

# centre for material texts

## annual report 2012-13

### introduction

The Cambridge Centre for Material Texts was constituted by the English Faculty Board in July 2009 to push forward critical, theoretical, editorial and bibliographical work in a very lively field of humanities research. Addressing a huge range of textual phenomena and traversing disciplinary boundaries that are rarely breached by day-to-day teaching and research, the Centre fosters the development of new perspectives, practices and technologies, which will transform our understanding of the way that texts of many kinds have been embodied and circulated. This report summarizes the activities of the Centre in its fourth year.

The academic year 2012-13 saw a number of exciting developments. The significance of the Centre was recognized in the advertisement of **two lectureships** in the Faculty of English as posts in 'Literature and the Material Text', one covering the period before 1500, the other any field in the period 1500 to the present. The former post has been taken up by **Orietta da Rold** of the University of Leicester, the latter by **Hester Lees-Jeffries** of St Catharine's College, Cambridge. An **AHRC-funded project** to look at Italian books in the newly-catalogued libraries of the National Trust bore fruit in a one-day seminar and an exhibition at Belton House, Lincolnshire. The Centre contributed to the establishment of a **collaboration between CRASSH, the Huntington Library and the University of Southern California** entitled 'Seeing Things: Early-Modern Visual and Material Culture', which staged a two-day conference on 'Ephemerality and Durability in Early-Modern Visual and Material Culture' in May 2013. And we initiated a **medieval palaeography workshop** which we hope will become an annual fixture.

### I committee

The Centre is run by a Director (currently **Jason Scott-Warren**) and a Steering Committee. In 2012-13 the committee comprised: **Abigail Brundin** (MML), **Sarah Cain** (English), **Stefano Castelvechi** (Music), **Mina Gorji** (English), **Fiona Green** (English), **Stella Panayotova** (Fitzwilliam Museum), **Ed Potten** (University Library), **Paul Russell** (ASNC), **Anne Toner** (English), **Tessa Webber** (History), and **Andrew Zurcher** (English). The committee met twice this year, in February and May.

An Advisory Committee oversees the Centre's activities. Current members are: **Mary Beard** (Classics), **Helen Cooper** (English), **Simon Franklin** (Slavonic Studies), **Robert Gordon** (Italian), **David McKitterick** (History/Wren Library), **John Rink** (Music), **Jim Secord** (History and Philosophy of Science), **Nicholas Thomas** (Anthropology), **John Thompson** (Sociology), **David Trotter** (English), **Mark Turin** (Anthropology), and **Alexandra Walsham** (History). Members of the Advisory Committee are invited to comment on the Agendas and Minutes of meetings

of the Steering Committee, and to alert members of the Centre to new developments and opportunities.

Members of the Centre were saddened to learn of the death in April 2013 of an Advisory Committee member, Professor **Philip Ford**. Among Ford's numerous academic achievements was the securing of the Montaigne library—a wonderful resource for the study of the book in sixteenth-century France and beyond—for the Cambridge University Library. He will be greatly missed.

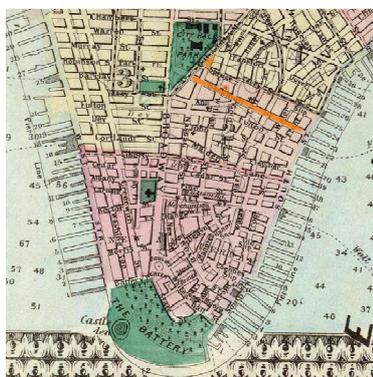
## II website

The website sets out the aims of the Centre, reports back on conferences and colloquia, advertises news and events, and publicizes the research interests and activities of its members. This year, **Alison Knight** helped to update the website and to circulate information to the mailing list. We are very grateful to her for all her hard work.

In 2012-13, one new item was added to the 'gallery' space: an article on **Colour-Printed Illustrations in Tudor Books, 1485-1603** by **Elizabeth Upper**, current Munby Fellow in Bibliography at the University Library.

The 'Projects' section of the website was extended considerably. The Fitzwilliam Museum's Illuminated Manuscripts Pigment Analysis Project morphed into

**MINIARE (Manuscript Illumination: Non-Invasive Analysis, Research and Expertise, <http://www.miniare.org/>)** and a number of new projects were added. These include the AHRC-funded **Sanskrit Manuscripts Project**, based in the University Library; **Collecting the Early Modern Book World**, a collaboration between scholars at Cambridge and Granada analysing the library of Columbus's son Hernando Colón; and **“Will not these days be by thy poets sung”: Poems of the Anglo-African and National Anti-Slavery Standard, 1863-1864”**, a digital edition of newspaper-published verse of the American Civil War.



