



School of Information Sciences

Course Profile: History of Books, Printing & Publishing

Course number: INF 7790

Credits: 3

Prerequisite(s): None

Rationale for inclusion in the curriculum:

The library is the primary social institution by means of which literate societies retain contact with and control over their accumulated stock of recorded knowledge. Librarians are responsible for making this stock of knowledge available to current users and preserving it for the use of future users. Librarians should understand how the stock of recorded knowledge for which they are responsible was created, organized, disseminated, used, and preserved at successive historical periods. It is especially important in the digital environment for librarians, archivists, and other information professionals to understand how previous communications revolutions like the invention of printing presented challenges and opportunities similar to those we face today in an increasingly digital environment.

Learning outcomes:

The course explores the evolution of the book from the roll of the ancient world to contemporary formats in digital form, with special emphasis on the relationship between patterns of written communication and cultural and intellectual life. Topics considered include authorship, formats of publication, bookmaking technologies, the visual appearance of books, literacy, reading, and copyright. By the end of the semester, students should be able to analyze the consequences of the invention of printing from movable type and the implications of the digital revolution unfolding today in terms of the dissemination and survival of information.

Although course lectures are offered asynchronously through Blackboard, student "case study" presentations are conducted synchronously through Adobe Connect, giving students important experience in preparing and organizing virtual meetings and responding to questions in real time.

Content:

The course covers the following topics: Book in the ancient world and Middle Ages; Invention and spread of printing; Visual appearance of early printed books; Printing and society in early modern Europe; Professionalism of authorship and the origins of copyright; Printing and publishing in the Americas; Orality, literacy and popular culture; Nineteenth-century technical developments and publication patterns; Twentieth century publishing; and Implications of the digital revolution.

Course methodology:

Lectures and discussion supplemented by a large number of images and by student “case study” reports on historically significant books and printers. A filmed lecture by Peter Gulewich, formerly of the Detroit Public Library, has been digitized for presentation through Blackboard and provides an opportunity to view medieval manuscripts and early printed books in the collections of the Detroit Public Library.

Bases for evaluation of student performance

Term paper, synchronous oral reports, final exam, and class participation.

Texts

Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing 1450-1800*

Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*

In addition to the textbooks, a large number of required readings are posted in Blackboard.