INF 2331H: The Future of the Book

Overview

This course considers the history and possible futures of books in a digital world. In this course "the book" is interpreted broadly, meaning not just an object with covers and pages, but also an evolving metaphor for conceptual frameworks for knowledge, and a metonym that brings together many different technologies, institutions, and cultural practices. The course introduces students to interdisciplinary approaches such as book history, textual studies, history of reading, and digital humanities, with an emphasis on balancing theoretical speculation with practical implementation. Readings will survey topics such as the ontology of born-digital artifacts, critical assessment of digitization projects, collaborative knowledge work, reading devices (old and new), e-book interface design, text/image/multimedia relationships, theories and practices of markup, the gendering of technologies, the politics of digital archiving, the materiality of texts, and the epistemology of digital tools. Students will also receive a practical introduction to XML markup and visualization tools.

Note: although this course involves an introduction to eXtensible Markup Language (XML), the lectures and grading criteria do not assume any prior knowledge of XML on the part of students.

Students who have successfully completed the course will be able to:

- use different disciplinary and theoretical frameworks to understand the changing form of the book from a range of perspectives;
- understand how specific technologies, such as XML and the EPUB format, affect the design possibilities, implementation choices, and preservation challenges inherent in various forms of digital text;
• situate changes in authorship, publishing, and reading within historical, social, and cultural contexts;
• apply theoretical and practical knowledge gained in the course to current debates regarding the digitization of print books, the dissemination of e-books, and experimentation with new forms of the book.

Relationship between Course Learning Outcomes and Program Learning Outcomes (http://current.ischool.utoronto.ca/studies/learning-outcomes): The future of the book is a topic that requires students to be able to apply a range of concepts, theories, and practices derived from a range of information-related disciplines (Program Outcome 1). The book’s historical centrality to the preservation and dissemination of human knowledge means that the evolving forms of digital books are a core concern for information professionals, especially those who work to ensure access to knowledge (Program Outcome 2). Understanding the changing forms of the book, from manuscript to print to digital text, requires a synthesis of theoretical and practical knowledge, linking theories of interpretation to specific encoding and digitization technologies (Program Outcomes 4 & 5).

Course materials

There is no textbook required for purchase for this course. All course readings will be made available via Blackboard.

The following resources are useful general introductions to different aspects of the course topic:
The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain. 6 vols. Cambridge University Press, 2002-2011. [online: http://go.utlib.ca/cat/8112873; this link will take you to vol 1., but on the Cambridge Books Online page there should be a link on the right-hand side to the series as a whole]


TEI By Example: www.teibyexample.org

Evaluation

20% Blog contributions (first evaluation)
25% Blog contributions (second evaluation)
25% Encoding challenge
30% Final paper/project

Written assignments that do not meet a minimum standard (in terms of legibility, formatting and proofreading) will be returned for re-submission, with late penalties in full effect. All assignments are evaluated in accordance with (1) the University of Toronto Governing Council’s University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy and (2) the Faculty of Information/s Guidelines to Grade Interpretation. The Governing Council policy is available at http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/grading.pdf. The Faculty of Information/s Guidelines to Grade Interpretation supplement that policy and are available at http://current.ischool.utoronto.ca/grade-interpretation.

General assignment guidelines

The encoding challenge and final paper must be submitted electronically as PDF files via Blackboard. Except for portions of code, they must be submitted in double-spaced 12 pt serif font. Assignments at the graduate level should be free of writing errors. Be sure to proofread your work carefully before submitting, and refer to the Chicago Manual of Style on questions of grammar, punctuation, and usage. If you find writing to be a challenge, consult the resources listed under Writing Support below.

Late Policy. Assignments must be submitted via Blackboard by noon on the due date. (The reason this deadline is set at noon, not midnight, is so that the instructor has time to help students with any technical problems with the submission system.) Extensions will only be granted in the event of illness or emergency, and then only once appropriate documentation has been submitted to Student Services. Late assignments will be penalized by one full letter grade per week (e.g. from A to A-), for a maximum of two weeks. After that point, late assignments will no longer be accepted. Furthermore, late papers will not receive detailed feedback or comments.

