



SCHOOL OF ENGLISH

English home > Gladstone Conference

Reading and the Age of Gladstone

23-25 January 2009

The Conference is now fully booked!

Several recent and ongoing projects have sought to provide new histories of the book and examine the role and position of readers within that history. This conference not only aims to explore the issues that surround reading in the period c1830-1901, it also seeks to explore the ways in which the Victorian period is read today. Increased literacy, unprecedented developments in publishing, the widespread availability of texts through periodicals and a new library culture: all mark out the nineteenth century as one of the most active in terms of the 'reading experience'. But how did readers of the time set about their task, and how should the modern critic or teacher set about theirs? What engagement did readers in the period have with the whole machinery of producing and disseminating books, with publishing houses, with libraries, with periodicals, and how do such material considerations affect our

reading of the Victorians today? What did the act of reading mean for them – and what does it mean for us?

Possible themes might include, but are not limited to:

- the Victorians and book collections, libraries, literary institutions
- the Victorian periodical
- nineteenth century bibliomania
- mass literacy
- readers at the margins, or annotators of books
- readers as editors – collation of scrapbooks/ manuscript volumes
- public readings
- the publishing of Victorian literature and criticism today
- circulating libraries and the public libraries
- writers writing about reading
- book clubs/ associations/ exchanges between readers
- ‘proper’ reading/ censorship of texts
- reading the Victorians in the university environment, and outside it
- how to record acts of reading – the use and suitability of new technologies in research on the history of reading/ readers

The conference will take place at St Deiniol’s Library, which was founded by the Victorian statesman and polymath William Ewart Gladstone (1809-1898). The Library is the National Memorial to Gladstone and is both the only residential library and purpose-built prime ministerial library in the United Kingdom. Part of the programme will consist of the official launch of the Gladstone’s Reading Database. The research for this project, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (2006-09), has been conducted at St Deiniol’s, and database represents a virtual recreation of Gladstone’s library, and a unique and comprehensive record of his reading of each item. For further details about the database or the conference, please contact m.d.bradley@liverpool.ac.uk.

[Conference Programme](#)

A Gladstone Centre for Victorian Studies in Wales and the North West Conference in partnership with the University of Liverpool’s Centre for Victorian Studies
