



COMMUNICATIONS REVOLUTIONS: WRITING A HISTORY OF THE BOOK FOR AN ELECTRONIC AGE

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When does an academic field begin? For the expanding specialty known as the history of the book, the landmarks are many:
• **Major publications:** Elizabeth Eisenstein's *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* and Robert Darnton's *The Business of Enlightenment*, both appearing in 1979.¹

• **Intellectual centers:** the Center for the Book at the Library of Congress (1977) and the Program in the History of the Book in American Culture at the American Antiquarian Society (1983).²

• **Encyclopedias and reference works:** since the appearance in the 1980s of the multivolume *Histoire de l'Édition*, the French pioneer in the field, national book histories have been launched in the United States, England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada.

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• **Degree programs**, including M.A. courses of study at the Universities of Alabama, Iowa, and Wisconsin and University College, London, and a Ph.D. minor at the University of South Carolina, all established since 1986.³

• **Scholarly associations**, notably SHARP, the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing, created in 1991 and now counting some 900 members in 20 countries.⁴

By such innovations and advances, encompassing multiple initiatives and interests, does a new discipline take shape in the contemporary world of scholarship. Yet, if anybody deserves credit for setting the process in motion, it is surely the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section of the Association of College and Research Libraries, whose “preconference,” held in Boston in 1980, was arguably the birthplace of an international field. That event beat by three months a similar gathering sponsored by the American Antiquarian Society on “Printing and Society in Early America.” And it claimed a wider reach. Featuring such historians as Darnton, Eisenstein, Henri-Jean Martin from France, Bernhard Fabian from Germany, and John Feather from England, RBMS took as its theme “Books and Society in History.”⁵

The Boston meeting was an unprecedented conclave, putting RBMS in the intellectual *avant-garde*. The preconference was conceived in 1978, two years after the English translation of Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin’s masterpiece, *The Coming of the Book*, and a year before Darnton and Eisenstein came out with their big books.⁶ With admirable foresight, the organizers, led by Harvard’s Kenneth Carpenter, sensed the stirring in bibliographic and historical circles and discerned a scholarly field in the making. Happily, that prescience was rewarded. The program attracted over 275 participants and generated an excitement that spilled beyond the formal proceedings. In an unusual step, the speakers, with the support of the RBMS executive committee, drew up a resolution, known as the “Boston Statement on the History of the Book,” that crystallized the universal sentiment.⁷

It was the manifesto for a new field. “The history of the book is fundamental to the historical study of society,” the statement affirmed, “but we are far from understanding the factors that have shaped the writing and dissemination of books.” Basic facts were lacking on “what was printed, by whom and for whom.” So, too, were the bibliographical tools necessary to investigate “a cultural force that transcends national boundaries.” Without such foundations, what analyses were possible? Some four and a quarter centuries after

Gutenberg, much book history remained *terra incognita*. Undaunted by the challenge and heartened by the signs of “rapid progress” at the preconference, the signers summoned researchers of many countries to the task. In this collaborative effort, numerous hands were needed:

. . . we appeal to library directors and all others responsible for manuscripts and books in our libraries to support activities in the field of the history of the book; and . . . we ask funding agencies in our various countries—governments, foundations and other institutions—to support basic projects as well as seminars, workshops, and conferences on an international level.

Researchers, money, institutional support: from these combined resources would emerge a comparative history of the book, detailing “how national differences in book production and dissemination have affected the various cultural areas.”⁸

Though framed in general terms, this call for research reflected its aegis in RBMS and ACRL. With the emphasis upon bibliographical inquiry, it expressed the outlook of rare book librarians, charged with the intellectual organization and physical preservation of the printed legacy from the past. That perspective informed the collection of essays that emerged from the conference. Published in 1983 as *Books and Society in History*, the same year as the American Antiquarian Society’s *Printing and Society in Early America*, the volume offered a view of its subject from particular locations: the printing house, the bookseller’s shop, the government office. From their interplay had issued the corpus of printed works—books, laws, magazines, newspapers, broadsides, bureaucratic forms, advertisements, and other ephemera—that constitute the essential database of the field.

