



Writing for the Artefact Symposium on Text, Artefact, and the Human Sign-Maker

December 5-6, 2025

University of Copenhagen

The relationship between writing and the material surface on which it appears has proven difficult to explain. Textual scholarship in general, and traditional philology in particular, have often favored the abstract text over the material substrate, treating the artefact as a vehicle for texts rather than as an integral part of communication. In contrast, **artefactual philology** (e.g., Driscoll 2010, Hansen 2017, Kapitan et al. 2019) approaches 'the whole book' within its socio-cultural and historical context, shaped by the practices of writing, reading, and use. Yet, despite this shift, artefactual philology has lacked a robust theory of communication or writing capable of

accounting for its own premises.

Unrelated to the 'material' turn in philology, **integrational linguistics** (e.g., Harris 1981, 1996, 1998; Pablé and Hutton 2015) has provided a general theory of writing (Harris 1984, 1995, 2000), based on a theory of human communication by means of signs (semiology). Integrational theory provides a powerful framework for understanding how texts are physically and communicatively constituted through the interplay of material form and social practice. It emphasizes the agency of the textualizer—writer, reader, scribe, printer, etc.—as a communicating participant, presenting a counterpoint to traditional notions of fixed textual meaning and editorial authority. Like artefactual philology, it considers the relationship between text and artefact as one of complementary contextualization; writing is contextualized by the artefact and vice versa, implying that they cannot be divorced. Thus, both approaches agree that textualization itself is a process that physically integrates text and artefact.

The symposium *Writing for the Artefact* aims to bring these two previously independent but congenial fields of research into dialogue to explore and utilize their synergetic potential for textual scholarship.

It invites scholars from philology, linguistics, literary studies, manuscript studies, media studies, and related fields to engage in a critical and interdisciplinary exploration of the textualized artefact. This event aims to develop a coherent theoretical framework for understanding writing as a form of communication materially embodied in various physical forms, ranging from manuscripts and printed books to digital formats and everything in between.

We welcome proposals that address, but are not limited to:

- Theoretical approaches to writing as a material and communicative practice.
- The relationship between artefact and the concept of 'text' itself.
- The role of the textualizer—scribe, printer, reader, editor, etc.—as sign-maker.
- The semiology of textualization for manuscript studies, books, documents, or other artefacts.
- Case studies that exemplify the communicative function of the textualized artefact.

By situating writing within its material and semiological realities, *Writing for the Artefact* aims to reconceptualize textual studies in ways that challenge long-standing editorial, linguistic, and philological assumptions.

Please submit abstracts of up to 500 words, to duncker@hum.ku.dk by September 15, 2025.

Presentation slots will be 20 minutes followed by 10 minutes discussion.

Symposium organized by the research group [Textual Scholarship](#), Department of Nordic Studies and Linguistics, University of Copenhagen, sponsored by the International Association for the Integrational Study of Language & Communication (IAISLC).

References

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- Katarzyna Anna Kapitan, Beeke Stegman, Seán D. Vrieland (Eds.). 2019. *From Text to Artefact. Studies in Honour of Anne Mette Hansen*. Leeds: Kismet Press.
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