The **blog** has been continuing to comment on material texts in the news, as well as drawing attention to (and reporting back on) current exhibitions, conferences and publications. The stalwarts of the blog are **Jason Scott-Warren** and **Lucy Razzall**, but other members of the Centre have posted and we are keen to encourage a broader range of contributors. Among the topics covered this year were: Ben Jonson's chair, Jane Austen's ring, and Michael Gove's Bible; the fate of Mali's manuscripts and the Senate House Library's Shakespeare Folios; the futures of the book, the newspaper and the Royal Mail; the roles played by graphology in French job recruitment processes, hanging chads in American elections, and the smell of chocolate in bookshops; signatures on classical statuary, inspirational slogans on cough-sweet wrappers, and paintings of plovers in second-hand books; editing Henry James and D.H. Lawrence; phishing, trolling and papal elections.

The CMT **Facebook page**, which provides broader publicity for the website, has now been ‘liked’ 178 times.

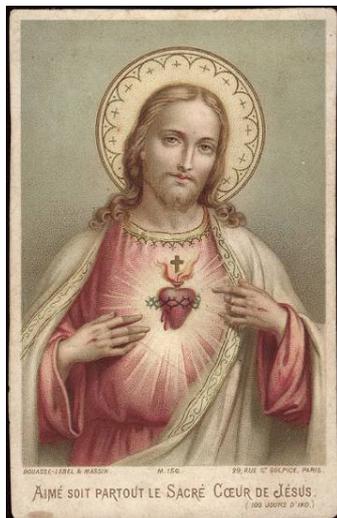
### III events and activities

#### Seminars



The Seminar for the History of Material Texts, convened by **Dunstan Roberts**, **Jason Scott-Warren** and **Andrew Zurcher**, met six times this year:

- 11 October** **Andrew Zurcher**, ‘Spenser’s Vomit: Imitation, Language, Materiality’
- 8 November** **Abigail Brundin** and **Dunstan Roberts**, ‘Italian books in an English great house library: The case of Belton House in Lincolnshire’
- 24 January** **Bob Groser** (Bibles Production Manager, Cambridge University Press), on materials and processes used in modern Bible manufacture
- 21 February** **Elizabeth Upper** (Munby Fellow, Cambridge University Library) and **Ad Stijnman** (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam), ‘Cycles of Invention: The Historical Developments of ‘New’ Innovations in Colour Printing, ca. 1600-1700’
- 2 May** **Robert Priest** (History, Cambridge), ‘Writing to Ernest Renan: Fan Mail, Hate Mail and the Historical Jesus in Nineteenth-Century France’
- 16 May** **Lucy Razzall** (English, Cambridge), ‘Thinking Inside the Box: Containers and the Materiality of Early Modern Texts’



Other seminars and workshops

**Cambridge Medieval Paleography Workshop, Easter Term 2013**

**Fridays 2-4, Trinity College, Junior Parlour**

The Cambridge Medieval Palaeography Workshop, convened by Tessa Webber, offered a new forum for informal discussion on medieval script and scribal practices, and on the presentation, circulation and reception of texts in their manuscript contexts. It is hoped that this will become an annual fixture in the Easter Term, each seminar focusing upon a particular issue, usually explored through a pair of short presentations and discussion.



**10 May                      Liturgical texts in their manuscript contexts**

**Henry Parkes**            ‘Visual hierarchy in eleventh-century “liturgical” texts’

**Erik Niblaeus**            ‘Twelfth-Century Breviary Fragments in the Swedish National Archives’

**17 May                      The process of development in script**

**David Ganz**              ‘Irish cursive script: scribes, styles and development’

**Chris Voth**                ‘The manuscript evidence for the beginnings of English Square Minuscule’

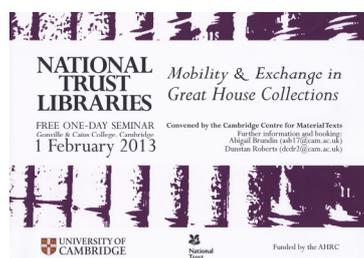
**24 May                      The palaeography of musical notation**

**Eduardo Aubert**        ‘The notions of pure and mixed (neumatic) scripts in the light of tenth- and eleventh-century sources from Burgundy’

