

Reading Cultures and Libraries in Change / 22–23 May 2019

Abstract of a paper
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Digital Reading and Writing Communities as a Resources for Research

The digital turn has effected a significant change on the way we approach works of fiction. Storytelling in software-driven, conditional and process-based computational media is not so much about disseminating a single story, as works of fiction now appear to us as something to be cut, pasted and reassembled with ease. As a result, the change challenges the previous research focus on fixed media content and author-controlled model of transmission.

In my paper, I explore and consider the ways in which communities built around reading and writing in the digital media might be used as a resource in the analysis of such change and understanding contemporary literary culture. Analysing not only the ways in which e.g., fanfiction stories are written, but also the ways in which they are discussed, reviewed, applauded and criticised offers us an illuminating perspective into the reading culture in the digital and networked age. Furthermore, as the popularity of content can be understood in terms of putting it into various kinds of uses by means of digital media, my paper provides insights into what people read nowadays and why.

In particular, I discuss an approach to entities such as fictional characters as process-based and open-ended instead of as parts of a finished work within which they fulfil certain functions. This allows us to go more deeply into the socially embedded practices of rewriting, repurposing and “retrofitting” media content – and ask quite profound questions. How and why are the entities such as characters reimagined and repurposed, and on whose terms?