

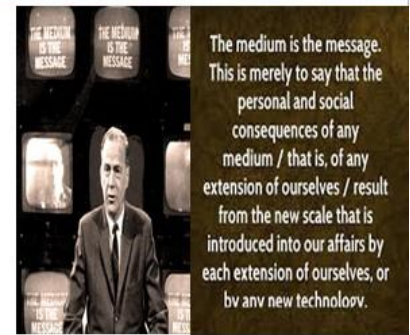
Online Communication in the Digital Age
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Lecture – 20
The Digital Literary Domain

Good morning dear friends and welcome to this module. In the previous module of this week, we have looked at the concept of digital writing and literary media. Today, we will look at new literary cultures and markets, digital marketing narratives, digital scholarship and independent publishing in a post digital world. Reading practices now as we have discussed have become more migratory in the sense that text can be accessed across different devices and platforms. This automatically dwindles with our attention span as well. We are now witnessing the emergence of a third generation of electronic literature that signals mainstream adoption of emerging forms.

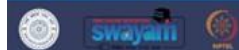
E-lit creators now turn to existing platforms and mobile devices rather than building interfaces of their own. This brings a readymade mass audience as it makes easier for users or readers to adapt skills that they already have. For example, swiping or rotating a screen on a smartphone.

Digital Medium and its Message

- Our shifting reading practices in the digital age have reshaped the society.
- Media theorist, Marshall McLuhan's statement, "The medium is the message" has extended increasingly into our lives.
 - The digital medium itself changes our lives.
 - The total pervasive effect that the medium has, and the social change it brings about; become the message.
- McLuhan notes that the content of the medium is never the message because the content remains similar to its analog predecessors.
- The change comes from the new medium which creates a new situation for human association and perception.



Marshall McLuhan- The Medium is the Message
Sources: mcluhangalaxy.wordpress.com



Our shifting reading practices in the digital age have also reshaped the society and the way the society communicates.


McLuhan's statement, the medium is the message has extended increasingly into our lives. The digital medium now itself changes our lives. The total pervasive effect that the digital medium has and the social changes it brings about also become the message. McLuhan had noted that the content of the medium is never the message because the content remains similar to the analog predecessors. The change comes from the new medium which creates a new situation for human association and perceptions.

What the digital age has accomplished above all else is to defamiliarize the act of reading. As we shift back and forth between print and digital mediums, reading becomes an increasingly self-conscious act. We study not only the words on the screen, but also the way that the medium itself shapes our reading. Digital mediums like e-books can either enrich our reading experience or can easily break the spell of the narrative. Discussing a novel with an online reading community can transform the solitary experience of reading into a social one.

The shift from printed to digital forms is changing reading in the digital age. Nicholas

Carr in his 2008 article is Google Making Us Stupid and its ensuing debates give the most influential public account of the message of the digital medium.


“Is Google Making us Stupid?”



The screenshot shows the article's title, author name, and a small illustration of a car on a road. The text below the illustration discusses the impact of digital technology on memory and attention.




The article initiated a debate among Nicholas Carr and his respondents Clay Shirky and Sven Birkerts.

It turned on three key points: (1) the question of attention and reading habits fostered by printed books and digital formats; (2) the question of whether print fostered individual consciousness and electronic media privileged group consciousness; (3) the question of whether the digital age, with its unrestricted access to texts and networks, is more democratic than the era of print.



Nicholas Carr

Source: www.yumpu.com

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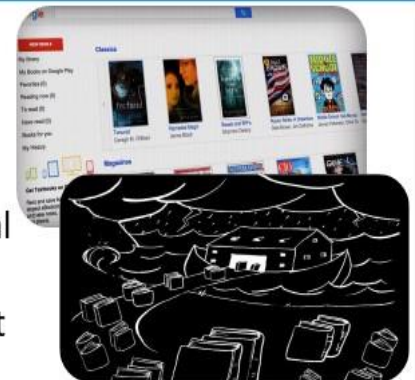
The article had initiated a debate amongst Nicholas Carr and his respondents Clay Shirky and Sven Birkerts. The discussion basically turned on three key topics. The question of attention and reading habits fostered by printed books and digital formats, the question of whether print fostered individual consciousness and electronic media privileged group consciousnesses, the question of whether the digital age with its unrestricted access to texts and networks is more democratic than the era of print.

