

# 1. Basic Concepts: Value and Acceptance

**Abstract:** The acceptance of technological innovations as well as new production methods are always dependent on the acceptance subject, acceptance object and acceptance context. It is further shaped by the various perceptions of value concerning the acceptance object. Therefore, a concept of value in connection with the book as a) a commodity, b) a medium and c) a symbolic object is helpful to better comprehend the changes of 'the book' throughout the centuries. This chapter proposes three 'book value categories' (economic, content and symbolic value) to help understand the transitional phases of the book, especially during the fifteenth (from manuscript to print), nineteenth (from hand press to mass production) and twenty-first (from print to digital) centuries.

**Keywords:** acceptance theory, value concept, book values, capital

## 1.1. Value

In order to detect patterns in transitional phases of the book, it is helpful to discuss these phases with the 'acceptance' and 'preference' of the new production methods and the end product according to their 'value.' As these terms are the foundation of further argumentation, this chapter will elaborate on them in more detail. It starts with a general understanding of the terms, then a more specific understanding as connected to commodities, based on concepts offered by Karl Marx, Jean Baudrillard as well as Pierre Bourdieu and Göran Bolin. Afterwards, the stages acceptance and preference will be addressed before these issues will be connected to the concept of the book. Books can fulfil several functions. Most importantly, they act as mediums as well as symbolic objects. Therefore, both aspects will be addressed as well. Finally, this chapter proposes 'book value categories' that will prove useful to explain the acceptance of new book production methods throughout this study.

'Value' is one of the most problematic terms in cultural studies. Often, it is equated with other terms like 'norms' or 'wishes' that seemingly imply the same or similar concept. In academic discussions, however, precise definitions of such abstract terms are necessary. Hans Joas, for example, emphasizes that 'values,' 'categories' or 'norms' imply different concepts; he suggests differentiating between them and that they should not be used interchangeably. He stresses that it is not helpful to simply equate values to 'wishes' because values are already the abstraction of wishes. As a result, the inherent rules of values last longer since they are embedded in social groups like families and, more importantly, they

have a very strong emotional element. Values define the individual and are also used to distinguish oneself from other individuals or other groups.<sup>63</sup>

The difficult character of this term is frequently exacerbated by the inflationary use in the media, precisely because a detailed definition is lacking. The *Oxford English Dictionary* entry states that ‘value’ either expresses worth with regard to exchange (“Worth or quality as measured by a standard of equivalence”) or “worth based on esteem; quality viewed in terms of importance, usefulness, desirability, etc.”<sup>64</sup> Whereas the first definition can be clearly recognized as an economic term and is fairly easy to understand (X is worth Y), it is the second reading that causes problems, because it depends largely on an emotional subjective estimation. This emotional quality gives further cause for concern because it is easily (and thus frequently) abused by rulers, political parties or instigators as tools for political legitimization, social or cultural distinction, for example, by justifying acts of terror or other unjust deeds to protect or symbolize ‘values.’<sup>65</sup> Also, military actions are frequently labelled necessary to defend the ‘values of our country.’ As Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger stresses in her essay “Die Historiker und die Werte” (2004),<sup>66</sup> values are, in contrast to interests or wishes, inherent to specific groups and are consequently only seldom negotiable by individuals. They constitute group-specific value systems. Therefore, they are prone to lead to antagonistic intensification of cultural, religious or international differences perceived as a clash of, for example, so-called Western values with non-Western values or Christian values with Islamic values.<sup>67</sup> Stollberg-Rilinger concludes that the term ‘value,’ from a modern perspective, does pose problems for cultural studies:

Der Begriff Werte, so wie er heute in der öffentlichen Debatte weithin gebraucht wird, ist alles andere als ein analytischer Begriff, sondern ein Konsens heischendes und zugleich

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63 Hans Joas, “Die kulturellen Werte Europas: Eine Einleitung,” *Die kulturellen Werte Europas*, eds Hans Joas and Klaus Wiegandt (Frankfurt, 2005), 11–39, 15.

64 “value, n.,” *OED Online*, September 2011 <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/221253>> (accessed: 10.12.2019).

65 Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, “Einleitung,” *Wertekonflikte - Deutungskonflikte: Internationales Kolloquium des Sonderforschungsbereichs 496 an der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster, 19.-20. Mai 2005*, eds Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger and Thomas Weller (Münster, 2007), 9–21, 9.

66 Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, “Die Historiker und die Werte,” *Eule oder Nachtigall? Tendenzen und Perspektiven kulturwissenschaftlicher Werteforschung*, ed. Marie Luisa Allemeyer (Göttingen, 2007), 35–48.

67 Stollberg-Rilinger, “Die Historiker und die Werte,” 36.

Abgrenzung stiftendes Etikett für Bekenntnisse, und Belehrungen unterschiedlicher Art; er verschleiert in der Regel eher, als dass er Erkenntnis ermöglicht. Die Vagheit, Beliebigkeit und die Interessenabhängigkeit, mit der der Begriff verwendet wird, scheinen seinem analytischen Wert für die Kulturwissenschaften Grenzen zu setzen.<sup>68</sup>

Nevertheless, the concept of value has been of growing interest within the field of cultural studies recently, precisely because of its problematic character. One pitfall would be to isolate the two different readings, economic value and value in esteem, too sharply from each other. Rather, it is helpful to keep in mind their possible direct connection as well as their correlations. What also becomes clear is that most discussions about values refer to social values rather than individual values.

Elaborating on this, Stollberg-Rilinger uses Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'capital' that he introduced and extended beyond its meaning of simply expressing economic properties but also including cultural, social and symbolic elements as certain resources for individuals or groups.<sup>69</sup> As this study is also relying on Bourdieu's ideas of 'capital,' it is necessary to summarize the most important aspects: according to Bourdieu, several institutions and agents contribute to the accumulation of different forms of capital within the 'field of cultural production.' **Economic capital** is straightforward: it is the possession of economic assets (property, money and so on). **Social capital** refers to the social connections and networks (for example, family, school and so on) of an individual or groups, which can be a value in themselves. **Cultural capital** refers to education and cultivation of a person (for example, various forms of knowledge, aesthetic preference and so on) and is further subdivided into three states: embodied, objectified and institutionalized cultural capital. The embodied form of cultural capital requires work and time, as it cannot be bought, given or achieved by another person: "The work of acquisition is work on oneself (self-improvement), an effort that presupposes a personal cost [...] an investment, above all of time [...]"<sup>70</sup> Education, general knowledge or the ability to play the piano or the classical guitar are examples of embodied cultural capital. Therefore, this form of capital is dependent on the physical as well as mental abilities of the individual. Just as it cannot be instantly acquired, it cannot be instantly passed on. Also, since

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68 Stollberg-Rilinger, "Die Historiker und die Werte," 38.

69 Pierre Bourdieu, "Ökonomisches Kapital, kulturelles Kapital, soziales Kapital," *Soziale Ungleichheiten*, ed. Reinhard Kreckel (Göttingen, 1983), 183–198; Bourdieu, *Sozialer Sinn: Kritik der theoretischen Vernunft* (Frankfurt, 1987), 205–221.

70 Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Richardson (New York, 1986), 241–258, 244.

time, and, more often than not, money is necessary to achieve these cultivated abilities, embodied cultural capital is oftentimes dependent on economic capital. Objectified cultural capital refers to the possession of cultural goods: material objects connected with a cultivated lifestyle, such as (prestigious) books, works of art, musical instruments and so on.<sup>71</sup> In contrast to embodied cultural capital, it does not necessarily require a large amount of time to acquire, depending on the economic capital at one's disposal. The investment of economic capital shows appreciation of these objects. If, however, such objects are not purchased but acquired through gift-giving or inheritance, it can still be regarded or used as objectified cultural capital, as the person is showing appreciation for them by keeping and maintaining them, and by using physical space for storage and display of these objects. Finally, institutionalized cultural capital refers to academic qualifications which confirm the individual's embodied cultural capital.<sup>72</sup> At the same time, these qualifications distinguish people with institutionalized qualifications (certificates, university degrees and so on) from individuals who achieved their embodied cultural capital by self-education (autodidacticism). This form of cultural capital is also mainly dependent on economic capital (directly and indirectly). Institutionalized cultural capital can be turned into economic capital by having the qualifications for better-paid employment. Usually, it also enhances social capital as success and reputation in academic institutions opens the door for relevant relationships which might again prove helpful to acquire further economic opportunities. Accordingly, cultural capital can be a means to social mobility and is inextricably linked with economic capital. **Symbolic capital**, finally, can be defined as "things that stand for all of the other forms of capital and can be 'exchanged' in other fields, e.g. credentials."<sup>73</sup>

The concepts of capital and value alike are both important for this study but need to be distinguished. The main difference is that whereas all forms of capital can be seen as a specific resource, values denote the significance and relevance of, for example, ideas or commodities. They guide decisions and therefore shape preferences. As Stollberg-Rilinger points out, value is mainly effective in symbolic form, albeit in a similarly vague way as the single idea of values.<sup>74</sup> Collective

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71 Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," 246–247.

