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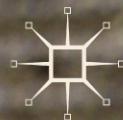
DIRECTIONS  
IN BOOK  
HISTORY

*Scholarly Adventures  
in Digital Humanities*

Making The Modernist  
Archives Publishing Project

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# New Directions in Book History

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Claire Battershill • Helen Southworth • Alice Staveley • Michael Widner •  
Elizabeth Willson Gordon • Nicola Wilson

# Scholarly Adventures in Digital Humanities

Making The Modernist Archives Publishing Project

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# MODERNIST ARCHIVES PUBLISHING PROJECT

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*This book is dedicated, with love, to the memory of Jon Gordon.*

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In the name of collaboration and friendship, we hope our readers will enjoy the fruits of our labours as much as we have delighted in their pursuit.

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## Introduction

*Yet I'm the only woman in England free to write what I like. The others must be thinking of series' & editors.* (Virginia Woolf, *Diary 3*, 22 September 1925 ([1980](#), p. 43))

### FROM DINING TABLE TO DESKTOP: THE HOGARTH PRESS AND THE MODERNIST ARCHIVES PUBLISHING PROJECT (MAPP)

When Virginia Woolf declared her liberation from the creative constraints imposed by book editors and publishing houses, she derived her authority from a technology and professional identity deeply implicated in those very networks of power. Since 1917, Virginia, with her husband Leonard, had been co-founder, publisher, and editor at the Hogarth Press. The independent publisher was part of a vast and proliferating network of publishing houses in the interwar years bent on remaking the book production landscape. The woman who would become one of the world's most famous modern novelists – a public intellectual whose essay *A Room of One's Own* ([1929](#)) helped found contemporary feminist literary criticism – credited 'a press of her own' with having started it all. The press would become both a touchstone for her textual innovations and a talisman she would brandish for future writers, as the increasingly affordable and accessible technologies of print created the intellectual freedom essential to a functioning democracy. As she wrote in *Three Guineas* (1938) on the eve of the Second World War:

[ . . . ] the private printing press is an actual fact, and not beyond the reach of a moderate income. Typewriters and duplicators are actual facts and even cheaper. By using these cheap and so far unforbidden instruments you can at once rid yourself of the pressure of boards, policies and editors. (1993, p. 97)

From its origins in 1917 as a small hand-operated printing press perched on the dining-room table where the Woolfs handset, inked, machined, and sewed the book jackets of their own works, the Hogarth Press grew to become not just Virginia Woolf's primary publisher, but also the imprint of many pioneering twentieth-century writers including T.S. Eliot, Katherine Mansfield, Sigmund Freud, Nancy Cunard, William Plomer, Henry Green, and Laurens Van der Post. Moreover, it championed a wide and eclectic selection of popular and middlebrow works, educational and political tracts, children's literature, and medical and self-help manuals. It boasted an output of over 500 books and pamphlets in three decades, an astonishing number given that both Leonard and Virginia led otherwise crammed professional lives.

In a sense, the Woolfs were one of the first in-house **desktop publishers**<sup>1</sup> in a century that would witness radical changes in how books are made, circulated, and read. If books can today be **born-digital**, the Woolfs were acutely aware of the material ecologies and economies of space, place, and method that went into turning narratives into readable, distributable objects. They knew first-hand that the business of publishing books was self-generative but also self-negating, a vocation where old technologies continually gave way to new, and former and future selves uneasily co-mingled: '[N]owhere else', wrote Woolf in 1924 when preparing to move from Hogarth House in Richmond to Tavistock Square in the heart of Bloomsbury, 'could we have started the Hogarth Press, whose very awkward beginning had rise in this very room, on this very green carpet. Here that strange offspring grew & throve; it ousted us from the dining room, which is now a dusty coffin; & crept all over the house' (Woolf 1978, p. 283).

