

Introduction: Books on Screen

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‘Is there anyone still in the waiting room? Thank you for muting your microphones. We... oh, I’ve just had a text that there’s someone still in the waiting room. Yes, I see your comment in the chat. The recording will be available after the event and... Could we ask that everyone please mute?’ Shared discussion of books in 2020 and 2021 was a grim affair. As life was put on hold or flung online, bookish discourse was only one of many fixtures of scholarly, educational, and cultural life forced to adapt. But books were tasked with even more. Reading was appointed as an all-purpose remedy for loneliness, fear, boredom, doom-scrolling, and even insomnia (Davies, Lupton and Gormsen Schmidt, 2022; King and Blackburn-Daniels, 2022; Norrick-Rühl and Towheed, 2022) during the COVID-19 crisis and, as scholarship about books and reading moved online, new forms of books and reading emerged as subjects of study. In classes and conferences and events, it became more evident than ever how many of the books we were placing on screen had been on screen already: representations of the book in films, television, photography, games, and other screen worlds abounded. The comic book in a-ha’s iconic ‘Take On Me’ music video (1985) blends into reality; the magical tome in *Myst* (1993) transports gamers to a mysterious island; rare books are the stars of the film *American Animals* (2018). No matter the electronic medium, the physical form of the codex has continued to assert itself as prop, metaphor, and plot device. However, codex display under pandemic conditions made readers increasingly aware of the importance of book materiality, not least through online discussions centred on #BookshelfCredibility and #PandemicBookshelves, which draw attention to the shelves lurking in our Zoom backgrounds (such backdrops, like bookish tableaus on BookTube, Bookstagram, and other social media spaces, invited scholarly examination of curated book displays). Newly urgent study of books on social media – books as a component of self-presentation – could be complemented by a broader study of books on screen.

We began asking ourselves what this movement to digital spaces meant for books. How were books represented on screen? Why were they represented in such ways? How were digital books being used as scenery, plot points, sources of information, and/or

imagined worlds? In short, how could we make sense of books on screen? As so often happens in academia, our questioning led us to solicit our colleagues for their thoughts. Hence, the free one-day online 'Books on Screen' symposium in November 2021, hosted by the University of Leeds and Anglia Ruskin University with the support of the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing (SHARP).

From the perspective of 2023, when many COVID-19 restrictions have eased (perhaps permanently, perhaps not), an effort in mental time travel is required to recall how uncertainty - what the next stage might be, how long it might take to arrive - complicated even the smallest decisions regarding interim arrangements. Will things ever return to feeling normal? How are we supposed to move forward in light of the collective trauma we have experienced? How are we to continue connecting with one another when we have been encouraged to see everyone as potential carriers of a contagious and life-threatening illness? In academic circles, this question about connection was especially pertinent. Despite what some films might lead viewers to believe, research is rarely the product of a lone genius poring over dusty tomes in a dimly-lit study; it is more often rooted in conversation and collaboration. As book studies scholars ourselves, we of course needed - and craved - access to our libraries while in lockdown, but we also needed access to the insights and intelligence of our colleagues. Both these libraries and the colleagues had, just like ourselves, largely moved to digital spaces.

SHARP had earlier sponsored other online conferences, including the Bookshelves in the Age of the COVID-19 Pandemic, hosted by the Open University in November 2020. Nevertheless, an online symposium was, while by that time not uncommon, still a new experience for many of the participants, as well as for us as organisers. Although we had watched our SHARP colleagues negotiate the preparative requirements of online book-based events, we had not anticipated many of those issues that they had so gracefully resolved behind the scenes. We were faced, for example, with the unfamiliar issues of Zoom room capacities. In our effort to facilitate informal dialogue akin to that enjoyed during coffee breaks, we set up an online Gather.Town, where participants could move avatars around a virtual room and chat with others using text, audio, and video; we spent an embarrassing amount of time deciding on the colour of the Gather.Town room's carpets. And then there was the scheduling. Participants logged in from around the world, and needed to present when was appropriate for their time zones. Some participants logged in while on their way to pick up children from school, or while making cups of coffee. Hardware was not always reliable; one speaker's WiFi disconnected in the middle of his presentation, and he had to frantically find another room closer to the router. Yet the symposium went forward, seeing active contributions from participants in the live chats, the Gather.Town room, and on Twitter. It was a long but invigorating day, putting international colleagues into contact with one another and forwarding critical consideration of books on screen across a plethora of media. The papers featured in this themed section all stemmed from the Books on Screen symposium, and offer just a glimpse into the vast offerings of the day.