72 Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," 247–248.

73 Patricia Thomson, "Field," *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, ed. Michael Grenfell (Stocksfield, 2008), 67–81, 69.

74 She gives the examples of the Statue of Liberty as a symbol for freedom, Justitia (Lady Justice) as a symbol of justice and the crucifix as a symbol of the Christian faith. Stollberg-Rilinger, "Die Historiker und die Werte," 47.

symbolizations create a belief of content and their convergences of value and meaning become apparent through discursive interpretation.<sup>75</sup> Values and their symbolic representations are prone to merge and become almost inseparable. Therefore, scholars should not only search for values as such but also for their value-based cultural practices and symbolizations, like Japanese tea rituals, dedication scenes of book gifts or ceremonial book burnings.

The important characteristic of Bourdieu's field of cultural production is the dichotomy between small-scale and large-scale productions. Whereas the former is interested in creating art for art's sake, the latter is primarily concerned with making profit. The small-scale field is part of the large field and is also dependent on economic profit, but it is not its main objective. In Bourdieu's terms, then, the small-scale field produces mainly cultural capital with small chances of economic profit and the large-scale field creates products with low cultural capital but higher chances of economic capital. As a result, the small-scale field is not dependent on current tastes or customer demand and is therefore largely autonomous. The large-scale field on the other hand depends very much on current tastes because it aims at satisfying a large market. It is heteronomous because it is dependent on the demand of customers. Bourdieu labels this situation "two economic logics"; the "anti-'economic' economy of pure art" and the "economic' logic of the literary and artistic industries [...]" which are content to adjust themselves to the pre-existing demand of a clientele.<sup>76</sup>

Finally, the whole field of cultural production is influenced by the field of power, which in itself is defined by the social space, which is further shaped by political, economic and educational/academic factors. Bourdieu especially underlines the importance of the latter factor:

[T]he most determining [change] is no doubt the growth (linked to economic expansion) of the educated population (at all levels of the school system) that underlies two parallel processes: the rise in the number of producers who can live by their pen or draw subsistence from the small jobs offered by cultural enterprises (publishing houses, papers, etc.); and the expansion of the market of potential readers who are thus offered to successive pretenders [...] and their products.<sup>77</sup>

Every agent and institution within the field is interested in acquiring (or producing) all or some forms of capital. This usually requires time, money and/or

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75 Stollberg-Rilinger, "Die Historiker und die Werte," 47.

76 Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* (Cambridge, 1996), 142.

77 Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, 127.

labour. The different forms of capital are usually interconnected. Economic capital, for example, can be used to acquire cultural capital (an expensive education, a rare book, a highly esteemed painting, an instrument), and cultural as well as social capital might be converted into economic capital under certain conditions and so on.

Bourdieu's different forms of capital are relevant for all agents (individuals as well as institutions, like publishing houses) within the field of cultural production.<sup>78</sup> However, one should be careful when applying Bourdieu's concepts. It would certainly not be accurate to generalize all different sorts of capital for all periods or sociocultural groups. Since Bourdieu applied his field theory mainly to nineteenth-century France, it is helpful to recognize Göran Bolin's approach to examine cultural production and consumption in digital media. In his monograph *Value and the Media* (2011),<sup>79</sup> Bolin bases his model on Bourdieu's idea of the field of cultural production and adds terminologies established by Marx<sup>80</sup> and Baudrillard.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, Bolin stresses the misleading terminology of large-scale and small-scale fields: just as products in the large-scale field might be, economically speaking, unsuccessful, so it is possible that products in the small-scale field may turn out to be successful commodities. This problem, however, might be resolved with the concept of belief: as long as consumers *believe* that certain products are not aimed at making a profit, it stays in the small-scale area, even if it turns out to be an economic success.<sup>82</sup>

The concept of commodity values originates from the eighteenth century. Already there was a distinction between the cultural and the economic, art and commodity. Based on notions previously introduced by Adam Smith

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78 See Pierre Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic Field Reversed," *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, eds Pierre Bourdieu and Randal Johnson (New York, 1993), 29–73.

79 Göran Bolin, *Value and the Media: Cultural Production and Consumption in Digital Markets* (Farnham, Surrey, 2011).

80 Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*. Vol. 1, London, 1839, Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (London, 1939).

81 Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures* (London, 1970); Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (St Louis, 1972; repr. 1981); Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production* (St. Louis, 1973); Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (London, 1976).

82 Bolin offers the example of Bob Dylan albums, which, in his view, can be considered small-scale products but enjoy a huge economic success nevertheless. Bolin, *Value and the Media*, 35. Dylan winning the Nobel Prize in 2016 certainly strengthens Bolin's argument.

and David Ricardo, Karl Marx differentiated between ‘exchange value’ and ‘use value.’<sup>83</sup> Whereas the first term refers to the economic understanding of value, the second term refers to both intended as well as unintended functions of the product in question. It is important to note that a product becomes a commodity only if it has a price on the market and thus has an exchange value. Later on, Jean Baudrillard built on this and further introduced the idea of ‘sign value’ that addresses the symbolic dimension of the commodity. According to Baudrillard, this symbolic dimension “is the result of the development of the fetish character of the commodity.”<sup>84</sup> It gives status to the consumer when they own, display or use the commodity. Therefore, this value is of importance to guarantee social distinction and should not be underestimated. At the same time, sign value can also be use value, since it fulfils certain functions, for example giving joy.<sup>85</sup> Marx, however, based his ideas on the production of physical commodities. Therefore, value is the result of raw material, means of production and labour. In times where commodity production happens without raw material, such as, for example, digital products, setting value gets more complicated as it is more dependent on labour and belief.<sup>86</sup>

The idea of value for commodities primarily refers to the economic worth, the ability to fulfil one or more purposes as well as a symbolic role. Addressing these notions of value with commodities in mind, the term ‘added value’ becomes interesting. Producers of commodities are dependent on selling as many units of a production run as possible and are eager to increase the desirability of their products. The idea of the ‘value chain’ has long been used to explain how each step in the production of a commodity ‘adds value.’ The concept of the ‘value chain’ in businesses stems from the economist Michael E. Porter in his work *Competitive Advantage* (1985)<sup>87</sup> and focuses on commodities in general. ‘Added value’ initially referred to certain qualities added to a product which hopefully resulted in a higher incentive (in some cases addressed to a particular class) for customers to purchase the good. As commodities are usually in competition

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83 Bolin, *Value and the Media*, 17. Bolin refers to John Guillory’s preface in his *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago, 1993), vii-xiv.

84 Bolin, *Value and the Media*, 34. Baudrillard also suggests the terms ‘utility value,’ ‘commercial value’ and ‘statutory value’ in *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, 125.

85 Bolin, *Value and the Media*, 34.

86 Bolin, *Value and the Media*, 17.

87 Michael E. Porter, *Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance* (New York, 1985).

with other products, it is hoped by the producer that these 'added values' result in a higher esteem than the products of the competitors. They may be real for the customer or just perceived. What counts is the increase in desirability. The term 'added value,' however, is misleading as it is euphemistic in character. Even though the goal is to increase the desirability of the product for the customer, the enhanced feature mainly adds value for the producer through the possibility of increased consumer and therefore higher sales figures or willingness to pay more for the product. In other words, the added value for the producer is mainly economic in character. Values can be added in various ways by the producer. The product itself may be altered by changing the design or improving its functionality. It may also be affected by enhancing its reputation through advertisements.

In conclusion, 'value' in general has two different, albeit connected, meanings: the straightforward economic definition as well as the more complex meaning which is based on a subjective estimation of an individual in correlation with the agreed-on estimation made by the majority of the group (or one of the groups) to which the individual belongs or desires to belong. The latter sort of value has an emotional quality. It oftentimes appears in symbolic form and then might unfold its potential more effectively. Both concepts of value are, in most cases, inextricably linked and should not be analysed individually but always in accordance with each other. When applying Bourdieu's ideas of the field theory and his concepts of capital, everything that strengthens or improves the position of an agent or institution within their specific field has value.

## 1.2. Acceptance

Since the production of commodities usually changes over the years and is also almost always in competition with other commodities, the ideas of 'acceptance' and 'preference' play an important part, too. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'acceptance' as "the action or fact of receiving something favourably; (of a situation, action, or thing) the fact of being received favourably; positive reception, approval."<sup>88</sup> For this investigation of new book production methods, then, acceptance would mean that customers approve of the product created with the new possibilities as an adequate replacement (meaning it is fully accepted) or at least substitute (meaning it is tolerated, but the predecessor would still be

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88 "acceptance, n.," *OED Online*, December 2011 <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/1011>> (accessed: 10.12.2019).



preferred) for the previously produced object. At the same time, producers must also accept new production technologies for their commodities.

