positioned as an exile, I am trying to map something both known and unknown to me, something at once human, material, social, historical, psychological, geographical, sea-bound, and aesthetic. The fields of narrative theory, psychoanalysis, cultural studies and feminist post-colonialism inform my analysis of four emergent findings: 1) the book clubs of NL readers function as psychological and metaphorical spaces of transit between experiences/feelings of homelessness and resettlement for the women; 2) landscape provides the punctuation, pauses and commas in the syntax of populist group reading experience in the participant sample; 3) the readers "read in cod-tongue", out of a void of economic devastation, memory, and feelings that the sea is dead, especially in rural communities; 4) the book club constitutes a feminine space of grace, a communal forum in which dreams of a brave new world can be kept alive.

Gemma Robinson (Stirling University)

Performing diaspora: reflections on a youth theatre adaptation of Jackie Kay's *The Adoption Papers*

In June 2007 a youth theatre group from Stirling's Macrobert Arts Centre will perform their adaptation of Jackie Kay's *The Adoption Papers*. This performance is part of the larger project on 'Devolving Diasporas' to (1) investigate a selection of UK and international reading groups' responses to books that deal with diaspora and a multicultural UK (Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*; Andrea Levy, *Small Island*; Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*; and Jackie Kay's *The Adoption Papers*) and (2) chart the 'devolution' of diasporic literature in Scotland. This paper discusses the ways in which a theatre adaptation enables us to think across the concepts of reading, reception, writing and production that inform the 'Devolving Diasporas' project.

In literary analysis and cultural theory 'diaspora' has been a useful term to discuss dispersed, dual and multiple senses of home, the fraught terminology of multiculturalism and ethnicity, historical and contemporary forms of migration and immigration, imperially enforced cultural contact, exile and ideas of cultural insiders and outsiders (see Stuart Hall, Robin Cohen). Given these literary theoretical understandings of the term 'diaspora', my paper's first aim is to examine the ways in which the actors, production team and audience use the term to describe their responses to *The Adoption Papers* during the changing stages of reading, writing, production and reception that will make up the performance. The production of *The Adoption Papers* from initial readings and workshops to final stage adaptation, I argue, provides a case study of the ways that reading 'diaspora' becomes a series of changing 'performative, interactional and collaborative' activities (Allington and Benwell) within the varied settings of theatre space. Second, I will take the production of *The Adoption Papers* as an opportunity to understand Suhayl Saadi's assertion in 'Infinite Diversity in New Scottish Writing' (2000): 'Scotland has actually always been polyglot – but today perhaps it is simply that it is more visibly so'. I will show how the casting, workshoping and directing of a poetic text that deals with the adoption of a girl – born to a white Scottish woman and a Nigerian man – by a white Glaswegian couple enables the Macrobert to ask questions about race, gender and diversity in relation to its productions, audiences and young actors. This paper seeks to describe and explore one instance of how the varied practices of reading can lead to a performance of 'polyglot' Scotland.

Paulette Rothbauer (University of Toronto)

21st century print culture and rural young people: Uneasy contexts of reading

This paper will present findings from ongoing research that investigates the role of reading among youth living in a Canadian rural municipality of approximately 10 000 people and with a strong agricultural heritage. Using a framework informed by culturally and socially situated literacy studies, my primary objective is to examine the extent to which rural youth between 15 -19 years

of age are engaged with print culture in their everyday lives. Print culture is defined broadly to include digital texts as well as printed and bound texts. The rural setting provides an unique and compelling context for exploring the reading practices of youth as in this municipality they have access to just one public library, one school library in the only secondary school, no full-service bookstores and only very recent access to high speed internet connections. As a researcher situated in the field of library and information studies, I am concerned with the intersection of reading practices of youth and systems of information access (including libraries, bookstores and the internet) that support or deny their investment in print culture. Preliminary findings based on analysis of in-depth, flexibly structured interviews with twenty-five youth suggest that regardless of their self-identification as either readers or non-readers they are engaged with diverse textual materials that range from literary novels to online computer manuals. Data also suggest a tension between engagement and disengagement with print culture that is strongly mediated by the particular rurality of the specific geographical contexts of this study. This paper will report on the ways in which rural young people articulate the meaning of reading in their lives that illustrates a richly mediated reading landscape and undermines perceptions of an impoverished print culture.

Anne Salter (Oglethorpe University, Atlanta) and Judith Brook (Mercer University, Atlanta)

Reading practices among 21st century college students: Are we becoming an aliterate society?

