REVIEW ESSAY

How Does Paper Mean?

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Lisa Gitelman, *Paper Knowledge: Toward a Media History of Documents* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014)

Jonathan Senchyne, *The Intimacy of Paper in Early and Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2020)

At a 2004 conference at Princeton University, the leading practitioners of two influential approaches to studying the history of texts—the "history of the book" and "intellectual" history—compared the underpinnings of their respective methods. Robert Darnton contended that while seemingly "made for each other," book history and intellectual history had proceeded along parallel paths over the late twentieth century, with the latter focused on the analysis of discourse, while historians of the book concerned themselves with the diffusion of texts.[1] Quentin Skinner responded to Darnton by elaborating on these "contrasts." He characterized the history of the book as "a specialized form of inquiry into the production, diffusion and enjoyment of printed and scribally published material," while describing intellectual historians as primarily concerned with the meanings that actors in the past have ascribed to concepts as they expressed them in language. Intellectual historians, Skinner suggested, had paid relatively little attention to the social histories of how texts were produced and received, including questions of their physical attributes.[2]

In practice, as Jacob Soll has recently written, distinctions between the "history of the book" and "intellectual" history were always artificial: self-styled practitioners of both diffusionist and discursive approaches to textual meaning have consistently borrowed methods and techniques from each other.[3] To these observations, one might add that these respective approaches share another characteristic: whatever their differences, neither book historians nor intellectual historians have generally attended to the way textual artifacts like the "book" and the elements that compose

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[1] Robert Darnton, "Discourse and Diffusion," *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 1/1 (2005), 21–8, at 21.

[2] Quentin Skinner, "On Intellectual History and the History of Books," *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 1/1 (2005), 29–36, at 29.

[3] Jacob Soll, "Intellectual History and the History of the Book," in Richard Whatmore and Brian Young, eds., *A Companion to Intellectual History* (Malden, MA, 2016), 72–82.

them—"paper," "letters," even "type" and "font"—have *themselves* been thought of conceptually by past actors.

Until recently, that is. The origins of this turn to writing histories of ideas of media can be traced at least in part to a development within the diffusionist approach to textual meaning: what the *New York Times* in 2004 identified as "an emerging body of work that might be called 'paperwork studies'," whose practitioners take "a fresh look at office memos, government documents and corporate records, not just for what they say but also for how they circulate and the sometimes unpredictable things they do."[4] Historians of paperwork are preoccupied with understanding how documents travel through contexts, and the meanings that people make out of them in the process. They want to assess documents in the same way scholars have interrogated printing, books, and reading: in order to account for the impact of media on politics, economics, and society.[5] Writing for popular audiences, historians have used paper as a means of framing discussions of the present "information age" within broader chronologies and deeper contexts.[6] Addressing scholarly readers, they have sought to trace paperwork's production, circulation, reception, and storage in order to illuminate the relationship between cultural attitudes and social practices within a particular political or administrative context—for example, between record keeping and policy making in early modern Europe, citizenship and identity papers in modern states, and the control of archives and justice in post-dictatorship societies.[7]

Two recent "paperwork studies" by Lisa Gitelman and Jonathan Senchyne serve as reminders of the rich possibilities that lie in treating discourse and diffusion as complementary tools rather than parallel or competing approaches. Gitelman and Senchyne share with other historians of paperwork—and, indeed, historians of the book—a concern for uncovering the transmission and function of written information. But Gitelman and Senchyne also have another objective in mind, one that will

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[4]Jennifer Schuessler, "The Paper Trail through History," *New York Times*, 17 Dec. 2012, C1.

[5]Cf. Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early Modern Europe*, vols. 1, 2 (Cambridge, 1979); Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (New York, 1996), Part III: "Do Books Cause Revolutions?"; Roger Chartier, *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Durham, NC, 1991), chap. 4; and Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago, 1998).