Referencing. The American Psychological Association (APA) citation style is the most commonly used one in academic writing in the social sciences, while Chicago and MLA (Modern Language Association) are the most common in the humanities (at least in North
America). For this course, you will be expected to use Chicago’s notes + bibliography format, as it is the referencing system most suited to the course topic. The Chicago Manual of Style Online is also an excellent writing reference for our course on matters of grammar, usage, and other writing conventions apart from citation. You can find it here: http://go.utlib.ca/cat/6662347

**Images.** Students can include copyrighted images in their assignments as long as they follow the Canadian Copyright Act’s current exceptions for fair dealing, in that the images must only be used for the purposes of criticism or review, and each image must be accompanied by:
(a) the source; and
(b) the name of the author(s) (if given in the source)

**Acceptable secondary sources.** As graduate students, you will be expected to use a majority of academic (i.e. peer reviewed) sources when writing your term paper. The course schedule, blog, and lectures will include many suggestions for secondary sources on various topics related to the course. However, students are strongly encouraged to track down those resources that are best suited to their specific area of interest or inquiry, rather than rely too heavily on those provided in class. Media texts (books, comics, television episodes, films, videogames, websites, etc.) can be used and referenced as needed, but should always be treated as artifacts of study and analyzed accordingly. Here’s a good position to adopt:

> The materials of popular culture may become raw materials for our creative expression, vehicles for exploring aspects of our own personalities, and shared points of reference to facilitate social interaction. Anthropologists and historians look at artifacts as materials that encapsulate the values and practices of another culture. We can look at the contents of mass media as artifacts that help us to better understand our own culture. In both cases, though, deciphering an artifact’s meanings is a complex process, because the same artifact may serve multiple purposes, operate in multiple contexts, and become invested with multiple meanings.


For cutting edge information, news, announcements, etc., popular press articles are acceptable. But these should be used to supplement or update rather than replace peer reviewed sources, and should never be used to explain a theoretical concept. They should also come from credible, verifiable sources, who have the credentials (whatever these may be) to back up their claims. Online sources are fine, as long as you can determine who wrote the content and for what purpose, and are prepared to defend the author’s credibility and expertise if questioned. For example, if you define critical discourse analysis, your definition should not come from Wikipedia -- even if the Wikipedia entry happens to be a good one. That said, my definition of expertise is flexible. For example, if you’re looking for parents’ reactions to the Harry Potter phenomenon, an online forum where fathers, mothers and other caregivers discuss the *Harry Potter* books and films is an excellent source of expertise.

**Academic integrity**

The life of the mind depends upon respect for the ideas of others, and especially for the labour that went into the creation of those ideas. Accordingly, the University of Toronto has a strict zero-tolerance policy on plagiarism, as defined in section B.I.1. (d) of the University’s Code of Behavior on Academic Matters. Please make sure that you:
• Consult the University’s site on Academic Integrity: http://academicintegrity.utoronto.ca/
• Acquaint yourself with the Code and Appendix "A" Section 2; http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm
• Consult the site How Not to Plagiarize: http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize

Remember: plagiarism through negligence, as distinct from deliberate intent, is still plagiarism in the eyes of the University. Take notes carefully, use quotation marks religiously when copying and pasting from digital sources (so that no one, including you, mistakes someone else’s words for your own), and document your research process. And always, when in doubt, ask.

Writing support

As stated in the iSchool’s Grade Interpretation Guidelines, work that is not well written and grammatically correct will not generally be considered eligible for a grade in the A range, regardless of its quality in other respects. With this in mind, please make use of the writing support provided to graduate students by the SGS Office of English Language and Writing Support (http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/currentstudents/Pages/English-Language-and-Writing-Support.aspx). The services are designed to target the needs of both native and non-native speakers and all programs are free. Please consult the current workshop schedule (http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/currentstudents/Pages/Current-Years-Courses.aspx) for more information.

The SGS Office of English Language and Writing Support provides writing support for graduate students. The services are designed to target the needs of both native and non-native speakers of English and include non-credit courses, single-session workshops, individual writing consultations, and website resources. These programs are free. Please avail yourself of these services, if necessary.

Special needs

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability or health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach the instructor and/or the Accessibility Services Office at http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as as soon as possible. The Accessibility Services staff are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals, and arrange appropriate accommodations.

Credit: Some of the language in this syllabus has been adapted from Prof. Sara Grimes’s INF 1240H (Research Methods) syllabus.
Assignments

**Group Research Blog**  
*Due each week by noon Friday (evaluated at the end of Week 6 and Week 13)*  
*Posting logs are due by noon on Friday, Feb. 12, and Friday, April 8 (via Blackboard)*

Students will form groups of 10-12 in order to collaborate on a group research blog. Students should expect to contribute original posts on a weekly basis, and to engage in discussion via comments. The blogs will not only serve as an online archive of each student's progress in this course, but will provide a place to record ideas and resources that you're thinking of using in your assignments, as well as a forum to voice your thoughts and questions about weekly readings and topics covered in class. Group members are expected to interact with each other, commenting or replying to each other's contributions in order to engage in (and ultimately produce) an ongoing dialogue about different aspects of the course topic. Links and block quotes are welcome, but these should never stand alone -- they should always be accompanied by discussion of contents and an explanation of why they are included.