**Giovanni Varelli**        ‘Ransacking the “toolbox” of tenth-century Italian music scribes: reflections on a first survey’

## One-Day Seminar

### **Mobility and Exchange in Great House Collections**

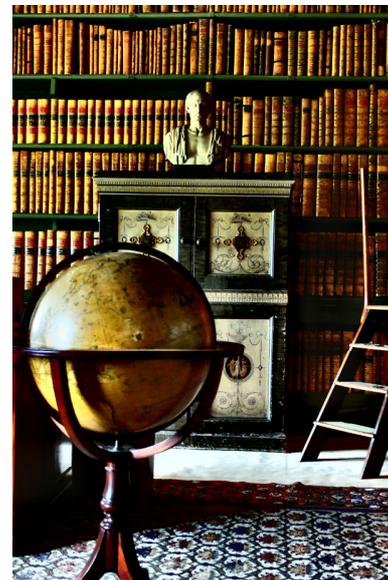


On 1 February 2013 the CMT hosted a one-day, AHRC-funded seminar on National Trust Libraries, organized by Dr **Abigail Brundin** of the Cambridge Italian Department. 45 librarians, curators, academics and postgraduate researchers from up and down the country came together to discuss ‘Mobility and Exchange in Great House Collections’, and to celebrate the unveiling of a new resource for cultural history.

Everyone who has been to a NT property will have had the experience of visiting the library and seeing rows and rows of books, intriguing but inaccessible, lining the shelves. Did they really matter? Or were they (as the cliché has it) bought by the yard by unthinking aristos who hoped they would help to keep out the cold? Only now, as the cataloguing of the Trust’s collections reaches its conclusion, can we begin to answer that question.

The NT’s libraries are overwhelming in scale—over 140 collections, with 230,000 books in 400,000 volumes, much if not all of which is now catalogued in impressive copy-specific detail on [COPAC](#). Both the cataloguing and the collections are overseen by the indefatigable Libraries Curator, **Mark Purcell**, who took us on a whistlestop powerpoint tour of his dominions. Like the houses, the libraries as he described them are complexly layered—brought together, broken up, moved around often over hundreds of years—so that understanding them requires a kind of archaeological reconstruction. Each library is a research project, or many research projects, waiting to happen. Purcell flashed up some of the highlights—masterpieces of printing or exceptionally rare titles—whetting the appetite for further exploration.

Elsewhere in the day, six papers illuminated different aspects of Great House library history. **Guyda Armstrong** (Manchester) kicked off with a discussion of the Chatsworth manuscript of Boccaccio’s *De claris mulieribus*, drawing out the pointed significance of presenting this discussion of good and bad women to Henry VIII, who had just executed his fifth wife, Catherine Howard, together with the daughter of the work’s translator, Lord Morley. Tracing the roundabout route by which the manuscript had made its way to the Chatsworth collection, Armstrong asked why the manuscript had always been so undervalued, and described some of the difficulties of gaining access to it today. **John Gallagher** (Cambridge) began his paper on ‘Reading and the Grand Tour’ by drawing a sharp contrast between the stasis of old books held in modern research libraries and the likely mobility of the same books in their early lives. His research shows how travellers bought, transported and discarded books according to the needs of the moment, often guided by their desire to pick up a fashionable smattering of a foreign tongue. **Dunstan Roberts** (Cambridge) followed this up with an account of the books that various generations of the Brownlow family of Belton House in Lincolnshire had bought on the Grand Tour. Putting the surviving books together with surviving lists of



travel expenses provides a startlingly immediate sense of the priorities of eighteenth-century tourists, and of the cultural horizons that their journeys opened up. You can find sculptures by Canova in the Hermitage and Louvre, but there's also one in the local church at Belton, thanks to the savvy of one heir to the family estates.



In the next session, **Hannah Degroff** (York) pointed to the difficulties of establishing exactly *where* books were kept in the historic house, in her case Castle Howard. The evidence is tantalizingly vague, but suggests that there may have been several separate collections within the house, and that these moved around in response to the changing circumstances of their ageing owner, the 3rd Earl of Carlisle. **Susie West** (Open University) extended that discussion by looking at the changing shape and location of aristocratic study libraries

from the late seventeenth-century into the eighteenth century, during which time they moved from a position adjacent to the bedchamber to a more public situation where they worked as a variant of the parlour. Her study also challenged the tendency of literary historians to privilege the closet as a site of privacy and (especially female) agency; the fluidity of nomenclature in this period makes it hard to distinguish closets from studies, and the fluidity of room usage may muddy the waters still further. Finally **Ed Potten** (Cambridge University Library) asked why nineteenth-century libraries had received so little scrutiny. Focusing on the libraries at Nostell Priory and Tatton Park, he suggested that the idea of the 'bibliophile' or the 'collector' (or worse still, the 'bibliomaniac') obscured the intellectual vitality of bookbuying and reading in the period.