Are we becoming an aliterate society? The demand for recreational reading appears to be on the decline while the demand for films (DVDs, vhs and other formats) is on the rise. Is this an indicator that students of today are selecting viewing over reading? What, if any, is the impact on collection development of undergraduate libraries?

This paper will relay the results of a survey issued to undergraduate liberal arts students and professional students at two major universities in the metro-Atlanta area – Mercer University and Oglethorpe University. Conducted between August and October of 2006, the survey goals were to determine the reading habits of students by obtaining information on reading, use of leisure time and use of new technologies. The results provide interesting data especially as it relates to the concept of "leisure reading." Specific questions asking participants to list authors and select among literary genres provided insight into types of literature preferred by today's student.

In order to provide a suitable context for the survey, research was conducted to locate and evaluate information from reading surveys on both a national and international scale. Comparing data from these surveys provides an interesting frame work as well as additional data on reading habits of young adults and adults from a select number of countries including England, Canada, Thailand, China, Australia, and the USA. Additional structure is provided by a brief consideration of the state of the state of the undergraduate college library in the USA today.

Implications from the Oglethorpe/Mercer reading habits survey indicate that viewing is a preferred option over reading. This and other revelations create an array of findings that will be of interest to college librarians and educators concerned with the decline of "reading" and the rise of the aliterate society.

Claire Squires (Oxford Brookes University)

Ghostreaders: Writing and reading the celebrity autobiography

In the 1990s and 2000s, the intensity of celebrity culture has had a forceful impact on the publishing industry. A myriad of celebrity autobiographies and other associated books focusing on high-profile figures including David Beckham, Wayne Rooney and Katie Price (aka Jordan) have been commissioned for large advances and to concerted media attention. These publications rely to a large extent on the writing skills of ghostwriters, who fashion publishable texts out of celebrities' words and increasingly play a public role in the marketing of these books.

But what is the role of the reader in this burgeoning market? As publishers aim to tap into the mass market that these celebrities attract, how are readers addressed both by the texts and the

paratexts of ghostwritten celebrity books? How is the 'ghostreader' configured both by the materiality of these books (e.g. by their jackets and surrounding marketing materials) and by the words 'written' by the celebrity? And how do ghostreaders – including intermediary ghostreaders such as the media and literary journalists – receive ghostwritten texts?

This paper will explore the contemporary phenomenon of the ghostwritten celebrity autobiography from the perspective of its readers, including its consumers and intermediary readers such as the media, booksellers and publishers. In so doing, the paper will examine the broader question of the nature of the relationship between writers, readers and the various agencies of the contemporary book trade.

Ann Steiner (Lund University, Sweden)

"It's my Reed!" Valuing literature in personally written criticism on the Internet

The proposed paper will investigate personal criticism of literature written on the Internet, and the intention is to shed light on reading, book discussions, and informal reviews. The results presented emanate from a study of literary discussions and reviews on Amazon and various blogs on the web, and focuses on issues of identity, resistance, and community creation. The paper draws from a wider research project focused on the impact of technology on reading, and the relationship between literature and new media.

The reviews written by general readers on websites like Amazon can be described as a kind of private criticism in the public sphere. Readers and technology are involved in a major change in how books are discussed, reviewed, and marketed. The impact modern information society has had on reading has to be further addressed, but I claim that people use technology to spread and discuss books in a way that has induced personal writing about literature and reading. The paper will bring up issues concerning reading, audience communication, and the social position and meaning of new forms of readers' expressions.

It can be argued that the Amazonian review section gives equal opportunity for people to spread their views on books worldwide based on reading experience rather than on literary criteria. Many readers use review sections to confirm their own experience of a text, and it is also clear that a strong motivation in writing criticism on the web is to connect to other people. The spreading of private views on literature further strengthens the claim that reading is a social act.

Cori Stewart (Queensland University of Technology, Australia)

Faking the Festival: celebrity culture and the International Festival of Authors

Famous for presenting famous authors, and widely recognised as the world's most prestigious writers' festival, Toronto's *International festival of Authors* illustrates the dominance of celebrity culture in the promotion of literature and the wider production of public culture today. The question addressed in this paper is what forms of public culture are produced/constructed by this festival and to what extent have these been shaped by the processes and practices of celebrity culture?

Writers' festivals have been traditionally regarded as discrete forms of elite culture independent of media bias and celebrity culture (Starke 2000). This image is falsely perpetuated today as writers' festivals have become part of the promotional activity designed to serve the literary enterprise. In this paper I will use theories on celebrity culture as a way of exploring this "fakery".