In the centenary year of the founding of the Hogarth Press, *Scholarly Adventures in Digital Humanities* looks back at the contributions the Woolfs as publishers made to the interwar book trade, and forward to the twenty-first century where rapid technological changes are challenging everything from what constitutes a book, to how we read, to the human and technological networks evolving to make, share, and distribute stories. It documents the intellectual history, architectural design processes, and

collaborative negotiations behind the building of an international **digital humanities (DH)** project, **The Modernist Archives Publishing Project (MAPP)**. We are driven to write this book partly for those starting out in collaborative DH work who want to bring the concerns and methodologies of their home humanities disciplines into dialogue, practically and theoretically, with DH. But we also want to reflect upon and to theorise the technological and creative work we are engaged in *as we work through it*. While there is currently a burst of construction going on in DH, we are sensitive to the need for open discussion of the ins and outs of the process not only for those with a high degree of digital interest and expertise, but also for humanities researchers who are novices, sceptics, or aspirant participants in digital work.

As six humanities scholars with a diverse set of skills, cultural backgrounds, generational experiences, and expertise, the present volume, like MAPP itself, is a collaborative venture. Both have been undertaken more in the spirit of the start-up – where process and workflow, trial and error, planning and execution are openly ‘white-boarded’ – than in the tradition of academic humanities where the dominance of the monograph can obscure the complex collaborations and alternative forms of scholarship we believe are capable not just of co-existing but also of mutually strengthening knowledge production in the academy. Our experiences building MAPP have helped us understand more keenly how cultural imperatives rooted in historical biases toward non-collaboration in humanities scholarship have helped to magnify – at all categories of institution – the status of research over teaching, product over process, and professor over student. This state of affairs does have a tipping point, which may have arrived with the increasing popularity of DH. We are open to being wrong about this as a fact, but as a vision – to borrow Woolf’s wily inter-animation of fact and vision, her metaphoric ‘granite’ and ‘rainbow’<sup>2</sup> – we are willing to wager the right for collaborative work in digital humanities to productively disrupt the status quo for the good of humanist learning and knowledge dissemination.

*Scholarly Adventures* is not, therefore, intended to teach a particular skill set (an increasing number of books are available for that purpose and there are many useful resources online, some of which we outline in our appendices); and what we hope to convey goes beyond practical suggestions for collaboration (although we are careful to mention the tools we have found helpful, to describe the technological skills we have gained so far, and to fully annotate bolded DH terms (Appendix A) and DH projects

(Appendix B)). What we aim to show primarily is what it feels like to start from scratch in making something in the digital humanities, as Woolf once started, with both excitement and trepidation, handling and manipulating the type for her new hand press. Woolf's embrace of this new venture bridged the mechanics of printing with a new form of narrative innovation consciously (and unconsciously) in dialogue with her printer's identity.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, she negotiated the many demands of building a multi-layered business with innumerable moving parts, only the smallest of which were the letters she set and redistributed – or 'dissed' as she liked idiomatically to describe her typesetter's job – for future books. Similarly, as humanities scholars making a digital resource, we are navigating the multiple demands of academic careers as they turn digital. We argue throughout this volume that involving ourselves in making the digital projects that present our research is crucial: as literary scholars we have as much of a stake in the resources of the future as do librarians and technologists if we want those projects to reflect the long histories of methodological development in our own fields. For us, it is crucial to consider developments in modernist studies, book history, and Virginia Woolf studies alongside the new affordances of DH.

MAPP has begun by resurrecting the thousands of material artefacts generated by the publishing house the Woolfs built which are now scattered and dispersed in far-flung libraries and archives. This includes everything from dust jackets, to printers' receipts, to binders' instructions, to marketing papers, to readers' reports, to name only a few of the many types of paperwork generated by the press. By reuniting some of these materials we aim to leverage both the tools and collaborative culture of digital humanities to find new approaches to still unsettled questions ('What was modernism?'); and to use these tools in mobile, aggregative ways that go beyond the exhibitionary to the analytical and data-driven. Our epistemic aims are not so much to turn words into numbers, but to create an adaptable digital object capable of engaging those common readers Woolf herself cultivated, alongside today's academics and scholars-in-training who want access to tools and models for how to dig deeper into the cultures of modernist and twentieth-century publishing writ large.