One reason for the complex nature of the phenomenon of acceptance is the fact that it can be applied to almost every object, material or immaterial. But even within the specific field of 'technology acceptance,' various approaches and models are offered. The most important aspects to consider for this study are the dimensions of acceptance as well as the main elements of subject, object and context of acceptance.

Acceptance research differentiates between the attitudinal and behavioural dimensions of acceptance.<sup>89</sup> The attitudinal dimension defines acceptance merely as a positive attitude towards an innovation. This dimension is usually influenced by values and norms of individuals and groups. The behavioural dimension is further concerned with actual, observable behavioural actions that are the results of acceptance (or, respectively, unacceptance). Behavioural actions include buying and using the new technology or even supporting the spread of it. In the case of unacceptance, behavioural actions could include demonstrating against the innovation or even sabotage. (It is important to note, though, that the lack of observable behavioural actions of resistance does not necessarily prove acceptance.) In order to systemize acceptance, some researchers suggest specific levels of acceptance. Sauer et al., for example, suggest a scale ranging from active opposition (level 1) to active support (level 8).<sup>90</sup>

In its most basic sense, acceptance means that someone (subject) accepts something (object) under specific circumstances (context). The subject can be an individual, a group or a whole society. Further, it can refer to consumers who are supposed to accept a new commodity as well as producers who may accept

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89 Martina Schäfer and Dorothee Keppler offer a third dimension ("Wertedimension") but state that this could also be part of the attitudinal dimension. Schäfer and Keppler, "Modelle der technikorientierten Akzeptanzforschung: Überblick und Reflexion am Beispiel eines Forschungsprojekts zur Implementierung innovativer technischer Energieeffizienz-Maßnahmen," (discussion paper 34, Zentrum Technik und Gesellschaft) Berlin, 2013, 14. <[https://www.tu-berlin.de/fileadmin/f27/PDFs/Discussion\\_Papers/Akzeptanzpaper\\_\\_end.pdf](https://www.tu-berlin.de/fileadmin/f27/PDFs/Discussion_Papers/Akzeptanzpaper__end.pdf)> (accessed: 12 March 2020).

90 The levels in between are, in order of acceptance, 'rejection,' 'discord,' 'indifference,' 'tolerance,' 'conditional acceptance' and 'approval.' Schäfer and Keppler, "Modelle der technikorientierten Akzeptanzforschung," 23–24. This is based on Alexandra Sauer et al., "Steigerung der Akzeptanz von FFH-Gebieten," *BfN-Scripten*, 144 (Bonn, 2005). <<https://www.bfn.de/fileadmin/BfN/service/Dokumente/skripten/Skript144.pdf>> (accessed: 12 March 2020).

new technology for producing their commodity. The object of acceptance can be material or immaterial, individual people, groups, politics, attitudes and so on. Subject and object are both influenced by the acceptance context, that is the social and cultural framework in which the acceptance is supposed to take place. This includes all factors and circumstances that are neither the subject nor the object, but that are still relevant for the process of acceptance.<sup>91</sup>

In conclusion then, acceptance is the outcome of a process of perception, evaluation and decision which results in a specific attitude and sometimes also observable behaviour. The outcome is dependent on the overall context. In other words, as Schäfer and Keppler put it, acceptance is an unstable construct.<sup>92</sup> The subject is influenced by already existing attitudes, individual norms and values, emotions and sociodemographic factors (for example age, gender, education). The object is primarily (but not solely) influenced by an economic cost-benefit analysis. However, it is also dependent on the potential for offering profit or social status (for example as objectified cultural capital). It is further affected by the general usability and its suitability to perform the fulfilling/supposed tasks. Finally, aesthetic aspects may influence the level of acceptance of the object, as well.

Phase models are helpful tools to analyse acceptance by breaking down the phenomenon into several steps. In 1995, Everett Rogers offered his “Diffusion of Innovations”<sup>93</sup> model, in which he broke down the acceptance of innovations into five stages that each individual of a social system has to go through to reach acceptance: 1) knowledge, 2) persuasion, 3) decision, 4) implementation and 5) confirmation. Starting with the awareness of a new technology and a basic idea about this innovation (1), the individual forms a first favourable or unfavourable attitude towards this innovation (2). Afterwards, a decision is made whether to reject or accept the innovation (3). If accepted, the process continues with buying/ paying for the innovation and putting it to use and maybe even promoting it (4). Finally, each individual evaluates the results of the decision they have already made (5). This either leads to a confirmation of the acceptance or a cancellation of the acceptance process and consequently to rejection.<sup>94</sup>

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91 Schäfer and Keppler, “Modelle der technikorientierten Akzeptanzforschung,” 17–23.

92 Schäfer and Keppler, “Modelle der technikorientierten Akzeptanzforschung,” 25.

93 Everett Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations* (New York, 1995).

94 Schäfer and Keppler summarize Rogers’ phase model in “Modelle der technikorientierten Akzeptanzforschung,” 38–41.

Once a commodity has competitors on the market or exists in different forms (for example alternative design or materials), the customer has a choice. This choice is determined by preference. Preference, then, may indicate value and is in turn influenced by several factors. Even though preferences are subjective, they must be regarded as genuine evaluations. In his monograph *Preference, Value, Choice, and Welfare* (2012),<sup>95</sup> Daniel M. Hausman argues from a philosophical perspective that some economic approaches to the topic of preference are flawed. The claim he most criticizes is that preferences are seen as arbitrary “matters of taste, concerning which rational criticism or discussion is impossible.”<sup>96</sup> First, he distinguishes between four different concepts of preference: 1) *enjoyment comparisons*, the most subjective preferences, which merely compare overall enjoyment (for example, colours or flowers) 2) *comparative evaluations* which (ideally) take into account all further factors that will or might be affected by the decision 3) *favouring*, a preference based on certain decisions or legal situations, for example, affirmative action or preference of female or disabled applicants for a job position if the qualifications are equal and 4) *choice ranking*, which is a preference that is made when a specific choice is offered, for example selecting from a set dessert menu in a restaurant.<sup>97</sup> Hausman stresses that these four senses can sometimes come apart and even contradict each other. A person might prefer red wine over sparkling water (enjoyment comparison) but as a designated driver, the person takes into account that alcoholic beverages are not an option (comparative evaluation). Throughout the monograph, preferences are defined as “total subjective comparative evaluations” and Hausman stresses that a preference for one thing over another needs to be distinguished from a non-comparative desire for just one thing. In a situation of choice, one can desire two or more options, but one cannot prefer all of them. A preference is a total evaluation because it takes into account everything that matters to the agent that forms the preference: It “depend[s] on beliefs, desires, emotions, intentions, reasons, and values [...]”<sup>98</sup> When confronted with a choice, the agent arranges the different choices according to the overall individual desirability and also takes into account certain constraints, like high price, lack of availability or other reasons

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95 Daniel M. Hausman, *Preference, Value, Choice, and Welfare* (Cambridge, 2012).

96 Hausman, *Preference, Value, Choice, and Welfare*, 8.

97 Hausman, *Preference, Value, Choice, and Welfare*, 1–2.

98 Hausman, *Preference, Value, Choice, and Welfare*, xii, 3.

which precludes the agent from choosing a specific option.<sup>99</sup> The idea of preference, then, might shed light on the understanding of the agent's values.

The stage of complete acceptance signifies that a new product or new production methods of commodities have replaced the previous methods as the standard. A clear indicator of this stage would be if producers still use the previous methods but have to justify the decision to do so.<sup>100</sup>

As stressed before, the book not only has competition from other media, but also new production methods result in customers suddenly having the ability to choose between books produced in different ways, such as handwritten or printed, hardcover or paperback, or even printed or digital. Therefore, the notion of preference becomes important during the transitional phases of a single medium, such as the book. Preference is an important indicator of value concerning the acceptance of either new technological possibilities of book production or new mediums altogether: if the majority of customers prefer the newer commodity over the older, it can be labelled as completely accepted and becomes the standard medium for its primary function. The superseded medium, however, does not disappear, but still co-exists and performs either the same or other functions the new medium is not (yet) able to perform. This will continue until either the new medium is capable of fulfilling this function or the function has become obsolete (or its importance has significantly decreased).

### 1.3. Value and the Book

With these preliminary ideas of value, acceptance and preference discussed above in mind, it is now possible to discuss the value of the book more effectively. The book as a research subject is as complex as the difficult terms discussed above. From a book studies perspective, as has been addressed in the introduction, the book can be treated as a text, a material object, a cultural transaction and/or an experience.<sup>101</sup> Indeed, the book is, on its most basic level, a material object ready to be sold as a result of a production process. Consequently, it is most often conceived of as a commercial commodity produced to be sold on a market. However, this is only one aspect of many that defines the book.