For the American writer, Clay Shirky, the real thrust of the shift to digital textuality and the real cultural significance of the internet is its expansion of democracy. What this entails is that different kinds of reading are emerging in the digital age, skimming, scanning, fragmenting and juxtaposing texts happen online and it allows more flexibility among different information streams and a low threshold for boredom. One of the most significant aspects of literary digitization is the possibility of creating a library that contains digital copies of all literary text and that grants free and universal access to them. Major digital libraries include Project Gutenberg, JSTOR, Google Books, etc.,

among which Google Books perhaps is the most promising effort in the attempt to build a universal digital library.

The Case of Google Books

- Google Books was a project that attempted to build a 'universal virtual library' of available knowledge.
- It sought to digitize all printed books and making digital copies instantly available to the reader.
- The culture clash with Google Books happened when it started commercializing content of the libraries.
 - Instead of establishing a universal library open to all, it sought complete monopoly of the books of the partnered libraries.



NewYork Time's article on Google Books- "A Library to Last Forever"

Sources: historyofinformation.com, www.nytimes.com, www.newyorker.com



- Robert Darnton, director of the Harvard University Library from 2009 to 2015, published the article "Google & the Future of Books" in the *New York Review of Books*.
- He talked about how enterprises like Google Books stand in the way of democratization of knowledge.
- Digitization should not lead to privatization by subordinating public good for personal interests.

The Google Books project sought to digitize all printed books and making digital copies which would be instantly available to the reader. The cultural clash with Google Books happened when it started commercializing content of the libraries. Instead of establishing a universal library which should be open to all, it sought complete monopoly of the books of the partnered libraries. Robert Darnton, director of the Harvard University Library from 2009 to 2015 published the article Google & the Future of Books and he talked about how enterprises like Google Books is stand in the way of democratization of knowledge. His argument was that digitization should not lead to privatization by subordinating public good for personal interests.

Google Books remains for now in all its legal and ethical compromises as a closest thing we have to a universal library. As we have discussed in the previous modules, the shift to digital textuality moves the author from the center of the text to its margins. Digital medium focuses on the links, associations and dispersions of meanings. A contemporary digital authorship that best demonstrates this is alternative literature or Alt Lit.



Swajanti



Alternative Literature/Alt Lit

- Alternative Literature designates a community, medium, style and a particular subject matter tied together by their extremely active use of social media.
 - It is produced in a collaborative environment, posted online for free and edited based on feedback from readers.
- Existing in the free-flowing space of digital textuality, works of Alt Lit are dismissive of conventional notions of original authorship.

“ Print is dead: publishers are dead: academia is dead: borders is dead: literary journals are dead: ezra pound is literally dead”-
Steve Roggenbuck, a leading figure in Alt Lit ”

Sources: mhpbooks.com, www.buzzfeednews.com



It designates a community, medium, style and a particular subject matter tied together by their extremely active use of social media.


It is produced in a collaborative environment posted online for free and edited based on feedback from readers. Existing in the free flowing space of digital textility, works of alternative literature are dismissive of conventional notions of original authorship. We can refer to Alt Lit writer, Tao Lin's novel *Richard Yates* which begins with a cut and pasted chat log on Gmail chat. Marie Calloway's *Adrian Brody* is a detached account of a real life sexual encounter replete with excerpts from emails and Tumblr blog posts. Many proponents of Alt Lit see the movement as a way of harnessing the power of digital self-publishing to rescue literature from the hierarchical world of print and move it into the mainstream of contemporary online life.

Digital production has not fully discredited the notion of original authorship. In a state it has placed contemporary writers in a position where they must balance individual self-expression with the need to satisfy the reader's collective mind. Dash Show's graphic novel *BodyWorld* is a product of this balance. It was first serialized on show's website and revised for book publication in 2010. The artistic process in *BodyWorld* functions as a complex hybrid of digital and analog methods that remain unresolved and in conflict.

It is concerned with the digital present and more specifically with the world of digital publishing.

Dash Show's *BodyWorld*

- *BodyWorld* talks of a deranged researcher of hallucinogenic drugs, Paulie Panther.
- It takes as its subject the tension between individuality and 'hive mind' in the digital age and the fate of the individual artist in a networked society.
- It is concerned with the digital present and more specifically, with the world of digital publishing.
- Show's artistic process in *BodyWorld* functions as a complex hybrid of digital and analog methods that remain unresolved and in conflict.



