

DOPPELPANEL: A new literary public sphere? New roles, functions and institutions in today's global book market

Konzeption: Gerhard Lauer

The complex relationship between literature and society has been a much-debated issue. In his 1962 work, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Jürgen Habermas developed an idealised concept of the 'public sphere', which emerged in 18th-century Europe. This was a space outside of state control where individuals could gather to debate, converse and discuss, thereby forming a public opinion. The most convincing argument, rather than the prestige or status of the debater, should prevail. Through the literary public sphere, democratic thinking gains social capital. Current debates question the role of the literary public sphere, arguing that it, and the public sphere in general, is in decline due to the fan culture of bookishness, globalisation of the book market, and the general commodification of culture. The roles, functions and institutions of literature seem to be shifting, and there is a flourishing debate on whether it is still of pivotal importance to today's society.

The objective of this thematic section on Literary Public Spheres is to broaden the scope of literary studies by exploring how the interplay between writers, readers, and publishers employs literature for a variety of purposes – some explicit, some only vaguely defined – in a wide range of public settings locally, regionally, and globally. Thus, we seek to explore how literary texts become the subject of debate, negation, or dialogue centred on contemporary values and opinions of popular concern in different (digital) societies. Do we witness a global democratisation of cultural participation or a decline? The section invites contributions to the following areas of research:

- Beyond established publishing: New writing and publishing practices such as fan fiction, digital social writing platforms, or self-publishing
- Fan culture of bookishness: Practices of fan culture around books (display of reading, cosplay, merch)
- Influencer: New roles of BookToker and Instagramer, Youtuber etc.
- New Books: New developments in the field of audiobooks (Spotify, Storytel, Tonie etc.)
- Is this a publishing house? The reinvention of established publishers
- Is this a book? AI and the invention of artificial books
- Global and local values: Evaluation, rankings and lists of writers and books
- Genres, tropes etc. as forms of communication in the literary field
- Classics: The new and the not-so-new role of classics
- Paradoxes: Gender roles and parasocial relations