Despite burgeoning interest in print culture, the history of the book, and reception studies, much empirical and critical work remains to be done on the rise and development of reading publics in early modern Europe. Printed books helped to create and reinforce important networks of readers founded upon intellectual, social, and ideological interests. At the same time, however, designations of the Renaissance as “the age of print” make it easy to forget that manuscripts circulated widely and scribal culture retained a powerful presence, creating its own sets of social relations—often very different in nature from those transacted in print, even when the same individuals were involved.

Aside from the ongoing need for closer investigation of both these media in relation to questions of material production, diffusion, and socio-cultural contextualization, the realm of book consumption has been particularly neglected. By consumption, we mean the effects of print and manuscript culture upon the act of reading and its broader implications—religious, ideological, intellectual, literary—for both individual readers and networks of readers. Kallendorf, in his *Virgil and the Myth of Venice* (1999), for example, has shown how Venetian readers of Virgil formed a closely knit community, one whose social and political values were mapped onto the classical text and whose reading in turn contributed to the shaping and consolidating of Venetian ideology.

Closer study of these fields and questions, in both print and manuscript, has been facilitated by rapid developments in scanning and digitization, which have begun to make available, often in unprecedented numbers, new primary resources and materials. And yet the availability of these resources not only varies greatly depending on language, author, country, and period, but also calls for careful methodological reflection.

This workshop will offer an opportunity to compare digitized versions with physical inspection of manuscript and printed copies, to provide students with a clearer sense of digitized resources available—and planned—for the study of textual communities in early modern Italy, France, Spain, and England; and at the same time to prompt scrutiny of the advantages, problems, and limitations of digitization.

The summer workshop aims to address all the above issues. Three focused case-studies will be used to explore and contextualize how books, both Latin and vernacular, in manuscript and in print, were produced, distributed, and consumed. These key questions will be addressed throughout:

- the role of reading in fostering networks, developing ideas, and forging shared ideological beliefs
- the differences and similarities between print and manuscript cultures and their impact upon reading communities
- the differences and similarities between reading practices and networks in Italy and in other European countries.
Drawing upon established expertise in English, Renaissance Studies, and Italian at Warwick, Italy will be a primary focus, but with strong cross-disciplinary attention to areas across Europe.

The three main case-studies/strands of the workshop will be:

- Italian vernacular literature, in particular the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century printed works of Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch, including their reception in England
- Platonism, astrology, and magic, in particular the works of Ficino and his followers
- philosophical and medical works, with special attention to the reception of Aristotle and Galen

The two-week workshop will begin by addressing issues common to all strands that are raised by the variety of contexts—schools, universities, religious orders, academies, private groupings, courts—in which these writings were produced. Participants will also consider the channels by which they were transmitted—print, scribal publication, oral diffusion—as well as the ways in which they were received by readers—epistolary exchanges, marginal annotations, content of private libraries.

One key focus of the initial contextualization will include seminar papers by invited speakers from Warwick and elsewhere on the availability of new sources and methodological issues raised by digitization. The cross-disciplinary focus—again with seminars by invited speakers—will allow close consideration of the extent to which developments in one strand, and similarities and differences in context and transmission, affect the others. This introductory session will take place over two days.

The three specific strands will then be discussed in turn, two to three days each, with another day dedicated to visiting the John Rylands Library in Manchester (Thursday of week one), where workshop participants will be involved in a practical workshop and learn more about digitization technologies and projects.

The three strands selected as case-studies all aim to illuminate the larger phenomenon—the evolution, development, and significance of reading publics in Renaissance Europe. Within this perspective, attention will be focused closely on the material form of the works themselves, as well as on exploring how their different forms are related to practices of print publication, intended audience, place of composition, and time.