It is now widely established in academic literature that celebrity culture is the dominant medium for the production of social and everyday life today (Redmond 2006). Celebrity culture has been articulated in academic research in two important and distinct ways; firstly as the logical development of a capitalist and secular society sustained by the perpetual recreation of consumerist desire (Rojek 2001; Marshall 1997; Turner, Bonner & Marshall 2000) and secondly, as a framework where the cultural centrality of fame produces its own inter-textual representations via the products of agents, press officers, gossip columnists, cultural producers and fans (Holmes

& Redmond 2006; McKee 2004; Turner 2004). However recent attempts to theorise literary celebrity (Ommundsen 2004, 2005; Moran 2000) have been more concerned with the processes author celebrification rather than examining the ways in which literary celebrity interfaces with the public sphere.

This paper will draw on a recent case study of Toronto's 2006 *International Festival of Authors* to examine the writers' festival in the public sphere and the ways in which literary celebrity have shaped this relationship.

Chia-Sui (Crystal) Sun (National Dong Hwa University, Taiwan)

Books and Reading as Cultural Events: A Case Study of the Book "The Lord of the Rings" and the associated "Tolkien Weekend" in Birmingham, U.K.

The aim of this study is to examine the connection and innovation between the book publishing industry and cultural creative industries. The study observes ways by which books can be transformed to other cultural forms, such as film, drama and art forms and connect with other cultural activities. The local (Birmingham, UK) cultural event of a Tolkien Weekend is an example that shows how the contents of a book can be expressed in different cultural forms and cultural products by different media and presented at an array of cultural events. The Birmingham event reinforces and brings together the local community: it is also a means by which the image of the city changes from being a city of industry; it is transformed to a city having a cultural heritage and attracts tourists from all over the world. Visitors from different backgrounds, age range, nationality and culture attend the event to learn more about the author of the book and the setting which inspired the story of 'The Lord of the Rings'. It brings forth cultural communication leading to discussions that can range from times medieval to modern, and from books to what has evolved from the written word. By looking at the book as one kind of media, this study has explored the interaction between the book publishing industry, local culture and society. Through books, local culture crosses endless borders and boundaries to become global and thereby connects people on an international scale.

This study explores questions as follow:

Q1. how does the book publishing industry connect with creative industries?

Q2. how does the book strengthen local identity?

Q3. how does book publishing link with the cultural representation of a city?

Q4. what is the role played by the book as a medium to interact with culture and society?

Methodology of this research includes documentary analysis, interviews and case studies. Analysis of documents includes printed data as well as multimedia text (online news databases, photographs etc.). The case has been examined and analyzed regarding ways that the book publishing industry cooperates with other creative industries. Indepth interviews were conducted to obtain first hand data from local organizers of the Birmingham event and people who participated in it.

The theoretical framework will focus on the following aspects: publishing and cultural flows, publishing and cultural representation, publishing and community, media and new technology.

The findings of the research will reveal ways by which the publishing industry can cooperate with relevant associated creative industries. The research will also seek to identify ways by which contemporary cultures of reading move from the written to other media including art forms and cultural events.

Megan Sweeney (University of Michigan)

'Keepin' it real' with 'the underground book railroad': Incarcerated women's readings of African American urban fiction

Drawing on ethnographic interviews and group discussions with women imprisoned in Ohio, my paper explores incarcerated women's engagements with African American urban fiction, by authors such as Teri Woods, Chunichi, Vickie Stringer, and Zane. The urban fiction genre is largely forbidden on prison grounds due to its emphases on crime, drugs, violence, and sex. Nonetheless, some women in prison acquire urban fiction through the "Underground Book Railroad," and they organize their own circulation policies and waiting lists for the highly popular books.

Some incarcerated readers agree with the prison's prohibition of urban fiction, arguing that the books glamorize an urban gangster lifestyle. Yet imprisoned fans of the genre—who cross racial lines—convey a powerful sense of identification with the characters' experiences and describe the books as facilitating their own self-discovery. These readers identify mother/daughter relationships, sexuality, violence, addiction, possibilities for change, loyalty, and family responsibility as among the issues that urban fiction helps them to explore. Incarcerated women also value the books' use of vernacular speech patterns, which help to "keep it real," as well as the authors' efforts to engage readers in written or online dialogue about their books and about readers' own stories. In fact, many imprisoned women use urban fiction books as templates for crafting their own written narratives, which they circulate amongst themselves.

