BookLab: Making First Impressions

BookLab opened its doors in Tawes 3248 the first week of September, and since then we’ve been working to make an impression (that’s a printer’s joke; printers love their puns, we’ve learned). The centerpiece of our activities thus far has been the eye-catching tabletop screw press which allows us to set lines of movable type and print using traditional letterpress techniques. We have already run an introductory letterpress workshop well-attended by students and faculty, and will be offering another on Nov. 6. We’ve hosted or will be hosting a number of classes in BookLab, ranging from ENGL 301 and 601 to students in Kari Kraus’s graduate and undergraduate courses and the university’s Design, Cultures, and Creativity honors program. We’ve also organized two “community prints,” wherein we have standing type ready to go for anyone who would like to stop by to print: earlier this month we community printed the messages BELIEVE WOMEN and BELIEVE SURVIVORS, and later this month, during the campus’s Frankenweek, we will be printing quotations from Frankenstein. We’ll have paper cut to the size of bookmarks for you, but you can also bring in your own paper to print on (Oct. 24-31).

These activities accent another purpose: cultivating an awareness of the materiality of the book, the labor that goes into making books, and ultimately the political power of the press, which—even in this modest context—asks us to think about networks of support and channels for distribution. Meanwhile, other aspects of BookLab’s work are also coming online, literally: our in-house library of several hundred artists’ books, chapbooks, weird and experimental books, and scholarly books about books is now fully catalogued and available for browsing on LibraryThing. (Special thanks to Lindsay Bernal, Tita Chico, Michael Olmert, and Joshua Weiner for adding to our holdings.) Resources are also now in place for various kinds of paper computing experiments using books as literal and conceptual platforms for reinventing the genre of the treated or altered book with sensors, circuitry, and links to the online world. (How about a book that tweets at you whenever it’s opened?) This speaks to the other aspect of BookLab’s mandate, reimagining what a book is and can be in a moment of accelerating media change—just as books have been reimagined at previous inflection points in their history.

In the coming months, look for workshops with visiting artists on printing, paper marbling, and bookbinding, as well as a book launch event and a program of visiting speakers. We’re grateful for your interest and support so far, and look forward to continuing to work with all constituencies to develop BookLab into a valued community resource.

BookLab Letterpress Workshop
Tuesday, November 6, 2018; 2:00 - 4:00pm

Last month, BookLab held its first letterpress printing workshop with eight members of our departmental community. After a successful event, we're looking forward to sharing the printer's art with more of our friends. If you're interested in printing on our screw press--modeled after the Gutenberg's design from the 15th century--come print with us! Our second workshop will be held in Tawes 3248 on November 6, 2018 between 2:00pm - 4:00pm. While our workshop will be limited to four people, don't fret! We'll be holding additional events during the Spring semester.

Sign up here!

Upcoming Events
(On Campus and Beyond)

Please note: some events require pre-registration.

- **Letterpress Linocut Workshop** at Typecase Industries, Washington DC NW (Saturday, October 20, 2018 from 11:00am-3:00pm)
- **Writing FrankenTerps: Literary Competition** at the University Libraries, University of Maryland (Monday, October 22, 2018 at 5:00pm)
- **BookLab FrankenReads Community Print** in Tawes 3248, University of Maryland (Wednesday through Wednesday, October 24 - 31, during our normal open hours)
- **Pronto Papermaking Workshop** at Pyramid Atlantic, Hyattsville (Wednesday, October 24, from 6:30-9:30pm)
- **Exploring Modern Japan: Create Your Own Photobook** at the Freer|Sackler with Pyramid Atlantic (Thursday, October 25 from 6:00pm-8:30pm)
- **Bound to Amaze: Inside a Book-Collecting Career** at the National Museum of Women in the Arts (ongoing through November 25, 2018)
- **The Imaginary 20th Century** at the University of Maryland Art Gallery (ongoing through November 30, 2018)
- **The Chiaroscuro Woodcut in Renaissance Italy** at the National Gallery of Arts (ongoing

Follow Us

**Fall 2018 Hours**
(Tawes 3248)
Monday: 11am-4pm
Tuesday: 11am-4pm
Wednesday: 2pm-5pm
Thursday: 9am-11am
...and by appointment.

Twitter: @umd_booklab
Instagram: @umd_booklab
Email: booklab@umd.edu

Prepare for your visit: find all of our books and materials in our comprehensive LibraryThing Catalog

**Special thanks to Karen Nelson for our BookLab logo!**
Fall Book Picks

Each issue, we're choosing our favorite books from the BookLab library to be displayed on our bookshelves. Drop by and visit us if you're interested in learning more about our book picks.

