Recreating Worlds: Constructing Vivid Scenes with Book History
Shelby Lohr (History)

This presentation offers inventive approaches for book historians to depict their actors’ daily work life, including reconstructing physical workspaces in scenarios where detailed archival material remains wanting. This is of particular use in crafting micro-historical projects. My methodological emphasis relies on a form of deep reading, heeding attention to editorials and notices with ostensibly throwaway lines which, strung as a whole, craft a vivid portrait of print operations. Analysis of advertisements and maps will comprise a portion of this discussion. This presentation thus offers techniques to paint colorful scenes of in-office activity and its occasional foibles, detail relations with proximate businesses, and achieve a finer-grained accounting of the mechanics of subscription dissemination. The case study for this presentation is the New York-based Protestant Vindicator newspaper, examining its publishing milieu from 1834-1844.

The Life Cycle of the Part-Issued Victorian Novel
Jessica Terekhov (English)

Of the three main avenues for print circulation during the Victorian period, independent part issue has been historically overshadowed by multivolume publication and periodical serialization. However, the serial appearance of original narrative fiction in freestanding installments represents a curious series of “middles.” It flourished on the print market during the mid-1800s, it attracted a moderate number of authors, it bridged ephemeral and established print formats, and it catered to elite as well as popular tastes. Without overestimating the importance of part publication in light of the print historical record, a bibliography of original narrative fiction released in standalone parts will enrich any understanding of the Victorian publishing sector as it fostered professional authorship and mass reading culture. By documenting the actual range of authors, illustrators, publishers, genres, and material characteristics in evidence, it also demonstrates that the part-issued Victorian novel lived a remarkable number of lives.

Social Networks and the Spinoff
Kristen Starkowski (English)

Throughout the late 1830s and early 1840s in Britain, penny serialists published books with titles adapted from Dickens. Oliver Twist became Oliver Twiss and Dombey and Son became Dombey and Daughter. Because these serials were written weekly, whereas Dickens’s installments were published monthly, the spinoffs took characters’ adventures in different directions. This digital project uses network analysis to chart the decade-long controversy over the authenticity of penny spinoffs of Dickens’s novels in the era before the International Copyright Act of 1844. Project visualizations reveal that minor characters in Dickens’s novels often became major characters in the penny canon, offering us one window into debates over these texts’ originality: character space. Penny serialists gave increased representation and page space to marginalized character types compared to Dickens’ originals. This project addresses gaps in our knowledge of nineteenth-century audience and politics, revealing the extent to which penny publishers re-wrote Dickens’s minor characters in ways that would have resonated with their lower and working-class readership.

Monday, November 4th, 2019
Hinds Library, 4:30 pm

Join the Center for Digital Humanities and the Victorian Colloquium for this panel on exciting new work at the intersection of nineteenth-century studies, book history, and the digital humanities. Snacks and refreshments will be served.