

'Publication', papyri, and literary texts: process and presentation

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It is fashionable to deny any moment of literary publication in the Graeco-Roman world—just endless recopying. This is a reaction against the past, when the production and distribution of books was unthinkingly assimilated to modern practice. But as often, making the ancient world as different as possible, though it seems a satisfying move, glosses over the complexity of the evidence, and concentrates on difference rather than the reconstruction of ancient systems and approaches.

The crucial step for this proposal, within the larger project *Publication beyond Print*, is to unite two diverse bodies of evidence: Latin texts, which tell us so much about authors' and readers' attitudes and the contexts for writing and reading, and Greek papyri, which show us how books were produced, circulated and used. (There are Latin papyri too, and interesting things in Greek texts, especially the loquacious Galen.)

Work on the texts will bring together and exploit the evidence for authors' and readers' perspectives on publication: how readers are excited by something new (cf. Sen. *Contr.* 4. *pr.* 1), with a keenness for reading that feeds authors' keenness for writing (Cic. *Div.* 2.5); how authors correct, practice, and finally release their works for glory and criticism, in a 'giving out' (ἐκδοσις, *editio*) uncircumscribed in space and time—the book, a boy eager for city crowds, can never return (Hor. *Epist.* 1.20.6). Evidence in Latin and Greek texts on booksellers and distribution ties in with papyri; they show us the speed with which some imperial writers (Plutarch more than Galen) establish themselves as popular texts even in lesser Egyptian cities.

The physical papyri give us less direct access to minds than texts do, but offer nuanced and diverse evidence for concrete production and reading practice. When readers create their own books, from bits and pieces they like, often written in hands with less literary features, what does that imply about their attitudes to books organized by authors? How does a papyrus with at least two poems of Sappho and one effort inspired by Sappho, in a different hand, relate to a full edition of the poet (P. Köln XI 429-30, iii BC)? What if anything can we infer about attitudes to a particular text from the fairly informal hand of a papyrus of Achilles Tatius' novel (P. Colon. inv. 901 + P. Duk. inv. 722, iii AD) or the quite unliterary hand which transcribed an amorous female solo song (*Grenfell Fragment*, P. Dryton 50, ii BC)? Do texts of classic authors with spaces left for insertions from commentaries (e.g. P. Oxy. 1234 + 1360 + 2166 (c), ii AD, Alcaeus) imply things about what the copy and reading it are for?

Oxford has by far the world's largest collection of papyri, literary, sub-literary, and documentary; it has the country's most important collection of medieval Greek and Latin manuscripts. It houses the project of the Oxyrhynchus Papyri and the Centre for the Study of Ancient Documents. It has more experts on papyri, Greek and Latin literature, and Greek and Roman history and archaeology than anywhere in the world. It is the perfect place for the execution of this plan, which would make an important contribution to *Publication beyond Print*.

Applicants must have completed a Master's degree in Classics before beginning the doctorate. Some experience of papyrology is an advantage.