Click each book cover for a link to its entry in our LibraryThing catalog

Britt’s Pick: HORRORSTÖR by Grady Hendrix

If, like me, you are feeling the Halloween spirit, looking for levity, love to hate IKEA, and ever since reading From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler at age 8, have fantasized about secretly spending the night in a museum, you need HORRORSTÖR in your life. It's a spoooky genre-bending mystery that muddles fiction, (false) advertising, horror, and parody to tickle your little anti-capitalist goblin heart. Three employees of the furniture superstore Orsk in Cleveland, Ohio opt to work overnight in order to catch whoever has been sneaking in and smashing all the furniture. Horrorstör Novel is available in ivory matte with gloss exterior. W 7¾ x H 8¾.

Matt’s Pick: The Cambridge University Press, 1696-1712 by Donald F. McKenzie

My pick is Donald F. McKenzie’s majestic two-volume bibliographic history of The Cambridge University Press, 1696-1712. No, really, stay with me: McKenzie, still casting about for a dissertation topic, discovers a box of forgotten records of the most mundane kind and uses them to reconstruct the press’s day-to-day operations in intimate and exquisite detail, overturning much of what we know about bookmaking in the hand-press period. More than a triumph of forensic analysis, though, these books are themselves beautiful exemplars of the art of the book, with tables, charts, engravings, and even fold-out pages that would have pushed the compositor’s craft to its limit when it was printed in the mid-1960s. The link between bookwork old and new was not lost on McKenzie, who dedicated his scholarship “To the Makers of This Book.”

Mal’s Pick: Olio by Tyehimba Jess

Winner of the 2017 Pulitzer Prize in Poetry, Tyehimba Jess’ Olio is a beautiful fusion of history and fiction, as well as writing and form. Through a mixture of poetry, hymns, and narratives, Olio comes to terms with the stories of the first generation of freed slaves in the United States. Each time a poem is read, the accounts they contain vary within Jess’ innovative approach to form. Finding meaning is discerned in the process: while the poems exhibit one initial possibility of meaning, the variety of nuances formed in subsequent readings craft touching accounts of past and present
lives. While the book can be enjoyed in its entirety, my favorite section surrounds the story of conjoined twins, Millie and Christine McCoy, and its insight into the beautifully twisted understanding of individual and combined voice.

**Kari’s Pick: *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury (modified!)**

Having originally read Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451* in high school, I recently returned to it, circuitously, by way of another book: Doug Dorst and J. J. Abrams’ *S*. A work of transmedia fiction, *S* houses within its slipcase a novel entitled *The Ship of Theseus*, purportedly written by one V. M. Straka. Like Fahrenheit 451, *S* is ultimately a novel about books; indeed, its main protagonist, the eponymous *S*, is—fundamentally—not a character, but a book. And not just any book, but a fictional personification of the very book the reader of *S* holds in her hands. While teaching *S* this semester, I was reminded that that idea of the individual as a book is a central motif of *Fahrenheit 451*, where stories in an age of mass censorship find temporary sanctuary outside the covers of books in the minds of the men and women who choose to commit them to memory. “We’re nothing more than the dust jackets for books, of no significance otherwise,” explains Granger, the exiled drifter, at the conclusion of the novel. “Some of us live in small towns. Chapter One of Thoreau’s *Walden* in Green River, Chapter Two in Willow Farm, Maine. Why, there’s one town in Maryland, only twenty-seven people, no bomb’ll ever touch that town, is the complete essays of a man named Bertrand Russell. Pick up that town, almost, and flip the pages, so many pages to a person.”

Metaphors of books abound—books are birds, lighthouses, vineyards, ships, and gardens, to name a few. But in our current geopolitical moment, when the free press strains under the threats of tyrants—it is to Ray Bradbury’s metaphor of endurance and survival that I turn this month.

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**Bookish Links**

1. **The Second Shelf**: Created by writer, journalist, and rare books dealer, A.N. Devers, The Second Shelf is a "rare book business and new quarterly print..."
publication focused on increasing the visibility of writing by women and their contributions throughout history.” (image courtesy of The Second Shelf)

2. **Upside Down, Left to Right: A Letterpress Film**: Produced by Danny Cooke, this short film describes the letterpress and its history in “one of the few remaining moveable-type printing workshops in the UK, situated at Plymouth University, featuring Paul Collier.”

3. **Sold: A Rare Copy of Ada Lovelace’s Groundbreaking Computer Algorithm**:
This article from the Smithsonian Magazine discusses a rare, leather-bound copy of Ada Lovelace's 1848 translation of a paper on theoretical computing. The manuscript contains Lovelace's "pioneering formula that is considered by some experts to be the first computer program in history." (Image courtesy of Getty Images)

The BookLab Newsletter is distributed monthly by BookLab, located within the College of Arts and Humanities' Department of English. The newsletter is produced by Matthew Kirschenbaum, Kari Kraus, Mallory Haselberger, and Britt Starr.

If you have announcements, events, or ideas that you'd like to bring to our attention, please direct queries and comments to booklab@umd.edu.