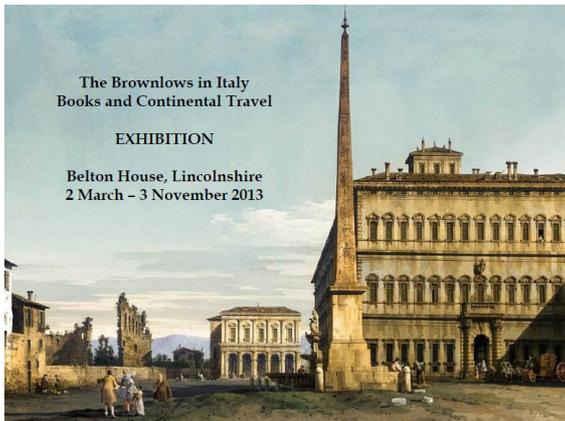
The seminar concluded with a round-table discussion chaired by **David Pearson** (London), along with **Warren Butcher** (Queen Mary), **Stephen Parkin** (British Library), **Nicholas Pickwood** (NT) and **Jason Scott-Warren** (Cambridge), which considered

some of the key issues facing the NT libraries as their cataloguing programme draws to a conclusion. How will the Trust cope with the expanding pressure for access? How can we balance increased access with the need to conserve the collections? How do we raise public awareness of the significance of these libraries? The last question generated the liveliest discussion: put simply, it will take money and labour to bring these libraries back to life, and nobody knows (yet) where that money and labour will come from.



## CMT 'Grand Day Out'

In June 2013, members were treated to the first ever **CMT coach trip**: a site-visit to the AHRC-funded exhibition at Belton House, Lincolnshire (see above), displaying books and maps collected by several generations of the Brownlow family on their Grand Tours across Europe. Among the many fascinating items on view were the original passports that the Brownlows carried in their travels; travel-guides and language-tutors that offer an insight into the prescriptive cultures that grew up around eighteenth- and nineteenth-century tours; several kinds of very rare ephemera, including opera programmes in startlingly colourful paper wrappers; and items of furniture such as the reading/exercise chair shown below, which allowed its users to bounce up and down as if on horseback while working their way through Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* or catching up on the latest Austen. The intimacy of the relationship between reading and travel was never clearer.



## IV research grant applications

### Transformative Research Axis for Creative Editing (TRACE)

This was an Outline Proposal submitted to the AHRC Large Grant Scheme (under the rubric of ‘Digital Transformations in the Arts & Humanities’) in January 2013. It was developed by Professor John Rink (Music), Dr Jason Scott-Warren (English), and Grant Young (Digital Services Division), in collaboration with the Digital Humanities Network.

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#### 1. Fit to the Call and Contribution to the Theme

Editions are central to the workings of the arts and humanities, and digital technologies are rapidly altering the ways in which they are produced, circulated and used. Although many editions now come with a substantial online component or are born digital, it is our contention that the **transformative potentials of the digital edition** have not yet been fully realised. This initiative will offer radically new ways of understanding, conceiving and exploiting editions, with the potential to change fundamentally the ways in which texts are presented and reproduced. The proposed research will explore and expand the horizons of the edition in the digital context through a combination of **critical investigation** and **practical exploration**, focusing in the first instance on several major editorial projects currently in train. The result will be a **new set of models and tools** for conceptualising and creating online editions, which will transform interactions with texts for a potentially limitless audience within and beyond the academy.

#### 2. Research Context

The context for this project is the current status quo in which many new digital editions—often funded by substantial grants of public money—are created through ad hoc collaborations between academics, website developers, and host institutions. Although there are personal and institutional continuities which facilitate the transmission of accumulated experience, there is little opportunity within these circumscribed collaborations for critical reflection on the modalities of editing or for creative experimentation with the conceptualisation, design and delivery of the edition. The lines of communication between academics, technologists and publics are often narrow, and editorial theory is not set in dialogue with editing as it unfolds in practice. The stage of testing, trialing and gathering feedback on editions is often similarly constricted, with attention being focused on simply ‘putting the material out there’. There is, in short, a glaring disconnect between the various stakeholders in the editorial process. It is this disconnect that our project aims to overcome.

