

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO LITERATURE
IN A DIGITAL AGE

Literature has experienced two great medium shifts, each with profound implications for its forms, genres, and cultures: that from orality to writing, and that from writing to printing. Today we are experiencing a third shift: from printed to digital forms. As with the previous shifts, this transformation is reconfiguring literature and literary culture. *The Cambridge Companion to Literature in a Digital Age* is organized around the question of what is at stake for literary studies in this latest transition. Rather than dividing its chapters by methodology or approach, this volume proceeds by exploring the major categories of literary investigation that are coming under pressure in the digital age: concepts such as the canon, periodization, authorship, and narrative. With chapters written by leading experts in all facets of literary studies, this book shows why all those who read, study, and teach literature today ought to attend to the digital.

ADAM HAMMOND is Associate Professor of English at the University of Toronto. He is the author of *The Far Shore: Indie Games, Superbrothers, and the Making of Jett* (2021), *Literature in the Digital Age* (2016), and the coauthor of *Modernism: Keywords* (2014). He is the editor of *Cambridge Critical Concepts: Technology and Literature* (2024). His work has appeared in *Wired* and *The Globe and Mail*, and has been profiled by the BBC and CBC.

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IN A DIGITAL AGE

EDITED BY

ADAM HAMMOND

University of Toronto



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Contributors

MARK ALGEE-HEWITT, Stanford University
TULLY BARNETT, Flinders University
CLAIRE BATTERSHILL, University of Toronto
KATHERINE BODE, Australian National University
ADAM HAMMOND, University of Toronto
GABRIEL HANKINS, Clemson University
JUDY HEFLIN, independent scholar
YOHEI IGARASHI, University of Connecticut
MARIT J. MACARTHUR, University of California–Davis
LEE M. MILLER, University of California–Davis
NICK MONTFORT, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and University
of Bergen
ANNA MUKAMAL, Coastal Carolina University
EMILY SHORT, independent scholar
HELEN SOUTHWORTH, University of Oregon
GARRETT STEWART, University of Iowa
DENNIS YI TENEN, Columbia University
TED UNDERWOOD, University of Illinois, Urbana–Champaign
INGE VAN DE VEN, Tilburg University
TIMOTHY WELSH, Loyola University New Orleans
ANNA WILSON, Harvard University

Chronology

16th–17th century	The modern binary number system is studied in Europe, systems related to modern binary numbers having already been developed earlier in ancient Egypt, China, and India.
1833	Charles Babbage begins work on the Analytical Engine, a proposed mechanical general-purpose computer.
1843	Ada Lovelace publishes her annotated translation of Luigi Federico Menabrea’s description of Babbage’s Analytical Engine. She includes a way to calculate Bernoulli numbers using the machine, earning her the title of the world’s first computer programmer.
1893	Lucius Adelno Sherman publishes his <i>Analytics of Literature</i> , an early data-based approach to literary study.
1911	Lane Cooper publishes <i>A Concordance to the Poems of William Wordsworth</i> , compiled using analog data processing techniques.
1936	Alan Turing publishes <i>On Computable Numbers</i> , which contains the earliest description of a modern computer.
1943	Work begins on Colossus, the world’s first electronic digital programmable computer.
1945	Vannevar Bush describes the Memex, a proto-hypertext device.
1946	Father Roberto Busa begins work on the <i>Index Thomisticus</i> project, the first electronic

Chronology

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- concordance, often cited as the first “digital humanities” project.
- 1957 Josephine Miles’s *Concordance to the Poetical Works of John Dryden* is published, the first concordance to be completed using computational methods.
- 1963 The first edition of the ASCII character encoding standard is released.
- 1964 Ted Nelson coins the term “hypertext.”
Joseph Weizenbaum begins work on ELIZA, an early natural language processing computer program.
Frederick Mosteller and David L. Wallace publish their computational analysis of the disputed authorship of *The Federalist Papers*.
- 1966 *Computers and the Humanities* is founded, the first academic journal in what would become known as the “digital humanities.”
- 1971 Michael S. Hart founds Project Gutenberg, the world’s first digital library.
- 1974 Kurzweil Computer Products, Inc. is founded, a pioneer in optical character recognition (OCR) technology.
- 1976 Will Crowther releases *Colossal Cave Adventure*, the first text-based adventure computer game.
- 1982 Robert Darnton publishes his model of the “communications circuit.”
- 1986 The *Women Writers Project* archive is founded.
- 1987 The Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) project is launched.
- 1990 Tim Berners-Lee specifies the HTML (HyperText Markup Language) standard, the foundation of the World Wide Web.
- 1994 Work begins on The William Blake Archive.
- 1995 The Modernist Journals Project is created.
- 1996 Brewster Kahle founds the Internet Archive.
- 1998 FanFiction.net is founded.
- 1999 The Electronic Literature Organization is founded by Scott Rettberg, Robert Coover, and Jeff Ballowe.

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2000	Jay David Bolter’s and Richard Grusin’s <i>Remediation: Understanding New Media</i> is published.
2001	Jerome McGann’s <i>Radiant Textuality: Literary Studies after the World Wide Web</i> is published.
2002	The Latent Dirichlet allocation (LDA) algorithm for computational topic modeling is released.
2004	The anthology <i>A Companion to Digital Humanities</i> is published, coining the term “digital humanities.” Google Books is announced. Facebook is created.
2005	Valve’s Steam videogame digital distribution service begins selling third-party titles.
2006	Goodreads is founded. Twitter is released.
2007	Amazon releases the first version of its Kindle e-reader.
2008	Apple’s App Store digital distribution service is released.
2009	Writing from the Philadelphia MLA convention, William Pannapacker calls digital humanities “the next big thing.” Chris Klimas releases Twine, an open-source tool for creating interactive hypertext fiction.
2010	Google releases the Google Books Ngram Viewer.
2018	OpenAI releases its first large language model, GPT-1.