

# Text Technologies A History

By Elaine Treharne and Claude Willan

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TEXT TECHNOLOGIES  
A HISTORY

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AND  
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# About the Authors

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Manuscript to Print

Compact Disc to MP3

Scroll to Codex

# Introduction

## **Main Argument:**

This book study texts, or textual records produced by the human agency over the history of text and technology includes the revolution of manuscript, writing, printing, and the new media cultures. Moreover, the study sheds the light on the text technologies' history and development in a connection to specific trends and emerging concepts in order to understand how texts were communicated, received, and valued using primary and secondary Conceptual concepts in defining text.



## **Usefulness to T&T Scholarship**

The book provides a useful historical framework on the text technologies revolutions from cave painting to contemporary hypertext media with many examples and visuals that help in understanding the process of revolution. In addition, student and scholar in the text and technologies field perform the main audience of this book that is why the book provides many questions by the end of each chapter that helps student readers to further think of new research concepts, methods and trends in the development of communication themes in text technologies history.

# Part 1: Conceptual Framework

## Defining Text:

“**Voluntarily** and **intentionally** human created phenomenon that contains and imparts an interpretable and meaningful message, accessible to **community** of receivers” (p2)

⇒ **Voluntarily** Phenomena if not intended and done by human agency cannot be text.

Examples: X (**somatic reactions**) Sneeze, bruise.

X (**Side effects**) cloud of dust caused by drill.

⇒ **Intentionally** Phenomena frame or reframed actively and directly can be considered text.

Example: (Starts) X **NOT TEXT**

(using starts to create astrological signs) ✓ **ARE TEXT**

⇒ **Community** Can be formed by group of people or by only one human.

## Describing Text:

### Primary Concept:

We can structure text technologies using the following three principle concepts :

(Intentionality | Materiality | Functionality)

In addition to its Cultural values or aura.

### Intentionality:

The motivation of creating text.

what the text were willing to determine?

### Materiality:

Technology component of the text.

What is it and what it made of?

### Functionality:

Audience interaction with the text and the message effects and consumed.

What does a text do or say?

**Production**



**Transmission**



**Consumption**

**Cultural values or aura** Challenges Benjamin Theory.

### **Secondary Concepts:**

These functions are not essentials to define text, but it is used as an example of conceptual operation on what text is perform or relay on.

**Sedimentation** How user respond to new text technology.

Example: write emails as letter.

### **Censorship, Copyright, Consortia and Cryptography**

Social conditions surrounding the life cycle of a text

### **Life Cycle of text:**

- ↳ Production : Manufacture and creation of a text.
- ↳ Transmission: Move from creator to the user.
- ↳ Consumption: Describe the text after deliver to the audience

## Part 2: Historical Framework

### **Timelines**

### **Historical Technologies**

Writing on stones

Writing on cellulose

Writing on animal skin

### **Forms and Function**

Manuscript culture

Readers and reading

Sound and image

digital technologies

### **Research questions**

**Trends, themes and Issues**

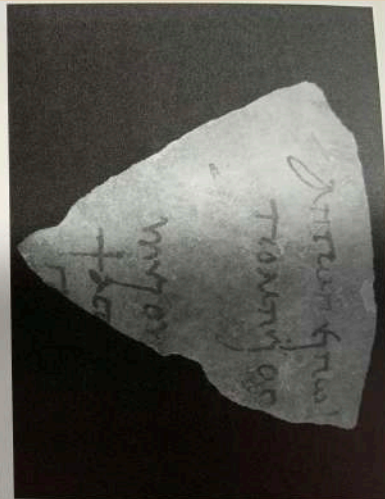
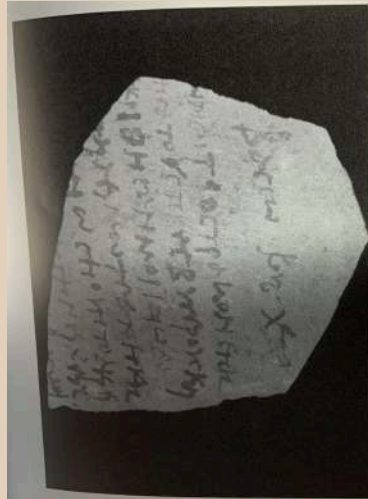
# Historical Technologies

## Writing on stones



Figure 1  
The Chauvet Caves,  
Thirty thousand BCE.

