

American Periodicals and Literary Institutions in the Long Nineteenth Century: Mediation, Mediality, Politics

Workshop Organizers:

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“If the master word defining the theory era was *text*, the master word of our era is *archive*,” writes Jeffrey J. Williams. Instead of merely conceptualizing “the archive” as a sweeping metaphor or as a neutral source for contextual evidence, this panel seeks to mobilize innovative forms of archival engagement with North American culture and literature from the revolutionary period to around 1900. Building on the recent “institutional turn” in literary studies as well as on the robust framework of periodical studies, contributors will seek to trace the emergence, ascendance, and eventual obsolescence of mediating institutions and medial forms that shaped American politics, culture, and the expanding literary field. As the leading medium of the long nineteenth century, American periodicals offer a gateway into the study of political ideas, debates, social movements, conflicts, and the larger discursive, institutional, and medial frameworks in which these were embedded. Recently (re-)discovered or newly accessible collections of periodicals and other institutional records also elucidate the evolving hierarchies of taste and the differentiation of literary genres, modes, and publics. In the field of American Studies, a sustained focus of recent scholarship has been on the gaps, omissions, and biases of archives. Since archival practices have historically supported exclusionary power structures and settler colonial violence, we need to recognize how the material we can access (including gaps in the archive) shapes scholarly practice.

Against this backdrop, we invite proposals for 20-minute papers on late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century institutional archives that reflect on the challenges of encountering historical newspapers, magazines, and other sources in physical or digital archives. In particular, we invite contributions that address how the specific medialities of historical periodicals and archival documents intersect with the politics of publishers, editors, authors, readers, and the archives that house them. Possible topics might include (but are not limited to) one of the following subject areas or combinations thereof:

- The mediating role of cultural institutions in the literary field of the long nineteenth century (publishers, libraries, schools, colleges, professional societies etc.) and their relationship to literary media, forms, and formats
- Materialities and medialities of periodical publication & the politics of the page (including aspects of format, layout, rubrication, etc); confluences and disparities among the content and voices printed within the same volume and/or on the same page

- Periodicals and the history of political ideas (e.g., democracy vs. republicanism, federalism vs. state rights) and reform movements (e.g. abolitionism, women's rights, socialism)
- Methodological challenges of archival work for literary criticism, literary historiography, and cultural history

Please send your proposal (of 350 words or less), along with a short biographical statement, via email to Alexander Starre at alexander.starre@fu-berlin.de.

Confirmed Speakers: Ilka Brasch (Leibniz Universität Hannover); Samira Spatzek (FU Berlin)