

Pocket Books and Portable Writing

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Stephen Colclough (Bangor University, Wales, UK)- Pocket Books and Portable Writing: The Pocket Memorandum Book in Eighteenth-Century England and Wales.

During the late eighteenth century the pocket ‘memorandum book’ was a particularly common object, found amongst the stock of almost all small stationer-booksellers. Indeed, as James Raven’s recent work on the books and pamphlets intended for use in commerce has indicated, business manuals, office guides, directories and almanacs were of enormous importance to the expansion of British print culture in the eighteenth century. The number of pocket books being produced rose rapidly after 1730 and some, such as *The Universal Pocket Book* (published between 1730 and 1760) were ‘a particular success’.¹ Sandro Jung has noted that ‘the so-called “pocket book”’ was, a ‘hybrid genre’.² I am particularly concerned in this essay with those books variously described on their title pages as ‘memorandum’ books, ‘pocket journals’, ‘daily’ journals, ‘companions’, ‘accompt [account]’ books, and ‘pocket ledgers’. Although a constantly evolving form, as the insertion of ‘Improv’d’ into so many titles attests, the table of contents for most memorandum books aimed at a male audience included lists and tables of information ‘proper for every man of business to know’ (such as how to calculate a servant’s daily wage) combined with ruled pages left blank (apart from printed headings) on which the owner was to record ‘the Receipts and Expences of every Week in the Year’ and ‘Future Appointments or

¹ James Raven, *Publishing Business in Eighteenth-Century England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2014), pp.201-205 (205).

² Sandro Jung, ‘Print Culture, Marketing, and Thomas Stothard’s Illustrations for *The Royal Engagement Pocket Atlas*, 1779-1826’, *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture*, 41 (2012), 27-53 (27-28).

Engagements'.³ Pocket 'memorandum' books clearly overlap and intersect with other forms of ego document, such as the diary proper, which also became increasingly popular in the second half of the eighteenth century and gradually displaced the almanac from its traditional position as a calendar, at least amongst the higher social orders. Stuart Sherman has suggested that the memorandum book began to replace the almanac (on which notes about events had often been recorded) because it gave more space for inscriptions that 'whether anticipatory (such as for an appointment) or retrospective' (memoranda and accounts), allowed their owners to participate in a growing trend for anticipating and recording their own movements within time. These books fed into the fashion for 'circumstantiality' and 'contemporaneity' that also led to the proliferation of pocket watches and other devices for recording forms of time, especially diurnal time.⁴ Like the pocket watch, the pocket book was designed to be portable and much of the information that it contained, such as the lists of 'Rates of Coachmen, Chairmen &c' common in books aimed at women, was designed to be consulted while on the move.⁵ Most pocket books contained pockets in their binding in which manuscript texts and other valuables could be stored. In Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey* (1768) Le Fleur pulls out 'a little dirty Pocket Book cramm'd full of small letters and billet-doux' while travelling.⁶ As this example suggests, contemporary print culture associated these books with the storage of loose manuscript texts and it is the aim of this essay to restore the memorandum book to a

³ Examples taken from *The New Memorandum Book Improv'd: Or, The Gentleman and Tradesman's Daily Pocket Journal for the Year 1753* (London: Dodsley, [1752]). The *New Memorandum Book* first published by Robert Dodsley in 1748 and the *Gentleman and Tradesman's Daily Journal* produced by Richard Baldwin II in the following year are usually described as the earliest examples of this genre. See Raven, *Publishing Business*, p.203.

⁴ Stuart Sherman, *Telling Time: Clocks, Diaries and English Diurnal Form 1660-1785* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press 1996), pp.171-72.

⁵ *The Ladies Most Elegant and Convenient Pocket Book for the Year 1776* (London: J. Wheble, [1775]).

⁶ Laurence Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy* (London: Beckett & De Hondt, 1768), Volume I, p.147.

sociable context in which they acted both as containers of accounts and memoranda inscribed on the page and as storage spaces for texts and objects used as part of everyday discourse.