Sources: www.amazon.in, Adam Hammond

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It talks of a deranged researcher of hallucinogenic drugs and it takes as its subject the tension between individuality and the hive mind in the digital age and the fate of the individual artist in a network society. If we look at the pictures, we will understand that each drawing is a mashup of pre-Photoshop coloring processes and Photoshop coloring. It has the smoothness of digital coloration with the roughness of analog brush strokes. The most distinctive visual element in it is the palimpsestic overlaying to portray the merging of consciousness effected by the drug.

Through this hybrid of digital and analog, Show expresses the unresolved ambivalence towards the digital world. Digital production may make the publishing process faster, more accessible and more inclusive, but at the same time, it can never reinvent the print model. It can only improve on it. As we have seen in the previous modules, critics have argued that hypertext fiction would usher in a new literary era which would perhaps be characterized by a democratic leveling of author and reader. However, it becomes important to understand that the remarkable rise of hypertext and hypertextual interactivity was also followed by a subsequent fall.

Let us look further at this particular argument.

The Rise and Fall of Hypertext

- The advent of hypertext marked fluidity and discontinuity of the digital narrative.
 - It favored plurality over definitive discourses and freed the reader from the domination of the author.
- The two most important early works on the theory of hypertext are: Jay David Bolter's *Writing Space* (1991) and George Landow's *Hypertext* (1992).
- In *The Language of New Media* (2001), Lev Manovich warns against how the hypertext reifies or objectifies processes of psychological association that, in traditional print narrative, are left to the reader.
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Jay Bolter's *Writing Space* and George Landow's *Hypertext*

Sources: www.kobo.com, www.amazon.com

The advent of hypertext marked fluidity and discontinuity of the digital narrative. It obviously favored plurality over definitive discourses and in a way freed the reader from the domination of the author. The two most important works in the early phase about it are 1991 publication of Jay Bolter and the 1992 publication of George Landow.

In 2001, Lev Manovich in his book, warns against how the hypertext revise or objectifies processes of psychological association that in traditional print narrative are left to the reader. Manovich warns against overly literal understandings of interactivity that equate it with physical interactions like pressing a button or choosing a link. Such an interactivity becomes deceptive in its claims to activate the reader.

The Rise and Fall of Hypertext

- In *The Cambridge Introduction to Narratives* (2002), Porter Abbott asks whether hypertext truly effects a radical break from print narrative.
 - He points out that hypertext invented neither non-linear structure nor readerly choice in determining the narrative path because the story that the readers discover as they navigate hypertextual pathways will be always linear.
- Reader-response critics argue that hypertext choice cannot “transform” readers into co-authors because reading has always been an intrinsically creative activity.



Lev Manovich- *The Language of New Media*
Sources: manovich.net

It would also be pertinent at this point to refer to Porter Abbott who points out that hypertext invented neither non-linear structure nor readerly choice in determining the narrative path because the story that the readers discover as they navigate hypertextual pathways will always be linear. Other response critics argue that hypertext choice cannot transform readers into co-authors because reading has always been an intrinsically creative activity.

Let us take a compelling example of toned down 21st century hypertext. Stephen Marche's Lucy Hardin's Missing Period published on the website of the Canadian General Interest Magazine called *The Walrus* in 2010.

21st Century Hypertext- Stephen Marche's *Lucy Hardin's Missing Period*



A Map to *Lucy Hardin's Missing Period*
Sources: driving.ca, thewalrus.ca

- *Lucy Hardin* presents itself as a 'Choose your Own Adventure' (CYOA) novel for the generation that faces the more difficult decisions of adulthood in the digital age.
 - It is a story about a young woman in Toronto in the 2000s, who wakes one morning suspecting she maybe pregnant.
- As the punning title implies, the text unfolds like a sentence without a period, lacking a definitive, authorized ending.
- Marche shows the promise of second-wave hypertext by not attempting to revolutionize storytelling but using digital affordances to tell good stories better.
- It is an interactive novel, but the author retains his hierarchical position within the text because the choices that the reader make cannot be undone.



Stephen Marche
Source: www.goodreads.com

Lucy Hardin has often been portrayed as a choose your own adventure type of a novel for the generation that faces more difficult decisions of adulthood in the digital age. As the funny title implies, the text unfolds like a sentence without a period lacking a definitive authorized ending. Marche shows the promise of second wave hypertext by not attempting to revolutionize storytelling, but using digital affordances to tell good stories better.

