James Mussell. *The Nineteenth-Century Press in the Digital Age*. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. 256 pp.; US \$85.00 ISBN 9780235533

The Nineteenth-Century Press in the Digital Age is the latest volume in Palgrave's new series, Studies in the History of Media. The book originated from James Mussell's work on the online Nineteenth-Century Serials Edition (NCSE)¹ and calls for a dual approach to historical media: "we now need to cultivate two sets of skills to understand the nineteenth century: familiarity with the forms and genres of the periodical and newspaper press; and the ability to interrogate the resources that present them in digital form" (6). This fascinating cross-disciplinary study is as strong on nineteenth-century materials as it is on the digital landscape of our own historical moment.

Following a theoretical introduction, the book is divided into four chapters. The opening chapter considers the historical genre of the nineteenth-century newspaper in its moment and today; the second focuses on the visual dimensions of text and image. The third chapter, co-authored with Suzanne Paylor, is a detailed explanation of NCSE as a case study in digitization and editing practices. The final chapter turns to pedagogy.

Mussell begins with an overview of the state of textual scholarship, particularly through an examination of the language of scholarly editing. His subject demands consideration of the contingencies of authorial and textual construction: despite the ready availability of scores of newspapers from the nineteenth century, there is much that is still unknown about who made and read them, and how they contribute to the historical and cultural landscape. Mussell therefore addresses the questions of what we mean by *text*, what we mean by *work*, and what we mean by *author*, especially in the absence of the codex as a dominant form through which the idea of work is struck into stability. This discussion will doubtless strike textual scholars as familiar territory. (He engages with McGann and Tanselle on textuality and Barthes and Foucault on authorship, as well as more recent book history work by Kate Flint and others.)

¹ Nineteenth-Century Serials Edition, Birkbeck, University of London, King's College London (Centre for Computing in the Humanities and the Department of English), the British Library, and Olive Software, 25 June 2012, <http://www.ncse.ac.uk/index.html>.

Mussell carves out his particular space in the realm of textual studies by demonstrating that scholars working with the mass of digitized newspaper material from the period are on uncertain ground. When it comes to digitized nineteenth-century newspapers, the idea of a work is an even more complicated notion than in the case of the original printed texts. He makes astute remarks on the tendency of the most successful digitizations to replicate the visual features and the overall reading experience of the codex (such as virtual page-turning transitions, PDFs for preserving layout, or the “bookshelf” on iBooks). Mussell makes meaningful and visible these gestures that seem to allow “the mediating technology to disappear” (15). For all that Amazon and Apple might seek simulations of the codex, signifiers on the digitized screen may take on entirely different meanings. Part of Mussell’s contribution in this volume is to make the materiality of digital texts less likely to fade into the background as we use them, and to that end the book contains lucid nontechnical explanations of basic digital terminology and digitization structures. More importantly, he explains why everyone, even non-specialists, should understand these processes and take them into consideration when using digital texts.

As with any sizeable archive, readers need some way of managing and organizing it, and one of the most interesting parts of Mussell’s discussion is his analysis of the ways in which the Victorians themselves organized periodicals through the use of indices and companions. He also points to a central methodological problem for any project that hopes to deal with a large body of materials: our ways of selecting and sampling often lead us to leave undiscovered historical elements by the wayside as we revisit familiar authors and texts.

Mussell also makes a crucial point for book historians about current practices in digitization. Optical Character Recognition (OCR) – the dominant mode of producing textual transcriptions of scanned pages – is useful only if one assumes that the work is a purely verbal medium and not a material one, and he argues that OCR effectively “subordinat[es] any non-linguistic elements, whether these are important textual components like images, presentational features such as type or aspects of the printed object’s materiality” (30). Mussell argues convincingly here that the textuality of newspapers is predicated upon “miscellaneity and seriality,” a character that comes across not only in the content and style of the articles but also in typography, layout, design, and illustration. Mussell’s insightful analysis of the newspaper page as an image is convincing in this

regard. Features like the masthead and the column widths indicate the continuity of the articles, while shifts in typography over time can tell us what the newspaper thought of itself.

The first two chapters of the book identify some of the problems of contemporary digital methods, and the last two offer case studies of editing, studying, and teaching these works. Mussell's argument about the need to draw attention to digital mediation, for example, is elegantly reprised in the final chapter on pedagogy; he suggests that since teaching materials have always mediated what they describe, drawing students' attention to the process is an important part of student learning. The discussion in this final chapter of the skills and theoretical tools that students require in order to benefit from and analyze these resources is practical and coherent with the rest of the book's argument.

Paylor and Mussell's chapter on the NCSE outlines the project's scope and structure in a way that not only acquaints readers of this volume with the resource itself, but also suggests methods and approaches for future digital edition projects of a similar kind. A useful table with the full metadata schema as implemented for the project is provided here and explains in practical terms what can be done with metadata to augment OCR.

This book is aimed at digital humanities scholars and nineteenth-century specialists, but Mussell's analysis is not limited to the transmission of the nineteenth-century newspaper. Its theoretical components and practical suggestions for large-scale digitization projects will be of interest to book historians working on a variety of national and historical literatures and cultures.

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Stephen Partridge and Erik Kwakkel, eds. *Author, Reader, Book: Medieval Authorship in Theory and Practice*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012. 336 pp.; \$75.00 ISBN 9780802099341

Author, Reader, Book is a rich and stimulating collection of essays whose workshop roots are evident in helpful cross-references as well as subtler forms of response and exchange among the individual contributors. Partridge's introduction positions the volume as a