

Characters of the Press

Research Society for Victorian Periodicals (RSVP) 40th annual conference Roehampton University, London, U.K.

4-5 July 2008

"Character" was the term commonly used of the Victorian press for what today we might call the "brand personality" of a periodical - its distinctive features as a commodity in the marketplace. But how was this "character" created? Some periodicals identified themselves as people (one thinks of Mr Punch, or the less voluble human figures on many a masthead) or with people (Howitt's Journal, Reynolds's Miscellany, Blackwood's, or perhaps a reliable stable of authors, or a named editor). Many sought to improve the character of readers by offering heroes or heroines for emulation. Some preferred a recurrent set of textual practices - format, layout, size, range of departments. Some characters were generated through the targeting of specific audiences such as grocers or suffragettes, radical workers or young imperialists. Others were prompted by the occasions on which they expected to be encountered - for reading en famille on Sundays, over weekday breakfast or while commuting. And then there is the vital question of how the press in general (or sections of it) were characterised by those within and outside it: what metaphors were mobilised and why? This conference, then, offers a wide and varied route into the exciting and still only partially explored territory of Victorian periodicals. Indeed, RSVP will be happy to consider any proposal focused on periodicals and their relationship to print culture in nineteenth-century Britain.

One-page proposals for 20-minute papers are invited, as well as for panels of three papers on related topics, to be sent to Andrew King at andrew.king@canterbury.ac.uk by 15 December 2007.

Roehampton University is located in south-west London, 45 minutes by public transport from central London. Campus-based accommodation is available for the conference. For more on the London location, see:
<http://www.roehampton.ac.uk/about/location/directions/greaterlondon.asp>