While blogging groups are welcome to originate their own lines of discussion related to the course, the formal grading of the blog assignment will be based primarily on students' blog posts in response to **weekly assigned questions**, which I will post to the main course blog at least one week prior. This means that you will normally receive the week's blogging question each Friday afternoon, with the weekend and following week to think about it and post a response. In other words, your overall contribution to the blog will consist of at least 12 assigned responses, though students are welcome to go beyond this and use their group blogs to generate new lines of discussion, provided they're somehow related to the course topic.

Each blog will be reviewed twice over the course of the semester—once during the first half of the semester, and once during the second half. Students should keep a log of their blog contributions (just date and url, in txt file format) and upload their log to Blackboard by the evaluation deadlines.

Your grade for this assignment will be based on the consistency and relevance of your individual contribution to the blog. Here, "consistency" means that contributions are made on a weekly basis, and reflect a timely, ongoing engagement with weekly readings, materials, research, etc. "Relevance" means that the contribution contains one or more of the following: familiarity with course readings and other materials (lectures, group discussions, etc.), as demonstrated through the use of specific examples, author names or theoretical concepts; inclusion of themes and points that have a clear and direct relevance to the course topic; discussion of literature, problems, ideas, examples and current events that pertain directly to your assignments, which includes consideration of the course readings and themes.

All of your posts must be signed with your your first and last name (even if you blog under a different online handle). Anonymous posting and commenting is not permitted for this assignment. Groups should decide for themselves which blogging platform they will use, depending on familiarity and personal preference. Some good free ones to consider are WordPress and Blogger. (I advise against using Tumblr, as it can be difficult to attribute names to posts.) However, your blog must indicate the time and date of each post, and your blog must be open only to those in your blogging group for this course -- please don't open your blog to the general public. Finally, group blogs must be brand-new blogs created specifically for this course.
Encoding Challenge
Due Friday, Feb. 19 (via Blackboard)
Report: 6-7 pages (excluding references, code, and images)

This group assignment is intended to introduce students to the complexities of digitally modelling print and manuscript materials, as well as other types of texts that pose a challenge to represent digitally. Students will begin by selecting a short text like a poem, scene from a play, prose fragment, or other example of primary source material, and then encode it in XML. This involves making choices about which aspects of the original to encode, and how to contend with the structural constraints of XML. Students should follow the guidelines of the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI), which allow considerable latitude for customization. We will spend considerable class time preparing for this assignment, and I expect to consult with groups as they think about scale, strategy, and choice of materials.

Students will complete this assignment as a subgroup of 2-3 people, drawn from within your larger blogging group. The blog posting topics leading up to this assignment will give your subgroup opportunities to work through problems and questions collaboratively. The subgroups for this assignment should identify themselves to me by January 28, after which point I may assign group members arbitrarily.

This assignment will be submitted in three parts, to be submitted at the same time, but in separate files:

1. The first part is a stand-alone XML file containing your code. It does not need to include a valid schema, but it must be well-formed (these terms will make sense after our first class on markup).
2. The second part consists of an image file (in any standard format) showing the example that your group chose to encode. Please be sure to use an image editing program such as Gimp (www.gimp.org) to reduce the image filesize to 4 MB or less.
3. The third part of this assignment is a 6-7 page report in which your group articulate the rationale for the choices you made in your XML encoding (even choices you regret!), and to reflect on how the process of encoding can lead to new ways to understand the material. The report should draw upon appropriate secondary sources in markup theory and practice, beyond the TEI Guidelines or TEI By Example.

One group member should submit all materials on behalf of the group. Please ensure that all group members' names are included on the report. No need to include student numbers. This assignment will be graded on the appropriateness of the selected material, the clarity and critical strength of the written rationale, the quality of the writing, and how well the submitted XML reflects concepts discussed in class and readings up to this point.