Our research programme will assemble an entirely new series of connections called the **Transformative Research Axis for Creative Editing**, or **TRACE**, which will unite several existing centres, networks, academic departments and support services within Cambridge whilst effecting a wide-ranging series of collaborations with national and international partners within and beyond the academy. For strategic reasons, a number of these internal and external engagements will be founded in partnerships already constellated around existing editorial projects, but most will be initiated as the project unfolds. Critical nodes in the internal armature of TRACE will

be the **Cambridge Digital Humanities Network**, **Centre for Material Texts**, **Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (CRASSH)**, **Digital Services Division** of the Cambridge University Library, and **Cambridge University Press**. The project's three leaders are active participants in these institutions and have already engaged in a host of both large- and small-scale collaborations. They are ideally placed to design new interfaces between them and to ensure that new synergies flow from them. Together with the RAs and PhDs on the project, they will also facilitate the involvement of other relevant parties in order to develop a programme of work that is focused and practical, whilst being flexible and open to responsive development.

### 3. Research Questions

TRACE will address a series of interrelated questions:

- **Definition and redefinition.** What are the key modalities of the edition (critical, genetic, variorum, facsimile, scholarly, popular, etc.) and how does the digital environment invite us to reinvent those modalities? Are prevailing concepts of the edition relevant in respect of metaresources such as Connected Histories?
- **Print into digital.** The digital is often figured merely as a solution to the constraints of print editions. Is it possible to rethink the digital edition in its own right? How will the edition evolve and indeed need to evolve in response to digitisation initiatives? What new opportunities are afforded by the development of interactive apps (e.g. for 'The Waste Land')?
- **Roles and relationships.** The digital edition is changing the roles and relationships of participants in the production and use of editions (creator, archive, editor, publisher, buyer, reader, performer), with important cultural, political and economic consequences. How can we reposition these participants in order to unlock the potential of editing in the digital sphere?
- **Fluent editions.** The plasticity of the digital edition allows it to be (at one extreme) unique to each reader or performer. How can we combine this plasticity with the stability, reliability and ease-of-use that readers expect from editions?
- **The edition in use.** How is the new generation of editions being used? What critical and practical tools do we need to understand current and future patterns of use, and to harness changing appropriations in order to revolutionise the editorial process?
- **The edition in performance.** How are digital editions transformed in performance? How can this stage of the user engagement be facilitated and captured in a digital edition, so that the edition grows by the sum of its renditions?

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This outline pitch was unsuccessful; the applicants intend to develop it further for resubmission at a later date, as well as exploring other ways of developing Cambridge's status as a centre for editorial theory and practice, in association with the Digital Humanities Network. For further reflection on this subject, see the 'Research Horizons' article at <http://www.cam.ac.uk/research/features/the-un-limited-edition>

## **Mobility and Exchange in the Private Library**

This was an application submitted by Abigail Brundin and Jason Scott-Warren to the AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Awards scheme, seeking four PhD places to work across a range of National Trust libraries on a range of themes.

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### **Project Summary**

The National Trust owns and manages over 150 properties in the United Kingdom that contain collections of books, the majority still housed in the buildings where they were assembled and read by their original owners. Between forty and fifty of the libraries in NT properties have been described as being of 'major national significance' (Purcell and Shenton, 2005). The contents of these libraries constitute an unparalleled resource for the study of cultural history and the history of the book in the UK. To date, little work has been done on most of these collections, although the process of cataloging is ongoing, and results are accessible to researchers on Copac.

'Mobility and Exchange' builds upon the success of a pilot project at one NT property, Belton House in Lincolnshire. Funded by an AHRC network grant under the 'Translating Cultures' theme, the pilot focused on the cross-border movements of texts, objects and agents. We are now requesting 4 CDAs to explore separate but interrelated aspects of our central theme: (1) cultural exchange and the book; (2) the library and its communities; (3) the library in domestic material culture; (4) the Great House library and its modern publics. These doctoral projects will be comparative, with each student focusing initially on two collections but developing their argument in relation to other relevant libraries within and beyond the Trust's portfolio. Theme 1 will initially be linked to Charlecote and Ickworth, theme 2 to Townend and Lanhydrock, theme 3 to Dunham Massey and Calke Abbey, theme 4 to Wimpole and Belton. These collections have been selected for their fit to the theme and for their rich early modern bibliographic and archival holdings. A key ambition of this project is to think about how older collections which might appear to be of merely antiquarian interest can disclose fascinating and engaging stories at the interfaces between apparently distant cultures.