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99 Hausman suggests four "sources of preferences": means-end reasoning, attribute-based valuation, emotional influence and physiological needs. *Preference, Value, Choice and Welfare*, 118.

100 Some acceptance models call this stage 'adoption.'

101 Howsam, "Study of Book History," 2–6.

The book is usually, although not exclusively, also a communication system which can fulfil many and diverse functions, for example to entertain, educate or edify. From today's perspective, the primary function of most books is the dissemination of textual and other information that can be displayed (in print, handwriting or digital images). The material aspects of the book are mostly of secondary importance, as long as it is legible and relatively easy to use. In other words, the book is a medium. A medium, literally meaning 'centre' or 'middle' in Latin, is, among other things, the cause as well as the prerequisite for communication.<sup>102</sup> Mediums transport signs and are signs themselves as the mediating authority. The term medium can also refer to the technical precondition for communication (such as sound waves) as well as to the artefact of communication (such as radio).<sup>103</sup> Communication, then, is usually subdivided into the three steps of coding, transmitting and decoding. Within the now classic distinction of mediums by Harry Pross, mediums can further be subdivided into primary, secondary and tertiary mediums, depending on the necessity of technology in coding, decoding, both or none.<sup>104</sup> The manuscript and printed book, for example, are secondary mediums as only the coding requires technology, either pen or printing press, but not the side of decoding, meaning reception. The e-book, however, is a tertiary medium as the decoding also needs technology in the form of dedicated reading devices, computer screens or smartphones.

A detailed elaboration on the notion of the book as a medium would take the perspective of media studies which is beyond the scope of this book. However, some aspects of media studies are relevant, especially for chapter 4, which addresses the digital age and is consequently different from both of the historical chapters. To offer this, some general aspects by media theorist Siegfried Schmidt will be summarized in the following section.

Being aware of the manifold, and sometimes even contradicting, approaches to the concepts of mediums, Schmidt tries to join systematically different approaches to mediums (both technology- and anthropology-based) to offer an integrative concept of media ("integratives Medienkonzept.")<sup>105</sup> Within his conceptualization, he differentiates between four aspects of the term 'medium':

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102 Ursula Rautenberg, *Reclams Sachlexikon des Buches: Von der Handschrift zum E-Book*, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart, 2015), 278.

103 "artefact, n.," *OED Online*, December 2008 <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/11133>> (accessed: 10.12.2019).

104 Harry Pross, *Publizistik: Thesen zu einem Grundcolloquium* (Neuwied 1970), 129.

105 Siegfried J. Schmidt, *Kalte Faszination: Medien, Kultur, Wissenschaft in der Mediengesellschaft* (Weilerswist, 2000), 93–104.

Mein Vorschlag geht dahin, am Kompaktbegriff >Medium< folgende Aspekte zu unterscheiden, die als konstitutive Komponenten von Medien interpretiert werden können: semiotische Kommunikationsinstrumente, das technisch-mediale Dispositiv beziehungsweise die jeweilige Medientechnologie, die sozialsystemische Institutionalisierung eines Mediums sowie die jeweiligen Medienangebote.<sup>106</sup>

Schmidt determines natural spoken languages to be the prototype of his idea of 'semiotic communication tools' (the first aspect) and stresses that he does not consider spoken languages to be a medium but merely a communications tool.

The second aspect, media technologies, witnesses, according to Schmidt, a growing connection to communication tools. Consequently, this affects the production and reception of available media. The use of media technologies needs to be learned via socialization and thereafter becomes an integral part of competence of the individual. To ensure this, Schmidt labels his third aspect "sozialsystemische Komponente" and refers to schools, publishing houses or television broadcasters as institutions that are responsible for this. The last aspect Schmidt mentions is the "Medienangebote," the available media on offer within a society, whose production, distribution and reception are heavily influenced by the three previous aspects, for example by available technology, infrastructure and education.

Schmidt stresses the complex processes at work that play out during the adoption of new mediums in a society and thereby warns scholars to assume simple, linear causalities.<sup>107</sup> Looking at the historiography of mediums, Schmidt offers a hypothesis arguing that the social acceptance of a new media technology (for example printing press or photography) is accompanied by certain constants ("Entwicklungskonstanten").<sup>108</sup> The most important constants for this study will be briefly summarized in the following:

First, Schmidt hypothesises that new mediums lead to a disciplining of perception ("Disziplinierung der Wahrnehmung") according to specific needs of the medium. He gives the example of radio and television shows that forced listeners and viewers to consume the programmes at a specific time instead of choosing the time themselves (as one could, for example, with reading a novel). Schmidt argues that such a "disciplining" becomes more likely when the chances of gaining cultural capital are higher.<sup>109</sup> Current developments, however, contradict

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106 Schmidt, *Kalte Faszination*, 94.

107 Schmidt, *Kalte Faszination*, 177.

108 Schmidt, *Kalte Faszination*, 185.

109 Schmidt, *Kalte Faszination*, 185–188.

Schmidt's claim. Video-on-demand streaming services (for example, Netflix or Prime Video) have reversed the disciplining element of television and it is up to the viewers when to access content. A similar impact can be witnessed with digital books concerning access: Book users are no longer limited to opening hours of libraries or bookshops.

New mediums, according to Schmidt, further promise (or are hoped to offer) a boost of democratization in the sense of fairer participation in the new cognitive and communicative possibilities of the new medium. The radio became an instrument of transmitting information, education and culture; video technology made fleeting television programmes fixed; and, above all, the internet has facilitated instant communication worldwide, access to countless information pools and creativity through interactivity.<sup>110</sup>

Schmidt also hypothesizes that a new medium will only be accepted if it promises or already proves to be economically viable ("Kommerzialisierung"). This aspect of commercialization prompts Schmidt to offer an indicator for the social acceptance of a new medium based on the quantitative and qualitative use of a medium by the advertising industry.<sup>111</sup> This hypothesis is also very similar to Kilgour's precondition of "economic viability" for major innovations of the book.<sup>112</sup>

As soon as a new medium has established itself, Schmidt argues, its use as well as its offered content is slowly diversified ("Individualisierung"). Though not specifically addressing it, Schmidt, as an example, refers to the (contested) 'reading revolution' proposed by Rolf Engelsing, which argued that there was a rise in diverse reading material during the eighteenth century accompanied by a change from intensive to extensive reading (that is, from reading few texts again and again to reading many texts from different genres just once and then discarding them).<sup>113</sup>

The availability of a new medium also further detaches the stages of experiencing, acting and communicating ("Entkopplung"). Oral cultures act and experience at the same time whereas cultures with access to writing have the

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110 Schmidt, *Kalte Faszination*, 188–190.

111 Schmidt, *Kalte Faszination*, 190–191.

112 See Introduction; Kilgour, *Evolution of the Book*, 5–6.

113 See, for example, Rolf Engelsing, "Die Perioden der Lesergeschichte in der Neuzeit," *Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens*, 10 (1970), 945–1002 and Reinhard Wittmann, "Was there a Reading Revolution at the End of the Eighteenth Century?" *A History of Reading in the West*, eds Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier (Amherst, 2003), 284–312.

option to detach acting and experiencing from communication both chronologically and spatially. Schmidt suggests a general development from “Präsenz” (corporal- and situation-bound mediums) to “Telemedialität” (writing, radio) to “Teleinteraktion” (phone, internet) to “Telepräsenz und Teleeffektivität” (cyber technologies).<sup>114</sup> E-books would confirm this development since it is not even required to interact with booksellers or librarians.

Finally, Schmidt broaches the issue of intermediality (“Intermedialität, Reflexivität des Mediensystems und Autologie der Medienforschung”). He stresses that media competition does not function as a predatory competition. Rather, new mediums might take over the functions of older mediums only if they are much better suited for those functions. The intensity of intermediality rises with a higher complexity of a media system within a society (“Mediengesamtsystem”). Sometimes, a re-evaluation of a medium is the result of such a development. Schmidt offers the example of e-mail: it clearly imitated the traditional letter, which in turn lost its everyday function. Now, letters have greater value for special messages, for example wedding invitations, while e-mail has become a tool for spontaneous messages. This development was also witnessed with messaging apps on smartphones replacing e-mails for spontaneous messages beginning around 2009. The original purpose of the mobile phone, to talk to each other when away from a hard-line phone, has become almost obsolete. It remains to be seen whether the printed book as a medium will witness a similar development.