The challenges of a real-time, global virtual symposium were (for us and many other pandemic-era organisers) balanced by the opportunities of suddenly finding space in the crowded academic calendar. As one of our keynote speakers, Simone Murray, observed, Books on Screen represented exactly the kind of interdisciplinary gathering that would be difficult to attend in person, when travel time and travel funds required for anything other than a local gathering might come at the expense of some other conference critical for one's home field. The flip side of this loosening of disciplinary boundaries was the challenge of publishing outcomes. No one journal had a remit that entirely overlapped with the symposium's exuberantly sprawling scope. Our aim became to find a journal that could host a selection of pieces developed from conference papers (representing a range in terms of style - traditional peer-reviewed paper; peer-reviewed survey; interview report) alongside a narrative account of the presentations and panel discussions, and how they spoke to each other to draw out common themes. Hence, we turned to *Participations*, and to its founding editor, Professor Martin Barker.

In addition to capturing a snapshot of conference findings and cross-connections, this special section preserves the process of assembling one of the last *Participations* gatherings for which Professor Barker played a central role. Working with him to select which of the symposium papers would best be showcased together was an education in itself: debating our way through, abstract by abstract, allowed us to understand his vision for the journal, and for audience and reception studies more broadly, in a deeper way. We are profoundly grateful for the experience. Even though (as discussed below) various authors were forced by circumstances to withdraw, we decided not to expand the section, relying instead of the summary of panels that follows to serve as a roadmap: of the ground already covered, documenting the gathering itself, and of ground still ahead, pointing towards potential avenues for future collaborative work.

We open this Introduction by reflecting on these vast offerings, most of which are not represented in the themed section. Each of the symposium's panels is reviewed in turn to support future considerations of books on screen; readers may benefit not just from knowing who spoke about what, but also how presentations were put into dialogue with one another. We then position Books on Screen in relation to the audience and reception studies of *Participations'* remit, arguing for the value of interdisciplinary research for both audience studies and book studies. We make this argument by referring to some of the exciting research that has recently been published about bookishness - the symbolic values of books (Pressman, 2020) - and the interplay between materiality and digital bits. This Introduction concludes with a short summary of the following papers, and with a call to action for readers to embrace the incredible promise of uncertainty.

The 'Books on Screen Symposium

'Books on Screen' defined both 'book' and 'screen' loosely, inviting presentations about particular examples of books on screen or broad concepts of screen-centric bookishness. The symposium's programme featured a diverse array of talks about books in films, television, games, and digital teaching environments. Between the scheduled talks, participants were invited to explore and interact with one another in the online Gather.Town room created for the symposium; participants could move their custom avatars through a two-dimensional library, stumbling upon hyperlinked items (e.g. books, documents, projection screens, computers) that featured pre-recorded talks by keynote speakers Matthew Kirschenbaum and Simone Murray, as well as recommended readings that accompanied those recordings.