How did these materials come into being, get disseminated, and survive? The essays offered diverse approaches to that question, exploring such topics as privilege and patronage in *ancien regime* France, the shift from censorship to copyright in Britain, and the publication of English-language texts in Germany. Running through nearly all the pieces was, as G. Thomas Tanselle shrewdly detected, a concern for those “aspects of book distribution” that determined the circulation of ideas in print. That conception was narrower in scope than Robert Darnton’s, which was set forth in the opening essay, “What Is the History of Books?” Darnton’s reply, “the social and cultural history of communication by print,” as enacted in a circuit of communications from

author to reader and back, has justly won wide acclaim. In *Books and Society in History*, it was a minority view.⁹

Despite the sweeping title, the volume was centered on a specific time and place: early modern Europe, notably, Britain, France, and Germany, from the sixteenth through the early nineteenth centuries. To be sure, two pieces examined the modern era, one of them treating Britain and the United States from 1819 to 1939. But it was the Europe of Renaissance and Reformation, religious wars, absolute monarchs, Enlightenment, and Revolution that dominates the collection. With good reason: if, as Eisenstein claimed, the “shift from script to print” launched a “communications revolution,” what better realm to explore than “Gutenberg’s galaxy”?¹⁰

The formative age of the printing press is the obvious starting point of scholarship. Consequently, medieval scribes gain slight notice in the volume, except by Elizabeth Eisenstein, who observes their demise. Twentieth-century technology is no more visible. The conference convened a couple years before the personal computer made its way onto faculty desks; the participants in the 1980 preconference paid slight heed to the electronic revolution in their midst. The historian of France, Raymond Birn, did use a pocket calculator to produce a few statistics on censorship, but his was a limited exercise, with no intellectual implications. Only Eisenstein recognized the dawn of a communications revolution. Heralding the copying machine and the personal computer as instruments of democracy, she conjured up a scenario now known to filmgoers as “back to the future.”

Even while university libraries are . . . taking on the function of copy centers, professors are beginning to acquire their own word processors, which will enable them to bypass university presses and turn out justified copy in their homes. . . . we seem to be in the midst of yet another publishing revolution that very well may undermine current notions of intellectual property rights and bring us closer to the medieval experience of everyman serving as his own scribe.¹¹

Coming on two decades later, that forecast was a mild version of the technological utopianism that inspires current visions of the “electronic millennium” before us. When Eisenstein composed her essay, the cutting-edge computer was the 286 PC, slow, limited in memory, and costly for many college-financed purchase plans to obtain. Nobody had a CD-ROM drive, integrating sound and image. E-mail was a Pentagon secret, the World Wide Web had

not yet been spun. Even so, having limned one communications revolution, Eisenstein could recognize another. Her response was tentative, hedged with a historian's caution. In the years since, prophets of the electronic age have cast off restraint. Their scenarios gleefully anticipate the death of the book. Within its fixed form—words on paper, set in even lines, ordered in columns, and bound in covers—the artifact known as the codex was once state of the art: an ingenious invention of the second century A.D., valued for its flexibility and improved over the centuries by the printing press. Today, it strikes critics as an ancient prison, confining writing in a narrow frame. “Information wants to be free,” declares Stewart Brand of the Electronic Frontier Foundation. Abandon your tired, bookish land, he urges, and stake out “homesteads” in cyberspace. There ideas and information flow freely. Unimpeded by the barbed wire of print, untrammelled by authority, people can saddle up their computers and go wherever their interests and imagination roam. For Brand, the erstwhile salesman of the '60s counterculture, the World Wide Web is simply the Whole Earth Catalog online, with an infinite capacity for growth. More serious thinkers, like J. D. Bolter, cast themselves as revolutionaries, “freeing writing from the frozen structure of the page.” The “electronic word,” suggests UCLA's oracle Richard Lanham, will “disempower . . . the force of linear print,” encourage playfulness and participation with texts, foster reciprocity in communications, and advance the creation of “that genuine social self which America has discouraged from the beginning.”¹²