It is an interactive novel, but the author retains his hierarchical position within the text because the choices that the reader once make cannot be undone later on. *Lucy Hardin* helps us to see hypertext for what it is, that is a narrative form that shares much in common with older forms, but whose subtle differences allow skilled writers to achieve artistic effects which were not possible perhaps in the print medium. What happens when the place where you are reading also becomes the stage for the story? How can your location shape and alter the story you are hearing? These were the purported aims behind the Ambient Literature Project launched in London, Bristol and online in June 2016.



Ambient Literature

- Ambient Literature project is a research collaboration that investigates the potential of situated literary experiences delivered by pervasive computing platforms, which respond to the presence of a reader to tell stories.



Experiments with how ubiquitous technologies found within smartphones can help us to access the data that is all around us to produce literary works.

- They stress continuity with cultural and literary histories rather than technologically determined 'disruptions'.



The reader is asked to physically seek out, by walking, types of location in their own environment, and in response, are given sounds and stories from remote yet related situations.



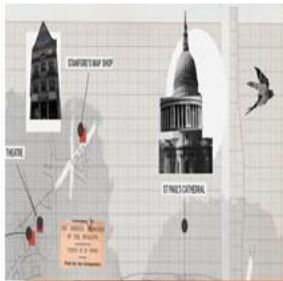
Sources: thewritingplatform.com



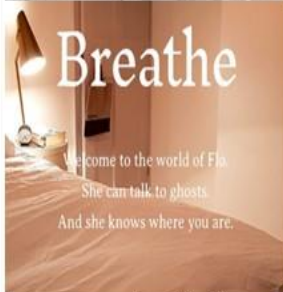
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Ambient Literature experiments with how ubiquitous technologies found within smartphones can help us to access the data that is all around us to produce literary works. This experience becomes a situated and an embodied practice because the reader is staying open to the uncontrollable parts of real world and is also improvising as part of the narrative. Let us look at the Ambient Literature Writing Projects from writers James Attlee, Kate Pullinger and Duncan Speakman.

Ambient Literature



- ***The Cartographer's Confession* by James Attlee*** combines fiction, non-fiction, imagined and real locations to create a story of migration, loss and betrayal.
- It features audio, prose, 3D soundscapes and musical scores.
- The 'armchair mode' enables the reader to explore the research materials and construct their own narrative, anywhere they may be.



- ***Breathe* by Kate Pullinger*** tells the story of Flo, who has the ability to hear ghosts.
- Using three APIs-weather, time and location- the story accesses data via the reader's phone in order to alter the story for every reader.
- Through the use of conditional text, the story changes according to the temperature, season and place it is being read.



Kate Pullinger and James Attlee
Sources: www.katepullinger.com,
www.andotherstories.org.

Sources: research.ambientlit.com

*Refer Ambient Literature: Towards a New Poetics of Situated Writing and Reading Practices



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The Cartographers Confession by James Attlee combine fiction, non-fiction, imagined and real locations to create a story of migration, loss and betrayal. Breathe by Kate Pullinger tells a story of Flo who has the ability to hear ghosts.

Using three APIs, weather, time and location, the story accesses data via the reader's phone in order to alter the story for every reader. Through carefully orchestrated experiences, writers draw reader's attention to distract aspects of the environment, highlighting the unseen and distracting from the familiar. Let us look at the example of Speakman's Ambient Literature, It Must Have Been Dark By Them. It is a book and audio experiences that uses music, narration and field recordings from three places in the world experiencing rapid human and environmental changes.

Duncan
Speakman's *It
must have been
Dark by then*

- It brings about stories of changing environments from the swamplands of Louisiana, to empty Latvian villages and the edge of the Tunisian Sahara.

Source: <https://vimeo.com/246078184>



It Must Have Been Dark By Then is a combination of an audio walk and a physical book.

One of the things that is different about it from a normal audio walk is that there is no prescribed route. It uses geolocation, satellite positioning but actually you are choosing the route yourself as you do it. You are hearing sounds and interviews and field recordings from three other countries. The piece invites you to choose different types of locations in your own environment and at each of those locations you are invited to read a story from one of these other places in the physical book while you are hearing field recordings and atmosphere from those places.

This is your current location. The circle marks a place. Some locations you will have to choose. Some will be chosen for you. And the work stores all those places you choose so you kind of create your own personal map in the city but in the second half of the piece you can walk back through where the narratives continue and you hear new parts of those stories. How many real choices have you made on your walk so far? Maybe you have just followed familiar routes or just drifted through this place.

