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 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 fifth year.

In the academic year 2013-14, the Centre was boosted by the arrival of our two new Lecturers in Literature and the Material Text, Orietta da Rold and Hester Lees-Jeffries. Orietta coordinated a two-day international conference, ‘Writing Britain 500-1500’, on 30 June-1 July 2014, in the Faculty of English. Hester curated an exhibition on the printed afterlives of Shakespeare, coinciding with the 450th anniversary of his birth, at the University Library. The History of Material Texts seminar was more international than ever, hearing papers on Tibetan books, Russian printed forms, Japanese broadsides, and American non-fiction paperbacks, as well as the manuscripts of George Eliot and Emily Dickinson, printed Biblical marginalia, and the history of the community library. Our medieval palaeography workshop stormed into its second year, and we staged two occasional seminars, one with Professor Randall McLeod of the University of Toronto, the second (via Skype) with Nicholas Jenkins of Stanford. The CMT project ‘Collecting the Early Modern Book World’, focusing on the library of Hernando Colón, held a one-day seminar in the Parker Library on 17 December 2013, with support from the Cambridge Humanities Research Grants Scheme. The Centre also hooked up with a conference on ‘Printing as an Agent of Change in Tibet and Beyond’, held at Pembroke College, 28-30 November 2013, which paved the way for an exhibition currently being held in the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, entitled ‘Buddha’s Word: The Life of Books in Tibet and Beyond’.

I committe

The Centre is run by a Director (currently Jason Scott-Warren) and a Steering Committee. In 2013-14 the committee comprised: Abigail Brundin (MML), Sarah Cain (English), Stefano Castelvecchi (Music), Orietta da Rold (English), Mina Gorji (English), Fiona Green (English), Alison Knight (CRASSH), Hester Lees-
Jeffries (English), Stella Panayotova (Fitzwilliam Museum), Ed Potten (University Library), Paul Russell (ASNC), Anne Toner (English), Tessa Webber (History) and Andrew Zurcher (English). During the course of the year, Anne Alexander (Digital Humanities Network) and Grant Young (Cambridge Digital Library) joined the committee. The committee met three times, in October, January and June.

An Advisory Committee oversees the Centre’s activities. This year the members were: Mary Beard (Classics), Helen Cooper (English), Simon Franklin (Slavonic Studies), Robert Gordon (Italian), David McKitterick (History/Wren Library), Rosamond McKitterick (History), 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). Helen Cooper retired at the end of the academic year; we would like to thank her for her contribution to the flourishing of the Centre. 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.

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 continued to update the website and to circulate information to the mailing list. Her hard work is much appreciated.

In 2013-14, two new items were added to the ‘Gallery’ space on the website. The first, by Alison Sinclair (MML), discussed the pleasures and challenges of curating the UL exhibition Read all about it! Wrongdoing in Spain and England in the long nineteenth century. The second, by Joe Jarrett (a PhD student in the Faculty of English), concerned the discovery in the University Library of a copy of Euclid’s Elements owned and annotated by the imprisoned Elizabethan recusant Sir Thomas Tresham.

The blog received around 40 contributions across this academic year. Subjects included the purchase of typewriters by the German secret services; the relationship between Galaxy chocolate bars and Kindle ebooks; the threat to the Warburg Institute Library; the new British Library newsroom; an exhibition of textiles made by people in prisons, workhouses, or hospitals; a 3D-printed reconstruction of the surface of the Hereford Mappa Mundi; the value of chasing wild geese in a library; the work of the Californian missionary Junipero Serra; a copy of Boccaccio annotated by the Elizabethan spy William Herle; a cache of letters sent home during the Second World War, requesting books; soldiers quoting Shakespeare in Afghanistan; a new waxwork of Jane Austen; why rhyme pleases; the place of books in the TV-series Call the Midwife; and the fashionability of text on clothing.
This year the blog made its first mark on print media. A post entitled ‘Shakespeare’s Dictionary’, debunking the claims of a pair of antiquarian booksellers to have discovered a copy of Baret’s Alvearie (1580) annotated by the playwright, was cited in the Times Literary Supplement (No. 5812-3, August 22-29 2014). It had previously been quoted by the online Chronicle of Higher Education (23 April 2014, http://chronicle.com/article/Shakespeare-s-Dictionary-/146165/).