Books are also cultural objects and can have a symbolic quality. Ursula Rautenberg elaborates:

Die soziokulturelle Funktionalität des Buches bestimmt dessen repräsentativen >Wert< als Kulturobjekt in gesellschaftlicher Kommunikation, beispielsweise als Leitmedium, das seit der griech.-röm. Antike bis in die Gegenwart institutionalisiert ist: Bildung, Wissen und gesellschaftliche Teilhabe beruhten jahrhundertlang auf dem literaten Umgang mit dem Buch, und auch illiterate Gruppen kannten die Wichtigkeit von Schrift und Buch. Als kulturelles Objekt ist das Buch – jenseits der primären Funktion des Lesens – Konstruktionsmaterial für vielfältige Zuschreibungen, soziale Handlungen und kulturelle Praktiken. Die Repräsentationsfunktion der Zeichen im Sprachsystem wird überdeckt durch neue semiotische Systeme uneigentlichen, symbolischen Buchgebrauchs.<sup>115</sup>

The symbolic quality of books is affected by sociocultural developments. A good example is the importance of books as gifts during the time of the early printing

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114 Schmidt, *Kalte Faszination*, 192–193.

115 Rautenberg, *Reclams Sachlexikon des Buches*, 67.



presses. In her essay “Das Buchgeschenk zwischen *largesse* und Buchmarkt,” (2005)<sup>116</sup> Gabriele Müller-Oberhäuser examines the value of book gifts in this transitional phase. The example of Anthony Woodville, second Earl Rivers to King Edward IV, stresses the complexity of value concepts concerning the book.<sup>117</sup> Woodville, a devout man and a brother of the Queen of England, had close connections to the court and became Governor to the Prince of Wales in 1473.<sup>118</sup> In 1477, he translated the *Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers* from French into English and commissioned William Caxton to print it.<sup>119</sup> Written in prose, this compilation of biblical and classical words of wisdom derived from an Arabic original that was translated into several languages. It became one of the earliest books printed in English in England. King Edward IV received a copy of the translation, possibly as a Christmas gift. It is interesting to note that, in all likelihood, a manuscript was given (completed on 24 December 1477) and not a printed version. The manuscript that is believed to be the dedication copy (London Lambeth Palace MS 265) is most probably a transcript of the Caxton edition. Consequently, it must have been created *after* Caxton had already printed the text. Müller-Oberhäuser concludes that despite the obvious advantages of the printing press (fast production method to supply a large group with the same text) the material aspects and especially the symbolic value of printed books were too limited in some cases to be an adequate replacement for *de luxe* manuscripts as presentation copies, especially for members of the aristocracy.<sup>120</sup> Even though the book already existed in printed form, Woodville spent time and money on a lavish manuscript to be presented to the king.<sup>121</sup> Apart from the limited ability to recreate material features of the manuscript, the great advantage of printing books was also one of the greatest elements of

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116 Gabriele Müller-Oberhäuser, “Das Buchgeschenk zwischen *largesse* und Buchmarkt im spätmittelalterlichen England,” *Wertekonflikte - Deutungskonflikte*, eds Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger and Thomas Weller (Münster, 2007), 123–143.

117 For an overview of Woodville’s role as a patron to Caxton, see Lotte Hellinga, *Caxton in Focus: The Beginning of Printing in England* (London, 1982), 84–94.

118 Michael Hicks, “Woodville, Anthony, second Earl Rivers (c.1440–1483),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2011) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29937>> (accessed: 10.12.2019).

119 STC 6826, Westminster 1477, folio, 78 leaves. Lotte Hellinga elaborates on this print in *Caxton in Focus*, 77–80.

120 Müller-Oberhäuser, “Das Buchgeschenk zwischen *largesse* und Buchmarkt,” 134–137.

121 It should be noted that this example of the book as a gift is further complicated by the complex situation at the English court, partially due to the Wars of the Roses between the Houses of Lancaster and York. See chapter 2 “The Gutenberg Age.”

decreasing their esteem: since the printing press turned books into almost mass-produced objects, the book as an object lost its unique character and thus some of its value.<sup>122</sup> In certain circumstances, the more readily available an object, the less it contains inherent elements of prestige. In other words, scarcity may enhance the value, mostly in economic and symbolic form. In the case of a dedication copy of a late medieval author to his king, this was most likely the case. Further developments of book production from few and expensive to many and cheaper copies over the centuries, up to digital copies with virtually no limit of downloads, exacerbate this shift of values. It might be argued, for example, that e-books in the early twenty-first century are less suitable as, say, Christmas presents, and is reminiscent of the limited use value of a printed book as a presentation copy in the fifteenth century.

### *The Value Chain of Publishing*

As a medium, books can potentially fulfil very different functions. Books with religious content can edify; books with short stories or cartoons can entertain; dictionaries can enlighten, teach or educate and so on. Books are also commodities and are therefore in competition: not only with other books but also, albeit in a different way, with other media like radio, television or internet, depending on the intended function of the respective book. Books have an exchange use because they have an economic value in a market. It is not relevant whether people purchase the object with the intent to use it according to the producer's intention or not. The primary function of a book may be to store and offer access to information, but this may not necessarily be the basis by which customers assess the amount of money they are willing to pay for it.

Because of the complex nature of the book, one can conclude that the complexity of the value concept is multiplied within the world of the book. Whereas in some regards a book works within that framework just like any other commodity, there are other aspects that make it unique: the idea of added value, for example. Changes concerning the preparation and promotion of the book may indeed make the book more valuable. The main factors that influence the quality of the book are content, material aspects, marketing and distribution. The author of a book therefore enhances the quality by creating a text deemed satisfactory according to its function by the publisher. They may further develop

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122 On the value of book gifts in both manuscript and printed form, see the contributions in Gabriele Müller-Oberhäuser (ed.), *Book Gifts and Cultural Networks from the Fourteenth to the Sixteenth Century* (Münster, 2019).

and thus enhance the text through suggestions regarding content and assure textual accuracy with copy-editing to satisfy the reader. Publishers may also decide on or at least suggest the material aspects of the book. Factors like the quality of the paper, the chosen typography, the design of the book cover and the type of binding all influence the quality of the book. Depending on the publishers and their position within the literary field, such decisions can also be made by the authors or the editors, but traditional publishers are normally involved in such decisions, as they are interested in making a profit as well as maintaining their house-styles and reputations. Finally, efficient distribution increases possibilities of sales.

John B. Thompson illustrates the idea of the “publishing value chain” in his *Merchants of Culture*.<sup>123</sup> The chain starts with the author creating content and ends with the consumers/readers. Some steps in the middle of the chain may be taken over by freelancers (for example, proofreading or copy-editing), but most steps are primarily performed by the publisher: from content acquisition to development and quality control, all the way to design and marketing. One glimpse at Thompson’s visualization of the value chain of publishing reveals that technological innovations can have a vital impact on the overall value of books. At the centre of this model, the publisher is one of the most important agents, defined as someone who exploits access to information.<sup>124</sup> The three main tasks are the selection of texts, the investment of capital in publishing processes, and, generally, to add value to the product in the several ways discussed above. As already addressed in the introduction, Michael Bhaskar suggests the four steps framing and modelling as well as filtering and amplification as the major functions of publishers.<sup>125</sup> In order to analyse publishing both in the digital age and before, Bhaskar suggests that publishing needs to be treated as a “comprehensible, continuous but nonetheless changing system.”<sup>126</sup> At the core of his approach are two main concepts: ‘content’ and the ‘network of publishing.’ Bhaskar further subdivides content into ‘frames,’ which stands for the various forms that the content can take (manuscript, printed book, audiobook, but also paperback, hardcover, e-book and so on) and ‘models,’ which addresses the motivations behind the content production and dissemination (for example economic profit or enlightenment). Finally, Bhaskar subdivides ‘network of publishing’ into,

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123 Thompson, *Merchants of Culture*, 16.

124 Van der Weel, “Van waardeketen naar waardeweb,” 29.

125 Bhaskar, *Content Machine*, passim.

126 Bhaskar, *Content Machine*, 34.

seemingly contradicting, ‘filtering’ and ‘amplification,’ addressing the issues of both selection and marketing. Since this approach views publishing in different formats on a spectrum rather than separate systems altogether, it is useful for this study.