Right now you should try to find some kind of junction. Having Duncan make the first of our commissions really provided us with an opportunity to work with somebody who

is incredibly experienced and that we can trust to challenge himself. It's a process of investigating how digital technology and smart phones in particular can impact on what we know to be situated storytelling and also how we write for that space and how we commission work and how readers respond to it. It must have been done by then feels in many ways like documentary but the particular mode in which it materializes in which you experience of it is different. This location might not seem important but right now it belongs to you.

You are the only one who knows why you chose it and now it exists as the edge of your map. The ambiguity that's built into the design of the work allows you to create an artwork that's unique to you. The three places are swamplands of Louisiana, empty Latvian villages and the edge of the Tunisian Sahara. The piece requires the readers to switch between a smartphone and a book. They are asked to walk marking specific moments of connection on the phone screen and creating a map of it.

However, the readers must also be aware about the politics of ambient literature, its future potential and the issues that it already raises. It shows the ongoing realities of contemporary, creative as well as critical works that rely on digital technologies and new kinds of interactions.

The Politics of Ambient Literature

- Ambient works and digital writing demand an understanding and manipulation of technologies which have become exclusional.
 - The requirement of digital devices also raises the question of who is assumed to have access to these means of interaction.
- Ambient literature is predicated on a technological apparatus which is part of an emerging spatialized digital culture.
 - Other than the technologically enabled worker, this excludes the vulnerable and the majority population of the informal economies.
- The presumed urban safety that it demands implicitly creates an 'ideal' reader who is cis-male, straight-presenting, able-bodied and neurotypical.



Sources: research.ambientlit.com

Ambient works and digital writings demand an understanding and manipulation of technologies which have become exclusionary. The requirement of digital devices also raises the question of who is assumed to have access to these means of interaction. It is predicated on a technological apparatus which is part of an emerging specialized digital culture.

This excludes the vulnerable and the majority population of the informal economies too. The presumed urban safety that it demands implicitly creates an ideal reader who is cis male, straight-presenting, able-bodied and neurotypical. This shows that bodies and their reception in places are not the same for all subjects. Being male and white, they are unlikely to be interrupted or assaulted or to be seen as doing something wrong. Digital literary experiments and digital media's role in fashioning 21st century literature have forged the relationship between digital communication technologies and contemporary literary culture.

There has been a socio-cultural conceptualization of the digital literature interface that is both contextual and contemporary in outlook. The literature that we have discussed can only be understood through digital platforms because they presuppose reading in digital environments. But the contemporary digital sphere is not just that, it is also predominantly about authorial careers, publisher prospects and public understanding of literature. It is also about critical judgments and reader response. Let us have a better understanding of these components of the digital literary sphere as we look at it today.

So when we look at the digital literary sphere, what do we see around us?

The Digital Literary Sphere

- **Literary authors** have embraced an interactive and distributed model of managing their presence online.
 - This includes twitter messages, YouTube channels etc.
- Contemporary **book publishers** have expanded into the phase of author-reader encounter.
 - This is usually manifested through social media feeds, online book clubs, YouTube channels or audiovisual recordings of literary events.
- Cultural consumption is evident through **book retailing websites** like 'Amazon' and 'Barnes & Noble'.
 - They display features like reader reviews, algorithmically generated book recommendations, book browsing, blogs, e-mail newsletters etc.
- Digital literary sphere has created the rhetoric of **reader-selfhood and individuality** as well as cultural self-fashioning.
 - It allows readers to catalogue their book collections, connect with those of similar tastes, rate and discuss particular titles.



Waterstones

Book Retailing Websites
Sources: today.uconn.edu, www.eseller365.com,
www.waterstones.com



We have literary authors who have embraced an interactive and distributed model of managing their presence online through Twitter messages, YouTube channels and different other media platforms. Contemporary book publishers have also expanded into the phase of author-reader encounter. Cultural consumption is evident through book-retailing websites like Amazon and Barnes and Noble, etc. Digital literary sphere has also created the rhetoric of reader selfhood and individuality as well as cultural self-fashioning. It allows readers to catalogue their book collections, connect with those of similar tastes, rate and discuss particular titles.

In the digital sphere, the author's role extends far beyond providing the content. They are engaged in real-time conversations with their readers, providing updates on the progress of writing projects and selectively endorsing their work. For example, popular author John Greene has his YouTube channel Vlogbrothers and he even asked his audience to design the paperback cover of his novel *An Abundance of Katherines*. The authorial persona are increasingly projected via digital media and the authorial performance is made possible by digital media technologies.

