

Paper Abstract  
"Canon, Wiki, Kernel"

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This paper examines the likely fate of the concept of literary canon, given recent developments in publishing, academia, and the culture at large, including but not limited to the emergence of networked, social media. Positing that canon is now what natural scientists might call a *well understood* problem, the paper explores two alternative models for literary affiliation and critical organization: first being the wiki, or commonly-revisable, community-owned archive; the second being the *kernel*, a term more or less directly imported from software development, particularly the open source community.

The paper contrasts possible and emerging wiki-based systems, which to a large degree extend current scholarly and publishing practices to a new domain of cultural constituents, with a kernel-based system, which might in the case of born-digital electronic literature actually permit code extension and interoperability, concepts that pose interesting challenges to analogous concepts in traditional literary-humanist discourse (e.g., citation, influence, intertextuality, and even hypertextuality).

The paper offers this contrast between wiki and kernel, and its implicit comparison of print-analogues versus more deeply computational forms of writing, as a re-engagement with certain fundamental questions about literature and the humanities, particularly questions about the purpose or objective of literature, digital or otherwise.