Jung's recent analysis of the development of the pocket diary, which includes evidence of their use and modification, builds upon Jennie Batchelor's examination of those earlier titles, such as *The Ladies Compleat Pocket Book* (printed for John Newbery from 1753), that were aimed at a female audience. By paying attention to both their contents and evidence of their consumption, Batchelor argues that these were texts 'in which ideals of femininity' were 'disseminated' and 'contested'.⁷ Similarly, both Amanda Vickery and Rebecca Connor have examined the actual use that women (such as Elizabeth Shackleton (1726-81)) made of titles published in the 1770s, including *The Ladies Most Elegant and Convenient Pocket Book* ('printed for J. Wheble' in London) and *The Ladies' Own Memorandum Book: or, Daily Pocket Journal* (G. Robinson in London and T. Slack, Newcastle).⁸ Vickery and Connor are mainly concerned with the way in which women used these books to prove that they were capable of 'prudent economy'. Connor concurs with Vickery's suggestion that memorandum books were 'both the means and the emblem of female mastery of information' by arguing that if such books produce an ideal femininity, 'that ideal is' rather unexpectedly 'woman-as-accountant'.⁹ However, as Jung notes, from the late 1770s onwards, new titles such as *The Royal Engagement Pocket Atlas* (1781-1873) and the *Polite Repository* (1779-1826), were no longer designed as instruments 'of

⁷ Jennie Batchelor, 'Fashion and Frugality: Eighteenth-Century Pocket Books for Women', *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture*, 32, (2003), 1-18 (2).

⁸ Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1998); Rebecca Elisabeth Connor, *Women, Accounting and Narrative: Keeping Books in Eighteenth-Century England* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004).

⁹ Vickery, *Gentleman's Daughter*, p.133; Connor, *Women*, p.15.

business or astrology' but as 'objects of consumer pleasure'. Most dispensed with the sections of accounts, leaving more space for illustrations which were often at the head of pages on which owners were invited to complete diary entries. These images promoted 'a mythical national past, and a patriotic celebration of Britain's architectural heritage' amongst the wealthy readers who purchased them.¹⁰

The competition between publishers for sales of pocket books was intense from the 1750s onwards.¹¹ In the last months of 1762, for example, advertisements for the memorandum books produced by several rivals, including Joseph Johnson and Newbery, appeared in the London newspapers. Those for Johnson's *The Ladies New and Polite Pocket Memorandum Book for the Year of Our Lord 1763* even went as far as to complain that some publishers 'envious of its success' had taken 'Pains' to 'Prejudice the Public' against it. This is clearly a reference to the advertisements for Newbery's *The Ladies Complete Pocket Book*, which included an addendum claiming that several ladies had bought 'imitations' by mistake and had been sent away in disappointment when trying to exchange them.¹² Like many late eighteenth-century texts, annually produced pocket books were targeted at audiences defined by gender. In the winter of 1762, for example, at least three London publishers were advertising titles aimed at men, including Johnson, whose *The Complete Pocket Book or Gentleman and Tradesman's Daily Journal* was usually advertised alongside his

¹⁰ Jung, 'Print Culture', 28; Sandro Jung, 'Illustrated Pocket Diaries and the Commodification of Culture', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 37, 2 (Spring 2013), 53-84 (56-7). See also, Sandro Jung, 'Thomas Stothard's Illustrations for *The Royal Engagement Pocket Atlas, 1779-1826*', *The Library*, 12, 1 (March 2011), 3-22, and Jung, 'The Illustrated Pocket Diary: Generic Continuity and Innovation 1820-40', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 45, 1 (Spring 2012), 23-48.

¹¹ James Raven, *The Business of Books: Booksellers and the English Book Trade* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2007), p.271.

¹² Both advertisements appear in the *London Chronicle*, 7 December 1762, p.359.

pocket book for women.¹³ Both price and contents differed according to the gender of the proposed audience. Johnson's *Complete Pocket Book* for gentlemen was advertised at 2s, whereas the same publisher's book for *The Ladies* was only half that sum. During the later eighteenth most memorandum books for women sold for one shilling ready bound.¹⁴ The advertisements for Johnson's pocket book for Gentlemen indicated that it was more expensive because it was printed on a higher quality 'large Post paper'. It contained eight lists or tables of 'useful particulars', including 'A List of Bankers with the Places of their Abode' in London', a 'Tide Table' for the Thames, the 'rates of Carmen according to the latest regulation' and 'an Alphabetical List of all the Fairs in England and Wales' including the 'Commodities sold at each'. The edition of Johnson's book issued a year later also included a table of the 'Payments of Dividends and Transfer Days at the *Bank, South-Sea* and *India House*' of the sort that featured in several earlier titles, including Dodsley's *The Gentleman's New Memorandum Book Improv'd* for 1753.¹⁵ However, as early as the 1750s, pocket books published in London and containing information mainly relevant to men doing business in the city were challenged by books aimed at local or regional markets. For example, *The Kentish Companion [...] For the Pocket or Desk*, 'printed and sold' at Rochester and Canterbury, hailed the 'Gentlemen, Clergy, Farmers, Hop Planters and Tradesmen of the County of Kent' as its target audience.¹⁶ By the 1760s some of these