Performing Authorship

- Authors have embodied performances at writers' festivals, their political engagements and their continuing hermeneutic agency in popular culture.
- The digital literary sphere amplifies a social, economic and institutional consensus. They also foster an author-reader para-social pseudo intimacy to show an unmediated authorial voice and interaction.



Source: <https://youtu.be/jpMAMFM7N-AQD15VfMgCFMuI>

Pierre Bourdieu's 'Cultural Capital' and 'Marketable Commodities'	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Authors become 'Cultural Capital' because they contribute to the intellectual discourse of the society and some of their works become part of the literary canon of high artistic value.• They also become 'marketable commodities' because the assets they produce in the form of books have direct economic value in the marketplace.
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Swajanti



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The digital literary sphere amplifies a social, economic and institutional consensus. They also foster an author-reader parasocial pseudo intimacy to show an unmediated authorial voice and interaction. At this point, it is interesting to refer to Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital and marketable commodities. Authors become cultural capital because they contribute to the intellectual discourse of the society and some of their works become part of the literary canon of high artistic value. They also become marketable commodities because the assets they produce in the form of books have direct economic value in the marketplace.

The Canadian author Margaret Atwood is perhaps one of the most digital savvy authors. She has used the long pin device to virtually sign copies of her books. She is also a participant of Twitter fiction festival and patron of community writing site Wattpad. Let us also look at the contemporary voice. We would listen to a video by a contemporary Indian writer Priyamvada Gaur.

Her comments about the cultural dynamism in the digital literary sphere and the creation

of authorial identity across multiple communication channels are based on her experiences of publishing her book.

The Importance of Creating Authorial Identity in the Digital Literary Sphere

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hT02fYQLHvk&t=2s>

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In the contemporary digital landscape, social media has emerged as a powerful tool for authors to connect with their readers, amplify their reach and promote their literary creations. With the right strategies, authors can leverage social media platforms to create a buzz around their books, engage with their audiences and ultimately drive the sales. We will talk about the effective techniques for utilizing social media to promote a book focusing on key platforms, content creation, engagement, timing and success measurements.

It is important to choose the right platforms. The first step in effectively using social media for book promotion is selecting the appropriate platforms. Different platforms cater to diverse demographics and content formats. Instagram and Pinterest are visually driven platforms, suitable for showcasing book covers, author images and visually appealing quotes. Facebook provides a more versatile space for discussions, live events and sharing longer posts as you might all be aware of. Twitter's brevity is perfect for concise updates and engaging with readers.

Although it can pose a little bit of problems sometimes politically, as I have heard.

Goodreads offers a dedicated space for book enthusiasts, fostering discussions and reviews. It allows users to catalogue their book collections and connect with those of similar tastes. So there is a cultural self-fashioning taking place and there is a literary display to presumably like-minded audiences. We have to understand that all these social media platforms, especially Twitter and Tumblr, form the superstructure of today's literary world.

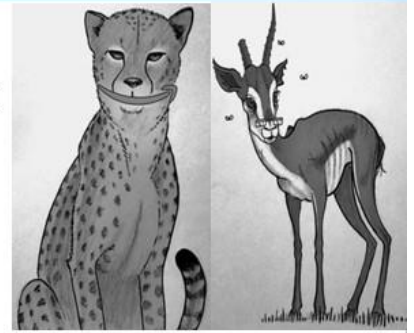
Through the exchange of links, recommendations, news and contacts, there is a mass appeal for the category of authors as we can create lively interactions with our readers, thus creating an authorial identity across multiple communication channels. You might have seen the book trailer for my novel Vega, which was officially released by Blue Rose Publishers in the YouTube. It has become equally important for publishers to become digital savvy. This encourages further reader-author-publisher identification, If there is a guarantee of quality control in the reader's minds. We have already seen how authors in the digital era become representative of Bourdieu's symbolic and marketable capitals.

But we cannot deny the fact that it is the digital literary sphere's mass accessibility and discoverability that generates this overall cultural dynamism. Therefore, we can say that authorship is just the text; It is also publicising, marketing and interacting with the actual readers. This corresponds to the concept of authorial identity performance. More information about author Priyamvada Gaur talking about new literary cultures and digital marketing are given in the reference section.