Panneau Des Chevaux (Partie Gauche),  
by Claude Valette, is licensed under CC  
BY-SA 4.0. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:13\\_PanneauDesChevaux\\_\(PartieGauche\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:13_PanneauDesChevaux_(PartieGauche).jpg)



Figures 4 & 5  
An ostrakon—a fragment of a  
letter in Greek from the second  
century CE.

Sources: Ostraka 18 (110) & Ostraka  
11, courtesy of Special Collections  
& Archives, Florida State University  
Libraries.

### QUESTIONS

1. What types of substrate were available to individual writers in these early centuries?
2. What kinds of tools were required to write on these substrates?
3. What are the reasons for using these substrates?

Part 2  
58



Figure 17 (top left)  
Graffiti, New York. Twentieth  
century.

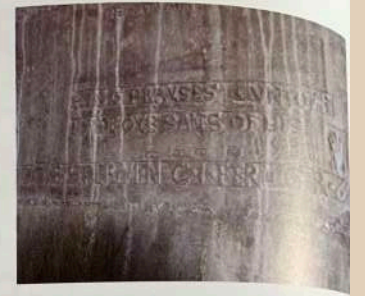


Figure 18 (top right)  
Graffiti on church monument. It  
reads "Singe praises unto the  
lord O ye saintes of his, 1581 'in  
te domine speravi non confundar  
in eternum' G. R." (Psalm 30:2).  
Sixteenth century CE.

Source: Elaine Treharne.



Figure 19 (right)  
Graffiti. Twentieth century.

### Graffiti

Graffiti (from Italian *graffito*, a scratch) is a drawing or writing scratched on a wall or other surface. Early graffiti exists from centuries ago including evidence in ancient towns like Pompeii and Herculaneum destroyed and petrified by Vesuvius in 79 CE and hidden until 1749. Graffiti can be found throughout history, including deeply engraved graffiti in medieval and early modern churches and castles, with names, initials,

# Writing on cellulose



Figure 23 (above)  
Medieval styli.  
Source: Four examples of medieval  
styli, by Numantica, is licensed under  
CC BY-SA 3.0 via [https://  
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stylus#/media/  
File:Stylus.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stylus#/media/File:Stylus.jpg).

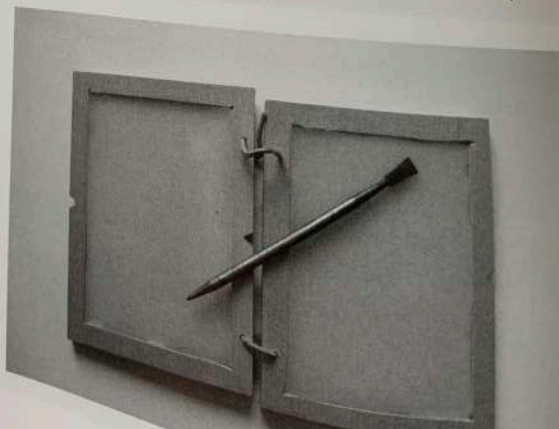


Figure 24 (right)  
Wax tablets with stylus.  
Twentieth-century replica.  
Source: Wax tablet and a Roman stylus,  
by Peter van der Sluis, is licensed under  
CC BY-SA 3.0 via [https://en.wikipedia.org  
/wiki/Stylus#/media/File:Tablet\\_with  
\\_wax\\_and\\_stylus\\_Roman\\_times.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stylus#/media/File:Tablet_with_wax_and_stylus_Roman_times.jpg)  
File:Stylus.jpg.

