

EDITOR'S NOTE

*T*EXTUAL CULTURES 14.1 CELEBRATES THE “CONFERENCE THAT was not” — that is, the STS meeting scheduled to unfold in March 2020 at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia but cancelled at the last moment when the virulency of the Covid-19 pandemic led to widespread lockdowns across the world.

“Where are the borders of the book, and what do we find there?” These were the focal questions posed by the principal organizers at the host site of the “lost conference”, Zachary Lesser (Edward W. Kane Professor of English) and John H. Pollack (Curator, Research Services, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts), and their organizing committee, Julie Nelson Davis (Professor of the History of Art), Mitch Fraas (Director of Special Collections, Kislak Center), and Whitney Trettien (Assistant Professor of English). These questions were meant to open a conversation about the inter- and transnationalism of textual culture(s) — in their words, “the translations and migrations that transmit texts and that texts themselves have prompted — as well as the ‘borders’ of books and other textual vessels, as objects that may be material, digital, and/or ephemeral”.

The original conference program, set to feature four keynote addresses followed by more than a dozen panels, seminars, and workshops, promised a rich array of responses to these questions and the diverse others spurred by them. Many — just over half — of those responses appear here. Yet as all textuists know, changes in the form and setting of texts entail changes in their meanings — and what is missing has meaning too. These “proceedings”, then, evoke rather than replace the work that would have taken place in March 2020. Here, the original session titles — no longer fully applicable in this new context — have fallen away. The issue opens with keynote lectures by Peter Kornicki and Roger Chartier, which together almost span the textual miles between the seventeenth and twenty-first

centuries, and a theoretical case-study of Paul Eggert's landmark book, *The Work and the Reader in Literary Studies*. From these points of orientation, the remaining essays are arranged chronologically by the historical era addressed, with the final two contributions — those by Young and Dean, respectively — returning to extend the explorations of textuality and authorship central to the issue (and the field) as a whole. They serve as a clasp to these “proceedings” that end as they began: in the space of theory mindful of practice.¹

While no printed issue of a journal can ever capture the vitality of an event where thoughts would have unfurled “live”, *in real time*, we believe that vibrations of the original energy of this “conference that was not” find expression in the essays gathered here. Perhaps most significantly, these proceedings, drawing us ever further out into the aura of their potentialities, suggest that change is afoot in our ever-emergent field.

This issue is dedicated to the conference organizers who prepared the ground for the 2020 meeting and to the larger community that had hoped to convene in the early days of that spring to probe questions about borders and to cross over them.

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1. Two sections unrelated to the 2020 conference proceedings close this issue: a “Reply” by Michael Gavin to an essay published in an earlier issue of this journal that cited his work and a section of Reviews of scholarly works across the field.