[6]For histories of texts and textual practices geared toward trade audiences see, for example, Alberto Manguel, *A History of Reading* (New York, 1996); Keith Houston, *Shady Characters: The Secret Life of Punctuation, Symbols, and Other Typographical Marks* (New York, 2013); Edward Wilson-Lee, *The Catalogue of Shipwrecked Books: Young Columbus and the Quest for a Universal Library* (London, 2018); and Leah Price, *What We Talk about When We Talk about Books: The History and Future of Reading* (New York, 2019). For examples of similarly marketed histories of paper see Nicholas A. Basbanes, *On Paper: The Everything of Its Two-Thousand-Year History* (New York, 2013); Alexander Monro, *The Paper Trail: An Unexpected History of a Revolutionary Invention* (London, 2015); Lothar Müller, *White Magic: The Age of Paper* (London, 2015); and Mark Kurlansky, *Paper: Paging through History* (New York, 2016).

[7]Cf. Verne Harris, "The Archival Sliver: Power, Memory, and Archives in South Africa," *Archival Science* 2 (2002), 63–86; Randolph Head, *Making Archives in Early Modern Europe: Proof, Information, and Political Record-Keeping, 1400–1700* (Cambridge, 2019); Craig Robertson, *The Passport in America: The History of a Document* (New York, 2010); and Kirsten Weld, *Paper Cadavers: The Archives of Dictatorship in Guatemala* (Durham, NC, 2014).

intrigue intellectual historians: they want to recover the history of discourses about "diffusion." Focusing on the United States, and especially its late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century history, they argue that "paper" served as a site of propositional meaning-making by contemporary actors. Their work suggests that writing American intellectual history should not only encompass the reconstruction of attitudes toward familiar concepts like republicanism, romanticism, transcendentalism, and pragmatism, but also how people thought about "paper"—a provocative suggestion, given that ideas of media do not register in either classic or more recent syntheses of "American ideas" or "intellectual history."[8] The subject and time period of their focus recall the prominent role accorded to media and mediation in explorations of early American political culture by historians who have traced the broad structures of communication that developed during the colonial and early national period; those who have emphasized the importance of print in the formation of American political culture; and those who have stressed the significance of letter writing, especially as a vehicle through which people formally excluded from public life exercised political agency.[9] But Gitelman and Senchyne are not interested in substituting "paper republicanism" for the frameworks of "print republicanism" and "epistolary republicanism" developed by those scholars: they do not argue that practices of mediation helped develop and spread ideology. And while they join historians who have conceptualized "paperwork" as a set of tools and techniques—such as lists and listing, index cards and indexing, archives and archiving—through which actors acquired, ordered, and communicated knowledge, Gitelman and Senchyne also make a distinctive claim: that media *was* ideology.[10] Americans did not simply think by writing *on* paper about politics, culture,

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[8]Cf. Merle Curti, *The Growth of American Thought*, 3rd edn (New Brunswick, 1982); Lewis Perry, *Intellectual Life in America: A History* (New York, 1984); Daniel T. Rodgers, *Contested Truths: Keywords in American Politics since Independence* (New York, 1987); Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club: A Story of Ideas in America* (New York, 2001); and Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen, *The Ideas That Made America: A Brief History* (New York, 2019). Neither of two recent edited collections on the state of the field of American intellectual history includes an essay on ideas of media or communication: see Joel Isaac, James T. Kloppenberg, Michael O'Brien, and Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen, eds., *The Worlds of American Intellectual History* (New York, 2017); and Raymond Haberski Jr. and Andrew Hartman, eds., *American Labyrinth: Intellectual History for Complicated Times* (Ithaca, 2018).

[9]On communicative structures cf. Ian K. Steele, *The English Atlantic: An Exploration of Communication and Community* (New York, 1986); Richard D. Brown, *Knowledge Is Power: The Diffusion of Information in Early America, 1700–1865* (New York, 1989); and Joseph M. Adelman, *Revolutionary Networks: The Business and Politics of Printing the News, 1763–1789* (Baltimore, 2019). On print cf. Jeffrey L. Pasley, *The Tyranny of Printers: Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic* (Charlottesville, 2001); Seth Cotlar, *Tom Paine's America: The Rise and Fall of Transatlantic Radicalism in the Early Republic* (Charlottesville, 2011); and Keri Holt, *Reading These United States: Federal Literacy in the Early Republic, 1776–1830* (Athens, GA, 2019). On epistolarity cf. Konstantin Dierks, *In My Power: Letter Writing and Communication in Early America* (Philadelphia, 2011); Sheila Skemp, *First Lady of Letters: Judith Sargent Murray and the Struggle for Female Independence* (Philadelphia, 2011); Cassandra A. Good, *Founding Friendships: Friendships between Men and Women in the Early American Republic* (Oxford, 2015); and Sara T. Damiano, "Writing Women's History through the Revolution: Family Finances, Letter Writing, and Conceptions of Marriage," *William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd series 74/4 (2017), 697–728.

