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## Washington Area Group for Print Culture Studies

In the Spring 1993 issue of *SHARP News*, the suggestion to organize regional subgroups within SHARP was put forward, and by the next issue, Summer 1993, it was announced that the groundwork for two such regional chapters — one in New York City and the other in Clayton, Victoria, Australia — was underway. A little less than seven years later, the Washington, DC area heeded the call. Although this area's regional group, Washington Area Group for Print Culture Studies (WAGPCS), is not officially a SHARP chapter, it nonetheless shares ties with SHARP through its members, visiting speakers, and interests. WAGPCS held its first meeting in February 2000 at the Library of Congress, Washington, DC. The founders and organizers, all members of SHARP, had participated the previous fall in Elizabeth Eisenstein's Folger seminar on early modern attitudes towards print. That experience, coupled with the exchange and fellowship found at SHARP annual conferences, created a desire for a regular, local forum dedicated to ongoing conversations about histories of the book and print culture.

Ever since Steven Zwicker's inaugural talk on early modern reading, the group has welcomed a wide variety of speakers addressing an equally wide range of topics related to the study of book history and print culture of any time or place. WAGPCS has sponsored talks on book arts in Cuba, histories of nonprint media, French pulp fiction, poetry in print and manuscript, the effects of upper and lower case letters, Emily Dickinson's manuscripts, antebellum readers in New England, and many more. The group has also held a roundtable on Adrian Johns's *The Nature of the Book*, visited the National Museum of American History for demonstrations of typefounding and handpress printing by Stan Nelson, and met at the Folger Shakespeare Library for a special tour of 'The Reader Revealed,'

an exhibit curated by WAGPCS cofounder, Sabrina Baron. Local SHARP members, including Elizabeth Eisenstein, William Sherman, Carol Armbruster, Lydia Schurman, and Marilyn Barth have given talks, and SHARPists such as Robert Gross, Jonathan Rose, and Ronald and Mary Zboray have come from farther away to deliver presentations to the group. One meeting every academic year is devoted to works-in-progress presentations by WAGPCS members. Like SHARP's membership, WAGPCS's core base consists of academics from a variety of fields, librarians, book dealers, administrators of scholarly and public institutions, independent scholars, students, and others who have an interest in print culture issues.

While WAGPCS has no funding and exists solely through volunteer efforts, from its inception it has received the encouragement of John Cole, director of the Center for the Book at the Library of Congress. Its meeting space is provided by the Division of Scholarly Programs at the Library of Congress through the efforts of Les Vogel. On occasion, the Center for the Book, Office of Scholarly Programs, and the John W. Kluge Center at the Library of Congress have co-sponsored WAGPCS events such as Wayne Wiegand and Kendall Larson's 'Main Street Public Library: Book Availability in the Rural Midwest, 1890-1970' talk and database demonstration in March 2001. This past March, Paul Boyer's WAGPCS talk, 'Moral Guardianship and First-Amendment Rights: Reflections on Censorship in America from the Gilded Age to the Internet Age,' was followed by a book-signing and reception sponsored by these three Library of Congress divisions.

For the 2003-2004 schedule, WAGPCS will meet the first Friday of each month from 3.30pm to 5.00pm in the Woodrow Wilson Room (LJ-113), in the Jefferson Building of the Library of Congress. The monthly meetings

will run from September through December, and then from February through April. On Friday, 5 September 2003, Ann Kelly will open this year's WAGPCS series with a talk entitled 'Jonathan Swift: Myth, Media, and the Man.' Other speakers for the fall include Christopher Kyle (7 November) and James West (5 December) — titles to be announced. The spring schedule begins with the 6 February 2004 meeting, and will feature several WAGPCS members discussing their current projects. On 5 March 2004, Matt Kirschenbaum will deliver a talk entitled 'Extreme Inscription: New Media, Magnetic Media, and the Limits of Writing,' and at the 2 April 2004 meeting, Roger Chartier and Peter Stallybrass will offer a joint presentation, 'Writing in Print.' The meetings are open, and reservations

are not necessary. If you live in the area, we hope that you will join us on a regular basis; those visiting Washington, DC are equally encouraged to attend. Following most meetings, we continue the conversation over dinner and drinks and extend an open invitation for all to join us. For more information about the group, including past presentations, please see our website: [http://www.wcupa.edu/\\_academics/sch\\_cas.eng/wagpcs.htm](http://www.wcupa.edu/_academics/sch_cas.eng/wagpcs.htm). If you wish to be added to our reflector list (used primarily for announcements) or have additional questions, contact Sabrina Baron, Eric Lindquist, and Eleanor Shevlin at [booksumcp@umail.umd.edu](mailto:booksumcp@umail.umd.edu).

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