The symposium began with the 'Emerging Platforms and Multimodality' panel, chaired by Emmett Stinson. Ellen Addis reviewed the framing of tangible book objects by digital literary festivals, focusing on the 2021 Hay Festival in Wales, which ran entirely digitally that year. Addis' discussion focused particularly on Patricia Lockwood's Dylan Thomas Prize-winning *No One Is Talking About This*, a 2021 novel that itself commentates on digital cultures and the ways in which texts are shared online. Kenna MacTavish drew attention to the online discussions centred on the books held in television and film characters' hands. 'She's fake as fuck the book is not that big', declared one Twitter user in response to the appearance of Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* in the film *10 Things I Hate About You*. Using a playful autoethnographic methodology of the study of books across social media platforms, MacTavish explored how bookish moments on the silver screen were reimagined on the screens of our personal devices. Tonguc Sezen took the concept of reimagination to an even deeper level in his talk about replica books: physical, and sometimes digital replicas of books featured in screen-based entertainment. This panel's talks intersected in their scrutiny of bookish environments, which were all transmedial. While the codex book is a material form, it is remediated in digital forms, and then remediated again in other material forms. In this way, books are networks and networked.

Stevie Marsden chaired the 'Television' panel, which featured consideration of the global and multigenerational reach of *The Baby-Sitters Club* (Netflix, adapted from the popular book series of the same name) by Chandni Ananth and Corinna Norrick-Rühl, the relevance of books in *The Wire* (HBO) by Laura Ntoumanis, and a reflection upon the use of bookish props and filming locations in *A Discovery of Witches* (Sky One) by Alison Ray. A theme that emerged in all three of these talks was nostalgia: *The Baby-Sitters Club* depends on nostalgic feelings about the book series from much of its audience; a clip from *The Wire* featured a discussion of the canonical *Great Gatsby*; and the *A Discovery of Witches* evoked the romanticised cultural ideals surrounding books and libraries. Nostalgia was further implied in the commercial products spun out from these television shows, many of which were paper-based, permitting bilateral exchange between books (and related material) and screen.

In the 'Archives and Special Collections' panel, chaired by Laura Dietz, Jessica Bigelow highlighted the need for special collections libraries to begin collecting ebooks, but also acknowledged some of the many obstacles for long-term ebook preservation and patron access. This work was soon after published in *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage* (Bigelow, 2021). Amanda Boczar, Emma Frank, and Sydney Jordan then spoke about their own efforts at the USF Libraries - Tampa Special Collection to adapt to remote instruction needs posed by the COVID-19 lockdowns. They reviewed the use of reception of different digital technologies and techniques, paying particular attention to unique experiences of digital access to material objects. Kevin Wisniewski added further insight to these points by discussing his use of digital technologies and techniques to support access of material and digital texts during the lockdowns. While the panel acknowledged that all digital technologies come with their own issues of accessibility, maintenance, and longevity, they also showed some of the many ways in which digital options could support heightened, or altogether new kinds of, bookish experiences. A high-resolution camera applied to a rare manuscript, for example, could help students see illuminations more closely than would be possible in a reading room. An ebook, as another example, could permit greater access to a text if it may be read across a variety of devices, in adjustable font sizes and colours.

The 'Publishing on Screen' panel, chaired by Christoph Bläsi, examined how processes of making the book (or, in the case of the two films set in the world of fashion magazine publishing, the mock-up described as 'The Book') are depicted as totems and material signs of agency in four Hollywood films. Amy L. Blair, presenting "'This is The Book': The Fashion Magazine Mock-up in *The Devil Wears Prada* and *Funny Face*", demonstrated how 'The Book' mediates relationships between characters (particularly the critical relationships between the protagonists and their mentors) and how reverence or lack of reverence for the physical object flags initiation into the realities of its production. Maria Juko's 'Books, Authorship, and Agency in Greta Gerwig's 2019 *Little Women*', traced the process by which the 'the book is the movie', but 'the movie becomes the book': in particular, how the plot of the novel as published in 1868-69, where Jo gives up her literary ambitions to become a helpmeet for the Professor, is replaced by a story closer to the facts of Alcott's own life, where Jo becomes an author herself, and her dramatised development as a writer tracks her emerging agency within her family and in her professional role. Finally, Ellen Forget's 'The Book as a Bridge: Examining Gender Roles in Book Publishing in *Genius*' explores power dynamics in literary publishing, juxtaposing the lauded 'writing' and disdained 'typing' as well as the unequal romantic partnerships that provided indispensable support for Wolfe's and Perkins's careers. All three papers dealt with themes of labour within publishing: who carries out the real work, who receives the credit, and how cinematic treatments of this labour assign value to the people who create books and the books themselves. Worth noting here is the use of montage to present the more 'boring' aspects of bookmaking: aspects that contribute to particular narratives, generally positioning characters as productive and/or intellectual, but only need