However, using Twitter for one-way self-promotion is known as broadcasting within the Twitter worlds. Digitally distributed spaces have helped to sell the book not only through commercial transaction but also through advertising and promotions. And this brings us to the question, what are the conditions of existence for literature in the 21st century?

New Frontiers of Selling Literature

- Algorithmic culture explains the rapidly expanding digital regime of cultural decision as they help in driving the prominence of authorial profile and book sales through user-recommendations.
- Innovations in online book marketing include launching book trailers through online platforms and the phenomena of blog tours that include op-ed-style pieces, writer interviews and live webchats.



Dan Turk's illustrations for *Inside Digital Book World*; Amazon as cheetah and independent publishers as a wounded deer with reading glass.
Source: Simone Murray

Amazon and the commodification of community

- Amazon's commercialized approach to community building in the digital literary sphere through precise targeting of potential consumers and commercial messages would readily identify as the surveillance culture of social networking.
- It curates featured books, special offers, bestseller listings and top-selling titles generated algorithmically by its Amabot software.



Algorithmic culture explains the rapidly expanding digital regime of cultural decision as they help in driving the prominence of authorial profile and book sales through user recommendations. Innovations in online book marketing include launching book trailers through online platforms and the phenomena of blog tours that include op-ed style pieces, writer interviews and live websites. Some of the previous slides have hinted at the commodification of books on certain online platforms like Amazon.

Let us look at the picture on the top right hand side of the slide. This picture shows Dan Turk's representation of Amazon as a cheetah and the independent publishers as a wounded deer trying to evade the cheetah. Another paradigm of the digital literary sphere is the book review culture. Social media has rendered reviewing more democratically accessible and interactive.

The Book Review Culture

- The internet has normalized the act of reviewing cultural products like books. This permits readers to challenge facts, lines of argument or assumptions.
 - Prominent online venues for reviewing include book-retailer websites like Amazon, social cataloging sites like Goodreads, literary or book review blogs like 'bookslut', online forums etc.
- The characteristic tone of digital book review culture is personal, intimate, conversational and affective.
 - This could also lead to trolling and abuse of contrary opinions.
- The critic in an era of digitally accelerated cultural democratization (1) concentrates on textual specifics (2) judges the importance of work and place them in hierarchies of value and (3) considers how readers engage and approach them.



The internet has permitted readers to challenge facts, lines of arguments or assumptions.

The characteristic tone of digital book review culture is personal, intimate, conversational and affective. This could also lead to trolling and abuse of contrary opinions often. The critic in an era of digitally accelerated cultural democratization concentrates on textual specifics, judges the importance of work and place them in hierarchies of value and considers how readers engage and approach them. It is often not possible to identify the identity of those who write online reviews.

A review can be thoughtful, flippant or biased. Fiction remains the book sector that still cultivates the practice of long-format, linear, immersive online reading in which emotional investment of the reader is avidly encouraged. Let us also briefly discuss online reading groups.

Online Reading Groups

- Virtual book clubs facilitate semi-anonymity unless a reader chooses to (mis)represent them through personal disclosure, pseudonym or an avatar.
- An online forum's asynchronous communication and unlimited space facilitate lengthy and reflective responses rather than on-the-spot replies.
- However, the disembodied nature of digital mediums raise issues about the sites' cultivation of data for commercial purposes.
- The online book exchange-cum-reading group 'BookCrossing' facilitates the exchange of the same copy of a book that has passed through numerous prior readers and hence, exerts unique auratic power.

The logo for Netflix Book Club features the words "Netflix", "Book", and "Club" stacked vertically. The word "Book" is enclosed within a red circle that has a diagonal slash through it, resembling a "no" symbol.

Netflix's Book Club
Source: <https://youtu.be/rj-R28D6ITM?si=hqfSyiMblGqERjZz>



Virtual book clubs facilitate semi-anonymity unless a reader chooses to represent or misrepresent them through personal disclosure, a pseudonym or an avatar. And online forums asynchronous communication and unlimited space facilitate lengthy and reflective responses rather than on-the-spot replies. However, the disembodied nature of digital mediums raise issues about the site's cultivation of data for commercial purposes.