The model of the value chain of publishing, as helpful as it is for visualizing the many steps of publishing, has three main shortcomings for this investigation: first of all, as van der Weel points out, it is only of limited help for the digital world, because texts can be transmitted without the physical production of books.<sup>127</sup> Further, the use of the term ‘value’ seems vague and it remains unclear what exactly is added to what and for whom. The notion ‘added value’ also insinuates that ‘value’ is only added. However, as will be discussed in this study, certain changes in book production may devalue individual characteristics of the book as well, either in handwritten, printed or in digital form. Finally, it needs to be noted that it would be dangerous to generalize the role of the publisher as a businessman purely interested in profit. Depending on the publishing house, the acquisition and subsequent distribution of highly regarded intellectual property might be of equal or even more importance than economic profit. The main concern of a publishing house might instead be the production and dissemination of religious or educational material without primarily thinking about profit. The Oxford University Press, for example, claims that they never made a profit from publishing the (now) prestigious *Oxford English Dictionary*.<sup>128</sup>

It becomes clear from these examples that the exceptional position of the book as a commodity originates from the fact that it is also a cultural object. Due to this duality, in comparison with other commodities, it is more complex to gauge its value or to analyse which processes increase or decrease the value of the book. Since the early days of the printing press, printer-publishers almost exclusively carried the financial risk and handled the publishing policy. They needed to strike a good balance between the number of copies of a text produced and the number of buyers, so as to at least break-even for as many publications as possible. The expensive preparations to set up a text to be printed were only financially viable if enough copies could be sold. Thereafter, an important task for printers was to assess their market and estimate what readers expected from

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127 Van der Weel, “Van waardeketen naar waardeweb,” 31.

128 Alastair Jamieson, “*Oxford English Dictionary* ‘Will Not Be Printed Again,’” *The Telegraph*, 29 August 2010 <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/booknews/7970391/Oxford-English-Dictionary-will-not-be-printed-again.html>> (accessed: 10.12.2019).

the book for which they were paying. With the sentiments about value discussed above, it needs to be stressed that the value of the book cannot be simply integrated into the object by new technology, be it a completely new production method or smaller changes to the same method. Only if the majority of book buyers and readers agree upon certain functions and elements as desirable will new characteristics of the book increase the group-specific value. Innovations due to new technology must be accepted both by producers and consumers in order for the new technology to be fully accepted.

Defining specific value categories for the book is necessary because a book works not only as a commodity, but also as a medium and a cultural object. Sometimes, different sorts of value may even stand in opposition to one another. High literary quality, for example, adds cultural capital to the publication but might damage the economic value because of a possible reduction of readership and therefore potential buyers.<sup>129</sup> In this case, the position of publishers in the literary field and their values decide if the high literary quality justifies the publication or not. If the text is received favourably by high-brow critics, then the publishing house will gain cultural capital. The example of the manuscript dedication copy by Earl Rivers shows that new production methods are not only capable of improving the quality of the book, they may also entail disadvantages, depending on the functions the book should fulfil. In such a case, the new features (for example typographical fixity,<sup>130</sup> standardization of spelling or legible typography) and consequences (for example lower price of the individual product, higher distribution rate) have to compensate somehow for the loss of these qualities to ensure the acceptance of the new production method and the emerging new medium, an important notion, especially concerning the current developments in digital publishing.

#### 1.4. Book Value Categories

One of the main purposes of this study is to establish categories that stipulate the different values of books. More specifically, it addresses the values of book possession and book use (for example, reading or the use of the physical object as objectified cultural capital) primarily from the perspective of reception. However, since this study deals with the question of acceptance of innovations within production, the perspective from the producers' side is important, too, because they

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129 Bolin, *Value and the Media*, 2.

130 For the concept of 'typographical fixity,' see Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 2005), 46–101.

have to assess both the technological possibilities as well as the changing priorities and value perceptions of the customers. The publishers, too, are affected by value changes. They try to help bring them about since they need to profit from them. Finally, the importance of the book customer and consumer is obvious as they express acceptance by paying for the new product. These deliberations aid the finding of patterns in acceptance and preference innovations.

Since it is particularly difficult to gauge values objectively - even if only judged from an economic perspective - the emotional element, as stated by Joas, gains importance in the desirability of the product. More often than not, the 'perceived value' by the consumer plays an equal if not a superior role. The situation of the e-book around 2005 illustrates this problem. As John Thompson has stated, one reason why the acceptance of e-books was still low in 2005 was the fact that prices were too high in relation to the perceived value of consumers:

[T]he savings involved in delivering book content in electronic formats were not as great as some of the early champions of ebooks had suggested - all the development costs were still there, as were the royalties, the marketing costs, the publisher's overheads, etc. But this does not go down well with consumers, for whom the perceived value of an ebook is significantly lower than that of a print book. So the prices of ebooks would have to come down significantly before there would be any substantial increase in sales.<sup>131</sup>

In other words, consumers did not agree with the proposed exchange value because they did not see or accept the possible added value of the new product. They certainly did not rank it higher compared to other features of the previous book form that were apparently lost in the process of digitization. Most likely, e-books were simply seen as a possible cheap alternative to the printed version. The price for them, however, remained too high. This situation in turn seemed to have hindered a faster acceptance of the new technology.

The above introduced concepts of exchange, use and sign value are helpful to distinguish the different functions for commodities. For books, however, it is necessary to formulate more specific concepts as they can have various functions and deviate slightly from other commodities. From a consumer perspective, the incentive to buy something is determined by the various values the commodity represents. This study will look more closely at three distinct sorts of value to the owner or user: economic value, content value and symbolic value.

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131 John B. Thompson, *Books in the Digital Age: The Transformation of Academic and Higher Education Publishing in Britain and the United States* (Cambridge, 2005), 317.

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### *Economic Value*

Economic value reflects the idea that a book is a product created to be sold and also *remains* a commercial commodity after it has been purchased. Book owners retain the possibility to resell their books. This value must not be underestimated despite the fact that, usually, it is not the primary function of books. They are, generally, not bought to be sold again. But the important role of the second-hand book trade during the Middle Ages and during the industrialization stresses that it needs to be taken into consideration. But also in modern times, second-hand books may have an astonishing increase in economic value. This seems surprising because, usually, mass-produced books quickly lose their economic value. Novels from the 21st century, for example, can be found for a fraction of their initial recommended retail price after only a couple of months, sometimes even weeks or days. However, certain books might increase their economic value with the passing of time as collector's items or rare books. In 2014, William Caxton's translation of Raoul Lefevre's *History of Troy* was sold for GBP 900,000.<sup>132</sup> But also more modern books see intriguing rises of their economic value: Abebooks, an online marketplace for books, offers a monthly list of their most expensive sales. Leading the list in April 2014, for example, was a signed first edition of John Le Carré's *Call for the Dead* (London, 1961) for USD 22,500. This illustrates that modern novels may also retain the possibility to become cherished (and costly) collectors' items.<sup>133</sup> In the above-mentioned examples, the text (or content value, see below) is obviously not the primary value for the customers as the texts themselves could be purchased or accessed much more easily and for a significantly lower price. Rather, the customers were interested in the material objects because of their rarity. In the case of Caxton's *History of Troy*, it is a more than 500-year-old book with a special significance because it is one of only 18 extant copies of the first printed book in the English language. In the case of Le Carré's *Call for the Dead*, the book as an object gained economic value because it is a copy from the first edition of a novel (albeit mass-produced) signed by its famous crime-fiction author John Le Carré, who had experience working for the British Secret Intelligence Service.

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132 After the added commission for Sotheby's, the buyer had to pay GBP 1,082,500 in total. "First Printed Book in English Sold for over £1m," *BBC Online*, 17 July 2014 <<http://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-28344300>> (accessed: 10.12.2019).

133 "Most Expensive Sales in April 2014" <<http://www.abebooks.com/rare-books/most-expensive-sales/april-2014.shtml>> (accessed: 10.12.2019).

It is important to note that, overall, economic value loses its importance for the customer in the digital age. As mentioned above, mass-produced books rapidly lose their exchange value once they are published. But the decrease in economic value becomes more drastic with e-books: first of all, they are generally cheaper than their physical counterparts and have less economic value for the publisher.<sup>134</sup> More importantly, though, they are content without any material aspects. Their functions are stripped down to a communication system. Legally speaking, customers of e-books merely purchase a licence that allows them to access and display a file with one or several accounts or devices, for example an e-book-reader or a smartphone. Since they do not buy a physical object, they are unable to resell an artefact.<sup>135</sup> It also has limited abilities (if any) to become objectified cultural capital. The e-book, however, has the potential to become embodied cultural capital, as the content is primarily relevant for this.

### *Content Value*

Content value primarily, and especially in modern times, addresses the “utility” or “use value.”<sup>136</sup> It focuses on the main function of a book: the container of texts and illustrations (in the case of digital books the container is external from the e-book itself, but can also offer multimedia content) that can educate, entertain or edify the reader. The book functions as a tool in various specific capacities

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134 The price difference depends on the country. Germany, for example, has a much smaller price gap compared to the United States.

135 The difference between printed book and e-book is also underlined by the long-lasting differences in taxing. In Germany and the UK, for example, printed books had a reduced tax rate (no taxes for the UK). E-books, however, were fully taxed. In Germany, e-book taxes adapted to the reduced tax rate in December 2019. The UK plans to abolish taxes for e-books in December 2020.