The main contributors to the blog have continued to be Jason Scott-Warren and Lucy Razzall, with occasional interjections from others. Members of the Centre wishing to post to the blog should contact Jason Scott-Warren (jest003).

The CMT Facebook page, which provides broader publicity for the website, has now garnered 283 likes. The CMT has recently acquired a Twitter identity and will start tweeting in earnest in the coming academic year.

III events and activities

Seminars

The Seminar for the History of Material Texts, convened by Dunstan Roberts, Jason Scott-Warren and Andrew Zurcher, increased its offerings from six seminars to eight this year:

17 October Alison Knight (CRASSH/Emmanuel), “The Margent Profitable”: The Marginal Note in the Early Modern Bible


30 January Cristanne Miller (SUNY Buffalo), ‘What Is (and is not) the Poem? Genetic Editing and Emily Dickinson’s Manuscripts’. Held jointly with the American Literature Research Seminar

20 February Simon Franklin (MML, Cambridge), ‘In Praise of Old Blank Forms (Especially in Russia)’

24 April Mark Towsey (History, Liverpool), ‘Community Libraries: Connecting Readers in the Atlantic World, 1650-1850’

1 May Peter Mandler (History, Cambridge), ‘Good Reading for the Million: The Advent of the Mass-Market Non-Fiction Paperback’

15 May Laura Moretti (AMES, Cambridge), ‘Broadsides in Early Modern Japan: The Osaka Publisher Shioya Kihei and his 'Kobanzuke”
29 May  Hildegard Diemberger and Stephen Hugh-Jones (Social Anthropology, Cambridge), ‘Palm-leaf, paper, Digital Dharma; Exploring the Materiality of Tibetan Buddhist Texts and their Transformations’

Other seminars and workshops

Cambridge Medieval Palaeography Workshop, Easter Term 2014

Convenors: Teresa Webber, Orietta Da Rold, Suzanne Paul and David Ganz

The Cambridge Medieval Palaeography Workshop is a forum for informal discussion on medieval script and scribal practices, and on the presentation, circulation and reception of texts in their manuscript contexts. This year there were two 2-hour workshops, held in the University Library:

Friday 2 May  Scribal Identification and its Hazards

Benjamin Pohl, ‘The hand of Robert of Torigni: methods of scribal identification’

Richard Beadle, ‘CUL MS Ee.i.12: the hand(s?) of James Ryman’

Friday 16 May  Transcription and its Hazards: Interpreting Scribal Practice

Anna Dorofeeva on diacritical marks and other problems of transcription posed by manuscripts of the twelfth-century Kaiserchronik and its later re-workings (for the Kaiserchronik project, see http://www.mml.cam.ac.uk/german/staff/kaischron.html)

Daniel Wakelin on the use, possible function(s), and editorial treatment of the ‘otiose strokes’ with which scribes completed certain letters or letter combination in late-medieval copies of Middle English texts
Seminar: The Biblioteca Hernandina and the Early Modern Book World

On 17 December 2013, the Centre for Material Texts in association with the Literature and Translation Research Group at the University of Granada staged a one-day workshop on ‘The Biblioteca Hernandina and the Early Modern Book World’, held at the Parker Library at Corpus Christi College. Organised by Edward Wilson-Lee and José María Pérez Fernández, the workshop convened a group of experts to discuss aspects of the enormous library of Hernando Colón, son of Christopher Columbus, who after some early journeying with his father in the New World devoted much of his life to travelling in search of books.

