

Call for Papers: *Design, Mediation, and the Posthuman*

We invite submissions for an edited anthology exploring the disciplinary intersections of technological mediation, design, and the posthuman.

Deadline: Abstracts of 500 words should be submitted by March 30, 2012. Notifications will be made by early May with final drafts of submissions due by September 30, 2012.

Please include a short biographical statement with abstracts.

Editors:

Dr. Amy Propen, Rhetoric and Composition, York College of Pennsylvania
apropen@ycp.edu; <http://amypopen.com/>)

Dr. Colbey Reid, Literary Studies, York College of Pennsylvania
creid@ycp.edu)

Dr. Dennis Weiss, Philosophy, York College of Pennsylvania
dweiss@ycp.edu, <http://faculty.ycp.edu/~dweiss/>)

In the early days of the Internet, there was much talk about moving from the offline world to the online world. Fanboys to cybertheorists proclaimed the demassification of culture. Life, we were told, would become increasingly virtual and the world of things wouldn't matter much. In their 1994 preamble to "Cyberspace and the American Dream: A Magna Carta for the Knowledge Age," cyberlibertarians Esther Dyson, George Gilder, and George Keyworth nicely articulated this early Internet dream: "The central event of the 20th century is the overthrow of matter. In technology, economics, and the politics of nations, wealth—in the form of physical resources—has been losing value and significance. The powers of mind are everywhere ascendant over the brute force of things."

The past decade, however, has witnessed a renewed focus on materiality. From Bruno Latour's constitution of a parliament of things to Jane Bennett's efforts in *Vibrant Matter* to challenge the view of matter as passive and inert, Johndan Johnson-Eilola's recent exploration of the social lives and agency of texts (2010), and Bill Brown's award-winning 2001 *Critical Inquiry* issue on "thing theory," a variety of discourses and disciplines have renewed their efforts to engage questions about the epistemic and rhetorical power of physical artifacts. Literary theorists, digital humanists, rhetoricians,

philosophers of technology, and product designers are paying more attention to the crafted environment, the manner in which artifacts mediate human relations, and the constitution of a world in which the boundary between humans and things has seemingly imploded. Simultaneously, new questions arise about the extent to which we ought to view humans and nonhuman artifacts as bearing equal capacity for agency and life, and the ways in which technological mediation challenges the central tenets of humanism and anthropocentrism.

Contemporary theories of human-object relations presage the arrival of the posthuman, which is no longer a futuristic or science-fictional concept but rather one descriptive of the present, and indeed, the past. As Charles Bazerman has observed, “technology... has always been part of human needs, desires, values, and evaluation, articulated in language and at the very heart of rhetoric” (383). Bill Brown’s *A Sense of Things* likewise points out that humans have long been living under what one *Atlantic Monthly* article positioned, already in 1906, as a tyranny of things. Discussions of the posthuman already have a long history in fields like literary theory, rhetoric, and philosophy, and as advances in design and technology result in increasingly engaging artifacts that mediate more and more aspects of everyday life, it becomes necessary to engage in a systematic, interdisciplinary, critical examination of the intersection of the domains of design, technological mediation, and the posthuman.

Design, Mediation, and the Posthuman, itself a project of mediation within the complex intersections occasioned by the history of technology, aims to bring diverse disciplines together to foster a dialogue on some of the significant technological issues pertinent to philosophy, rhetoric, aesthetics, and science.

Topics may include, but are not limited to:

Humanism and anthropocentrism in a world of relational artifacts
The place of the human being in technologically mediated environments
Moving from a demassified culture to a culture of things and artifacts
The resurgence of materiality and things in a posthuman world
The posthuman at the nexus of design culture and technologies of mediation
The value of things in a posthuman device culture (Albert Borgmann and philosophy of technology)
The symmetry thesis and the status of the human being
Multimodal technologies, rhetorics, and questions of agency
Rhetorics of the posthuman and questions of agency
Rhetorically-focused case studies or ethnographies involving technologically mediated environments, spaces, and bodies

The text as agent; texts and agency
Visual, material, and spatial rhetorics, design, and mediation
The posthuman quality of material cultures, past and present
Textual design as a space of human-object interface
Digital archives and the problems, uses of technologically mediated history
Design culture: interior design, fashion design, artisanal craftsmanship and/as human-artifact boundary dissolution
Form (style, genre, etc) as technology; parallels between the turn to form and the turn to things
Proto-posthumanisms (Victorian, Edwardian “cyborgs”)

Please submit abstracts of 500 words and a short biographical statement to Amy Propen (apropen@ycp.edu) or Colbey Reid (creid@ycp.edu) or Dennis Weiss (dweiss@ycp.edu) by March 30, 2012. Essays appearing in the anthology will average 3,000-6,000 words. MLA style should be used where citation is required. Notification of acceptance will be given by early May. Completed chapters will be due by September 30, 2012.