These strands have been chosen not only to present a strongly contextualized approach to major textual traditions and their readerships but also to broach topics of broad Renaissance cultural interest such as:

- how religion was profoundly modified through the revival of ancient thought; e.g. pagan demonology, Neoplatonic theurgy, prisca theologia
- the history and the development of the Italian language
- the relations between Latin and the vernacular, especially with regard to the reception of canonical vernacular authors
- the European-wide reception of texts produced in Italy.
Strand One: Vernacular Literature

This strand explores the role of regional rivalry in the formation of reading publics, especially in Tuscany and the Veneto, with particular attention to editions and commentaries on Dante in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italy. As well as the use of digitized versions, the strand will include analysis and inspection of early printed editions of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, with site visits arranged for a private group viewing of the special collections available at the John Rylands Library.

Strand Two: Platonism

This strand concerns the way in which the revival of Platonism through translations and commentaries in Latin and the vernacular in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries led to the establishment of new reading communities and networks across Europe. It will focus on:

- the constitution of a community of Italian humanists sharing an interest in Ficino’s revival of Plato through the copying and circulation of manuscripts in fifteenth-century Florence
- reactions to Ficino’s Platonism within religious orders and Savonarola
- the reception of Ficino’s ideas in the sixteenth-century in a European context, by examining the circulation of Ficino’s Letters, their influence on leading statesmen, scholars, and churchmen across Europe, and the constitution of a wider network of humanists sharing a common interest in Platonism (for instance, Jacques Lefèvre d’Étapes in France and Mathias Corvinus in Hungary)
- the reception of Ficino’s Platonism in sixteenth-century universities in commentaries by Ficino’s followers in Italy (Francesco Diacceto and Francesco de’ Vieri) and in Spain (Sebastian Fox Morcillo).

Strand Three: Philosophy and Medicine

Despite considerable work in the past thirty or so years, several questions remain to be clarified, including the adaptation of Aristotle and Galen to the needs and expectations of a public uncomfortable with scholastic Latin, the relationship between natural philosophy and medicine in Italy and north of the Alps, the evolution of forms of interpretation (e.g., from commentaries to textbooks, including the role of illustrations), the special case of surgery, and the role of the printing press in shaping a distinct reading community.

These five topics will allow a rare interaction between specialists of philosophy and medicine. Given that both subjects had theoretical and practical branches, it will be important to discuss the purpose of reading for those who consumed the books produced in these fields. We shall study the reception of Aristotle and Galen through the development of different commentary genres, including the philosophical production of the Frenchman Jacques Lefèvre d’Étapes, the Englishman John Case, and Italian works of medicine such as Alessandro Achillini, De subiecto medicinae (1568) and Girolamo Cardano, Contradicentium medicorum liber (1548).

Surgery deserves separate treatment, partly because its very practical ends made for rather different kinds of books and readership, partly because its advances (through the anatomical work of Da Vinci, Vesalius and others) poses interesting questions about the role of the book in promoting or retarding cultural transformations. Finally, considerable attention will be given to the Aldine press as
an example of the Renaissance diffusion of works particularly of Aristotelian focus. The latter will be achieved through an on-site exploration of the John Rylands Library in Manchester, which contains the world’s most-complete collection of Aldine imprints.

**Overall Aims of the Workshop**

The “Reading Publics” program intends to develop strongly the interests of students and scholars in texts and doctrines that have been largely ignored because of their limited availability. As mentioned above, too, one of the lines of methodological enquiry will concern closer reflection on the advantages and limitations of the digitization of early printed material. The two-week workshop is distinctive in allowing students and scholars to work on both digitized copies and authentic printed editions. The geographical position of the university offers good opportunities for visits to libraries, where, as mentioned above, site visits for private group-inspection have already been planned. Visiting research fellows will also be able conduct independent research at archives and key repositories throughout the southeast and midlands areas of England and in London.

Our overall aim in this workshop is to use the resources in major research libraries and the accumulated knowledge of a significant cluster of early modern scholars working on Italy, France, England, and Spain, in order to explore how books function as material objects, and as records of and creative forces in, the building of reading communities.

**For more information and application instructions, see:**