José María and Edward kicked things off by offering a potted biography of Colón and an account of his life in book-buying. His shopping expeditions began in Spain in 1510, moved on to Italy in 1512, and subsequently took him to Germany, France, the Netherlands and England. He also sent agents out to extend his collections, instructing them to focus on cheaper and more unusual small-format books rather than buying the kind of expensive folios that could be obtained anywhere. Along the way he paid visits to heroes such as Erasmus, taking care to receive at least one book as a gift on each visit, and he may have befriended Albrecht Dürer, whose works he added to his vast collection of printed woodcuts and engravings. The result was a library that dwarfed other collections of the day, boasting more than 15,000 titles. A number of catalogues witness his struggle not merely to list the books he owned, but also to render them useful. Rather than letting the books die on the shelves, he sought to release their contents through a massive project of indexing and epitomizing—a project that was doomed to failure, and which was left unfinished at his death in 1539.

One of the most striking features of Hernando’s collecting was his enthusiasm for ephemera, and in the morning session Miguel Martínez explored his penchant for broadside ballads, newsbooks and controversial pamphlets—the sort of cheap publications that streets of his native former ubiquity, such single copies if they longer extant in survives in Seville Pettigree picked up suggesting that as early modern editions without trace. He would have flooded the Seville. Despite their items now survive in survive at all, and they no Cólon’s library as it Cathedral. Andrew this topic of lost books, many as two-thirds of all may have disappeared explained how the editors of the Universal Short Title Catalogue are using a variety of archival records to infer the existence of lost editions—10,000 of them so far—which are being added to the catalogue to create a much fuller map of pre-1600 print culture. The third paper in this session focused on a particular book, Christopher Columbus’s copy of Marco Polo’s account of China. Ana Carolina Hosne reconsidered the question of how far Columbus was aware of Polo’s work when he set out to pioneer a westward route to Cathay—given that his copy in the Biblioteca Hernandina post-dates his second expedition of 1498.
The afternoon session began with Tess Knighton on Cólon’s music books. As well as setting Cólon in relation to other Spanish collectors, Knighton’s talk challenged the idea that all of Cólon’s music-buying would have required foreign travel. Although it is clear that some of his shopping for the earliest printed polyphonic music was done in Italy, the mobility of books in the period was such that a range of international publications would have been on sale in Seville. Alexander Marr took on the subject of prints, exploring the curious blind-spots in Cólon’s massive collection of woodcut and intaglio images and asking whether these point us to his personal tastes, or merely to the financial constraints imposed by someone who seems to have watched every maravedi as he trawled the seas of ink. Vittoria Feola concluded the session by considering the fate of the Hernandina library in relation to other great collections, including the library of Elias Ashmole, which she is currently cataloguing. Her account of the unpredictable twists and turns of books-as-property suggested that there are many ways in which a library can be ‘lost’. The most perfectly preserved collection can be unknown and unused, kept in a gilded cage with no catalogue to guide readers to its contents.

The conference closed with a round-table discussion which started out from a fascinating memoir of Cólon by his servant Juan Pérez, and which moved on to attempt to integrate the day’s findings. Was Cólon a bad collector, someone who put quantity above quality and whose cataloguing techniques were little better than quixotic? What should we make of his buying of books in languages he couldn’t read and that he considered ‘barbaric’ (such as his large collection of German Lutheran pamphlets)? And what sense can we make of his ephemeral collecting? Does his investment in the popular mark him out as exceptional, or does our propensity to find it surprising merely reveal the distortions in our view of the period?

For further details of the workshop and the larger project, see http://www.english.cam.ac.uk/research/hernandocolon/home/

Conference: Writing Britain, 500-1500

The Writing Britain conference, held under the aegis of the Centre for Material Texts in the Faculty of English between 30 June and 1 July 2014, provided an informative and stimulating three days of friendly and lively academic exchange.

The conference theme implicitly questioned contemporary notions of identity and historiography, as well as prompting the delegates to explore how modern accounts of ‘Britain’ matched the realities experienced by individuals and communities during the millennium that comprised the conference’s focus. The result was a set of papers that used a broad range of approaches, allowing a great deal of productive analysis of similar questions from multiple angles.
The ‘Writing...’ series has been notable in its encouragement of digital approaches to questions of the materiality and functionality of text. This year’s incarnation was no exception, with a strong focus on tools that are being developed and then augmented by scholars seeking a more comprehensive understanding of a broad array of information.