[10]Cf. Markus Krajewski, *Paper Machines: About Cards and Catalogs, 1548–1929* (Cambridge, MA, 2011; first published 2002); Elizabeth Yale, "With Slips and Scraps: How Early Modern Naturalists Invented the Archive," *Book History* 12 (2009), 1–36; Ann Blair, *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information*

and society, Gitelman and Senchyne argue, but also thought *about* "paper" as having ideational meanings. To discern these meanings, Gitelman and Senchyne look at the content, form, circulation, and contemporary significance of kinds of paper artifacts—slips, scraps, rags, documents, and sheets—not usually regarded by historians as sites of intellection.

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In making their case, both authors begin by boldly breaking scholarship's fourth wall. Gitelman starts *Paper Knowledge: Toward a Media History of Documents* by invoking municipal death certificates, each of which "bears a number, the printed signatures of a doctor and a city official, two seals, a barcode, and multiple carefully filled-in boxes" that make the specifics of a life legible to the state. She wants you, the reader, to imagine yourself attending physically to the material qualities of these "serious documents": to "run your finger over them" and notice the "intaglio printing" of the "seals and borders"; to "hold" them "up at arm's length with a light behind" in order to see the "elaborate watermark"; and to 'rub' "your finger over" them, thereby heating the certificate's ink, changing its color, and rendering its thermochromic logo visible (ix). Opening *The Intimacy of Paper in Early and Nineteenth-Century American Literature*, Senchyne also makes a direct appeal to your sensory capacities. "Do you see this paper?" he asks, with reference to the first page of his book's introduction. "The answer is likely 'yes,' but also 'no,'" because while "the letters you read become legible against their papery substrate," "the technical and social codes of reading dictate that normally substrates should recede from view," and that paper should therefore become "secondary to meaning-making processes" (1). Both authors challenge the muteness of paper within such "meaning-making processes" with a similar organization. They divide their books into episodic chapters, each of which scrutinizes a particular media object in order to illuminate some facet of the meanings that Americans have invested in paper.

Read together, Senchyne and Gitelman's books make it possible to construct an account of how the meanings of paper changed for audiences between the colonial period and the present in the lands that became the United States. Senchyne concentrates on the era spanning the late 1600s and the 1860s, in which printing occurred largely on paper made out of clothing rags. In this era of rag printing, Senchyne argues, people located the meaning of texts not just in their contents but also in the stuff that composed them. Borrowing the conceptual vocabulary of the media theorist Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, Senchyne contends that when early Americans read texts, they were interested not only in what words meant, but also in the "presence effects" of the paper mediums in which they encountered them, with the interpretive and sensory experience intertwined (28). Paper in this

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before the Modern Age (New Haven, 2010); Craig Robertson, "'You Lie!' Identity, Paper, and the Materiality of Information," *Communication Review* 17/2 (2014), 69–90; Richard Yeo, *Notebooks, English Virtuosi, and Early Modern Science* (Chicago, 2014); and Matthew Daniel Eddy, "The Nature of Notebooks: How Enlightenment Schoolchildren Transformed the *Tabula Rasa*," *Journal of British Studies* 57/2 (2018), 275–307. For a discussion of the paperwork-as-instruments approach see Boris Jardine, "State of the Field: Paper Tools," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 64 (2017), 53–63.

era became "the material substrate of both the literary public and the body politic," enabling a much wider spectrum of actors beyond those with "privileged access to printing presses" to participate in public life (29–30). These included rag pickers, papermaking artisans, and factory laborers whose contributions to the production of paper were figured in the culture of patriotism that characterized the Revolutionary and early republic eras as crucial to "building and conducting the nation" (46). Challenging Benedict Anderson's influential account of modern nationalist sentiment as the product of widely shared discourses spread socially via quotidian print objects like newspapers ("print capitalism"), Senchyne argues that in the late 1700s, American national identity was constituted not only by the discursive expression of republican sentiment in published writing, but also through the widely shared work of collecting rags and making the paper on which such ideas would be printed ("paper nationalism" (40)).[11] But by the late 1860s, "wood and vegetable pulp [had] surpassed rags as the primary source material in American papermaking," and because these materials "did not give rise to the same structures of feeling and presence" as rags had, "paper and paperwork became an expression of alienation from others rather than a scene of intimate presence with others" (157–8).

