



# Memory Bytes: History, Technology, and Digital Culture

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**Memory Bytes: History, Technology, and Digital Culture** From Duke University Press Books

Digital culture is often characterized as radically breaking with past technologies, practices, and ideologies rather than as reflecting or incorporating them. *Memory Bytes* seeks to counter such ahistoricism, arguing for the need to understand digital culture—and its social, political, and ethical ramifications—in historical and philosophical context. Looking at a broad range of technologies, including photography, print and digital media, heat engines, stereographs, and medical imaging, the contributors present a number of different perspectives from which to reflect on the nature of media change. While foregrounding the challenges of drawing comparisons across varied media and eras, *Memory Bytes* explores how technologies have been integrated into society at different moments in time.

These essays from scholars in the social sciences and humanities cover topics related to science and medicine, politics and war, mass communication, philosophy, film, photography, and art. Whether describing how the cultural and legal conflicts over player piano rolls prefigured controversies over the intellectual property status of digital technologies such as mp3 files; comparing the experiences of watching QuickTime movies to Joseph Cornell's "boxed relic" sculptures of the 1930s and 1940s; or calling for a critical history of electricity from the Enlightenment to the present, *Memory Bytes* investigates the interplay of technology and culture. It relates the Information Age to larger and older political and cultural phenomena, analyzes how sensory effects have been technologically produced over time, considers how human subjectivity has been shaped by machines, and emphasizes the dependence of particular technologies on the material circumstances within which they were developed and used.

*Contributors.* Judith Babbitts, Scott Curtis, Ronald E. Day, David Depew, Abraham Geil, Sharon Ghamari-Tabrizi, Lisa Gitelman, N. Katherine Hayles, John Durham Peters, Lauren Rabinovitz, Laura Rigal, Vivian Sobchack, Thomas Swiss

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### **Review**

“Anyone who teaches courses in digital culture or media studies knows how difficult it is to find scholarly essays on new media that consider these developments in relation to social and technological precedents. *Memory Bytes* fills this gap.”—Brian Goldfarb, author of *Visual Pedagogy: Media Cultures in and beyond the Classroom*

“*Memory Bytes* is an important contribution to the growing body of scholarship taking the current moment of media change as an incitement to re-examine earlier moments in media history. The range of media, historical periods, and disciplinary perspectives is spectacular, representing interdisciplinary collaboration and conversation at its very best.”—Henry Jenkins, coeditor of *Hop on Pop: The Politics and Pleasures of Popular Culture*

### **From the Back Cover**

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### **About the Author**

Lauren Rabinovitz is Professor of American Studies and Cinema at the University of Iowa. She is the author of *For the Love of Pleasure: Women, Movies, and Culture in Turn-of-the-Century Chicago* and *Points of Resistance: Women, Power, and Politics in the New York Avant-Garde Cinema, 1943–1971* and coeditor of *Television, History, and American Culture: Feminist Critical Essays*, also published by Duke University Press.

Abraham Geil is an instructor in media history at the New School University in New York City.

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