Taken together, the work of our CDA students will help to bring the library rooms of historic houses (often experienced by modern visitors as dead spaces) back to life by attending to the plurality and diversity of their contents and their interactions both with wider cultural histories and with the households and communities of which they are a part. As in the Belton pilot study, these doctoral projects will explore the significance of the vast numbers of foreign books in English collections; will explore the protocols of access to books according to differentials of gender, status, age and race; will consider the relationship between bookbuying and other forms of domestic consumption, circulation and display; and will explore the implications of these investigations for the presentation of National Trust libraries to modern audiences for

whom engagement with physical books and libraries is likely to become an increasingly unfamiliar experience.

The students selected for the project will work closely with NT library curators and house staff in order to gain an unprecedented degree of intimacy with individual houses and historic collections that have only recently been opened to scrutiny through the NT's programme to catalogue its collections. Co-supervision from the NT end will be provided by Dr Mark Purcell, Libraries Curator, and his team of curators and conservators working across the Trust's large portfolio of libraries. Doctoral students will be involved in the planning and delivery of small-scale exhibitions of books in the properties where they are working, with support and guidance from NT book curators and conservators. Similarly, public engagement events, including workshops and talks on site at the properties, will be an integral part of the doctoral experience.

In Cambridge the students will constitute an NT research hub under the aegis of the Centre for Material Texts, with supervision managed jointly by the Faculty of English and the Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages.

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The application was unsuccessful, and we are currently seeking alternative sources of funding for what we hope will be a long and fruitful collaboration with the NT.



## Collecting the Early Modern Book World

This was an application to the Cambridge Humanities Research Grant Scheme, made by Edward Wilson-Lee (Sidney Sussex College and the Faculty of English)

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Between 1512 and his death in 1539, Hernando Colón (1488-1539, natural son of Columbus) set about collecting one of the great libraries of the early modern age. ‘Without being a man of great estate’, one of his contemporaries recorded, ‘he travelled throughout Christendom searching out and bringing together books on all subjects’. At the time of his death the collection boasted over 20000 volumes.



His bibliomania took him across Europe — on a single trip in 1530-1 stopping in Rome, Bologna, Modena, Parma, Turin, Milan, Venice, Padua, Innsbruck, Augsburg, Constance, Basle, Fribourg, Cologne, Maastrich, Antwerp, Paris, Poitiers and Burgos—and his meticulous records of his purchases allow us to trace his spending spree in great detail. Besides his own travels, his collection grew through the volumes sent via an extensive network of factors and correspondents in other Spanish and European cities. Unusually for its time, his library sought to collect printed books — considered by many libraries to be mere novelties — as well as precious manuscripts, expensive folios as well as leaflets of no more than ten pages. He also devised detailed and systematic methods for the classification of his volumes, making him one of the founders of modern bibliography. Colón acquired such expertise in book-purchasing that in his will he recommended the sort of itinerary that a good collector should follow in his endeavours to gather books. In line with the imperial ambitions of Charles I, Hernando Colón declared that his intention was to put together a universal library that would gather not just all the published material in Christianity, but also whatever was available beyond its frontiers.

Colón also played a part in many of the central intellectual currents of the day: educated by the Italian Humanist Peter Martyr, he also travelled with his father to the New World (1502, 1509) where he began a lifelong passion for cartography and for anthropological information (which he promulgated in a biography of his father). Under the sponsorship of the Spanish monarchy he led a team of experts that elaborated the first modern topographical description of the country, the so-called *Descripción y cosmografía de España*, with its companion *Vocabulario topográfico*. His cosmographical expertise also made him a valued diplomat, and he served in delegations to Italy and elsewhere to defend Spain’s right to its New World possessions and to assert further possessions to the east, in Persia and Arabia.

The core of his collection survives today, as the Biblioteca Colombina within Seville cathedral, and features a world-class collection of incunabula and manuscripts from the age of discovery and Humanism. For all its bibliographical and historical riches, this collection is scarcely known outside Spain as a resource for studying the material and intellectual culture of a key period in European history. Recent developments — including the completion of modern catalogues for the library, an online Universal Short Title Catalogue for the early modern book trade as a whole, and a growing interest among scholars in ideas of collecting, knowledge organization, and translation — suggest that the time is ripe to correct this oversight. A project focused on Colón’s library not only has the potential to shed new light on the circulation and organization of knowledge in the early years of the book trade, it will also provide an opportunity to bring together experts from the full range of early modern European book cultures, experts who have until recently largely worked on isolated national traditions but who are now recognizing the radical transnationalism of early modern book culture.

