**BRILLENBURG — LiBB**

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**@LiBB: Changing Literacies for the Boundless Book**

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**Description**

The open @LiBB workshop explores how the codex has been fanning out into an ‘open’, boundless book and how this affects the way we engage with literature today. Standard research on changing literacies in the digital age focuses on the impact of new media technologies on existing cultural and artistic competences. Such research shows how ‘old’ literacies associated with print culture make way for ‘new’ cultural and artistic literacies of the digital. By contrast, this workshop aims to establish how the codex is being unbound, and literary competences are being transformed, today in a creative contrast between the analog and digital. The idea of the boundless book uniquely allows us to probe the dynamics of changing literacies between offline and online cultures. How do these changes affect comparative literature as a humanist discipline? The workshop aims to make an inventory of effects of the boundless book, and reconsider the ‘crisis’ of close reading in the digital age. This workshop is extremely relevant to digital humanities research, as it not only considers technologies of digitization with respect to literature but also the transformation of literary and creative strategies of presentation. How does digitization inform a ‘material turn’ in literature today? What kinds of frameworks do we need to understand this new material turn?

Comparative literature scholars are acutely aware of the challenges the Internet is posing to literature and print-based scholarship. The digitization of literature already started in 1949, with the development of the concordance of the works of Thomas Aquinas on punch cards, but only took off in 1971 with the creation of Project Gutenberg and its quest for open access. In the 1990s–2000s, an early phase of research on the interplay between page and screen involved the exploration of new modes of text editing in cyberspace (McGann); new horizons for the literary as hypertext, networked fiction, and digital poetry; and the history of electronic text in relation to the avant-gardes (Wardrip-Fruin). This early phase—represented by scholars like Robert Coover—was characterized by digital optimism: the digital was posited as the culmination of the ‘analog’ book, the fullest realization of textual potentialities in editing, or nonlinear writing modes that would change our mode of thinking and open up new imaginative pathways.

Today, this early phase has been replaced by the recognition that new media do not necessarily fulfill the old. They co-exist in a complex media ecology (Hayles, Pressman, Brillenburg). Yet there is a strong sense of cultural change among leading literary scholars such as Katherine Hayles and Kathleen Fitzpatrick who are considering the transition from ‘print’ to digital culture, from book to pad, from paper- to digitally based humanities research. Though reading has a long and varied history, the Internet is now creating a new sense of urgency about changing modes of ‘close’ reading, analysis, and literary knowledge.

The @LiBB workshop intervenes in this debate on shifting media ecologies with the claim that changing literary competences today can only be gauged in an intermedial framework. This framework takes into account digital *and* ‘analog’ reinventions of the book and the page: there is no transition; there is interplay. The @LiBB workshop refers to these reinventions as the ‘boundless book’. The idea of the boundless book refers to the book as a system and tradition mutating or proliferating beyond recognition, its binding literally or metaphorically undone, its status yet indefinable (Sussman). Examples of boundless books are the bookworks of Brian Dettmer, discarded knowledge books rift open by digital information flows, or the screenfold *Codex Expangliesis: From Columbus to the Border Patrol* (1998; 2001) by Enrique Chagoya, Guillermo Gomez-Pena, and Felicia Rice. *Codex* remakes the book into a nonlinear system of images and icons to be read forward and backward at once, without end. At the same time, the boundless book materializes in cyberspace as a design structure hyperlinked into a vast electronic universe, or as an open space networked between multiple media platforms, such as Tan Lin’s reworking of the codex into a broadcasting medium in HEATH or 7CV. Such electronic boundless books fit in with the concept of future narratives coined by Christoph Bode and his research group: narratives that consist of two or multiple nodes rather than a set of linearly organized events. We will specifically pay attention to the growing significance of database aesthetics in both digital and ‘analog’ literature today, and how *re*counting has given way to counting (Ernst).

Questions that will be raised in the workshop are: What new concepts and analytical tools do we have to analyze and categorize such ‘boundless’ works? What new literacies does the boundless book require, and which new narratological models do new (or future) modes of storytelling demand? What is the relation between such new modes and changing media technologies in the present? How can we compare comparable developments in the other arts? Why is it that music, and the cut-up and sampling techniques it has long employed, continues to be a major source of inspiration for experimental writers in the digital age?