¹³ *The Complete Pocket Book or Gentleman and Tradesman's Daily Journal* (London: Joseph Johnson, [1762]); *The London New Memorandum Book, Or a Methodical Pocket Journal [for] Gentlemen and Tradesmen in all Parts of Great Britain* (London: J. Bristow, J. Wilson and J. Fell, [1762]); *Baldwin's Daily Journal: Or, the Gentleman and Tradesman's Complete Annual Account Book for the Pocket or Desk* (London: R. Baldwin, [1762]).

¹⁴ Those aimed at a male audience cost between 1s 6d and 2s 2d. The title pages of the 1764 edition of Johnson's *Complete Pocket Book; or, Gentlemen and Tradesman's Daily Journal* and Harris's *Pocket Journal [...] Or, The Gentleman's Memorandum Book* for 1772 record that they sold for '1s 8d neatly bound' and '1s 8d without an Almanack or 2s 2d with' respectively.

¹⁵ *The New Memorandum Book Improv'd : Or, The Gentleman and Tradesman's Daily Pocket Journal for the Year 1753* (London: R. Dodsley [and 12 others], 1753).

¹⁶ *The Kentish Companion: or Useful Memorandum and Accompt Book, for the Pocket or Desk* (Canterbury and Rochester: Simmons and Kirkby and T. Fisher, [1772]). *The Exeter Pocket Journal; or*

regional publications, such as *The Newcastle Pocket-Book*, tried to increase their market share by being sold as suitable for both gentlemen *and* ladies.¹⁷

If the advertisement for Johnson's pocket book for men emphasised its utility for men of business, that for his *Ladies' New and Polite Pocket Memorandum Book* suggested that the 'useful Memorandum Book for keeping a plain and exact account' of financial transactions could be combined with didactic essays and amusing literature. Newbery's *The Ladies Complete Pocket Book* for 1760 contained a series of essays (on 'The Precedency Due to Ladies' etc), 'useful' recipes (including a rather playful 'Receipt for Love') and several pages of 'Favourite New Songs' and 'Country Dances' popular in London during the previous year. *The Ladies Own Memorandum Book* compiled and edited by Ann Fisher for publication by Robinson in London and Slack in Newcastle during the 1770s contained 'Enigmas' and 'Rebuses' which were designed to be solved. Karen Cajka has argued that under Fisher's editorship this pocket book was 'unique in the genre' because it included 'substantial content which presumed an audience of interested, intelligent women'.¹⁸ However, although some of Fisher's essays were unusually progressive most pocket books for women certainly seem to have assumed an intelligent audience. In terms of genre there is a clearly a good deal of overlap between this form of the memorandum book, with content aimed at inculcating ideal female behaviour, and the popular conduct books of the period.¹⁹ However, as Connor notes, unlike the conduct book which presents the ideal women as already fully formed, the memorandum book is a creative space designed as much

West-Country Gentleman and Tradesman's Memorandum Book [...] 1755 (Exon: Thom, [1754]), is an early example.

¹⁷ *The Newcastle Pocket-Book: Or, Gentleman and Lady's Compleat Journal for the Year MDCCXVII* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: I. Thompson and W. Charnley, [n.d]).

¹⁸ Karen Cajka, 'Ann Fisher: Reforming Education for "the mere English Scholar"', *European Romantic Review*, 22, 5 (October 2011), 581-600 (591).

¹⁹ Cajka, 'Fisher', pp.590-96.

for inscription as reading.²⁰ Indeed, many of the texts included in such books were designed to be interactive and in many extant copies the enigmas and paradoxes have been annotated by readers recording possible answers to these puzzling texts. The need to fill the blank pages of accounts and to complete and answer the enigmas meant that pocket books produced a much less passive response than conduct books.