The online book exchange-cum-reading group BookCrossing facilitates the exchange of the same copy of a book that has passed through numerous prior readers. The video shows the launching teaser of Netflix book club where readers will hear about new books and films and exclusive access to each book's adaptation process. This shows how reading communities are most often commodified through apps like Netflix, Kindle and Kobo based on a genre's popularity, demographic appeal, geographic uptake and rate of book club adoption. The digital advances have never led to the decline in demand for literature. In today's world, we can never neither detach literature nor its authorial role from the digital realm.

Let us listen to the views of Priyamvada Gaur, the emerging Indian writer on this topic.

- Technological advances have never led to the decline in demand for literature.
- In today's world, we can never neither detach literature nor its authorial role from the digital realm.



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HT02fYQLHvk&t=2s>

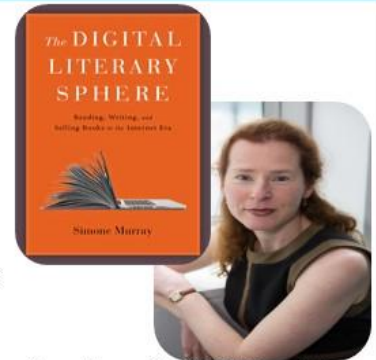
Authors should actively interact with their followers by responding to comments, addressing queries and participating in discussions. Asking questions or initiating polls related to the book themes can encourage readers to share their thoughts and create a sense of community. Hosting Q&A sessions or live author chats provides a direct channel for engaging with the fans in real time. As you might have seen a lot of movie stars, they use Twitter, YouTube, Facebook and Instagram for live chatting with all their fans situated all across the globe.

Additionally, collaboration with book clubs or bloggers can widen the reach and encourage in-depth discussions. In the digital frontier, everyone's a critic. We are looking at a boom of electronic magazines. Emerging of new electronic publishers, springing up of organizations to develop online leadership and bring them into contact with the new writers.

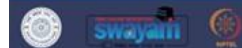
This is what encompasses the digital paratext.

Digital Paratext

- 'Digital Paratext' is a coinage by Simone Murray in her book *The Digital Literary Sphere* (2018) to refer to all manifestations of literary interests and their existence in the digital environment.
 - This includes the **public performance of authorship** through various authorial blogs, vlogs, podcasts, Twitter messages and posts circulated by authors.
 - The **participatory culture of the readers** are re-defined through digital reviewing culture where readers' reviews, social cataloging profiles, littblogs and booktuber videos bring in global literary conversations.
 - **Consumer-oriented view of literary culture** finds its manifestations in online reading formations, publisher's websites and online businesses that cater to convert reader's reading enthusiasm into a commercially viable business.



Simone Murray- *The Digital Literary Sphere*
Sources: www.press.jhu.edu,
research.monash.edu



Digital paratext is a coinage by Simone Murray in her book, *The Digital Literary Sphere* published in 2018. It is used to refer to all manifestations of literary interests and their existence in the digital environment. This includes the public performance of authorship through various authorial blogs, podcasts, Twitter messages, etc. The participatory culture of the readers are redefined through digital reviewing culture where readers review social cataloguing profiles, litt blogs and BookTuber videos bring in global literary conversations. The digital-oriented view of literary culture finds its manifestation in online reading formations, publishers' websites and online businesses that cater to convert readers' reading enthusiasm into a commercially viable business.

The digital literary landscape has evolved significantly in recent years with emerging technologies and innovative approaches to storytelling. Immersive experience, multimedia integration, non-linear narratives and collaborative storytelling are all part of it. Similarly, digital publishing has transformed the way literature is produced, accessed and shared.

Conclusion

- Digital and technological platforms have redefined and expanded the digital literary sphere in terms of creation, circulation and consumption of texts.
- Beyond traditional e-books, digital spaces have given rise to new formats like web serials, interactive fiction, and transmedia storytelling.
- The rise of digital platforms and self-publishing tools has empowered authors to bypass traditional publishing houses and release their work independently.
- It allows data analytics for the collection of reader data, providing insights into reading habits, preferences, and engagement levels.



Digital and technological platforms have redefined and expanded the digital literary sphere in terms of creation, circulation and consumption of texts. Beyond traditional e-books, digital spaces have given rise to new formats like web serials, interactive fiction and transmedia storytelling.

The rise of digital platforms and self-publishing tools has empowered authors to bypass traditional publishing houses and release their work independently. It allows data analytics for the collection of reader data, providing insights into reading habits, preferences and engagement levels. This information can be valuable for authors and publishers in tailoring their content and marketing strategies. In the next week, we will begin with an introduction to digital humanities. Thank you.