136 For the term ‘utility value’ and especially the different understandings of *utilitas* in the Middle Ages and ‘utility’ in modern times, see Ann W. Astell, “On the Usefulness and Use Value of Books: A Medieval and Modern Inquiry,” *Medieval Rhetoric: A Casebook*, ed. Scott D. Troyan (New York, 2004), 41–62. Further useful contributions to the discourse of *utilitas*, albeit mainly on medieval and early modern books are Klaus Schreiner, “Bücher, Bibliotheken und gemeiner Nutzen im Spätmittelalter und in der Frühneuzeit,” *Bibliothek und Wissenschaft*, 9 (1975), 202–249; Hagen Keller, “Einführung zum Kolloquium,” *Der Codex im Gebrauch: Akten des internationalen Kolloquiums 11.-13. Juni 1992*, eds Christel Meier, Dagmar Hüpper and Hagen Keller (Munich, 1996), 11–20, and Natalie Zemon Davis, “Beyond the Market: Books as Gifts in Sixteenth-Century France,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 33 (1983), 69–88. The relevant aspects will be discussed in chapter 2 “The Gutenberg Age.”



depending on the genre (entertainment, education and so on). Throughout the years from the Middle Ages to the twenty-first century, more publishing categories were established (novels, self-help books, self-published fanfiction and so on). This ultimately led to a more complex situation on the book market (something which proves Schmidt's idea of the accompanying constant of diversification).

Content value is affected by several factors. In medieval times, for example, paratextual elements and bibliographical devices modern readers take for granted now, like the index or the title-page, had only just been introduced to enhance the content value of the book.<sup>137</sup> The importance of authors' names rose during the first decades of printing as well. Whereas approximately 30 per cent of incunables were attributed to a specific author, this figure rose to 80 per cent in printed books in the sixteenth century.<sup>138</sup> Content value is further affected by improvements made by proof-reading, copy-editing and so on, that is, the traditional functions of the publishing house.

The format of the book may also enhance the pragmatic quality. Smaller books are portable and therefore tend to be read in a greater variety of locations. Larger books on the other hand are more suitable for depictions of detailed maps. Illustrations may further improve the content value if they help the understanding of the text. A sensible use of typographic features also increases usability, especially in reference works like dictionaries.<sup>139</sup>

Apart from these direct influences, there are also more indirect impacts. When we recognize the book as a communication system, then the availability and affordability of the content itself affects the content value: the faster and cheaper a medium carrying the content can be acquired, the greater the potential circle of readers and the more effective the communication. Even though the content value itself stays the same, the potential impact of a book can be much bigger, and offers, according to Schmidt, a better promise of democratization.

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137 Alexandra Gillespie, *Print Culture and the Medieval Author: Chaucer, Lydgate, and Their Books, 1473–1557* (Oxford, 2006), 2.

138 Gillespie, *Print Culture and the Medieval Author*, 3. On the authority of authors as a value for books in medieval times, see also Pollie Bromilow (ed.), *Authority in European Book Culture, 1400–1600* (Farnham, Surrey, 2013).

139 For a brief history of the use of typography in English dictionaries, see Simon Rosenberg, "Van aflevering naar scherm: De presentatie van informatie in de *Oxford English Dictionary* in de negentiende en eenentwintigste eeuw," *Jaarboek voor Nederlandse Boekgeschiedenis*, 19 (2012), 163–175.

### *Symbolic Value*

Symbolic value addresses the function of books to represent certain ideas, convictions and beliefs of the owner. Books are objectified cultural capital. The primary function of a book might be to produce, disseminate and store ideas in form of signs to be understood by readers. However,

the concept of media always needs to be linked back to the social and material dimension of media. Seen from this perspective it also becomes obvious that media do not simply carry signs, that is, they are not simply the tools of communication; rather, they are themselves signs, both in their symbolic and their material dimension.<sup>140</sup>

In 2005, Ursula Rautenberg examined the status of the printed book in depictions of books in various settings.<sup>141</sup> Rather than focusing on the function of the book as a communication system, she elaborates on how books are used symbolically. Although she admits that her approach is not strictly methodological, she still offers the conclusion that books in modern times are almost exclusively used to signify something that is generally accepted as being positive:

Im Spiegel der Buchzeichen ist das Buch an vorderster Stelle "Kulturgut." In dieser Eigenschaft eignet es sich als Imagefaktor und Werbeträger für Radiosender, für den Klavier-Kaiser, für Teebeutel, Autos und Zigaretten und, dies ist wohl der am stärksten vertretene Produktbereich, für Mode. Für "Kultur," im Sinn von "Wissenskultur," stehen Buch und Bibliothek noch immer als mächtige Symbole für das Gedächtnis einer Gesellschaft.<sup>142</sup>

As a result, books can provide good opportunities for self-fashioning. The desire to signify one's lifestyle with one's book collection has often resulted in portrait photos depicting a person in front of a filled bookshelf to signify knowledge and erudition or at least wealth. Photographer Arnold Genthe remembers in his autobiography that Henry Edwards Huntington, famous American railroad entrepreneur and avid collector of art and rare books, asked for the book he had paid USD 30,000 for, so he could hold it in his hand in a portrait. It turned out to be the first edition of Shakespeare's sonnets. This example stresses that Huntington,

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140 Christian J. Emden and Gabriele Rippl, "Introduction: Image, Text and Simulation," *ImageScapes: Studies in Intermediality*, eds Christian J. Emden and Gabriele Rippl (Bern, 2010), 1–18, 8.

141 Ursula Rautenberg, "Das Buch in der Alltagskultur: Eine Annäherung an zeichenhaften Buchgebrauch und die Medialität des Buches," *Buchkulturen: Beiträge zur Geschichte der Literaturvermittlung. Festschrift für Reinhard Wittmann*, eds Monika Estermann, Ernst Fischer and Ute Schneider (Wiesbaden, 2005), 487–516.

142 Rautenberg, "Das Buch in der Alltagskultur," 515–516. It will certainly be interesting to see how fast this might be changing.

at least in this situation, was not interested in the content of the books but rather in the symbolic value that was illustrated by the book. He remembered the book for its costliness, not for its content or special significance within the history of literature.<sup>143</sup> Similarly, a bookshelf filled with leather-bound classics and highly esteemed encyclopaedias signifies that the owner is a literate, intellectual and wealthy person, despite the possibility that he or she may just have inherited the books and may have never shown an interest in their content. This stresses that symbolic value is very much a group-specific value.

Symbolic value, much like Bourdieu's symbolic capital, pervades all other forms of value. A high economic value of a commodity may also result in high symbolic value precisely because of its costliness. Therefore, price itself can be seen as a value. If a commodity is expensive, it can (or is intended to), for example, indicate that it is superior to competitive commodities on the market.<sup>144</sup> Ownership of an expensive commodity can also symbolize that its owner is wealthy. The symbolic and the economic value in this example become inseparable, as is often the case.<sup>145</sup> This, however, needs to be seen in relation to the content as well. If the owner has spent a large amount of money on a text that is not accepted in a specific group in the literary field, then the economic value does not increase the symbolic value. It can even be argued that the individual is losing cultural capital as money has been spent on a book that has low, if any, cultural capital.

Symbolic value may represent intellectual content or high economic value, if not both. It may also immensely rely on the materiality of the book. The importance of content, however, must not be underestimated as it may reflect more symbolic value, even if it is unimposingly produced. The famous penguin paperbacks revolutionizing the British book industry in the 1930s, for example, signified with their distinctive and unmistakable design an interest in highbrow literature throughout the decades in certain social circles. Nevertheless, in other circles, a very cheap paperback edition of a highly esteemed text may devalue its symbolic worth as it might indicate ignorance of the book's importance. On the other hand, a text with low esteem will only marginally increase its symbolic value, if at all, when in a more expensive edition. Though a high-priced

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143 Arnold Genthe, *As I Remember* (New York, 1936; repr. 1979), 153.

144 Hermann Simon, *Preisheiten: Alles, was Sie über Preise wissen müssen*, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt, 2015), 148: "Der Preis trägt sowohl zu diesem Prestigewert als auch zur Qualitätsindikation bei."

145 Schmitt, "Welche Geschichte der Werte?" 25.

book may indicate economic value, it may even result in a contrary effect if the text in question is deemed inappropriate in the group-specific value system, for example, a very cheesy or pornographic novel. Spending a lot of money on an unaccepted text may therefore nullify the added value achieved by a high economic value. Symbolic value highly depends on the agreed-on values within the value system of a social group.

