

**Centre for the Book
2017 Research Symposium**

Books and Users



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**28–29 November
and 30 November–1 December 2017
University of Otago
Dunedin, New Zealand**

The University of Otago Centre for the Book is pleased to announce our sixth annual research symposium. In 2017, we are teaming up with Dunedin UNESCO City of Literature to offer a 3-day extravaganza engagement with books and culture.

The Centre for the Book Symposium will start on Tuesday evening, November 28th, with our usual public lecture at the Dunedin City Library. The lecture will feature Warwick Jordan, proprietor of Hard to Find Books, talking about his wide experience as a bookseller and the variety of book users that he supplies.

The symposium proper will take place on the University campus all day Wednesday, November 29th, at the College of Education and will feature a slate of presentations on the theme "Books and Users."

The two-day UNESCO Creative Cities symposium will follow, with international and local keynote speakers on Thursday November 30th, followed on Friday by facilitated workshops at the Dunedin Athenaeum in the Octagon.

Please note: Thanks to generous support from the University of Otago Centre for the Book, the NZ National Commission for UNESCO and the Dunedin City Council, both of these events will be free to attend, with delegates responsible for providing their own lunch. Delegates are welcome to register for specific days or all three days.

The theme for the Centre for the Book 2017 Symposium is "Books and Users."

Before the advent of electronic text storage, a whole realm of print existed to record and store information. From instruction manuals to phone books and encyclopedias, these publications were to be consulted rather than read. Today, increasingly, many of these works are no longer printed on paper. They are instead disseminated to users in electronic formats, often only when they are requested. This shift in media has made readers more conscious of how they use books. It also raises questions about which sort of books work well in electronic format and which do not.

This symposium seeks to investigate all the ways people use books, not just consciously or as intended, but for any purpose. Some may be propping up an item of furniture in the corner; some used for artistic design; some for elegant wallpaper. Even those books that are actually read are used in many different ways: for self-exploration; for escape; for gifts to others; for inspiration. And there are the readers, an equally diverse lot: some fold down corners; some write in books (some even in ink); some insert all sorts of items such as bookmarks or for storage; others handle a book so delicately that a second reader cannot tell the book has ever been opened. Indeed, in medical contexts, 'users' may refer to those in control of their habit or to those harmfully addicted. Is this also true in the book world?

Traditionally, libraries recorded the frequency with which books were used. Today, especially because of increased privacy concerns, such information is less publicly available, but is still being used. Indeed, publishers often place restrictions on how many times an e-text may be loaned. Institutions face pressure, often having to buy another copy after the set number of loans has been reached.

The variety of uses for books and of users of books creates areas both of mutual benefit and of potential conflict. The codex is a superbly efficient and highly evolved

technology with a well-established set of design conventions that permit quite distinctive uses. Change is in the wind, and the book beyond the codex is evolving in new directions, some of which will no doubt succeed and others of which are bound to fail.

Call For Papers

All of these topics are of potential interest for the Centre for the Book symposium. Whether you are an adept or an addict, whether books for you are primarily physical, spiritual or cerebral, and whether you prefer to look up information online or in print, you undoubtedly have thoughts on this topic. So please email a 250-300 word abstract of your ideas to books@otago.ac.nz and set aside the end of November for a thought-provoking few days of reflection and engagement with books and users of books.

Abstracts must be received by 1 October 2017, with a final programme announced by mid-October. If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Donald Kerr (donald.kerr@otago.ac.nz) or Dr. Shef Rogers (shef.rogers@otago.ac.nz).