to be displayed for a few moments for audiences to discern these traits. The very presence of a bookish object changes the scene.

The 'Games' panel was chaired by Amy Spencer. Alexandra Alvis, in 'Shuffle Your Library: The Book History of *Magic: The Gathering*', drew on conversations with artists who create cards for the immensely successful and deeply bookish game, unpacking how they research their designs and use (or do not use) online resources in ways that challenge ideas of how the public accesses digital library collections. Jason Boyd, in 'Tantalizingly Unreadable: Books in *Gone Home*, *Tacoma*, and *Firewatch*' contrasted books as semi-accessible artifacts in three games, noting how the uniqueness and variation required for a convincing 'bookshelf' collides with game mechanics, causing frustration for the would-be reader - but also reassuring evidence that 'despite continual fear of 'death of the book', the codex is still a component of imagined future worlds. In 'The Semiotics of the Music Book in *Skyrim: Medievalism, Fandom, and Colonialisation*', Kate Maxwell interrogated colonialist and origins of medievalist tropes seen in in-game music book design, and what they reveal about current discourses on medievalism and race. What 'library' means in game settings, and how and why players expend great effort to amass in-game books (even where, as Maxwell observes, the books have 'generic' exteriors and no particular 'visual appeal'), is a theme of all papers, as is the role of books in worldbuilding and how knowing the characters through those stacks, 'bookshelves', and 'libraries' changes our ideas of what gameplay can be.

The 'Film' panel, chaired by Alexandra Alvis, wrapped up the symposium in both senses, completing the day and enriching some of the most compelling threads between panels as well as between papers. Dot Porter and Brandon Hawk's 'Aionomica, Rammahgon, and De sphaera mundi: Bibliographic Medievalism in Star Wars' examined the first appearance of the codex in the Star Wars saga (where reading had previously been represented via 'data pads' and other imagined future text technologies - texts on screens, on screen): the Jedi library featured in *The Rise of Skywalker*. Building on their video series *Sacred Texts: Codices Far, Far Away*, Porter and Hawk traced how the Jedi texts, modeled on actual medieval manuscripts, parallel manuscript genres and demonstrated how intersections of spirituality and science in a modern science fiction blockbuster echo earlier expressions. In 'Screening Victorian Books', Margaret Stetz investigated the Victorian book on film, with particular focus on fake books in title sequences. There, typically inauthentic volumes represent artifice more than artifacts, signaling audience-flattering status and class privilege and saying more about contemporary regard for the 19th century than about the Victorian book. Finally, in 'Figure and Frame, Letter and Line: William Kentridge', analysis of short films by Charlotte Pryce and William Kentridge aided Holly Willis as she contrasted two ways book pages can become film frames, and where the materiality of the book can be 'catapulted into the temporal and spatial capacities of the cinematic'. The talks intersected not only in terms of how the enduring prestige of the book is deployed by filmmakers (for diverse reasons and for different ends) but how authenticity and continuity with the past may be concealed as easily as celebrated.