Senchyne contends that early Americans were conscious of the "presence effects" of rag paper. He builds his case by reconstructing the ideas about paper which colonists and then nationals expressed in newspaper advertisements, poetry, fiction, and correspondence from the 1600s through the mid-nineteenth century. In the second chapter, he locates this awareness in the explicit references to rag paper made by two female authors writing two hundred years apart, Anne Bradstreet and Lydia H. Sigourney. Bradstreet's "pointing to the … rags that constitute paper" in *The Tenth Muse, Lately Sprung Up in America* (1650) made visible "the social relationships" that "cloth forms" created, specifically the feminine labor of birthing and childrearing effaced by early American (white and male) discourses of industriousness and economy (84). Similarly, Sigourney's three mid-nineteenth-century poems about papermaking materials—silk, cotton, and linen—evinced the vital role of women in the political economy of paper production in the early United States. Such explicitness, Senchyne argues, testified to an authorial awareness that "readers were receptive to enticements related to the material contents of paper"—readers wished for a felt intimacy with the stuff of texts, and writers like Bradstreet and Sigourney responded by appealing to this sentiment (92). As industrialization in the mid-1800s increased the scale of paper production, a yearning for raggy intimacy remained, a subject Senchyne traces in a chapter on Henry David Thoreau and Herman Melville's writings on what the latter termed the "ineffable socialities" created by paper and its diffusion, and whose insalubrious connotations Senchyne exposes in the book's final chapter by linking early Americans' obsession with "the whiteness of the blank page" to the antebellum-era flourishing of antiblack racism (126). But by the late 1860s, rags were giving way to wood pulp as the main material of paper production, a development that, Senchyne contends in a brief conclusion, led modern Americans to view "paper and paperwork" as "an

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[11]For "print capitalism" see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 2006; first published 1983), chap. 3.

expression of alienation from others rather than a scene of intimate presence with others" (158).

Chronologically, Gitelman begins where Senchyne concludes. By the 1870s, the turn from rags to wood, alongside the growing mechanization and scale of paper manufacturing, solidified form filling as a fundamental feature of American political and economic life. An influential historiography has contextualized this shift as part of the "managerial revolution" of American capitalism, arguing that through forms, a new type of workplace authority—the manager—sought to inculcate among laborers a particular time discipline suited to the rhythms of industrial production.[12] More recent scholarship by Joanna Brooks, Trish Loughran, Lloyd Pratt, and indeed Senchyne himself has demonstrated less interest in how communicative technologies and structures facilitated the exercise of control, and instead explored media's relationship with emerging concepts of national community in industrializing America.[13] Like Loughran and Pratt, Senchyne locates this expansionary dynamic of commercial printing in what Gitelman describes as a "centrifugal logic" "whereby different [American] readers and readerships may not have been drawn together as much as they were held apart" as print's proliferation exacerbated existing racial, gender, and geographic divisions (29). But Gitelman herself characterizes industrial America's media nationalism as centripetal. She argues that the proliferation of "job printing"— printing undertaken on behalf of organizations, often as fill-in-the-blank forms that corporations, states, universities, and other institutions circulated internally in order to administer themselves—actually forged common experience. Americans' routine, quotidian encounter with job-printed documents solidified a shared epistemology (if you know how to fill in the order form for your sandwich at the deli, you likely know how to fill in those you later encounter at the cardiologist's office) and brought into being a common "modern, bureaucratic self" (30). Unlike Anderson's "print nationalism," this subjectivity arose not because Americans *read* the same thing—as Gitelman notes, "job-printed forms didn't have readers" (31)—but instead because surviving in a world of offices as both worker and consumer required mastering a recursive set of common behavioral norms that involved "knowing" how to fill in "preprinted blank forms" and a near constant "showing" of this shared knowledge (49).[14]

Did the meaning of documents change as a result of the technological transformations of the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries? Senchyne answers

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[12]For the "managerial revolution" see Alfred D. Chandler Jr, *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge, MA, 1977); and for the role of paperwork see JoAnne Yates, *Control through Communication: The Rise of System in American Management* (Baltimore, 1989).