Surprisingly, the naysayers to technology share the premises of the enthusiasts. One sign of the times is the new wave of titles on the pleasures of reading. Like Lynne Sharon Schwartz's *Ruined by Reading*, they are elegies for a vanishing age, when a young girl in Brooklyn could enlarge her world and forge her identity by burrowing into books. That experience prompts the novelist E. Annie Proulx, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for *The Shipping News*, to conceive an implacable opposition between book and computer. “Nobody is going to sit down and read a novel on a twitchy little screen,” she snipes. “Ever.” Such skepticism is understandable in a writer whose main characters, a newspaperman and a librarian, rebuild their lives and come together in the slow-paced backwater of Newfoundland. It drives Sven Birkerts's *The Gutenberg Elegies* with fierce passion. “The printed word is part of a vestigial social order that we are moving away from,” he intones, “by choice and by social compulsion.” Print is logical, linear, cumulative; it fixes thought and

focuses concentration. Electronic media, by contrast, scatter attention; our eyes skim across the screen, scanning evanescent images soon to dissolve into the ether. Ephemeral encounters, Birkerts warns, yield insubstantial individuals, sundered from the past and shorn of sophisticated speech—"ambiguity, paradox, irony, subtlety, and wit." Inverting Brand's judgment, Birkerts nonetheless sees no way to stem the tide. "We are at a watershed point. One way of processing information is yielding to another." As technology goes, so goes the republic.¹³

This determinist rhetoric replays a longstanding theme in Western culture. When Victor Hugo's archdeacon Frollo contemplated the printed book in *Hunchback of Notre Dame*, he glimpsed the collapse of an age of faith, embodied in the grand cathedral. "This will kill that. The book will kill the building. . . . The press will kill the church . . . printing will kill architecture." Engine of reason, solvent of piety: so viewed, the culture of print has aroused dissent in every generation. Well before the computer, before television, before radio, when the cinema was still young, the Italian futurist Filippo Tommaso Marinetti seized upon the new visual medium as a weapon in an ongoing struggle.

The book, the most traditional means of preserving and communicating thought, has been for a long time destined to disappear, just like cathedrals, walled battlements, museums, and the ideal of pacifism . . . , [Marinetti declaimed in 1909]. The Futurist Cinema will . . . collaborate in a general renewal, for substituting the magazine—always pedantic—,for the drama—always stale—,and killing the book,—always tedious and oppressive.

Condemning museums and academies as "the graveyards of vain endeavor," Marinetti saved his deepest hatred for print. "Go and set fire to the stacks of the libraries." Sadly, that vision would be realized in the fascist *Fahrenheit 451*.¹⁴

The printed book has thus been a site of ideological conflict for a long while. To its study we can bring the experience of living with multiple media, whose technical capabilities are shaped by the economic structures, social settings, and cultural values in which they are employed. In turn, our "rereadings of the past" may generate new perspectives on the electronic age. That prospect, I believe, explains why the *Chronicle of Higher Education* recently dubbed the history of books "a particularly hot topic in the humanities and not just in the United States."¹⁵

How far have we come since *Books and Society in History*? And what, if anything, have we learned from the computer? Surprisingly, for all the recent hype, we ought to feel, with Yogi Berra, “deja vu all over again.” Consider the immediate impact of online catalogs, e-mail, and the Web on academic research. Overcoming barriers of time and space, organizing and supplying great quantities of information at low unit-cost, these technological aids have at once expanded and shrunk the world of scholarship. Computers give us increased access to research materials, heighten intellectual control over collections, preserve new discoveries, and enable the uncovering of error and the cumulation of knowledge. They facilitate standardized practices of cataloging and coding and reproduce a rich tapestry of images in hypertext. Linked together on the internet, scholars can communicate with colleagues all over the globe and realize the eighteenth-century ideal of the Republic of Letters. Such abundant possibilities are both liberating and disorienting, one moment tempting with the promise of comprehensive knowledge, the next prompting complaints about too many books, too little time.¹⁶

If this litany sounds familiar, it should. Replace computer with print, and you have the central themes of Eisenstein’s *Printing Press as an Agent of Change*. Economies of scale, multiplication of texts, standardization of copy, systematic arrangement of books through such devices as title pages, tables of contents, and indexes: the logic of rationalization, which Max Weber identified with modernity, drove the printing press centuries before the computer. In its wake, the advance of the press forged an international community of scholars, even as it separated peoples by vernacular languages; weakened existing structures of authority while enabling governments to extend their powers of social control; and evoked sentiments of anxiety and exhilaration over the abundance of reading matter it cast up. It may be small comfort, but if Eisenstein is right, the route to the twenty-first century runs directly through the age of print.

