

#Reading

Traditional Concepts of Literary Reception and their Transformation in the Digital Age

International Conference

organized by the German Research Foundation (DFG) Research Training Group 1787

»Literature and Dissemination of Literature in the Digital Age«

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Historical Building of the Göttingen State and University Library (Papendiek 14, 37073 Göttingen, Germany)

In the wake of the ›Digital Revolution‹ the traditional concepts of ›reading‹ and ›readers‹ are challenged: The long-established cultural technique evolves into ›Social Reading‹, the passive consumer into an active ›prosumer‹. Worlds which were previously contained between books' covers are now increasingly migrating into such transmedial spaces as films, audio books, and (computer) games. The mere consumption of literature seems outdated since a participatory culture has grown out of the Web 2.0. Readers can now play an active role within a community, discuss with like-minded people, and enrich an author's world with their own ideas. The establishment of new electronic reading devices facilitates these new forms of participation. E-readers, smartphones and tablet computers can be easily connected to the Internet, and thus simplify communication and exchange with other readers and authors. These changes also have an effect on the book market: electronic commerce companies become places of literary communication and attempt to replace personal service in bookstores with customers' reviews.

In the digital age, the possibilities of interacting with literature have become manifold. Readers are encouraged to become producers themselves. In social networks, forums, and on blogs, they can voice their opinions, rate books, or even write their own literary texts. Social reading platforms and reading communities enable readers to offer direct feedback to publishers and authors and, thus, to actively participate in the literary scene. As a result, the production and dissemination of literature become subject to change as well – the lines between the different agents of the literary field are blurred. These extensive developments in the sphere of literary reception constitute a rewarding and dynamic field of research. During the conference »#Reading – Traditional Concepts of Literary Reception and their Transformation in the Digital Age«, possible aspects for discussion include but are not limited to:

1. Changes in reading behavior/the role of the reader:

- In which ways do electronic reading devices affect the act of reading?
- How do new literary formats such as (enhanced) eBooks influence the reading experience?
- In contrast to books, which possibilities are introduced by digital formats? Which interdependencies between digital and print media can be observed in regard to reception?
- How does social reading influence the act of reading and perceiving literature?
- Do readers really take on different roles within the literary scene and, thus, permanently change their status?
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2. Changes to reading culture(s):

- Which types of reading cultures can be identified on the Internet?
- Which types of agents become active within digital media environments?
- What marks the difference between digital reading communities and their historical predecessors? To what extent can we regard these developments as historically aligned?
- In what way can we regard and investigate fan forums as individual reading cultures?
- How does digitalization change the reception of literature on an international level?

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3. Consequences for production and dissemination:

- To what extent do new forms of reception change concepts of authors and facilitators?
- How can these changes be described within the discipline of literary studies? Which theoretical models can be utilized?
- How important are readers' opinions for publishing houses and authors? What does it mean for an author to receive direct feedback in social networks? Which types of author-reader-interactions can be observed on the web?
- In what way do producers (authors/publishers etc.) make use of the reader in regard to the (further) development of products and their marketing?
- Which role does the collection of readers' data play for the book industry, which for academic research?
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We are planning to host an international conference with interdisciplinary approach, which seeks to examine the phenomenon of literary reception not only from a literary studies' point of view. Therefore, we welcome perspectives from related disciplines such as book, film, game, and media studies as well as cognitive science, cultural anthropology, psychology, and sociology. We particularly welcome contributions that enrich the conference in terms of critical positions.

The conference language is German. However, individual presentations may be given in English. Travel and accommodation expenses are subject to compensation according to the governmental guidelines. On the first evening of the conference, a public event will take place in cooperation with the local house of literature to which the presenters are warmly welcomed. A publication of papers is planned.

Please send your suggestions for presentations (up to 30 minutes) and a short résumé to grk1787@uni-goettingen.de. Abstracts (max. of 400 words) need to be submitted by September 30th, 2015.