[13]Joanna Brooks, "The Early American Public Sphere and the Emergence of a Black Print Counterpublic," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series 62/1 (2005), 67–92; Trish Loughran, *The Republic in Print: Print Culture in the Age of U.S. Nation Building, 1770–1870* (New York, 2007); Lloyd Pratt, *Archives of American Time: Literature and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia, 2010); and Jonathan Senchyne, "Paper Nationalism: Material Textuality and Communal Affiliation in Early America," *Book History* 19 (2016), 66–85.

[14]Gitelman's account of the relationship between paperwork and "the liberal subject" in the United States (49) bears comparison with Joyce's argument for the entanglement of liberal subjectivity, bureaucracy, and paperwork in the nineteenth-century British state and empire. See Patrick Joyce, *The State of Freedom: A Social History of the British State since 1800* (Cambridge, 2013), chaps. 3–4.

affirmatively: as the material basis of paper shifted from rags to wood, so too did paper's cultural resonance in America alter from social intimacy to alienation. Gitelman, by comparison, suggests a fundamental continuity in how documents meant, regardless of whether the "documents" in question were job-printed blanks, copies, or digital files. In a chapter entitled "Xeographers of the Mind," Gitelman explores the "know–show" function with respect to two significant moments in the history of photocopying: the military analyst Daniel Ellsberg's copying and leaking of the Pentagon Papers between 1969 and 1971, and the computer scientist John Lions's "Commentary on the Sixth Edition UNIX Operating System" (1977), regarded as "the most photocopied document in computer science" (84). Gitelman notes that when the Pentagon Papers were leaked, both the newspapers that printed them and the government that tried to suppress them "cared about the papers' linguistic meanings … to the virtual exclusion of their bibliographical meanings," even though Ellsberg himself had a keen "bibliographical interest" that significantly shaped how the papers "meant": he was selective in what he copied and he edited out government markers of "TOP SECRET—Sensitive" on the documents (88–9). Through these "editorial and mimetic investments," Ellsberg appropriated official technologies of document production and replication to undermine state power (93). Gitelman concludes the book by discussing digital documents, focusing in particular on the PDF ("portable document format") invented in 1991 by the Adobe Corporation, a "technology that imagines … certain uses and conditions," specifically "reading without writing" since PDFs are not easily edited (130). Indeed, as Gitelman argues, even as the PDF aspires to replicate the look of paper, the format inhibits its audiences from "reading" it as they would a physical document—the miniature cartoon hand ubiquitous in PDF viewing software (which are called, not insignificantly, "readers") have a much more "limited range of functions" than "actual hands," trapping the audience in an "environment where uses are parameterized" and "constrained to menu-identified tasks" (128–9, 131). Whatever forms documents take on, and even as they are "worked by new and different means" and "additional and increasingly diverse actors," she argues, they "mean" not merely through readers interpreting their contents, but also—and perhaps more significantly—by users who "know" how to work them and then "show" that knowledge in everyday practices (20).

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The responses that Gitelman and Senchyne provide to the question of how paper means point to some latent tensions between "discourse" and "diffusion" which carry over from intellectual history's relationship with book history into its nascent comingling with paperwork studies. For Skinner, whose methodological touchstones lie in Ludwig Wittgenstein and J. L. Austin's philosophies of language, understanding "meaning" is an exercise of recovering the complex intentions that an actor wished to convey in a particular context using words; and if, as Skinner has written (following Hans-Georg Gadamer), "language" is "the medium in which all interpretive activity is carried on," then the particular media form in which the language is expressed may not be relevant to the task of recovering meaning unless the actor themselves has assigned a particular, recoverable intentionality

to the form.[15] But book historians often make a different claim. They have argued that "forms produce meaning," or at the very least "effect" it, irrespective of authorial intention; hence, they contend, any account of discursive meaning must take into consideration the cultural significance of the form in which language is expressed.[16]