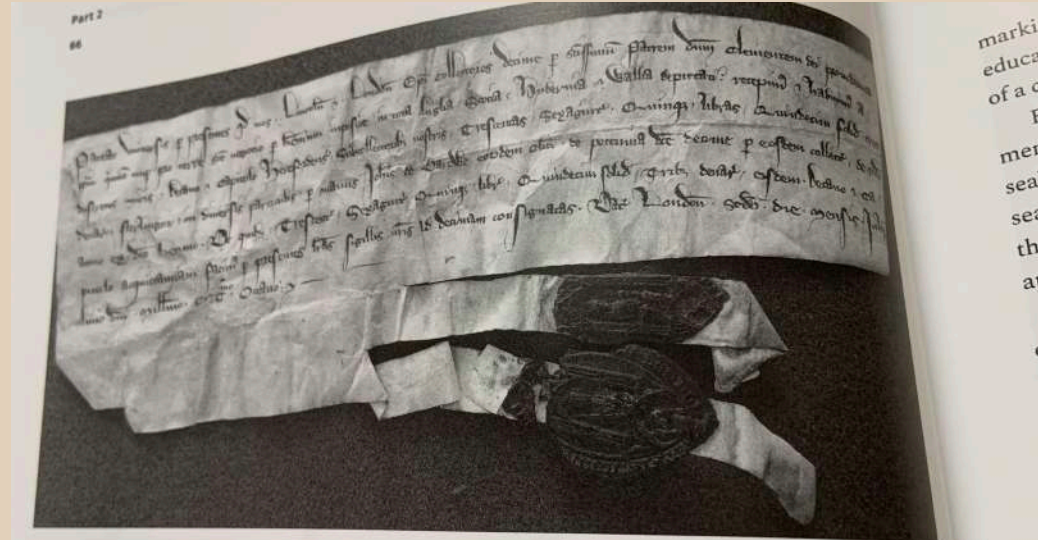


Figure 25  
Medieval seal on a writ.  
Fourteenth century CE.  
Source: Courtesy Department of Special  
Collections, Stanford Libraries.

**Seals**  
Seals (the study of which is called sigillography) date back to at least the  
cuneiform period (3000 BCE-450 BCE), and perhaps the precuneiform.  
As cylinders in ancient Mesopotamia, seals were rolled onto clay to give  
a repeating image. As a...

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## Writing on animal skins

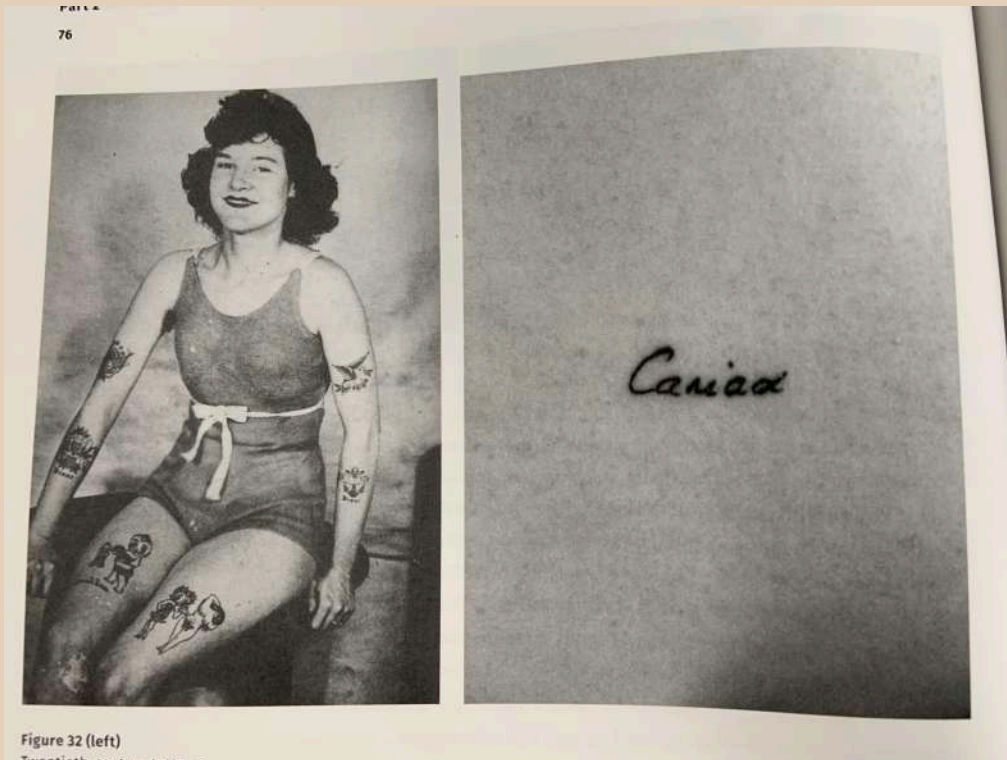


Figure 32 (left)

