

Introduction

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THIS IS THE FIRST of the ten *Print Networks* volumes to combine selected papers from three of our annual conferences: Dublin 2006, Chester 2007 and Lincoln 2008. This reflects a new editorial intent to identify broad themes for the volumes, rather than simply offering the ‘proceedings’ of a single conference. Future *Print Networks* conferences will also aim to be broadly thematic. As ever, the focus of both conferences and published volumes is the history of the book trade – the production, distribution and readership of texts, especially in print but also in manuscript – primarily, though not exclusively, with a British focus. *Print Networks* papers have usually tended towards an emphasis on book-trade practitioners in provincial towns and the relationships, often amicable, sometimes not, between them and members of the London trade. The multiple meanings of ‘provincial’, discussed in a perceptive keynote essay by Iain Beavan, resonate throughout this collection. The other main focus of this volume is the publication of newspapers and periodicals, an important part of the activities of many book-trade people, both metropolitan and provincial, especially during and since the ‘long eighteenth century’. Essays deal with many parts of the British Isles and there are several on an Irish theme from our memorable conference in July 2006 at Trinity College, Dublin.

The essays in this collection reflect the broad chronological scope of the *Print Networks* conferences, ranging from c. 1740 to the early twentieth century. By the latter half of the eighteenth century most British provincial towns apart from the smallest had at least one local weekly newspaper, some had several com-

peting titles. By the early twentieth century, the newspaper business had progressed beyond the wildest dreams of the pioneers: production was increasingly mechanized, while the gathering and presentation of news had developed to meet the growing appetite of readers for current news and information. At national and local level, weekly newspapers were now complemented by a wide range of daily titles, many of them peddling their own brand of politics. By the start of the First World War, readers had an unprecedented choice of papers, while producers faced ever increasing challenges from competition and technological innovation. Alongside a growing demand for up-to-the-minute news, there developed a voracious market for periodicals reflecting a wide range of interests. The work, and thought, that went into the production of both serious journals and popular magazines is discussed in a number of these essays.

The history of the book is currently thriving as an exciting and fruitful field of study – thankfully not as a discrete academic discipline – and within this broad, interdisciplinary field, the history of the book *trade* flourishes too. It is good to see the work of promising young scholars represented in this collection, alongside that of more seasoned contributors.

With this volume, Catherine Armstrong has chosen to end her editorial involvement with the *Print Networks* series. I wish to record my thanks for her imagination and efficiency, and her good humour, all of which will be greatly missed. At the same time, I am delighted to welcome Matthew Day into the editorial harness and I look forward to working with him on future volumes. Once again, the editors extend their gratitude to Maureen Bell, not only for her exemplary proofreading but also for advice and ‘moral support’ without which the *Print Networks* series would be immeasurably poorer.

Contributors

Catherine Armstrong is a Lecturer in American History at Manchester Metropolitan University. Her first monograph entitled *Writing North America in the Seventeenth Century* was published in 2007 by Ashgate. Her book trade interests centre on transatlantic cultural connections between England and North America during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Iain Beavan has recently retired as Keeper of Rare Books, Historic Collections, University of Aberdeen. He has written widely on aspects of the Scottish book trade, and continues to pursue his research interests in print culture.

Stephen W. Brown is the Master of Champlain College at Trent University in Ontario Canada and the 3M Fellow in the Department of English. The author of over fifty articles and book chapters and editor of the manuscripts of the Scottish eighteenth-century printer, William Smellie, he is currently engaged as co-editor of volume two of the *Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland*.

Stephen Colclough is a lecturer in the School of English, University of Bangor. He is a contributor to *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain* and the author of *Consuming Texts: Readers and Reading Communities 1695-1870* (Palgrave, 2007).

Matthew Day is Head of English at Bishop Grosseteste University College, Lincoln. He has research interests in print culture and early modern travel and their intersection. He has published on censorship, paratextuality and the reception of early modern travel narratives during the eighteenth century.

Victoria Gardner recently gained her doctorate on provincial newspaper proprietors (1760-1820) from St. John's College, Oxford. She is particularly interested in the evolution of the national newspaper trade, its occupations and networks, over the later eighteenth century.

John Hinks is an Honorary Fellow at the Centre for Urban History, University of Leicester, where he is researching networks and communities in the British book trade. At the University of Birmingham he is an Honorary Research Fellow in English and a Visiting Lecturer in History, where he teaches early modern cultural history.

Graham Hogg works as a senior curator in Rare Book Collections at the National Library of Scotland. His interest in the career of George Miller arose from ongoing research into the development of printing in Scotland, which celebrated its 500th anniversary in 2008.

Máire Kennedy is Divisional Librarian with Dublin City Libraries in charge of Special Collections (early printed books and manuscripts). A book based on her PhD thesis *French Books in Eighteenth-Century Ireland* was published by the Voltaire Foundation in 2001. She has also published widely in Irish and international journals.

Jennifer Moore is currently an editorial assistant and researcher with the Irish Historic Towns Atlas in the Royal Irish Academy. Her PhD thesis, at the University of Limerick, deals with provincial print culture, their networks, and the power of the printer in civic urban governance.

Lisa Peters is the law librarian at the University of Chester. Her main research interest is North Wales newspaper history.

Michael Powell is Librarian of Chetham's Library, Manchester. He has published a number of papers in previous *Print Networks* volumes on aspects of the book trade in Manchester.

Kath Skinner is a learning resources assistant at the University of Chester. She is interested in Victorian literature, especially child-parent relationships.

Ria Snowdon was a fellow at the Print Networks and Texts, Ma(r)kers, Markets Joint Conference in 2008. Her research focuses on Georgian women and the business of print, particularly proprietors of newspapers.

Elizabeth Tilley is a lecturer in the Department of English, National University of Ireland, Galway. She is an associate editor of the *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism* and publishes on Irish periodicals and book history.

Terry Wyke teaches Social and Economic History at Manchester Metropolitan University.