Reading Material in Early Modern England rediscovers the practices and representations of a wide range of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English readers. Heidi Brayman Hackel argues for a history of reading centered on the traces left by merchants and maidens, gentlewomen and servants, adolescents and matrons – precisely those readers whose entry into the print marketplace provoked debate and changed the definition of literacy. By telling their stories and insisting upon their variety, Brayman Hackel displaces both the singular “ideal” reader of literary theory and the elite male reader of literary history. This interdisciplinary study draws upon portraiture, prefaces, marginalia, commonplace books, inventories, diaries, letters, and literature (Spenser, Shakespeare, Sidney, Greene, Dekker, Lyly, Jonson, and others). A contribution to literary studies, the history of the book, cultural history, and feminist criticism, this accessible book will also appeal to readers interested in our continuing engagement with print and the evolution of reading material.

Heidi Brayman Hackel is Assistant Professor of English at Oregon State University and author of several essays on early modern readers, literacy, and libraries.
READING MATERIAL IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

Print, Gender, and Literacy

HEIDI BRAYMAN HACKEL
For Steve, “hand in hand”
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This book has depended upon the insights and kindnesses of many teachers, friends, and colleagues. It has become more nearly the book I imagined thanks to support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Whiting Foundation, the Huntington Library, the British Academy, the Oregon State University Center for the Humanities, and my three home institutions since its inception, Columbia University, Randolph-Macon College, and Oregon State University.

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A note on the texts

Original spellings and typography can provide important evidence for historicist literary practice, and they begin to make visible the obstacles to reading early modern texts. Quotations in this book therefore appear in original spellings, and the distinctions between u/v and i/j have been retained, as has “ff” for “F”. Modern italics for whole words represent the emphases created by different typefaces in a single text; italicized single characters (like upon or pamphlets) indicate my expansions of standard manuscript and print abbreviations. Square brackets ([ ] ) enclose any other material added by me; angled brackets (< >) frame material deleted in the original.