Across these panels, we saw not just diversity of topics covered, but also diversity of methods applied to critically considering those topics. These methods embraced the subjectivity of the researchers' perspectives: value perspectives that are so often lost in quests for scholarly objectivity. We heard from university teachers and librarians reflecting on their pedagogical approaches, drawing from quantitative and anecdotal data to paint vivid pictures of digital classroom classrooms. Kenna MacTavish's autoethnographic approach centred her in her research context, as did Alexandra Alvis' personal interviews with artists. Even when more conventional analytical approaches (e.g. close reading) were applied, many of the presenters nodded to their own personal - and emotional - connections with the material under review. Books are not objective, either in their production or reception, and such acknowledgements of the subjective experiences of these artefacts opens up new research avenues that facilitate fresh insights into their impacts. Dotted throughout all of the presentations were vivid reminders of how the traffic between books and screens is not one-way. The screen-based representations and uses of books showcased do not just reflect our existing conceptions of books, but also impact those conceptions, reshaping what was, is, and can be. By combining interdisciplinary, unconventional research methods, and subjectivity, the Books on Screen symposium ultimately became a springboard for future research into digital and digital-informed bookishness.

These themes also emerged in the symposium's one-long keynote conversation, which featured Matthew Kirschenbaum and Simone Murray. The symposium's Gather.Town room featured pre-keynote recordings to which participants could refer asynchronously; Kirschenbaum gave a reading from his recently-released book *Bitstreams: The Future of Digital Literary Heritage* (Kirschenbaum, 2021) and Murray responded to the question 'Is BookTube the Future of Literary Studies?' (the answer being 'Yes. Seriously.'). In their synchronous conversation, Kirschenbaum and Murray interrogated the limitations of institutional disciplinarity, and how those limitations may vary across international contexts. In investigations of books on screen, however, a convergence of disciplinary perspectives is necessary to identify the affective experiences of those books, as well as their unique materialities. Although academics studying books on screen may exist within particular institutional structures, the objects of consideration do not. Books are now, as both Kirschenbaum and Murray acknowledge, often produced and received in digital contexts that are networked and multimodal. As such, multimodal approaches to analysis of these artefacts is vital. These approaches must also appreciate the varied experiences of readers across broader contexts than ever before. Books on screen transcend geographical limitation, and may be embedded into different contexts in very different ways.

Audiences and Reception of 'Books on Screen'

These different contexts of books and bookishness make books on screen an exciting avenue of audience and reception studies. Bookishness is, after all, a product of reception, with

readers congregating around not just objects but also cultural ideas and ideals of those objects. We need to apply audience and reception studies to books on screen if we ever want to understand their impacts.

Nevertheless, some readers may think it strange that a themed section about books on screen is featured in a journal about audience and reception studies. Our enthusiasm for featuring this section in *Participations* has been supported by Danielle Fuller and DeNel Rehberg Sedo's Introduction to their themed section about 'Readers, Reading and Digital Media' in Volume 16, Issue 1. As Fuller and Rehberg Sedo (2019: 130-131) explain:

[R]esearching contemporary readers and cultures of reading is not only about book-centred practices and communities. Much of the book history literature does of course focus on the reading of books and printed materials - perhaps most frequently codex books and periodicals - but it's a catholic field that encompasses the production, circulation and reception of legible marks made on and with all types of material from parchment to digital code. [...] [I]t is often impossible, and not especially desirable, to disentangle some readers' attachments to the older medium of print from their new media practices.

The emphasis on readers in this passage admittedly differs from our emphasis on the objects being read (or, in some cases, not being read). However, justification for considering books on screen is similar to that offered by Fuller and Rehberg Sedo. Books on screen do not exist as isolated objects, whether tangible or computational. Rather, they represent cultural understandings and expectations of bookishness, and serve as literal and figurative meeting points between individuals in a variety of ways, as shown by this section's authors. In considering books on screen, we are more broadly considering the ways in which these objects contribute to sociocultural narratives within increasingly digital contexts. Despite flippant claims that the codex book is 'dying', this form of book seems instead to be gaining new life, rising like a phoenix from pixelated ashes.

