



Book History Seminars 2013

In 2013, the French Institute of South Africa (Ifas) and the Department of Information Science at the University of Pretoria will be co-organising a series of seminars on book history. At the crossroads of several disciplines (history, literature, palaeography, librarianship etc.), book history has become the spearhead of cultural history worldwide. Introduced in Southern Africa thanks to the works of Isabel Hofmeyr, it has since then led to some major renewal of regional and national history problematics, as found in the recent works of Archie Dick (*The Hidden History of South Africa's Book and Reading Cultures*, University of Toronto Press, 2012) and Andrew van der Vlies (*Print, Text and Book Cultures in South Africa*, Wits University Press, 2012) or Adrien Delmas and Nigel Penn (*Written Culture in a Colonial Context*, UCT Press, 2012).

Book history and, more generally, the history of the written word in Africa, is confronted with new challenges which these seminars intend to examine: the rediscovery of a long-term history, much earlier than the arrival of the Europeans on the continent, as proposed by Shamil Jeppie for example (*The Meanings of Timbuktu*, HSRC Press, 2008) or the efforts to go beyond the simplistic oral paradigm which has been applied for too long to African studies.

Far from wanting to structure a field characterised by diversity, the objective of the seminars is, first of all, to explore and list research avenues, whether at the level of concepts (materiality, scripts, genres etc.) or topics (non-Latin alphabets in Africa, reader communities, new information technologies etc.). Two main lines will be favoured in this regard: transnationality first, offering a better chance to grasp the circulation of the written word than the generally adopted national framework; the African dimension secondly, which is largely under-documented in the current literature, and yet which offers many perspectives, including very long-term ones.

The seminars, in which the Universities of Cape Town, Johannesburg and Pretoria will participate, will take place once a month in turn at IFAS and UP. Two international conferences will complete the seminar programme for this semester.

Provisional Programme for the First Semester:

- ❖ **Tuesday 26 February, University of Pretoria, IT 5-81, 15.30-17.00**
David Johnson (Open University)
Publishing and Imagining the Union of South Africa in 1910
- ❖ **Tuesday 12 March, French Institute, Braamfontein, 14.00-15.30**
Adrien Delmas (IFAS/EHESS)
Towards a History of Philology from a Global Perspective in the Early Modern World
- ❖ **Wednesday 3 April, University of Pretoria, IT 5-81, 14.00-15.30**
Peter McDonald (Oxford University)
Book History as a Discipline Today
- ❖ **13 May, University of Pretoria**
Print, Publishing and Cultural Production in South Africa
International Seminar University of Pretoria/Oxford Brookes University (coord. Beth le Roux)
- ❖ **10-12 June, Wits University**
Textual Commodities in Empire
International conference (coord. Isabel Hofmeyr)



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