Proposal for ASECS 2024 session 80 Overdetermined and Under-determined Authorship: Methods and Progress in Identity [Society for the History of Authorship, Reading, and Publishing (SHARP)]

Emily D. Spunaugle

Oakland University

spunaugle@oakland.edu

**Accounting for Authorial Labor in Women’s Self-Published Texts of the Long Eighteenth Century**

Book history’s corrective to author-centric literary studies shows that printing and publishing required many hands doing muddled albeit distinct tasks, as in the work of Helen Smith, Kate Ozment, and Lisa Maruca. But what of authors who had a hand in the publication of their own works? What of authors whose labors exceed being merely authorial, but which are involved in a greater variety of labors? To highlight the agency of the author, I propose the term author-facilitated publication to account for the physical, mental, and emotional hustle required for an author to see their work in print. These authorial labors are typically obscured—particularly in the case of women. This paper returns to the bodies of women authors not to reattribute texts or create a new canon, although this recovery work is paramount. Instead, this paper avoids the cult of the author-function created in concert with celebrity and instead uses the examples of relatively unknown authors to account for their labors in excess of composition. I use as example the autobiographical descriptions of the publishing ventures of Scottish author, Jean Marishall (active 1765-1789). I use Marishall’s two-volume A Series of Letters (1788-89), which include detailed accounts of her attempts to publish, to read for authorial labor in less illustrative cases, including women’s co-called “vanity publications” of the long eighteenth century. Ultimately, this paper aims to broaden what counts as labor in the print trade and offer a new concept, author-facilitated publication, for investigating women’s print publications.