We see such resurrection in, for example, visual representations of codex books online. Amanda Lastoria has framed the printed book cover as a mask that shields a book's contents and entices potential readers. She focuses particularly on the ways in which digital representations of book covers - in online shops offering books for purchase and in social media network posts about book releases, for instance - influence our discovery, acquisition, consumption, and sharing of those books. 'Considering how design and production values are (not) translated from book to screen allows us to glimpse behind the digital masks of print design to see what they conceal and reveal about the book's physicality, its contents and its owner', Lastoria (2022: 150) argues. This point may be extended to argue that the 'digital masks of print design' to which Lastoria refers are relevant not only in interactions with tangible book objects, but also (as Lastoria herself acknowledges) in other bookish contexts. A book, after all, is always more than its materiality. It is a manifestation of ideas and ideas, a figurative meeting place for authors and readers to exchange knowledge and stories. As

Jennifer Burek Pierce (2022) has shown in her observations about late-night comedians' placement of timely titles in their television shows' backgrounds, book cover masks may serve simultaneously as representations of wider sociocultural happenings and as mirrors that reflect our uncomfortable truths back at us. In these ways, book objects are tools for narrative framing, contributing to our understandings of what certain spaces are for, but kinds of conversations are welcome in those spaces, and what kinds of people we may be having conversations with (Mészáros, 2022).

Our emphasis in this themed section is on the screen-based materiality of book objects, but we are well aware that any juxtaposition of the words 'book' and 'screen' will recall - in productive and unproductive ways - enduring controversies surrounding digital books and on-screen reading. Despite decades of intensive comparative studies of screen and print reading that highlight potential (though typically small) advantages for print reading in aspects such as a sense of location within a text (Mangen, Olivier and Velay, 2019), most experiments and meta-analyses share the conclusion that print and screen are not measurably different on most measures of comprehension (Baron, 2015; Clinton, 2019; Delgado et al., 2018; Hillesund, Schilhab and Mangen, 2022; Mangen, Olivier and Velay, 2019; Schwabe et al., 2021). However, the long history (Murray, 2016: 12; Thompson, 2021) and frequent vitriol (Murray, 2018; Phillips and Kovač, 2022; Pressman, 2020) of debates on the nature, uses, and supposed threats to print culture posed by digital books can pit books against books, and readers against readers. Any discussion of how books function in digital spaces takes place in an emotionally charged, not neutral, atmosphere.

The discussion presented in this themed section comprises three voices that draw attention to different contexts of screen-based books and bookishness, using three different approaches. In 'Portals of Potentialities', Ellen Addis argues for the importance of material books in digital literary festivals by analysing the case study of Patricia Lockwood's novel *No One Is Talking About This* as it was represented at the UK's Hay Festival Digital 2021. In this instance, virtual audiences communed around the book object, reflection upon the novel's print-based remediation of digital language and writing forms. In effect, in *No One is Talking*, Lockwood inverts the more frequently discussed print-to-digital shift to demonstrate the multilateral influence of media forms on one another. In her paper, Addis weaves together literary analysis and reception studies to consider the layers of multimodality not just in *No One is Talking* itself, but also in the talking about *No One is Talking*. In 'Books Bleeding Out of the Screen', Tonguc Sezen surveys the portrayal of 'imaginary books' - books that do not exist except as components of other fictional narratives - across a variety of films and television shows. He emphasises these books' roles in transmedia storytelling, paying particular attention to audience interpretations and conceptions of fandom. For Sezen, imaginary books tell their own stories, which may then be accepted, subverted, and/or materially realised by fans wishing to further immerse themselves in secondary worlds. Whether or not the pages of these imaginary books are populated with content, either fully or partially, the books themselves help populate the fictional worlds within which they exist. In 'Shuffle Your Library: The Book History of Magic: The Gathering', Alexandra Alvis reports on the ways that