Actually, that path was set well before Gutenberg. Unlike current prophets of the electronic future, Eisenstein is no technodeterminist. Her case for the “printing revolution in early modern Europe” rests upon a concrete chain of connections, linking a specific invention (the printing press), as incorporated within an economic organization (the commercial printing house), to the development of new intellectual practices in the learned community.¹⁷ It is book history as the Boston Statement of 1980 prescribed: an inquiry into

the impact of “book production and dissemination upon various cultural areas.” Unfortunately, she overlooked the call for bibliographical research. Synthesizing secondary studies rather than viewing manuscript and printed books firsthand, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* was vulnerable to dispute. And disputed it was by experts on Europe from late antiquity to the Enlightenment.

The current consensus, neatly summarized by the French historian Roger Chartier, is that the change from the manuscript to the printed book was no big deal. In its physical design, the newcomer kept the old ways. It employed devices developed in monastic scriptoria to order the text: signatures, page numbers, columns and lines, ornaments, alphabetical tables, systematic indexes. It inherited a hierarchy of sizes, from the learned folio to the humanist quarto down to the bedside *libellus*. And it called upon methods of silent reading of long standing in medieval universities and popularized among aristocratic laymen in the fifteenth century. The printing press thus depended on, rather than altered, the fundamental form of the book.

Seen in the *longue durée*, Chartier suggests, the real revolution in book history took place when the scroll was displaced by the codex. That “rupture” gave the reading experience a distinct material form that has lasted to the present, but is now challenged by the computer. If reading does move from the page to the screen, that change will surely rival the adoption of the codex as a decisive turning point in the history of the book.¹⁸

It is characteristic of French historians, in the tradition of the *Annales* school, to take the long view, across the centuries, in search of the deep structures of social existence. They are not like their American counterparts, who slice the past into small sections and parcel it out for close inspection, according to no common plan. The competitive individualism of our culture puts its mark on historiography. Studies of the book in the American past, interdisciplinary by nature, bear this trait. Accordingly, I find it difficult to generalize about a sprawling area. Since 1980, the ranks have expanded beyond bibliography and history and burgeoned with recruits from literature, communications, and cultural studies. These accessions have diversified and enlivened scholarship with new agendas, but without any overarching interpretations. Loosely connected to one another, American scholars attend even less to the international field. Notwithstanding the injunction of the Boston Statement, isolationism remains the common practice. Though many

read Chartier and Darnton for France and Raymond Williams for England and draw on their insights and methods, few engage in explicit comparative history. By habit, if not ideology, American exceptionalism endures, attributing principal trends in national life to events and actions within our borders.¹⁹

The one exception is the field of early America, whose history is inevitably entangled with the early modern states—Britain, France, Spain, and the Netherlands—contending for imperial dominance in the New World. Offshoots of Western Europe, the North American colonists transplanted the cultural ways and the reforming projects formed in their native homes. And they imported ideas and goods across the Atlantic through 1776, deepening identification with the mother country, even as they found themselves on the reluctant road to independence. Appropriately, the initial volume in the American Antiquarian Society's multivolume *History of the Book in America* is entitled *The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*.²⁰

The co-editor of that volume, David D. Hall, has been the leading conduit of the French *histoire du livre* to these shores, and it is owing to his influence that the book history of early America has taken shape as “the history of culture and society.”²¹ In that vein, Hall joined with others, particularly, Richard D. Brown, in *Printing and Society in Early America* to set the initial lines of interpretation. Early Americans, as they saw it, inhabited a “traditional world of literacy,” which lasted in many places down to the early nineteenth century, when it was shattered under the combined force of capitalism and mass democracy. In this cultural regime, the mass of people adopted a style of “intensive reading,” pondering the same religious works—the Bible, sermons, psalters, guides to divinity, the “steady sellers” of the era—over and over. This was a cultural choice, animated by a desire to experience the divine presence in sacred texts. But it was also an adaptation to necessity. Authority prescribed such reading, and scarcity reinforced it. With few books printed at home and imports too expensive for ordinary folk, most colonists acquired information about the wider world from the pulpit and the gentry. Printed materials were filtered through this oral culture. Thus was a familiar fabric of thought maintained.

