



Middlebury

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**Rohatyn Center for Global
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**Rohatyn Center for Global Affairs
5th Annual International and Interdisciplinary Conference**

Call for Papers

From Scroll to Scrolling: Shifting cultures of language and identity

**March 9-11, 2017
Middlebury College, Vermont, USA**

Language and identity are inseparable. Changes in writing technology, on the one hand, and in power dynamics, on the other, shape communities and individual identities. This conference examines two intertwined themes: One, the impact of the production and circulation of texts, over time and place, on practices of writing, reading, and the transmission of knowledge. Two, the way in which power imbalances affect language use, community, and identity. As writing technologies emerge, decisions are made regarding what knowledge gets preserved and (re)produced or forgotten and lost. Changes in technologies of writing and access to their control have profound effects on cultural survival and social change.

The conference will address questions such as

- How are individual and cultural identities linked to the materiality of a given language and its writing system (e.g., the painterly quality of Chinese ideographs; Helvetica typeface)? Are there universal elements of written technology that transcend particulars? Is digital technology—the ability to type any language on a single keyboard—flattening or erasing the materiality of individual languages?
- How have the physical aspects of the production and circulation of texts (e.g. carvings, scroll, codex, manuscript, screen) shaped knowledge production over time? How have changes in ways of writing and reading lent new meanings to 'old' texts, and new reading experiences?
- How does the study of ancient technologies of writing and reading—epigraphy, scholarship of Chinese bone script—inform contemporary understandings of cultural community? Does it suggest essential continuities? Or does it suggest a rupture with the past in which technology has fundamentally changed the nature of communication?

- How have national literatures and cultures negotiated the distance between their oral and written languages through time? How have uses of technologies of writing created or reflected this distance?
- How have religious communities negotiated changes in technologies of writing and what role have sacred languages played in the construction of shared religious identities across linguistically diverse communities?

Presenters may want to address the following themes:

- Language and identity
- Materiality of language
- Sacred language
- Orality, literacy, and new media
- Poetics, textuality, politics
- Censorship and language policies: threatened and disappearing languages
- Technologies of writing—multiplicity, diversity and change
- Technology, hybridity, authorship

We invite papers that address these issues from a range of disciplinary perspectives as they pertain to different historical periods and geographical locations.

Those interested in presenting at the conference should send an abstract (no more than 250 words) and their curriculum vitae by October 1, 2016, to the organizers below. The selection process is competitive.

Funds are available to support travel and lodging of all participants.

Organizers:

Tamar Mayer, Professor of Geography and Director of the Rohatyn Center for Global Affairs, mayer@middlebury.edu

Steve Snyder, Professor of Japanese Studies and Dean of Language Schools, ssnyder@middlebury.edu

Juana Gamero de Coca, Associate Professor of Spanish, jgamero@middlebury.edu

Marybeth Nevins, Associate Professor of Anthropology, mnevins@middlebury.edu