The prison permits books by African American authors such as Eric Jerome Dickey and Carl Weber, which—like urban fiction books—include sex, violence, and drugs. However, these books' emphases on black middle class and professional life seem to secure their sanctioned place as African American uplift narratives.

Joan Bessman Taylor (University of Iowa)

Defining "discussibility": Book groups and the elusive good book group book

Fundamental to the practices of book discussion groups is the selection of "good" books on which to focus their attention. But what makes a good book group book? The prevailing idea is that some books are better suited for fostering discussion than others. At the center of selecting books for discussion is this notion of "discussibility". It pervades popular guides for book groups and the common discourse surrounding them as well as the published research on book group practices. Though it is "something intuitively appreciated by booksellers" (Rehberg Sedo 2004), it has not been explicitly defined beyond its being that quality that makes a book well-suited for discussion. This paper will examine "discussibility" as a primary selection criterion. It will unpack the attempts made thus far to qualify the nature of discussibility and will then turn to the groups in my own study to examine it in action. Based on five years of participant observation in six open-to-the-public book groups in the Midwestern United States, including a mystery group, a science fiction group, an African-American group, a contemporary and nonfiction group, a Great Books group, and a literary fiction group, groups composed of male and female members aged 25-90; the investigation will interrogate the idea that good books and good books for discussion are not necessarily the same.

Lyn Thomas (London Metropolitan University)

Reading and writing the hidden story of class: Annie Ernaux and her class-migrant readers

Drawing on my work on the reception of the controversial French writer, Annie Ernaux, I will discuss the function of her writing for readers who like Ernaux herself are self-declared class migrants. I will argue that Ernaux's texts legitimate an experience whose complexities are rarely addressed in 'mainstream' culture. In these works, the linear structure and predominantly positive trajectory of the traditional 'rags to riches' narrative of the fairy-tale or Hollywood film are replaced by detailed dissection of the losses as well as gains inherent in the move from working-

class culture of origin to middle-class milieu. The language and themes of Ernaux's writing of class migration will be discussed, in preparation for an analysis of a small, anonymised selection of readers' letters. The focus of this analysis will be on readers' interactions with Ernaux's texts in the framing of their own narratives.

There will be some discussion of the significance and quality of this reader-writer relationship in a cultural context where the stories which both are trying to tell are often effaced. How is the story of class migration told, read and re-told in a 'classless' society? How do 'old media' – books, letters – provide a space for sharing the secrets of class?

Molly Abel Travis (Tulane University, New Orleans)

Building a national culture of reading in the "new" South Africa

This paper will focus on the importance of creating a national culture of reading in the process of nation building and will take post-apartheid South Africa as an instructive case. In the wake of the dominance of white South African writers such as the Nobel laureates Nadine Gordimer and J.M. Coetzee, there have been efforts to rethink the curricula of school and university literature programs and to diversify the publishing industry to reflect the ideals of the new constitution. The curricular reforms have aimed at developing individuals who will build and sustain the re-imagined nation. Critics of this reform complain that it has created an insular, conservative, and homogeneous curriculum—a mirror inversion of apartheid's Christian National Education. Despite a flurry of literacy campaigns, South Africa's libraries remain seriously under-funded, with books not available in the eleven official languages, which means that it will be difficult to unite around a tradition of national literature. Patrons frequent rural libraries more for their affiliated programs than for books, journals, or newspapers. Many of these libraries are connected to rural garden projects and language classes. Librarians in the KwaZulu Natal province report that Zulu speakers seek instruction in English—despite the fact that the constitution recognizes the linguistic rights of all South Africans and national language policies recommend equal access to reading materials in the mother tongue(s). While libraries reinvent themselves as garden spots and language schools, the South African publishing industry has exploded. Not only are established publishers taking risks, but new publishers and imprints are bringing out unusual voices and genres. In considering the challenge of creating a national culture of reading in the new South Africa, one must take into account not only the centripetal and centrifugal forces mentioned above, but also the lure of global information technologies.

Tony Tremblay (St. Thomas University) and Ellen Rose (University of New Brunswick)

The function of the online little magazine in Canada: When reader becomes user

With the rise of e-books, zines, blogs, Wikipedia, hypertext, and visual mark-up, reading is increasingly practiced as a "light-through" activity, a digital handicraft that has positioned the reader, in media critic Marshall McLuhan's terms, as a post-modern monastic in an open library of illuminated manuscripts. The importance of McLuhan's typically colourful metaphor is in the changes it implies in the relationship between reader and text, for in illuminated environments where the text and its embellishments are the light source, the nature of that text changes, as does the role of the reader. In short, text now hails the reader as much as the reader hails the text.