This confined world was breached over the course of the eighteenth century, as newspapers sprang up in every colony, transmitting secular information not only to privileged elites but also to the middling folk who eavesdropped, in taverns and coffee shops, on the cultural communication.

Cosmopolitan colonists took pride in knowledge of the latest fashions in books as well as goods. Cherishing an Anglo-American identity, they closely followed the debates over British imperial policy in the press. For many, it was a sense of betrayal over America's second-class standing in the empire that provoked them to rebellion. Popular mobilization and war fostered more expansive, diversified reading, and it drew new participants, notably women, into the audience for books.

Nonetheless, the rural majority of white Americans, scattered across a vast countryside, maintained the "intensive" ways of the past down to the early nineteenth century. Then the rapid growth of the literary marketplace, propelled by newspapers and promoted by a rising publishing industry, ushered in a new world of democratic abundance. The great mass of people could now enjoy the literary privileges of the old elite and read "extensively," picking and choosing from a cornucopia of newspapers, periodicals, novels, travels, histories, speeches, reform tracts, Bibles, sermons, and other genres and indulging an unprecedented appetite to learn "What's the news?" The end of scarcity marked the disappearance of a culture of constrictions. An expansive, liberal society offered the democratic luxuries of pluralism, competition, and choice; in the process, individuals gained new autonomy in determining the course of their lives.²²

This interpretation began to come apart not long after it was assembled. It lost its principal prop as soon as the notions of intensive and extensive reading, derived from the German historian Rolf Engelsing, received critical scrutiny. "Have but few Books," the Quaker William Penn once instructed his children, "but let them be well chosen and well read, whether Religious or Civil Subjects . . . reading many Books is but a taking off the Mind too much from Meditation. . . . much Reading is an oppression of the Mind. . . ." That counsel took the medieval ideal of the monk in the cloister, reverently digesting the Word, and adapted it to the spiritual needs of the Friends. Puritan pastors conveyed much the same advice to their flocks. Was intensive reading, then, a bulwark of authority? Not to judge by the Quakers, who, armed only with scriptures and the teachings of George Fox and inspired by the Inner Light, refused to doff their caps before the highest powers in the kingdom. Indeed, all the religious radicals of the age of Cromwell marched under the banner of "the Bible alone"—an antiauthoritarian slogan that resounded through American history. "Intensive reading" could behead a king.²³

If reading styles were politically ambiguous, they also proved difficult to locate in social life. William Gilmore excavated exhaustively household libraries in the Upper Connecticut Valley of New Hampshire and Vermont over the period 1790–1830, only to find such heterogeneity in holdings as to defeat clear delineation of rural *mentalités*. Printed materials did become more abundant, but in most homes, only the Bible was a fixture, occasionally supplemented by a sermon, an almanac, or schoolbooks. Yet this region was rapidly commercializing, and it is likely that many people enlarged their horizons by reading newspapers, available at taverns and seldom preserved among the family possessions. In the face of these imponderables, scholars of early America have retreated from the concept of a “reading revolution.” Social configurations, David Hall now cautions, are not easily aligned with reading tastes. “In any given period of time, readers had available more than one representation or ideology of reading, texts, and writing. . . .” That complexity resists easy formulations, such as the putative movement from scarcity to plenty, limitation to choice. In its celebration of abundance, democracy, and freedom, our primary narrative of American print culture stands exposed as a triumphal account of liberal progress.²⁴

What, then, do we say about early America? That dilemma challenges and perplexes the editors of the colonial and early republic volumes for the AAS’s *History of the Book*. David Hall and his co-editor Hugh Amory put their emphasis on the colonial identity of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century print culture. Peripheral settlements on the outskirts of empire, British North America long relied on the mother country for the basics of printing: presses, types, paper, ink, and the craftsmen to put them to use. It imported most of its literature from England, and its aspiring writers longed for publication back “home.” It is customary to describe this state of affairs as “dependency,” but that is a retrospective view from the American Revolution. To the participants in Anglo-American culture, such engagement with the metropolis was a mark of cosmopolitanism.²⁵