Symbolic value can almost never be accumulated. Bolin uses the example of owning one very expensive car, which might have more symbolic value than owning four relatively cheap cars, even if their total economic value is equal to or greater than the single car. In book-related terms it could be said that the possession of a Gutenberg Bible offers more symbolic value than owning a great amount of modern printed bibles. Bolin argues that this is the case because symbolic value is mainly a quality and less a quantity.<sup>146</sup> However, as stressed above, the book is a different commodity. Whereas cars have primarily two functions (transport and prestige), the book is also a medium and a cultural object. Even though Bolin is certainly right that it is not possible to measure symbolic value as precisely as, for example, economic value, a larger quantity of books can indeed result in higher symbolic value: even the possession of many small and cheap books might result in an equally high symbolic value, as this ultimately results in a multifaceted book collection which indicates erudition and a keen interest in books and reading. The comparison obviously does not work because different cars may have different prestige, but their primary role, transport, stays the same. Different books may also carry different symbolic value, but they always offer different content too.

Symbolic value seems to be the most difficult value to gauge, but concerning the digital age, in which digital texts are offered as yet another option for one text, it might be the most notable. The main question that e-book publishers faced and may still be facing is if and how the symbolic value of the printed (or handwritten) physical book can be transferred to e-books.<sup>147</sup>

For the book market, the categories of economic, content and symbolic value are further affected by the factors which establish the value of the book itself: the agents within the life cycle of the book. Authors as well as publishers

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146 Bolin, *Value and the Media*, 43.

147 Adriaan van der Weel, "e-Roads and i-Ways: A Sociotechnical Look at User Acceptance of E-Books," *Logos: Journal of the World Publishing Community*, 21.3 (2010), 47–57, 54. Van der Weel quotes research proving that the mere presence of physical books in a household has a positive effect on school success of children. It is unlikely that a solution to that problem will be found by enhancing soft- and hardware.

may have a certain amount of symbolic value. The text itself may acquire value by favourable reviews of established quality newspapers, book prizes and so on.<sup>148</sup> A famous controversy illustrates the complex character of these book value categories. In 2001, the novel *The Corrections* by American author Jonathan Franzen was included in Oprah Winfrey's Book Club selection. While inclusion usually results in a huge increase in sales for the work, Franzen publicly expressed his doubts about whether he really felt grateful for this accolade. Seeing himself in the highbrow literary tradition, he felt that his readers would be turned off if they saw his novel discussed in Winfrey's book club, which allegedly addressed a low- to middlebrow female audience. In other words, Franzen feared a loss of symbolic value both for his novel and himself as an author and did not wish to accept the short-lived economic value he was about to enjoy. He stated that he may lose his faithful readership, and only briefly win a new audience which ultimately may be overstrained with his novel.<sup>149</sup> A more recent incident within the British publishing industry further stresses the complexity of the logic of the field. In April 2013 the crime novel *Cuckoo's Calling*, written by a certain Robert Galbraith, was published. The novel earned praise and overall good reviews, but it hardly achieved excessive visibility. After several months, approximately 1,500 printed copies had been sold. Even though this is a rather moderate sales figure, it was quite impressive for a first-time author. Then, in July, the *Sunday Times* revealed that "Robert Galbraith" was actually a pseudonym used by Joanne K. Rowling, bestselling author of the Harry Potter series. In the course of the following week, over 17,000 copies had been sold. But even though this meant more profit, Rowling expressed distress that she had been outed so soon as she had enjoyed working without hype or expectation and receiving totally unvarnished feedback. In this case, her name meant symbolic value that quickly turned to economic value for both publisher as well as the author, even though the content of the novel stayed exactly the same. However, Rowling's disappointment over

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148 For the role of literary book prizes as agents in the literary field of cultural production, see James F. English, *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards, and the Circulation of Cultural Value* (Cambridge, MA, 2005).

149 Theodore G. Striphas, *The Late Age of Print: Everyday Book Culture from Consumerism to Control* (New York, 2009), 130–137. The controversy lasted for years even though Franzen apologized soon after his initial comment that started the controversy. Winfrey refused to accept his apology. Ironically, this media attention might have supported *The Corrections* becoming a huge success. Winfrey's and Franzen's dispute officially ended when she included his successive novel *Freedom* in her Book Club selection in 2010.

the revelation in the *Sunday Times* indicates that she wanted her work to be positioned within the literary field of cultural production without her name involved, which is already placed in the large-scale production.<sup>150</sup>

### *Conclusion*

These categories of book value can also be used to assess the acceptance of new book forms. Based on these different sets of values, consumers may assess the changed circumstances of values surrounding a new medium and can decide the levels of acceptance of that new medium. Even if the new medium is partially accepted at first, the previous form may still be preferred, both mediums may be regarded as equal or the new medium may be regarded as superior. Ultimately, it is up to the assessment of consumers to decide whether the new medium will be fully accepted, whether it offers 'added values,' or whether it actually devalues the content and is thus rejected.

The significance of each value differs depending on the assessed time frame along with its socioeconomic context, the existing publishing categories, and the individual background of the owners based on their economic and cultural capital. In the late twentieth century, for example, a worn-out paperback copy of a large print run of a detective novel might hold limited symbolic value, and probably even less economic value. However, it can still have high value in content if the text still has the capability to entertain the owner in the desired way. On the other hand, a luxuriously bound and designed multi-volume edition of a history of English literature can be of high symbolic value as well as economic value, whereas the owner is not interested in the content at all.

Establishing book value categories for three distinct time periods (fifteenth, nineteenth and twenty-first centuries) can run the risk of lacking depth due to its broad scope and consequent occasional generalizations. However, including all aspects and exceptional cases would defeat the purpose of these categories. They are intended to simplify and illustrate complex and abstract problems and interrelated processes. With the help of these categories, it is possible to assess how various technological developments affected the above-mentioned values for books. It needs to be distinguished, however, between what technological

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150 Liz Bury, "Cuckoo's Calling by JK Rowling: did you know?" *The Guardian*, 15 July 2013 <<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/jul/15/cuckoos-calling-jk-rowling-did-you-know>> (accessed: 10.12.2019). Even though the novel is still sold with the pseudonym Galbraith, stickers sometimes indicate that Galbraith is the pseudonym of "bestselling author JK Rowling."

innovations were possible and what was actually demanded, or at least partially accepted, by customers.

The term 'value' is used in this study to gauge the esteem of the book as a medium primarily from the side of reception (book buyers, users and owners alike) throughout the book's various changes due to technological developments. For the side of production, the innovations of book production methods are relevant as well. With the book value categories established here, this study looks at the transitional phases of the introduction of the printing press, the age of industrialization and the digital age. These eras represent turning points in production methods for the book because of technological inventions. The speed of complete acceptance, however, as will be shown, varies.

Apart from the socioeconomic influences, economic, content, and symbolic values are also affected by further factors like materiality, design, layout, accessibility, textual quality and so on. Consequently, all technological developments within the field of book production might affect these value categories. This study claims that certain patterns can be detected in the historical chapters and are helpful to further understand developments during the digital age by stressing the continuities and discontinuities of these patterns.

Since the respective eras are quite different, it is necessary to further elaborate on the specific settings for the book: early printed books in the fifteenth and early sixteenth century, deliberately or not, imitated manuscript features and are oftentimes characterized by book historians as a hybrid form of printed and handwritten book. The eventual abandonment of such features in the 1530s signifies that the printed book was completely accepted as a fully-fledged new medium by their users.

The age of industrialization introduced manifold technologies into the book market that also had an impact not on output alone but also on physical aspects of the book itself. It became a mass-market commodity, and, with growing availability, the value of the individual copy eventually decreased significantly. Aspects of distribution also had a decisive impact on the book market, at least partially on the materiality of the book. The circulating library system in Britain artificially slowed down a quick establishment and consequently complete acceptance of cheaper book production methods, primarily for novels. Instead, it favoured the three-decker format which, from an economic perspective, was more convenient for circulating libraries. Ultimately, however, the economic viability of cheaper books prevailed. This led to a more convenient (in the sense of being favourable to one's comfort<sup>151</sup>) and cheaper medium for the reading public.

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151 "convenience, n.," *OED Online*, 1989 <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/40691>> (accessed: 10.12.2019).

Because of the, at times, active opposition against some innovations, acceptance was relatively slow.

The so-called digital age and the acceptance of digital distribution of texts reveal several discontinuities of the patterns and offers a break to many factors of the book trade. In certain respects, digital publishing might offer even more convenience for users by offering more ease of access, greater availability, and, again, cheaper prices. But even more than a decade after the introduction of satisfactory e-readers (Sony Reader, Amazon Kindle), for many publishing categories, paper books still seem to be the more important format. There is no obvious trend yet that indicates a complete acceptance of digital books and supersession of paper books.

The following chapters will elaborate on the book value categories within these respective time frames. The point of departure will be the introduction of printing to Europe in the middle of the fifteenth century.