

Linda H. Peterson Fellowship Report
Hannah Doherty Hudson
Romantic Magazines and Imperial Knowledge: Identity, Commodity, Miscellany

With the generous support of the Linda H. Peterson Fellowship, I was able to make significant progress on my book project, *Romantic Magazines and Imperial Knowledge*, in the spring and summer of 2025. Due to the teaching needs of my department, I adjusted my research timeline after being awarded the fellowship; this allowed me to take a course release for the spring semester and work on the book for a longer stretch of time while teaching just one class, followed by a shorter and exclusively focused research period over the summer. During the fellowship, I substantially expanded the book manuscript, completed two important research trips, and had the opportunity to present my research-in-progress to audiences at several conferences, receiving helpful feedback and support.

I articulated four main goals in my original proposal: to write the book's remaining chapter, on magazines and biography, (at the time, I had full or partial drafts of 4 out of 5 chapters); to extend two chapters that I had partial drafts of; to begin to draft the book's introduction and conclusion, and to conduct some research trips to consult archival and Special Collections sources. I accomplished most of these goals, although, as tends to happen with historical research projects, I also developed some new ones along the way, as new research discoveries led me to reconceptualize some parts of the book. Perhaps most importantly, I realized that the book should have six chapters, instead of five, in order to more fully account for the complex temporal and spatial orientations of the Romantic magazines I analyze. I drafted this new chapter during the fellowship period, as well as a 4500-word partial draft of the biography chapter. I also substantially expanded my draft for a chapter that attempts to define the genre parameters of the miscellaneous magazine and outlined and roughly drafted an introduction for the book. I have delayed writing the conclusion and further polishing the introduction for the time being; since both of these are so dependent on the content of the chapters, I want to leave them until last.

At the time of writing my proposal, I had drafted 55,000 words of the manuscript, and anticipated that the full book would be around 90,000 words. Currently, the manuscript is around 90,000 words in length, reflecting all the additional writing I was able to do during the fellowship period, and (though I anticipate cutting or condensing some of the current material in the revision process) I expect that the completed book will be closer to 100,000 or 110,000 words. Thus, while I had originally expected to submit the complete manuscript for review after Summer 2025, the new research and additional chapter lengthened that timeline a little; I am now hoping to submit at the end of Summer 2026.

One of the greatest benefits of the fellowship was the flexible time, which gave me the opportunity to travel to two research libraries with important holdings relating to my project. With the aid of some additional travel support from my university, I was able to spend two weeks in the UK, examining prospectuses and rare and unusual magazines in the British library, and then presenting my research on magazine prospectuses at the St Andrews Book History Conference. My time in the British Library was exciting and generative, as I had the opportunity to see both some materials I had long wanted to examine and others that I hadn't previously known existed, but that changed the way I was thinking about

magazine advertising. While it would be impossible to sum up all the items I examined and their implications in a brief statement, some of the most important revelations for my book include: clear evidence of repurposing and significant reworking of text between different advertising media; better insight into the physical quality and typical appearance of magazine prospectuses (since I had previously examined many only in a digitized format); and a much better sense of how magazine prospectuses compare to other prospectuses of the period, whether advertising other periodicals or expensive books.

Later in the summer, I took another research trip to the Beinecke Library at Yale, where I was able to continue work I had begun the previous summer, examining the papers of the Nichols family (the long-time publishers of the *Gentleman's Magazine*), which are held in part at the Beinecke. Since most of my primary sources for this project are printed (magazines themselves and prospectuses advertising them), these letters and miscellaneous materials relating to Nichols' editing practices provide invaluable context for understanding the magazines. Through this research, I have been able to track the interactions of contributors with the magazine over multiple decades, compare proofs of the magazine with the final printed version, and gain at least tentative answers to questions raised by the print materials I had examined, such as: Were letters to the editor genuine, or editor-generated? Was anyone actually interested in buying issues of magazines that were ten, twenty, or fifty years old? How quickly were submitted works published? I also took this opportunity to examine some examples of prospectuses and magazines in Special Collections, including some titles in original bindings, and others that I was able to directly compare with those I'd examined in the British Library, discovering important variations.

I was able to present on my research into the Nichols Family papers at the summer meeting of the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading, and Publishing. One of the most difficult things about visiting archives and special collections is the realization that there is so much more of interest than can ever fit into a single book. I felt this increasingly as I examined more and more prospectuses for periodicals that weren't miscellaneous magazines (and thus didn't really fit into my book project); to that end, I was delighted to be able to write up some of the most interesting examples—including a prospectus for a musical magazine that offered a free piano-forte to subscribers—for a chapter in a new edited book on Periodicals in Brill's *Library of the Written Word* series, based on the papers given at the St Andrews Book History Conference.

Having unexpectedly assumed an administrative role at my university at the end of the summer following my fellowship, I have been writing at a slower pace this fall, but look forward to rebalancing my research and writing time with my other responsibilities this spring as I work towards the book's completion. I am so grateful for the support of the Peterson Fellowship in this endeavor; I know that I would not have been able to progress nearly so quickly without the additional writing time and research funding the Fellowship provided.