We are seeking funds to hold preliminary workshops in Seville and Cambridge, gathering key players to discuss the opportunities and obstacles for such a project, before applying for a six-

figure project grant to be led by Dr Edward Wilson-Lee (Cambridge) and Prof. Jose Maria Perez Fernandez (Granada). The workshop in Seville would begin to consolidate a network of specialists on the Colombina collection, and the Cambridge workshop would gather experts on different European book traditions and on other topics relevant to the project, such as cartography, diplomacy, and travel. These sessions would also be used to compile a major funding application.

Prof. Perez-Fernandez and Dr Wilson-Lee have recently completed editing the results of a collaborative study, *Translation and the Book Trade in Early Modern Europe*, which brought together scholars of all the major European book markets with the aim of shedding light on practises within early modern book culture which could not be explained within the confines of a single national tradition. By looking at the marketing, design, and censorship of early modern books, as well as trends in readership and transnational religious, political, and cultural phenomena, the study revealed the extent to which early modern books straddled borders from conception to consumption. Most book markets relied heavily on translated books and on foreign markets, and they developed their products with an eye to international trade, importing celebrated (and scandalous) texts and printing books for markets in which they were banned. Elements of the book trade itself also flowed from country to country: language teachers and translators and printers were drawn into new areas by demand or driven there by persecution, and they brought with them book designs and ways of conceptualising the act of reading itself. The study, which has been highly praised by peer reviewers and senior scholars in the field, aimed to provide a means to harness the cascade of information on the European book trade being made available through the Universal Short Title Catalogue, digital text databases, and a range of major projects on translation within individual national book cultures.

The full-scale project on the Biblioteca Colombina would seek to take this further by studying one of the major early modern print collections in its aspect as a self-consciously European collection of books, and one of the earliest to bring together new material on the New World. How did Colón conceive of the European book world, and, by extension, of Europe? Did different national traditions have a ‘character’ within his collection? What channels — mercantile, diplomatic, personal — existed through which books could be gathered? How did the collection treat Latinity and vernacularity? As well as consolidating a pan-European network of interdisciplinary specialists, we would also plan a major collaborative publication on the organization of knowledge at the dawn of the modern age.

The fact that the collection was built after Columbus’s success in expanding the scope of the material, religious and economic ambitions of the West, also turns his son’s collection into an excellent case study for the intersection between the processes of colonial expansion and the transformations that the cartography of knowledge was undergoing in the early modern world. In bringing to fruition the transatlantic encounter between the wisdom received from Classical Antiquity, contemporary Western intellectual production and the novelties that kept coming from across the ocean, the whole collection pre-empted Francis Bacon’s call for an expansion of the frontiers of the intellect in his *Instauratio Magna* a century later: ‘*Surely, it would be disgraceful if, while the regions of the material globe—that is, of the earth, of the sea, and of the stars—have been in our times laid widely open and revealed, the intellectual globe should remain shut up within the narrow limit of old discoveries*’.

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This application was successful. A workshop on Colón will be held in the Parker Library, Corpus Christi, Cambridge on 17 December 2013.

## V the future

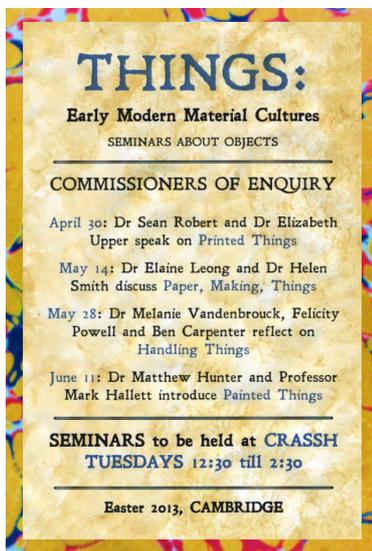
Our general aims, as stated in previous reports, remain central to our activities in the future: “We plan to make the Centre more eclectic and interdisciplinary; to offer a wide range of seminars, colloquia and conferences; to offer more bespoke graduate training seminars; to strengthen links between the Centre and the University’s library community; and to support the generation of research grant applications in the field of material textuality.”