Our larger aspiration for the digital infrastructure we are building to display and interpret Hogarth Press documents is to make it a model and hub, adaptable to the work of other current and future scholars researching *any* of the myriad publishers of the past century. We agree with Peter Shillingsburg that academics, whatever our biases or faults, 'have been very

productive when looking at how things relate to one another rather than just at what things essentially consist of (2006, p. 197). So while MAPP aspires to show its viewers the unique look and appeal of the books the Woolfs published, including aspects of what those objects ‘consisted of’ in their singularity, we are primarily motivated by the opportunities available to us at this juncture to build the digital apparatus that provides a platform for much larger-scale networked analysis within individual presses, and crucially across them. Publishers’ archives are the spaces, we believe, where much cultural history about modernism currently lies buried, undiscovered and, by problematic implication, uninterpretable.

### MODERNISM + BOOK HISTORY + DIGITAL HUMANITIES

This is an auspicious time within modernist studies to be bringing digital tools to large-scale network analysis of book publishers. Since the late 1990s, modernist studies has reincarnated itself as the ‘new modernist studies’, a phrase that continues to gain traction despite being almost twenty years old. It is, without doubt, a critical framework that has supported prodigious fresh research. The ‘new modernist studies’ was marked by institutional initiatives such as the founding in 1999 of the Modernist Studies Association (MSA) and publication of its flagship journal, *Modernism/modernity*, and has been distinguished by a critical turn towards materiality, historicism, and cultural studies. As Douglas Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz note in their 2008 state-of-the-field article, new modernist studies, for all its eclecticism, is best marked by the word ‘expansion’, in terms of time, geography, and genre, and includes broad efforts at documentary and materialist excavation that complicate and reconfigure the relationship between modernism as an aesthetic category and modernity as a lived experience (p. 737). As Michael Whitworth has put it, “‘Modernism’ is not so much a thing as a set of responses to problems posed by the conditions of modernity. The recognition that modernism and modernity are related but not identical is crucial to most recent work in the area” (2007, p. 3). Inasmuch as book publishing is (and continues to be) an industry subject to the economic, aesthetic, and technological changes of modernity, it offers a fertile but still frequently overlooked field of cultural negotiation and exchange where various types of capital, prestige, and access are at play.

An effect of these new critical paradigms in modernist studies has been the field’s intense engagement with the once-neglected arena of early

twentieth-century periodical publishing. Case in point: **The Modernist Journals Project (MJP)**, begun in the late 1990s to resurrect and showcase the myriad little magazines which cultivated modernist writing, is one of the leading digital humanities projects to have arisen from the materialist turn in new modernist studies. Its website stakes its brand: 'Modernism Began in the Magazines'. Until scholars could actually see the radial contexts in which experimental modernism was finding a public forum, claims for 'what modernism was' tended to foreground formalist or new critical theoretical approaches to canonical writers and texts deemed less 'ephemeral' than the magazine.<sup>4</sup> This fairly radical change of access and interpretative possibility submitted the magazine to the sort of rigorous critique that, for example, art historians have always given to paintings: the intersection of text and image being but one of the many components of periodical publishing. The periodical (including its material components: its paper size, its advertisements, and its design features) began to be considered as an object worthy of academic study, the text considered alongside advertisements, illustrations, and contributions by since-forgotten writers that precede or succeed what we now consider iconic modernist works. Periodical studies scholars around the world use the documents in MJP's digital corpus, as Renaissance scholars have been using theatre paraphernalia, to create a kind of historical phenomenology around experiences of modernist reading and to answer research questions about the relationship between print culture and readership. What did it feel like to read modernist texts in their original context, and what does it mean that that context was often in the periodicals?

The threads of modernist studies that Mao and Walkowitz pointed to as the future of the discipline were 'the transnational turn' and 'media in an age of mass persuasion'. Judging from the subjects of papers at MSA conferences and in *Modernism/modernity* in the years since the publication of their article, their predictions have held true. So far, though, *books* are nearly absent from this extensive work on media and on globalism, even though publishing history speaks directly to both of these broader intellectual shifts at the centre of the field. Nicola Wilson's work on colonial editions, for example, shows that there are concrete and specific transnational exchanges documented in publishers' archives, and we can demonstrate the nature of these relationships very clearly with reference to the book trade (Wilson 2016). This archival spadework goes beyond theorisation of transnational intellectual exchange and into specific details of the circulation of books and attendant issues around access to knowledge