bookishness pervades the gameplay and aesthetic of the popular trading card game Magic: The Gathering and its digital version Arena. Alvis first used online card databases to identify bookish elements in Magic cards, and then interviewed some of the artists responsible for creating those cards. Many of these artists were inspired by digital library collections and other experiences of embodied bookish spaces, translating these experiences into both subtle and explicit depictions of books that help establish familiar-but-still-fantastic Magic worlds. Alvis concludes their paper with suggestions for future avenues of study that further interrogate artist and player encounters with the pervasive bookishness of Magic: The Gathering in all of the game's products and forms. Taken together, these three papers provide a glimpse into the many approaches we may take to explore the audiences and reception of books on screen. None of these papers purports to be the final word on its subject. Rather, all three aim to start conversations about digital bookishness that are ever more relevant as more - and more diverse - groups plug in to read, watch, and play. They are introductions to the many stories of books on screen.

This themed section is the product of its own intricate storyline, posing plot twist after plot twist. While any academic publication, especially those produced by larger teams, comes with challenges in its production, the contexts within we were working on this section introduced further obstacles to overcome: increased workloads, personal and family physical illnesses, mental exhaustion, and uncertain publication practices. Understandably, some of the authors and peer reviewers we invited to contribute to this section were unable to accept, or found themselves needing to withdraw their participation to tend to more pressing matters. For many, the traditional forms of academic engagement with publishing opportunities were not appropriate in pandemic circumstances. At the same time, the entirely-online Books on Screens symposium itself attracted nearly 300 attendees from around the world - the maximum number of participants we could support within our institutional hosting policy. Only one accepted presenter needed to withdraw from the symposium. In our view, the success of our online symposium and others like it speaks to a need for innovation of academic experiences and expectations. The online-only model of the Books on Screen symposium meant that participants could drop in and out of the day as needed, and could determine for themselves how they wished to contribute: by listening to talks, putting forward questions or comments during or after those talks, or exploring the Gather.Town space. The specific topical remit of the symposium meant that scholars representing a variety of disciplinary perspectives could come together for pointed discussions over a digestible single day, which was not bogged down with the logistical and budgetary planning associated with travel. Such accessibility meant that we were more able to cross disciplinary boundaries without needing to cross institutional and geographical boundaries.

Without crossing disciplinary boundaries, we would not have had the opportunities to learn from what we can only describe as the perfect people for the subjects covered: people who span a wide range of scholarly and professional milieus that have contributed to the development of unique expertise about books on screen. At the symposium, these people

offered unmatched insight into how screen-based representations of books reflect, and in turn shape, reception of books by audiences in both physical and digital spaces. It was admittedly difficult, however, to identify a journal that could accommodate such an interdisciplinary remit. As a long-term 'coming-together-place', welcoming a range of perspectives and methodologies, we felt that *Participations* served as a model for meeting these challenges. We hope that this themed section will give interested scholars, artists, archivists, creative practitioners, and others help in finding related work in disparate disciplines.

Conclusion

While material objects may appear in generally static forms, the meanings of those objects vary according to context. Studying digital contexts can be intimidating because everything seems to happen so quickly, so multidimensionally, and so ephemerally. Yet, as Simone Murray compellingly demonstrates in her 2018 *The Digital Literary Sphere*, academic consideration of these digital contexts is vital. 'Literary academe (and the humanities more generally) cannot afford to sit this game out, wait until the dust settles, and then retrospectively consecrate a new canon of writing that has somehow emerged', Murray asserts (2018: 171). 'By then our self-assumed role in the cultural conversation may well have been usurped and, worse, we will have ceded the opportunity to help shape an emergent literary environment' (Ibid). This themed section represents an effort to capture a moment in a fluid landscape. It is a snapshot in time. However, it is also an effort to shape the conversation about books on screen: how they are depicted, received, and (re)mediated. It is not a conclusion. It is an opportunity.

Biographical Notes

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