By contrast, the conference opened with a plenary by Jonathan Wilcox (University of Iowa) which showed the value still to be found in traditional methods such as close reading. Many of the papers reflected a resurgence in the application of these more traditional techniques. This resurgence extended beyond textual analysis to palaeography and codicology, as well as to socio-economic history.

What the conference established is that all of these approaches have a great deal to contribute. The separation of delegates into the digital and the more traditional, often a feature of conferences of this nature, spectacularly failed to materialise. This perhaps speaks of the extent to which emergent approaches have matured over the last decade, to the point where they sit as a complement to more established forms of analysis. Neither camp sees the other as either a substitute or without its uses.

The conference was both encouraging and inspiring as it facilitated many conversations between more experienced academics and those in the early stages of their careers. All that remains is to thank the organising committee for this excellent opportunity to gather together as medievalists and book historians on both an academic and a social level.

The conference was very active on Twitter (#WritBrit2014) and Kate Sragan inscribed the Twitter feeds for posterity in Storify (https://storify.com/katesargan/writing-britain-500-1500). Thank you Kate!

[We are grateful to Owen Roberson and Freya Brooks for providing this report.]
Exhibition: ‘William Shakespeare, 1564-1616’

William Shakespeare was baptised at Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon, on 26 April 1564; since at least the eighteenth century, his birthdate has been given as 23 April. With a symmetry that has helped to fix the date of his birth, he died on 23 April 1616. Although Shakespeare’s works have been read, performed, and written about more or less continuously since they were first printed and acted, their formal study within academic institutions is much more recent. There is a long and lively history of performing Shakespeare’s plays in Cambridge, and of Shakespeare criticism and editing by Cambridge academics; all over the world, many students will read Shakespeare for the first time in one of the Cambridge School Shakespeare editions. This exhibition in the University Library’s Entrance Hall, curated by Hester Lees-Jeffries, brought together a number of books printed in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century which together demonstrate some of the ways in which early readers, perhaps students in particular, would have encountered and responded to Shakespeare. Among the volumes on display were the First and Second Folios, the Workes of Ben Jonson, Meres’ Palladis Tamia, the Second Part of the Returne from Parnassus, and a selection of modern editions of Shakespeare’s works. The exhibition also included some of the earliest Shakespeare examination questions ever set, and sat, in Cambridge.

For a fuller report, see https://specialcollections.blog.lib.cam.ac.uk/?p=7689

Seminar: Randall McLeod (University of Toronto), ‘The Birth of Italics’

Friday 27 June 2014

Randall McLeod’s lecture discussed the printing of the first book in italics, Aldo Manuzio’s 1501 Vergil, with type created for him by Francesco da Bologna. Offering ‘not a reading of Vergil, but a reading of Book’, McLeod showed how the printing of the edition had begun before the fount was complete. The arrival and insertion of a dozen sets of ligatured letters during the book’s production could be used to reveal the printing schedule, which was quite different from the narrative order imposed on the book by binding. Aldo’s schedule could be established still more precisely, McLeod demonstrated, by reading the blank tops and bottoms of some pages (such as the title page or colophon). These ‘spaces’ are not really blank, but are printed with type, like the other parts of these pages, but printed blind — that is, without ink, and their messages can only be recovered with the help of a raking light. McLeod’s talk offered a printer’s-eye-view of a foundational text, and provided a fascinating insight into the queer temporalities of print.
Seminar: Nicholas Jenkins (Stanford University), ‘Kindred Britain’

Monday, 2 June 2014

This Skype seminar was a round-table discussion with Nicholas Jenkins, associate professor of English at Stanford University and creator of an innovative Digital Humanities project entitled ‘Kindred Britain’ (http://kindred.stanford.edu). ‘Kindred Britain’ adapts route-finding software of the kind used by SatNavs to find the shortest route between two points in a family tree, and in the process offers a fascinating picture of the family ties that bind the iconic figures in British culture. A network of nearly 30,000 individuals, interconnected by relationships of blood, marriage or affiliation, it offers ‘a vision of the nation’s history as a giant family affair’—or perhaps as a closed shop.