Final Paper
Due Friday, April 8 (via Blackboard)
12-14 pages (double-spaced 12-point Times New Roman), excluding bibliography, figures, and title page

This final essay should explore a topic appropriate to the course, drawing upon primary and secondary sources to advance an original argument. Your essay could take any one of a number of approaches, such as: a review of a particular digital resource (or group of them); an exploration of a theoretical question we’ve examined in the course; an analysis of a key historical moment in the development of the book; a critical reading of a particular tool or
born-digital artifact; an analysis of a social phenomenon related to the history of books and reading; or another approach that builds on the readings, concepts, and focus of the course. I encourage you to start thinking about your final paper as soon as possible, and to consult with me about it. This may require you to read ahead if you wish to write on a topic covered toward the end of our schedule.

Note: I am open to unconventional approaches to this assignment, such as papers that combine traditional academic writing with a design experiment or mock-up of some sort. Students considering this option must consult with me at least four weeks prior to the due date.

INF 2331H Winter 2016 schedule

Week 1  Introduction
11 Jan  assigned reading
   o Drucker, Johanna, "Modeling Functionality: From Codex to E-book." In SpecLab: Digital Aesthetics and Projects in Speculative Computing, 165-75. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009. [http://go.utlib.ca/cat/9988258; note that you can download the entire chapter as a single PDF file if you enter the page range 186-95, though you'll need to view the endnotes separately]
   • further reading
     o tba

Week 2  Theoretical Frameworks
18 Jan  assigned reading
     • Note: in this article, Darnton is looking back to a much earlier article he published in 1982 called "What Is the History of Books?", which became one of the theoretical foundations for the field of book history. You can find the original 1982 article here: http://www.jstor.org/myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/stable/20024803. However, for students new to book history, the 2007 retrospective is a bit more accessible, and contains a figure of Darnton's "communications circuit" along with an alternative model offered by Adams and Barker. The Darnton model and its revisions will be a touchstone for our course as a whole.
   • recommended reading


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Week 3

25 Jan

Markup Theory and Practice, Part 1 (Fundamentals)

• assigned reading

• recommended reading
  o Comic Book Markup Language: http://dcl.slis.indiana.edu/cbml/

Week 4

1 Feb

Markup Theory and Practice, Part 2 (Applications)

• assigned readings

• recommended reading

Week 5

8 Feb

Markup Theory and Practice, Part 3 (Interfaces)

• assigned reading

• recommended reading

• recommended reading
Week 6
22 Feb
The History and Future of the Page
• assigned reading
• recommended reading

Week 7
29 Feb
E-Books, Part 1
• assigned reading
• recommended reading

Week 8
7 Mar
E-Books, Part 2
• assigned reading
• recommended reading

Week 9
14 Mar
Books and the Prehistory of Digitization: Sound and Image
• assigned reading
  o Mak, Bonnie. "Archaeology of a Digitization." Journal of the American Society of Information Science and Technology. Forthcoming. [Mak-Digitization_JASIST_verAA.pdf; this is a pre-print version shared by permission of the author -- please don't recirculate outside of the class]
• recommended reading
  o FirstSounds.org
  o Lewis Carroll, Alice's Adventures Under Ground (1864 manuscript book), digitized by the British Library
Week 10  Copyright, Digital Rights Management, and the Book
21 Mar  • assigned reading
  o Johns, Adrian. Ch. 1, "A General History of the Pirates" and ch. 17, "Past, Present, and Future." In Piracy: the Intellectual Property Wars from Gutenberg to Gates, 1-15, 497-518. University of Chicago Press, 2009. [http://go.utlib.ca/cat/8859795; Note: you can download these two chapters as separate PDF files. Click the link provided here, and open any one of the chapters. Once you can see the reading interface open, look at the bottom and you’ll see a link that says "Export to PDF." The pagination for exporting doesn’t match the pagination shown in the book, but you can export these two chapters if you enter the range 10-24 for chapter 1 and 506-27 for chapter 2.]
  • recommended reading

Week 11  Digital Narratives and New Media Experiments
21 Mar  • assigned reading
  • recommended reading
  o if you have played Portal to the end
    • half-life.wikia.com/wiki/ApertureScience.com
    • half-life.wikia.com/wiki/Portal_ARG
    • once the course is over and your final assignment is submitted, play Portal 2 and The Stanley Parable
  o if you have not played Portal to the end
    • visit the former ApertureScience.com website, now preserved by the Internet Archive: web.archive.org/web/20071030080002/http://aperturescience.com/
    • at the prompt, enter "LOGIN"; then enter a username of your choice; then enter the password "portal"; then enter "APPLY" and follow the instructions from there
    • play Portal, at least until you get to that major thing that happens (you’ll know)
  o if neither of the above: yhoo.it/NuAYGJ
Week 12  Books of Futures Past
4 April

• assigned reading

• recommended reading