

Call for Contributors

The Routledge Companion to Book Studies

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Overview

We are seeking chapter proposals for *The Routledge Companion to Book Studies*, a major new reference work under contract with Routledge. This interdisciplinary volume reimagines the field of book history for contemporary readers, moving beyond Eurocentric, bibliographic, or strictly historical frameworks to engage critically with global, material, pedagogical, and professional dimensions of textual culture.

Rather than presenting a chronological history, this *Companion* is organised around five thematic sections that interrogate books as conceptual, technological, and cultural objects. The *Companion* moves from:

- foundational frameworks and vocabularies (Section I);
- to material and sensory engagements (Section II);
- to technologies and infrastructures of transmission (Section III);
- to how these ideas are taught, challenged, and lived (Sections IV and V).

Our goal is to equip readers—students, researchers, teachers, and professionals—with the key vocabularies, debates, and tools needed to think about textual production, circulation, and meaning across diverse historical and geographic contexts.

What are we looking for?

Global and comparative: We seek contributions that centre underrepresented geographies, textual traditions, and communities—including Islamic, Indigenous, African, Asian, and Latin American practices.

Conceptual and critical: Chapters that interrogate key terms (e.g., ‘book’, ‘authorship’, ‘materiality’) and foreground the methodological and political stakes of studying textual forms.

Inclusive and interdisciplinary: We welcome voices from scholars across disciplines (literary studies, media studies, library science, history, sociology, art history, Digital Humanities) and professional contexts (archives, conservation, publishing, rare book trade).

Pedagogically useful and publicly engaged: The volume aims to be accessible to early-career researchers and students, while also supporting instructors and public-facing work.

Specific topics open for submission

We invite proposals that align with the structure of the volume, especially in the following areas where contributor assignments are still open. Authors may propose to contribute to one of these chapters or suggest a new chapter aligned with the *Companion's* aims:

I. Terminology: Rethinking Core Concepts

- Defining the Book: What counts as a 'book'? Cross-cultural and historical approaches.
- Ascribing the Book: Copyright, authorship, and collective writing beyond Eurocentric frames.
- Experimental Publishing: Alternative formats, community publishing, and radical distribution.
- Biblioclasm: Histories of erasure, destruction, and censorship across time and cultures.

II. Materialities of the Book

- Reading Bindings and Substrates: Material science, conservation, and sensory reading practices.
- Book in Parts: Paratext, palimpsest, remixing, rebinding, and the reuse of textual materials.
- Scrolls and Non-Codex Forms: Textuality before and beyond the bound book.
- The Book and the Body: Embodiment, disability, and neurodiverse reading practices.

III. Technologies of Textual Transmission

- Manuscript Cultures: Transmission before and after print in Middle Eastern, African, or Asian traditions.
- Books and Climate: Sustainability, waste, and the environmental costs of textual media.
- Digital Books and Access: Metadata, digitisation, AI, and the politics of digital preservation.
- Books on Social Media: Online reading communities, fan cultures, and remediation.

IV. Book History in Practice: Teaching, Theory, and Public Engagement

- Teaching Book Studies: Curricula, classroom practices, and decolonial pedagogy.
- Queering the Book: Sexuality, censorship, subversion, and LGBTQ+ textual histories.
- Books and Visual Culture: Artists' books, marginalia, illustration, and graphic narrative.
- Public Humanities and Activism: Libraries, museums, zine culture, and community archives.

V. Book Studies in the Workplace

- Professional Practice: Library and archival work in global contexts (non-Western case studies especially welcome).
- Book Conservation and Forensics: Material approaches to preservation and repair.
- AI and the Future of the Book: Machine reading, generative text, and algorithmic authorship.
- Publishing Pathways: Industry, access, and labour across national and regional publishing landscapes.

Chapter details

Chapters will be **7,000–8,000 words** (including notes), written for an undergraduate/early postgraduate audience in an accessible style.

Contributors are encouraged to include up to 1–2 images where relevant; securing permissions (and costs associated with those permissions) will be the author's responsibility.

Final submissions due: **30 June 2026** (allowing one year for editorial preparation).

Contributor commitments

We are actively seeking proposals from scholars in or from the Global South, scholars working outside elite institutions, early career researchers, and practitioner-authors (e.g., librarians, archivists, artists). Co-authorship and collaboration across geographic or disciplinary boundaries is warmly encouraged.

How to propose a chapter

Please submit the following to michael.durrant@sas.ac.uk and cynthia.johnston@sas.ac.uk by **30 September 2025**:

- A 300–500 word abstract, outlining the proposed chapter's focus, key arguments, methods, and relevance to the volume.
- A brief (100–150 word) bio including institutional affiliation (if applicable), and relevant publications or experience.
- Indicate which section your chapter best fits, and whether you're open to collaborating with another contributor.

We are excited to build a *Companion* that reflects the richness, urgency, and diversity of contemporary book studies. We look forward to hearing from you!