This paper will explore the cultural and political dimensions of the new subject position of the reader within the specific context of Canada's little magazines. Publications such as *Canadian Literature*, *The Canadian Forum*, *Delta*, and *The Antigonish Review* were founded decades ago with the subversive intent of democratizing access to literature, ideas, and publication. As modernist alternatives to the largely "established" conservative and Methodist publishing venues of early and mid-century, these small magazines (and the small presses that grew from them) were instrumental in creating what is now recognized as the new wave in Canadian writing in the 1950s. Editors and others involved in producing these small magazines broadly conceived of the reader in polemical terms: as marginal, political, independent, and disadvantaged either by class

or geographic circumstance. The first half of this paper will examine how small-magazine editors historically envisioned and represented their readership.

This opening will serve as a prelude to exploring how current editors use new media in the same context, and to asking questions about how this new media extends or reverses historical practice; creates new subject positions relative to issues of access, technological know-how, and privacy; changes the nature and role of the relationship between editor/author and author/reader; and alters the nature of reading as the interface with and characteristics of text changes. What does it mean when the "reader" becomes "user"?

Jill Tyler (University of South Dakota)

"I like you because you like me, and we both like Nick Hornby": An analysis of the use of public media texts in the performance of class and friendship in adult social networks

A complex intersection of interpersonal and mediated discourses are found in media clubs - small networks of individuals who gather regularly with the explicit purpose of interacting about and interpreting mediated texts, e.g., book clubs. Using the theoretical foundation of Giddens' structuration theory, this project explores how these groups actively discuss the meaning of the text, and through these shared interpretive strategies, create social structures which serve broader materialistic and political ends. Using participant-observation and qualitative interviewing methods, and building on a tradition of social network research as well as ethnographic audience research, this study captures the naturally occurring performances of identity, friendship, and community that are present in media clubs. The critical discourse analysis focuses on how spontaneous conversation in the club (talk about the book) constitutes, reifies and sometimes even challenges a wider social order (social status, prestige and class).

Individuals in these clubs interact both with the messages of the friendship network and with the messages of the mediated texts. Illustrative of Giddens' *agency*, when mediated texts are discussed, argued, negotiated, and interpreted with others, often involving an evaluative move, a social reality is constituted and reproduced (Giddens' *structure*) which, in turn, informs and impacts meaning-making on personal and societal levels. These structures emerge in conversation through performances of identity, similarity, and relational connection; through argumentative discourses that model shared dispositions toward ideas and ideologies; and through ritualistic interactions that negotiate and direct meaningful character and action.

Olivier Vanhée (Ecole Normale Supérieure, Lyon, France)

Reading Harry Potter: a personal and collective experience

The wide success of *Harry Potter* in France testifies both to a process of literary *commodification*, and to the popularity of literary print culture, especially among children and teenagers. Beyond traditional worries about a decline in traditional literacy, it has accelerated the reconfiguration of the youth literature sector, towards a more "market-oriented" and multi-media approach. *Harry Potter* involves a subtle play between different chronologies and media: cultural events and marketing campaigns are organized according to a specific temporal logic, and there are complex interactions between the evolution and maturation of the characters, and the evolution of the readership, over several years. This paper will be an attempt to analyse the specificity and the diversity of this reading experience by teenagers and young adults in France. It will draw upon primary research conducted between October 2005 and December 2006, using two main methods. First, a textual analysis of media discourses show how this reading practice is represented, and what cultural meanings and uses are ascribed to it. The analysis of the "ancillary materials" surrounding *Harry Potter* (especially in the teenagers' magazines) throws light on the "prefiguration" of the encounter with the novels. Second, biographical and focus group interviews with young readers (about 30 teenagers and young adults, aged from 17 to 22, from diverse social backgrounds, in Lyon and Paris) allow to understand their personal histories as *Harry Potter* readers. The different appropriations of *Harry Potter* involve analytical forms of exegesis

and emotional attachment to the characters. This plurality of appropriations can be explained by some factors: the differences in the “cultural and media repertoires” of the readers; the embeddedness of *Harry Potter* both in the dynamics of family relations and history, and in the readers’ personal networks of friends. Thus, this research shows how the “reading careers” of these specific readers, their personal networks and experiences, their informal collective conversations, their uses of Internet, shape their relation with *Harry Potter*.

