

Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield* as Information Object: A Case Study of Serial Literature in the Victorian World of Documents

New publishing norms in today's digital age are severing our connection to the historical meaning of the book as a physical medium.



In all, as our information environment goes increasingly digital, it is important for librarians, archivists, and other information professionals to have an understanding and appreciation for the book as a physical medium.

Finally, the textual qualities, or in the case of *David Copperfield*, the narrative content, also give a sense of the time, place, and circumstances of the book's creation. Stephen Greenblatt called this school of literary criticism "new historicism."

To study the history of the book is a reminder of what books have meant to people of many different cultures and backgrounds over the ages.



We can also learn something about the book as a medium during this era through its physical characteristics. In essence, this was cheap, ephemeral literature, meant for short-term use, which is why so few serial novels remain intact today.

Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield*, published over the course of 18 months (1849-1850) in nineteen serial installments, is a rich example of the book as form of information technology.

Serial literature, like *David Copperfield*, much like magazines, journals, or even websites of the present era, used to convey all types of information about society.

One of the ways serials did this was through advertising. Each original installment of *David Copperfield* was filled with advertisements for various commodities and fashionable amusements for Victorian consumers.

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