The Image on the Page: A Study Day Around Illustrated Print Culture
Call for Papers

Concordia University Library
Montréal (Québec), Canada
13 October 2023 (in-person)

This study day aims to gather researchers around the subject of the printed image since the 1880s. A significant milestone of this era was the widespread implementation of halftone printing, a photomechanical process that eventually enabled the reproduction of subtle hues and gradients in publications with large-scale print runs.

With particular attention to material bibliography and production techniques, we seek to better understand how illustrations contribute to the formation of meaning and discourses within different contexts from illustrated newspapers to etiquette manuals, from scientific journals to children’s books. As literacy levels continued to rise throughout the twentieth century, this vast array of publications was directed at increasingly diverse communities of readers whose expectations and needs influenced the development of visual culture in print. In turn, the intimate relationships that played out between image and text significantly shaped people’s impressions of the world around them by collating all manner of leisurely, professional, and political information within the space of the page.

Straddling the disciplines of literary studies, art history, bibliography, and library sciences, the field of illustrated print culture is a privileged inroad to social history. We are inspired by the foundational work of Richard Benson’s The Printed Picture (MoMA, 2008) as well as recent scholarly interest in vernacular media, such as Sarah Mirseyedi and Gerry Beegan’s important contributions on the development of photomechanical reproduction and the Thierry Gervais-edited volume The “Public” Life of Photographs (The MIT Press, 2016). Heeding the call of rare books specialist Roger Gaskell, who has identified the need to develop a “bibliography of images,” we invite contributions in French and English that address any aspect of mass-produced visual materials as well as the diverse industrial or manual processes that enabled their production.

Proposals may consider topics such as:

- The development, usage, or impact of various print processes.
- The importance of the graphic arts, including layout and typography, in the study of visual culture.
- The historical significance of a given book, magazine, or other kind of illustrated publication.
- Mass-produced works that rely on printed pictorial sequences such as photobooks, comic strips, or photo-novels.
- Posters, flyers, postcards and other kinds of ephemera.
- The invisible intermediaries: designers, prepress specialists, printers, typographers, etc.
- The evolving roles and statuses of author and illustrator/artist.
- Readership and reception.
- Distribution and publishing networks.
- The study of variants in the context of printed pictorial material: seriality, different editions, and the (ir)relevance of the original image.
• Approaches to the rapport between text and image in print and their resultant meaning.
• The creation and mass-circulation of stereotypes or other visual tropes.
• Theoretical or methodological approaches to multimedia artefacts: how to categorize, characterize and interpret hybrid print objects.
• The institutional challenges faced by scholars, libraries, and archives alike in collecting, cataloguing, preserving, and making illustrated print culture accessible.

Proposals for 20 minute papers can be sent to stephanie.hornstein@concordia.ca before 15 July 2023. They should include a title followed by an abstract (200 words max.) and a short biography (100 words max.).

Organizing committee

Stéphanie Hornstein, PhD candidate, Department of Art History, Concordia University and Concordia Library’s Researcher-in-Residence 2022-2023.

Michel Hardy-Vallée, PhD (art history), Visiting scholar, Gail and Stephen A. Jarislowsky Institute for Studies in Canadian Art, Concordia University.