Ana Vogrincic (Ljubljana Graduate School of the Humanities, Slovenia / University of Southampton, UK)

Changed discourse on the image of books and reading

Based on the rough overview of the forty years of *Le Monde*, *Le Parisien Libéré*, *The Times* and *The Sun* between 1960 and 2000 on the one hand and Gerard Genette’s meticulous classification of what he refers to as ‘paratexts’ (Gerard Genette; *Seuils* (1987); translated as *Paratexts*, 1997) – those liminal devices and conventions (such as titles, forewords, epigraphs, publishers’ jacket copy etc.), both within and outside the book, that form part of the complex mediation between book, author, publisher and reader – on the other, the paper will explore and reflect on the changes in the representation of the book, especially the novel, and reading in the above newspapers (and as well in other media to an extent). The changes will be regarded in terms of the changed importance of certain paratexts (privileging some and deemphasizing the others). The most important and obvious change in the media coverage of fiction in the chosen period seems to be the shift of the focus from the content to the author, a characteristic, materialized in a number of explicit and implicit ways. The changes will also be assessed by commenting on how they are evaluated in some of the many recently proliferated books about books and reading, among others John Sutherland’s *How to read a novel*, John Mullan’s *How novels work* and Gabriel Zaid’s *So many books*.

Val Williamson (Edge Hill University)

“Some of them was pretty chunky, or they seemed it when I was young”: The pleasures of reading remembered ... or are they? Undergraduates recollect the process of developing reading preferences

The Media and Narrative Literacy Project began its pilot run in September 2005, with students of Media at Edge Hill University, Lancashire and students of Media and Cultural Studies at Liverpool John Moores University, and will run until 2010. The survey results from questions that arose during the 2001 conference at Reading University, *Children’s Fantasy Fiction: Debates for the Twenty-first Century*. The project is interested in discovering students’ previous experience of how narrative and genre work, tracing their experience of consuming fiction from childhood to adulthood, with the aim of assisting understanding of how narratives and genres produce pleasure and accrue and retain audiences. The Pilot Phase of the project was begun in 2005, with questionnaires to groups of students in all three undergraduate years, some interviews following questionnaire responses in 2006. A methodology paper was presented at the CLTR conference at Edge Hill University in June 2006 and in full form is accessible at <http://medal.unn.ac.uk>.

This paper will discuss data generated 2005-2007 on the childhood and teenage reading of undergraduates born circa 1987-8. This age group would have been too young when the The Children’s Reading Choices Survey was conducted among 10-14 year-olds at Nottingham University (1994-1995) and yet too old for the full childhood ‘Harry Potter’ phenomenon. The paper will seek to investigate what this data implies in considering the contemporary meanings and experiences of reading influencing the current generation of media and cultural studies students vocationally focused on the cultural industries (including publishing) for their career.

“My Mum and Dad have always encouraged me like, encouraged me – about books, like Enid Blyton like, the Secret Seven [...] I used to read like before I went to bed; my Mum used to read to me, then when I was older I used to read to her when I was like learning to read. Then after a

bit I just read to myself in bed. [...] I remember if it was a big thick book being quite proud of it like, telling my Mum. Like the Roald Dahl books, I proper loved them; some of them was pretty chunky, or they seemed it when I was young.”

David Wright (The Open University)

Big Read, long tail: Literary taste and list-culture in a time of 'endless choice'

Sociological accounts of literary taste, from a Bourdieusian perspective have emphasised the ways in which the restricted nature of literary production depends upon forms of expert knowledge to manage notions of the literary. Professionals and producers within this restricted field wield particular forms of power in the definition of good and bad literary taste. For Bourdieu agents are distributed across the field of literary production according to their particular orientation to financial or symbolic profits. Whilst such divisions are complex and contested, the 'reading public' is largely left out of deliberations over good and bad literature. This paper argues that aspects of contemporary literary production and consumption require a re-working of this role of taste-makers. The rise of television reading events such as *Oprah's Book Club* and the BBC's *The Big Read* encourage reader participation and engagement with the literary in ways which, rhetorically at least, challenge notions of hierarchy in classifying literary output. The rise of 'mass niches' enabled, for example, by Amazon's expanded catalogue, and the ability of readers and producers to exchange forms of literary value amongst themselves through data-mining and collaborative filtering techniques potentially side-steps 'traditional' literary expertise. This paper considers the increasing prominence of the managed voice of the reading audience in developing theoretical accounts of literary value.