Twentieth-century tattoos

## Forms and Function

### Manuscript culture

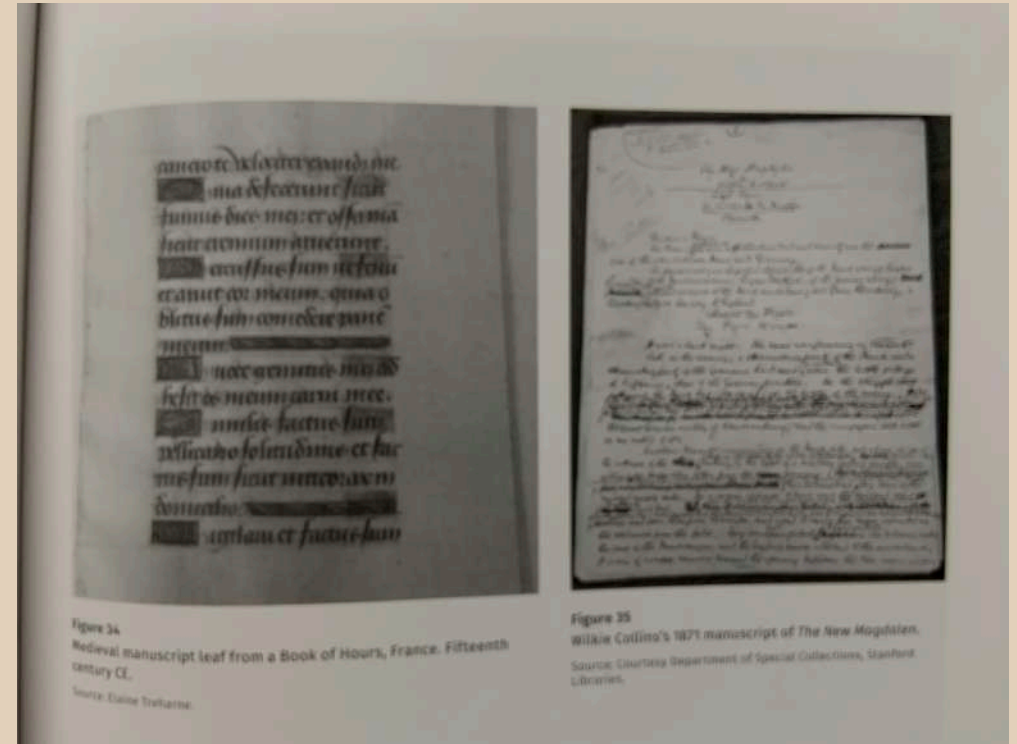


Figure 34  
Medieval manuscript leaf from a Book of Hours, France. Fifteenth century CE.

Source: Elaine Tuttle Hansen

Figure 35  
Wilkie Collins's 1871 manuscript of *The New Magdalen*.  
Source: Courtesy Department of Special Collections, Stanford Libraries.



## Readers and reading

part 2  
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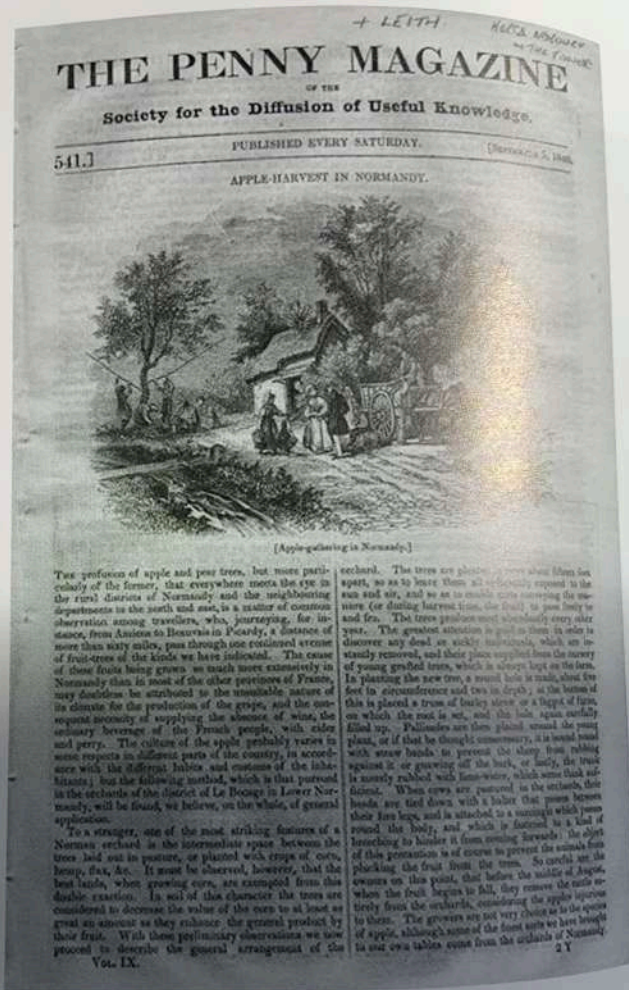


Figure 54  
The Penny Magazine. 1840.  
Source: Elaine Treharne.

## Sound and image



Figure 59  
Zoetrope, Leeds Industrial  
Museum. Nineteenth century.

Source: Leeds Industrial Museum  
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