

Welcome to the last two hours of the Futures!

Let me first express due appreciation for Simon Beattie, purveyor of rare books, manuscripts, music, and ephemera—not only for sponsoring this closing plenary session, this opportunity to think about future books and bookish futures, but also for sharing with us his dealer catalogues, which are so striking as objects and so attentive to their subjects. Simon seeks actively to find, as he puts it, “new ways with old books”. This is one way to do so. Please join me in thanking him for his generous support.

This has been a pretty tech-heavy conference. We’ve had discussions about the born-digital and DH and e-books and linked open data mashups, we’ve generated dozens of tweets, we’ve played with cool stuff in the petting zoo... But this last session loops back to a rather more physical entity: the book, which is so central to our profession. We study books as sites of intentionality, functionality, physicality, meaning; we wrestle with their cost and storage and use and preservation; we refute the endless reports of their “death”, and advocate for their longevity...

So the book seems like a good place to end RBMS 2012: a place of shelter before we walk away from this room into the winds of changes technological, philosophical, and institutional; an emblem of purpose at a time in which, as our plenary description says, bytes and plastic often outpace ink and paper. The book affords us the long view, past *and* present headed into future. But where *are* we going from here? What will the books of the future be like? How will people interact with them? How will librarians? Our speakers have spent pretty much their entire careers thinking about books. This is gonna be *GOOD!*

Johanna Drucker holds the Bernard and Martin Breslauer Chair in Bibliography in the Department of Information Studies at UCLA. (I *wish* I could have such a cool job title!) But that designation doesn't even begin to accommodate Johanna's acuity and breadth of interest and expertise; she is a book historian, a book-maker, a book theorist and advocate. In a recent talk entitled *The Cult Future of Books*, Johanna asks: "What, beyond nostalgia, prompts a commitment to books in the future?" More thought-provokingly, "How do we secure the place of humanity and human values at the core of a technophilic world?"

But before Johanna begins: our other speaker. Most of you know Michael F. Suarez, S.J., as Director of Rare Book School at the University of Virginia: an unbeatable position from which to study, and assess the state of, the book as object. (Have you *noticed* the strength of the UVa mafia in this room?) But Michael's most recent undertaking is as editor-in-chief of *Oxford Scholarly Editions Online*, which, funnily enough, puts him in the business of producing digital content on an industrial scale. Phase 1 of OSEO will launch in London this September, with the digital publication of 171 full-text scholarly editions, and many more to follow.

And now, Johanna Drucker.