The authors under consideration in the present essay would seem to agree with the book historians, but it is notable that they also seem skeptical (explicitly in Gitelman's case, suggestively in Senchyne's) of any straightforward application of insights into textual interpretation drawn from books to making sense of documents. Moreover, they argue for the meaningfulness of form with a set of hermeneutical tools distinct from the theoretical lodestars of both diffusionist and discursive approaches. Neither Gitelman nor Senchyne appeals to the Austinian speech-act theory or Wittgensteinian *Sprachspiel* that animates Skinner and those who have followed him; nor to the motley assortment of goods—Geertzian anthropology, Mannheimian sociology, and the "new bibliography" of textual exegesis fashioned out of the editorial work of W. W. Greg, R. B. McKerrow, and A. W. Pollard—with which book historians think.[17] Nor does either author seem to be particularly exercised about German media theorists like Friedrich Kittler, Bernhard Siegert, and Cornelia Vismann, all of whose work has served as important points of dialogue, appropriation, and contention for many practitioners of contemporary media studies.[18] Instead Gitelman invokes Michel de Certeau's concept of "scriptural economy" as a way to account for the "dynamic totality" with which "writers, writings, and writing techniques" expanded and interacted together from the nineteenth century onward, something she finds missing in extant scholarship "because of the ways that contemporary disciplines construct and divide their subjects" (x).[19] Senchyne, for his part, deemphasizes Kittler; instead, he is interested in Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht's concepts of "presence effects" and "meaning effects," which for Senchyne make accounting for "physical tangibility and [the] closeness of the body to aesthetic objects and events" central to interpretation (26). For both, the medium is less *the* message than one of its components. These differences indicate that even as book history and paperwork studies may operate to some extent on the basis of "shared references, sensibilities, and research

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[15]Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, vol. 1, *Regarding Method* (Cambridge, 2002), 16. For Skinner's debts to Wittgenstein and Austin see ibid., 161.

[16]Roger Chartier, "Laborers and Voyagers: From the Text to the Reader," *diacritics* 22/2 (1992), 49–61, at 50 ("forms produce meaning"); and D. F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (Cambridge, 1999; first published 1985), 13 ("forms effect meaning"). With respect to intention, Chartier has written that "meanings and significations … are not reducible to the intentions of authors of texts or producers of books." See Roger Chartier, "Texts, Printing, Readings," in Lynn Hunt, ed., *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley, 1989), 156.

[17]On the heterogeneous theoretical underpinnings of book history see Michael F. Suarez, SJ, "Historiographical Problems and Possibilities in Book History and National Histories of the Book," *Studies in Bibliography* 56 (2003–4), 141–70.

[18]An excellent entryway into this literature remains the special issue on *New German Media Theory*, *Grey Room* 29 (2007), 7–133.

[19]See also Lisa Gitelman, *Scripts, Grooves, and Writing Machines: Representing Technology in the Edison Era* (Stanford, 1999), 3–4.

agendas," their relationship at the levels of theory and method is one of familial resemblance, rather than inheritance.[20]

"Paperwork studies" thus raises distinct, but equally provocative, challenges to discursive and diffusionist approaches to intellectual history. To discourse-focused analysis, paperwork scholarship suggests (like book history) that form produces meaning, and thus meaning cannot be accounted for without attention to form; but, equally, that there are histories still to be written of how media objects have served as generative sites for meaning-making in the past. To diffusionists, Senchyne and Gitelman's work indicates that it is as important to reconstruct what a media concept like "paperwork" or "book" meant to audiences within a particular context as it is to trace the production and reception of specific media objects; indeed, the concept is among the factors that may shape how the media object is received. If book-historical analysis remains animated by the questions that Darnton famously described in terms of a "communications circuit"—"How do books come into being?" "How do they reach readers?" "What do readers make of them?"—then Gitelman and Senchyne imply that a fourth interrogatory should be added: "What concepts of the 'book' and its component parts exist within a particular context?"[21] Answering that question requires using the tools that intellectual historians have developed. It remains to be seen whether and how historians of discursive and diffusionist predilections, respectively, will respond to Gitelman and Senchyne's stimulating, incisive, and important interventions.

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[20]Ben Kafka, "Paperwork: The State of the Discipline," *Book History* 12 (2009), 340–53, at 351.
[21]Robert Darnton, "'What Is the History of Books?' Revisited," *Modern Intellectual History* 4/3 (2007), 495–508, at 495.