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Missed Connections: Hypertext and Book History

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Missed Connections: Hypertext and Book History

Hypertext technologies and methodologies underpin much of our modern communications infrastructure. Whether we approach Hypertext as non-sequential writing that branches and allows choices to the reader, or as a body of written or pictorial material interconnected in such a complex way that it could not conveniently be represented on paper (Nelson), thinking in Hypertext has become a ubiquitous part of our reading and publishing lives.

Initially framed against the printed work - the selectiveness of book publishing (Bolter); engendered notions of authorial property (Landow); the comparative instability of the object (Delany) - Hypertext is better understood as a sibling category, generative of new ways of thinking, new opportunities, new threats. "Computers are not intrinsically involved with the hypertext concept," clarified Nelson, citing the magazine as an example, and suggesting that hypertext has never lived up to its inventive potential.

Employing a series of case studies, this panel investigates the manner in which Hypertext as approach has influenced our perspectives on approach to book history and may continue to challenge it: in the webcomics publishing circuit, in communities of practice among queer authors of interactive fiction, in our reading of transmedia memory, in digital scholarly editions, and in wider studies of the book.