The seminar, organized by the CMT and the Digital Humanities Network, offered participants an opportunity to reflect on the project and to consider the potential of digital work of this kind to transform our understanding of histories and cultures. For more information, see Jenkins’s online essay ‘Originating Kindred Britain’, at http://kindred.stanford.edu/notes.html?section=originating.

Lunchtime Forum: ‘Digital Support for Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences’

This event, held on 10 June 2014, was organized by the Digital Humanities Network, partly at the prompting of members of the CMT Steering Committee who were concerned about the extent of the University’s support for digital humanities projects. There were presentations from Grant Young and Chris Stokoe of Digital Services, and from Paul Calleja and Richard Mee from the University Information Services. It is hoped that this might become a regular event, and that the University will recognize that the level of demand for digital tools in the Arts and Humanities is not being met by current provision. There are already signs that those contemplating projects with a digital dimension are having to look beyond the University for support. The failure to provide more in-house provision could put a serious brake on the ability of humanities scholars to bring external grant funding to Cambridge.
IV selected publications by members of the Centre, 2013-14

Ruth Abbott, 'Wordsworth, Coleridge, and the “strain of words | That shall be life” in Dove Cottage Manuscript 28', in Textual Practice (published online 13th January 2014, print version forthcoming)


Abigail Brundin, 'Composition “a due”: Lyric Poetry and Scribal Practice in Sixteenth-Century Italy', in Machtelt Isaaks and Louis Waldman (eds), Renaissance Studies in Honor of Joseph Connors, 2 vols (Florence: Olschki, 2013), 496-504


--- M. Elliott and M. Clemente (eds), The Life of Books in Tibet and Beyond (Cambridge: Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2014)


Joseph Jarrett, ‘Sir Thomas Tresham’s Elements of Geometrie’, *Notes and Queries* 61 (2014), 214-16


--- "De Arte Phisicali et de Cirurgia by John Arderne; From a New Digital Version of the Stockholm Roll", translated and commented by Torgny Svenberg and Peter Murray Jones (Stockholm: Hagströmer Biblioteket, 2014)


Leah Tether, ‘A Digital Manuscript Case Study: How publishing theory can advance the practice of manuscript digitisation’, *Book 2.0*, 3 (2013), 61-77


David Trotter, *Literature in the First Media Age: Britain Between the Wars* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013)
grant applications

In 2013-14, Edward Wilson Lee made applications to the Arts and Humanities Research Council and to the European Research Council (Starting Grant Scheme) in relation to his project on ‘Hernando Colón’s New World of Books’. We are delighted to report that he has been shortlisted for interview by the ERC.

In August 2013, a team at University College and King’s College London, including Samantha Rayner, a long-standing member of the CMT, made a successful bid to host an AHRC-funded project on ‘The Academic Book of the Future’. The CMT is a partner institution in this project, and we look forward to contributing to its discussions about the future shape of academic publishing. See http://www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/depts/ddh/newsrecords/2014/academic-book-of-the-future.aspx for further details.

Orietta da Rold is currently preparing a grant application for a project ‘Mapping the Literary and Cultural Life of Paper in Medieval England’, to be submitted in 2014/15.

the future

The CMT continues to grow in numerous directions. Among our plans for the coming year are:

A set of palaeographical training workshops, emerging from the Network for the Study of Caroline Minuscule (carolinenetwork.weebly.com) (Anna Dorofeeva, Zack Guiliano, David Ganz);

A one-day symposium on early modern visual marginalia (Alexander Marr) on 1 May 2015;

A conference on the subject of paper (Jason Scott-Warren, Orietta da Rold), perhaps for September 2015;

The establishment of a Cambridge Manuscripts Network (Orietta da Rold, Suzanne Paul);

The extension of CMT activity to the undergraduate English Tripos, via the new Part II paper on the ‘Material Renaissance’. We plan to host materials relevant to this paper on the CMT website.

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