More broadly, early America appears to be a New World extension of what Chartier, speaking of early modern France from 1470 to 1830, calls the “typographical *ancien régime*.” That era was characterized by an essential stability of technology and economic organization. As in France and Britain, so in the colonies, the process of manufacturing books experienced little change. Printers and booksellers scabbled for the basic elements of their trade and

were obliged to make do with what second-hand materials they could get. Marginal players in the market, they turned out drab, inferior products by London standards. Then again, colonists were happy even to approach the metropolitan model. In the first century of settlement, Virginia had reverted to scribal forms to disseminate its laws, while Massachusetts Bay proclaimed its official acts by beat of drums in Boston's public square. These makeshifts were discarded in the eighteenth century, as the press became the medium of public business; Boston gained its first regular newspaper, the *News-Letter*, in 1704, before Norwich and Bristol, spearheading the growth of provincial newspapers outside London. Such gains eased the scarcity of print, but did not change the fundamental nature of the premodern regime. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Chartier observes, French presses turned out no more than ten titles annually, in limited editions of 1,000 to 2,000, and by 1789, that output had only doubled. By that measure, colonial presses were struggling enterprises, but in a milieu where scarcity was the cultural norm.

In England and France, privation was made by law; owing to Crown licenses and monopolies, booksellers and master printers were scarce, journeymen and wordsmiths many. Had Benjamin Franklin run away to Paris, he might have descended onto Grub Street, peddling pornography and spying for the police. In Philadelphia, where skilled labor was in short supply, he found influential sponsors and friendly governments who, in exchange for support, facilitated his rise. Despite that good fortune, patron-client relations constrained the political independence and economic fortunes of the participants in the transatlantic *ancién regime* of print.²⁶

This brief analysis suggests the intellectual potential of concrete, comparative studies of the book trade and its impact on culture—the agenda laid out in the “Boston Statement on the History of the Book” back in 1980. Unfortunately, that message has been neglected in the rapid growth of the field. Today, the hottest topics involve literary and cultural inquiries: ideologies of print, authorship and the marketplace, popular reading. Michael Warner's *Letters of the Republic*, for example, portrays the crucial role of the press in creating a public sphere in mid-eighteenth-century port cities. In Warner's telling, this was an ideological project, in which printers redefined their vocation and impressed new meaning on print. The *Massachusetts Spy* was now an impersonal medium of civic republicanism, its editor and publisher Isaiah Thomas a selfless servant of the public good. No matter that

printers were businessmen, eager for profit. Inattentive to commerce, Warner forgets Benjamin Franklin's famous view of the press as a coach, open to anyone with the fare. A pose of disinterestedness paid well. That contradiction between public persona and commercial strategy, depicted in rich detail by the late Stephen Botein, goes unexplored in Warner's literary analysis.²⁷

In too many studies, the materiality of print disappears from view. How did readers in the past make sense of books? That query has spurred researchers to scour the archives for diaries, letters, and other personal documents recording individuals' responses to their reading. Running commentaries on familiar and forgotten works, these sources disclose individual efforts at self-improvement and self-fashioning. "The freedom of imagination women found in books encouraged new self-definitions . . .," writes Barbara Sicherman, who has used diaries imaginatively to reconstruct the lives of such figures as Alice Hamilton and M. Carey Thomas. Similarly, Ronald and Mary Zboray have pored over the personal papers of families in antebellum Boston to uncover "the meanings they ascribed to the printed goods they used." As it turns out, the books in such studies are seldom treated as artifacts. They constitute texts, abstracted from physical context, and serve, like Franklin's hypothetical coach, as vehicles of self-development and social relationships.²⁸

There are a few harbingers of change, like the recent collection *Reading Books*, in which eight literary scholars and one historian join forces to explore "the material text and literature in America." The volume contains such lucid essays as Jeffrey Groves's account of the marketing campaigns of the Boston publishing house Ticknor and Fields, wherein we see how distinct binding styles, copied from prestigious English models, were deployed to add cultural appeal to the firm's products. The analytical concreteness of these pieces is a welcome development.²⁹

By contrast, too many studies treat print as immaterial—a container of thoughts to be released from the page and appropriated in the reader's mind. That outlook resembles the vision of the electronic word in the futurist scenarios of Richard Lanham and others. The convergence may be coincidence. Ever since Carlo Ginzburg's *The Cheese and the Worms*, historians of the book have been on the hunt for popular readers.³⁰

Nonetheless, the parallel gives one pause. With its interactive technology, in service to individual needs, the communications revolution of our time

repeats the role we saw it play with the online catalog, accentuating a development already ongoing in print. In this instance, electronic media may be reshaping our approach to the past. If so, we would do well to consult the 1980 "Boston Statement on the History of the Book" and be reminded that without the book trade and its products, we would have no scholarly field.