**Participants**

The organizers of the workshop seek participants from the fields of digital humanities, comparative literature and comparative arts, book history, and zine studies to present papers and engage in lively debates. The workshop will be open to graduate and postgraduate students, as well as to early career researchers from the interdisciplinary field of comparative literature, the arts, intermediality, and digital humanities.

**Structure**

**10.10 AM**: Welcome and Introduction

**10.20–11.00**: Plenary: @LIBB: Boundless Books and Media Divergence—Professor Kiene Brillenburg Wurth, Utrecht University

**11.00–11.15**: Questions

**11.15–11.55**: Plenary: @LIBB: Zines: New Reading Strategies for the Digital Age—Professor Anna Poletti, Monash University

**11.55–12.10**: Questions

**12.10–13.00**: Lunch

**13.15–13.55**: Plenary: @LIBB: The Writing of Sound: On Scripts, Scores and Archives—Professor Sander van Maas, University of Amsterdam

**13.55–14.10**:Questions

**14.15–15.15 / 15.30–17.30**: @LIBB WORKSHOP on the basis of:

A. A set of primary texts to be read prior to the workshop:

• Kunzru, H. (2013). *Memory Palace.* Curated by Laurie Britton Newell and Ligaya Salazar. V&A Publishing, London.

• McCarthy, T. (2015). *Satin Island*. Alfred A. Knopf, New York.

• Two digital works **selected by the participants** from the Electronic Literature Collection vols 1 and 2 (http://collection.eliterature.org) or from the ELMCIP anthology of European electronic literature (http://anthology.elmcip.net).

B. A list of key secondary works:

• Emerson, L. (2014). Reading Writing Interfaces. In *From the Digital to the Bookbound*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.

• Ernst, W. (2013). *Digital Memory and the Archive*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.

• Hayles, N. K. (2012). *How We Think. Digital Media and Contemporary Technogenesis*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

• Schnapp, J. (2012). *The Electric Information Age Book: McLuhan / Agel / Fiore and the Experimental Paperback, with Adam Michaels*. Intr. Steven Heller. Princeton Architectural Press, New York.

• Siegert, B. (2003). *Passage des Digitalen*. Brinkman und Bose, Berline. [Also: B. Siegert (2014). *Cultural Techniques: Grids, Filters, Doors, and Other Articulations of the Real*. Fordham University Press, New York.]

During the afternoon workshop, the workshop organizers will discuss and analyze in depth the listed works with the workshop participants. Participants will briefly present their selected hypertextual works. We will have an open discussion and collect all insights and criticisms proposed by the participants into a working document. This document may form the basis for an eventual (online) publication.

**Required Technological Support**

A computer with a beamer and a projection screen.

**Description of the Presenters**

*Kiene Brillenburg Wurth* is full professor of literature and comparative media at Utrecht University, the Netherlands, and project leader of the NWO-funded VIDI research project Back to the Book. Her books include *Between Page and Screen: Remaking Literature through Cinema and Cyberspace* (Fordham UP / Oxford UP), *Musically Sublime* (Fordham UP), and with Ann Rigney, *The Life of Texts* (Amsterdam UP). She has published widely in peer-reviewed volumes and journals. Forthcoming is a volume on *Book Presence*. She is finishing a new monograph titled *Back to the Book: ‘Analog’ Literature in a ‘Digital’ Age*.

*Anna Poletti* is assistant professor with the Faculty of Arts at Monash University, and a specialist in the field of zines, print culture, and online life writing. Her books include *Identity Technologies: Constructing the Self Online* (University of Wisconsin Press) and *Intimate Ephemera: Reading Young Lives in Australian Zine Culture* (Melbourne University Publishing). She is editor of special issues and author of numerous articles in peer-reviewed journals.

*Sander van Maas* is assistant professor of musicology and creative industries at the University of Amsterdam and visiting professor at the London College of Music. He authored *The Reinvention of Religious Music* (Fordham UP) and has edited several volumes, including *Thresholds of Listening: Sound, Technics, Space* (Fordham UP) and *Contemporary Music and Spirituality* (Ashgate). He specializes in creative industries and mediatheoretical approaches to music.