Our activities in the coming year will continue to be shaped by our three **research themes**:

### (i) the material text in material culture

*There has in recent years been an increasing interest in the study of material culture, a fascination with the ways in which our lives shape and are in turn shaped by physical objects and environments. This theme focuses on the interrelations between the textual and the material, and explores the processes by which texts are produced, circulated and consumed, as objects alongside other objects, or sometimes on or in objects (since the things we live among are often notable for their loquacity). Our 2011 colloquium ‘Eating Words: Text, Image, Food’ offers a good example of the kind of interaction between writing and the world of things that a postdoctoral research fellow in this area might be dedicated to exploring; so too does our planned colloquium for 2012 on the theme of ‘Texts and Textiles’.*

This theme has given rise to two conferences in the past three years. A collection of the early-modern papers from the first of these, ‘Eating Words’, is currently being developed as an **edited collection** by Jason Scott-Warren and Andrew Zurcher. Contributors include Juliet Fleming, Deborah Krohn, Raphael Lyne, Randall McLeod, Helen Smith, Peter Stallybrass, Lizzie Swann and Andrew Zurcher. A draft introduction has been completed, as part of a book proposal submitted to Ashgate’s ‘Material Readings in Early Modern Culture’ series. Meanwhile we have received the green light to publish a **selection of papers** from the second conference, ‘Texts and Textiles’, in the journal *Textile: The Journal of Cloth and Culture* (Berg). The editors will be Jason Scott-Warren and Lucy Razzall (Faculty of English/Emmanuel College) with Victoria Mitchell (Norwich University of the Arts).



Members of the Centre continue to play a significant part in shaping the CRASSH research seminar on ‘**Things**’, which is about to broaden its remit still further and take in papers covering the period to 1900. They are also active in ‘**Seeing Things: Early-Modern Visual and Material Culture**’ (CRASSH/Huntington Library/USC), spearheaded by Alexander Marr (Cambridge, History of Art), which has resulted in several conferences and graduate exchanges. The Centre will continue to promote the idea of organizing a **Strategic Initiative** around the theme of ‘Materialities’, which would allow consolidation of the research that is currently being undertaken into material culture across a range of disciplines.

## **(ii) digital editing and digital curation**

*As soon as academics became aware of the internet, they became excited about the possibilities for new kinds of readerly engagement that it might open up, whether through hypertext editions that would encode multiple versions of variant texts, searchable ebooks that would hugely expedite research, or digital facsimiles that would allow unprecedented access to previously restricted materials. Two decades and many experiments later, it is time to assess how far we have travelled. Is it possible to extrapolate rules for a successful digital edition or curatorial project? What challenges do readers and scholars face in dealing with new technologies, and how might they be overcome? What might curators and editors of films, of music manuscripts, of theatrical ephemera, of cuneiform inscriptions learn from one another? And does the future lie with the increasing capitalization of the digital sphere, or with an efflorescence of open-access initiatives? A postdoctoral researcher appointed under this scheme might, for example, help to develop the English Faculty's 'Scriptorium' project, a digital collection of medieval and early modern manuscript miscellanies.*

This theme is nourished by our ongoing relationship with the **Cambridge Digital Humanities Network**, which we hope will lead to further large grant applications of the kind that we submitted this year in relation to the AHRC's 'Digital Transformations in the Arts and Humanities' research theme (see above). The newly-initiated **Centre for Digital Knowledge**, and the proposed **Strategic Initiative** on 'Big Data', may open new avenues through which to pursue this research strand.

## **the library and its publics**

*This theme focuses on rare book and manuscript libraries—with which Cambridge is unusually blessed—and explores the nature of their relationship with a variety of publics. What purposes will special collections come to serve in the twenty-first century? How might libraries best exhibit their collections and publicize their activities? Do new technologies create fresh possibilities for reaching out both to the academic community and the general public, or do they instead prove a costly distraction from the core business of curating and managing special collections? How might we increase the frequency and scale of academic collaborations with libraries? The Centre's current project on National Trust libraries, initiated by Abigail Brundin in MML, represents the kind of work that might be undertaken by a postdoctoral research fellow under this rubric.*

This theme has over the last year been pushed forward principally by the **National Trust Libraries Project**. We will continue to pursue ways of extending and expanding upon this very fruitful collaboration. The new project on **Hernando Colón** and his extraordinary book-collections will offer a valuable new focus for work on the history of libraries in Cambridge. In the coming year we plan to initiate a new series of **research masterclasses** based in the UL and college libraries, in order to intensify the relationship between the Centre and local library communities.