Notes

1. Elizabeth L. Eisenstein. *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformation in Early-Modern Europe* (Cambridge, England.: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 2 vols.; Robert Darnton, *The Business of Enlightenment: A Publishing History of the Encyclopédie, 1775–1800* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979).

2. For a brief description of the Library of Congress's Center for the Book, see its Website (<http://lcweb.loc.gov/loc/cfbook>); the American Antiquarian Society gives an overview of the Program in the History of the Book in American Culture at a gopher site (<gopher://mark.mwa.org>).

3. The Center for the Book's Website provides access to information about book history and book arts programs at home and abroad.

4. A brief description of the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading, and Publishing (SHARP) is available at its Website (<http://www.indiana.edu/~sharp/intro.html>).

5. Kenneth E. Carpenter, ed., *Books and Society in History: Papers of the Association of College and Research Libraries Rare Books and Manuscripts Section Preconference 24–28 June 1980, Boston, Massachusetts* (N.Y. and London: R.R. Bowker Company, 1983); William L. Joyce, David D. Hall, Richard D. Brown, and John B. Hench, eds., *Printing and Society in Early America* (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1983), ix.

6. Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin. *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing, 1450–1800*; trans. David Gerard (London: New Left Books, 1976). The volume was originally published 18 years before as *L'Apparition du Livre* (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1958).

7. "A Statement on the History of the Book," in Carpenter, ed., *Books and Society in History*, xi–xii.

8. "A Statement on the History of the Book," xi–xii; Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962).

9. G. Thomas Tanselle, "Introduction," in Carpenter, ed., *Books and Society in History*, xviii–xix; Robert Darnton, "What Is the History of Books?," which appeared in *Books and Society in History*, 3–16 (quotation 3), is now widely available in Darnton, *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History* (N.Y.: W.W. Norton, 1990), 107–35.

10. Elizabeth L. Eisenstein. "From Scriptoria to Printing Shops: Evolution and Revolution in the Early Printed Book Trade," in Carpenter, ed., *Books and Society in History*, 20.

11. Raymond Birn. "Book Production and Censorship in France, 1700–1715," in Carpenter, ed., *Books and Society in History*, 156; Eisenstein, "From Scriptoria to Printing Shops," 40.

12. Roger Chartier, *Forms and Meanings: Texts, Performances, and Audiences from Codex to Computer* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 13–20; Paul Duguid, "Material Matters: The Past and Futurology of the Book," in Geoffrey Nunberg, ed., *The Future of the Book* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 73–74; Richard A. Lanham, *The Electronic Word: Democracy, Technology, and the Arts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 3–28, 195–223 (quotations 21, 219).

13. Lynne Sharon Schwartz, *Ruined by Reading: A Life in Books* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996); E. Annie Proulx, quoted in James J. O'Donnell, "The Pragmatics of the New: Trithemius, McLuhan, Cassiodorus," in Nunberg, ed., *Future of the Book*, 37; E. Annie Proulx, *The Shipping News* (N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1994); Robert A. Gross, "Reading Culture, Reading Books," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 106 (1996): 60–64; Sven Birkerts, *The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age* (New York: Random House, 1994), 20–27, 117–33 (quotations 118, 128, 27).

14. Duguid. "Material Matters," 66, 69; Lanham, *Electronic Word*, 33.

15. "In Electronic Age, Scholars Are Drawn to Study of Print," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 14, 1993.

16. Robert A. Gross and Christine L. Borgman, "The Incredible Vanishing Library," *American Libraries* 26.9 (October 1995): 900–04.

17. Eisenstein summarizes her argument in *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1983), the abridged version of her *magnum opus* of 1979.

18. "Statement on the History of the Book," xi; Paul Needham, review of Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, in *Fine Print* VI (Jan. 1980):

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