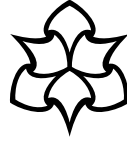




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"GLOBAL CIRCULATIONS - ANNUALS AND POCKET BOOKS ON THE MOVE"

U. CAEN NORMANDIE, 26-27 NOVEMBER 2026



Keynote speakers:

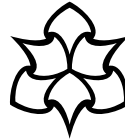
- **Dr Gordon Fraser, Senior Lecturer in English and American Studies at the University of Manchester and author of *Star Territory. Printing the Universe in Nineteenth-Century America* (2021)**
- **Amanda-Jane Doran, former Head of Collections and Conservation for Punch Publications Ltd, and Curator of the *Punch* Collection (1984-1998).**

CALL FOR PAPERS

Early almanacs, Alison Chapman writes, displayed a remarkable sensitivity to both time and place.¹ Marketed as reference-books on the movements of the planets and stars, they were often calculated for precise geographical locations, and supplied valuable information on harvest fairs and other local events. Most early modern almanacs were sold unbound, which reduced costs and allowed them to be rolled up "fit for one's pocket," making them quintessentially mobile objects.² As they flooded the eighteenth-century market, almanacs, albums, gift books appeared in a variety of forms and sizes to appeal to different sections of the readership.

¹ Alison A. Chapman, "Marking Time: Astrology, Almanacs, and English Protestantism." *Renaissance Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (2007), pp. 1257-1290, 1284.

² Bernard Capp, *Astrology and the Popular Press. English Almanacs, 1500-1800*. London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1979, 42.



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As such, their mobility considerably increased, generating an intense circulation of text and image across countries and continents. The Swiss *Hinkende Bote* thus inspired numerous successful imitations on both sides of the Rhine while Benjamin Franklin's *Poor Richard's Almanack* (1732-1758) became a fixture in European annual periodical publications.³

At a time when transport networks were developing quickly, annuals were increasingly designed for a mobile readership, articulating a new aesthetic of immediacy and responding to the new constraints of time and space. In *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World* (2006), Tim Cresswell underlines the “interface between mobile physical bodies on the one hand, and the represented mobilities on the other.”⁴ With their complex, hybrid, fragmented, and interrelated contents, Victorian pocket books and almanacs not only reflected the acceleration of people’s lives but also structured it. The immense success of such publications—an estimated 1.8 million annuals were published between 1823 and 1861, Harry E. Hootman reports⁵—also made them the ideal means to propagate ideologies or perceptions, as in the case of the *Anti-Slavery Almanach* published between 1836 and 1843 by the American Anti-Slavery Society. In the imperialistic context of the era, the circulation of these pieces functioned as a “contact zone,” that is, a social space “where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other.”⁶ Within the same period, comic illustrated gift books thrived. Largely aimed at the Christmas market, publications like Thomas Hood's *Comic Annual* (1830-1839; 1842) or George Cruikshank's *Comic Almanack* (1835-1853) sustained the popularity of small-scale wood-engravings while attracting the attention of aesthetes and connoisseurs whose travels accelerated the worldwide dissemination of nineteenth-century graphic art.

In line with *Punch's Pocket Book Archive*, an international digitisation project which proposes to deliver an open-access database based on a full run of these annuals, a symposium entitled “Global Circulations - Annuals and Pocket Books on the Move” will take place at Caen Normandie University on November 26-27 2026. The object of this event is to look at the manifold routes that annual publications (almanacs, pocket books, gift books, and other ephemera) and their respective contents travelled during the long nineteenth-century (1780-1914). It will feature keynote presentations by Dr Gordon Fraser, Senior Lecturer in English and American Studies at the University of Manchester and author of *Star Territory. Printing the Universe in Nineteenth-Century America* (2021), and Amanda-Jane Doran, former Head of Collections and Conservation for Punch Publications Ltd, and Curator of the Punch Collection (1984-1998).

³ Robert Darnton, “What Is the History of Books” *Daedalus* 111, no. 3 (1982), 65–83, 80.

⁴ Tim Cresswell, *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World*. London: Routledge, 2006, 4.

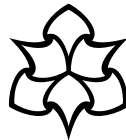
⁵ Harry Edward Hootman, “British Literary Annuals and Giftbooks, 1823-1861,” unpublished PhD thesis, University of South Carolina, 2004. <https://www.britannicalinfo.com/overview> (Accessed 7 June 2026).

⁶ Mary-Louise Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone,” *Profession*, 1991, 33–40, 34.



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Possible topics to explore include, but are not limited to:

- Annuals and pocket books as movable objects
- Giftbooks and the Christmas market
- Calendars, time and planetary movements in annuals
- Pocket books and diaries as travelogues
- Constructing and maintaining global collections, archivists and curators
- Circulating literature and ideologies (race, gender, class, colonial power)
- Annuals and the rise of global tourism
- Discursive and distributional strategies
- Publishers, printers, booksellers, readers on the move
- Global import/export, merchants and agents
- Prohibited circulations: smugglers and peddlers, copyright issues
- Roving collectors and connoisseurs

Submission Guidelines: We invite proposals for 20-minute individual papers. Proposals of 300 words, along with a short biographical note, should be sent to Françoise Baillet (francoise.baillet@unicaen.fr), Emma Liggins (e.liggins@mmu.ac.uk) and Sonja Lawrenson (s.lawrenson@mmu.ac.uk) by August 31, 2026. Notifications of acceptance will be sent by September 15, 2026.

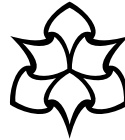
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