



## Acknowledgments



This book has been catalyzed by two major forces: my life-long love of books and my intellectual engagement with the concept of cognitive assemblages. Growing up in very small town in northeast Missouri (population 1,014), I had few resources to satisfy my curiosity about the world, nature, and science—no theater, no symphonies, no scientific instruments at home and barely any at school, no stimulating lectures by public intellectuals. In this preinternet era, the one resource I did have was print books. I devoured those at home before I was ten and then turned to the minuscule town library, which lasted until I was twelve or so. Then puberty struck, and my interests turned elsewhere for a while. Leaving that small town for college sparked my curiosity and widened my horizons; I would often read far into the night until the letters blurred on the page and dawn began to break. Books for me were objects of veneration, doors that opened onto vistas much broader, stranger, and more enticing than I could experience in person. So it was inevitable, I suppose, that I would one day write a book about print books.

It was not until I had developed the concept of cognitive assemblages, however, that I was able to bring together my affection for print with my intellectual interests in computation. I was fortunate to witness firsthand the enormous technological changes as computation came of age, from the first mainframe

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I worked on in college (fed by IBM cards and large enough to fill a room with all four kilobytes of memory) to microcomputers, word processing, desktop publishing, and then the amazing growth of the web. Through it all, I was fascinated by the technical devices themselves and even more by their implications for what it means to be human. Print books, too, in all their variety have also affected not only our ideas about the human but also the neuronal and synaptic pathways by which we understand the world and ourselves. The conjunction of print and computation, a configuration that I call “postprint,” thus presents a potent opportunity to explore through multiple registers, diverse historical events, and resonant metaphoric clusters our contemporary condition in developed societies.

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Postprint