Although memorandum books aimed at men encouraged ‘self-scrutiny in words and in numbers’ in much the same way as those for women, they tended not to include essays on ideal male behaviour.²¹ However, some titles did encourage the performance of particular forms of masculinity. Alongside ‘the usual tables’ and ‘double ruled Pages for Accounts’ and ‘Occasional Memorandums’, *The Man of Pleasure’s Pocket Book* for 1780 contained eight ‘original Articles’, including a ‘Scale of Beauties’ (a sort of league table of beautiful women topped by the Duchess of Devonshire) and ‘A List of the Most Distinguished Hotels’ that recorded the availability of prostitutes.²²

Batchelor suggests that when memorandum books for ladies emerged in the 1750s it was ‘their attention to fashion, usually concentrated in one or two engravings’ that differentiated them from those for men.²³ In 1762, Johnson’s new title boasted ‘an elegant engraving of her Royal Highness the princess Augusta and a Lady in the Dress of 1762’.²⁴ Such ‘embellishments’ frequently combined the latest fashions with

²⁰ Connor, *Women*, p.14.

²¹ Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, p.54.

²² *The Man of Pleasure’s Pocket-Book: or, the Bon Vivant’s Vdde Mecum, for the year 1780 [...]* Containing Fifty-Two Double Ruled Pages (London: S. Bladon, [1779?]).

²³ Batchelor, ‘Fashion and Frugality’, 2.

²⁴ See advertisement in the *London Chronicle*, 2 December 1762.

patriotic scenes involving the monarchy.²⁵ The 1769 edition of Johnson's *Ladies New and Polite* included plates of 'a lad dressed in the newest fashion' alongside a 'head of the King of Denmark' and 'that of his Consort'. During the 1770s titles such as *The Ladies Own Memorandum* often featured fold-out illustrations of the most 'fashionable head dresses' for women.²⁶ Illustrations were not exclusive to 'ladies' books, however. Many books for men included frontispieces or other 'embellishments'. The 1763 edition of Johnson's *Complete Pocket Book* was advertised as 'embellished' with a 'plan of the walks in the Royal Exchange Frequented by Merchants, Foreigners and Traders' and the same publishers *Young Gentleman's Pocket Book* for 1764 included an engraving of 'a Young Gentleman in the present Fashion and oeconomy, presenting the Pocket Book to a young Gentleman'.²⁷ Their memorialising content made memorandum books ideal as New Year or birthday gifts.

Unfortunately, no copies of Johnson's *Young Gentleman's Pocket Book* with its illustration of the book being presented appear to have survived, but the presence of such an image in a book aimed at a male audience suggest that men as well as women were concerned with being in 'fashion' and giving gifts. Both frontispiece illustrations (where they survive) and prefaces help us to understand how such books were intended to be used. The preface to *The Ladies' Compleat Pocket Book* for 1753

²⁵ The British Library copy of *The Ladies Most Elegant and Convenient Pocket Book for the Year 1777* (London: J. Wheble, [1776]) includes two intact illustrations; 'His Majesty Receiving a Regiment of Horse' and 'A lady in the Dress of the Year 1776'. RB.23.a.8136.

²⁶ An illustration of the foldout plate from the *Ladies Own Memorandum Book, Or, Daily Pocket Journal for the Year 1775* is included in Connor, *Women*, p.6. The Folger Shakespeare Library's copy of *The New and Polite Pocket Memorandum Book for 1778* shows that Johnson had adopted the foldout by this date. <http://luna.folger.edu/luna/servlet/detail/FOLGERCM1~6~6~74768~105801:The-Ladies-new-and-polite-pocket-me> [Accessed 1 September 2014].

²⁷ The *Young Gentleman's Pocket Book* is advertised in the *Complete Pocket Book or Gentlemen and Tradesmen's Daily Journal* [...] *For 1764* (London: Johnson and Payne, 1763), p.3.

encouraged the owner to carry this volume at all times so that if they met ‘any person who has Money to pay’ it could be immediately noted. In later editions this practice is described as ‘making Minutes of all Monies *Receiv’d and Paid*’. If such instructions for use suggest that these were books designed to be carried about the person for quick, practical consultation, they also recommended that they be preserved for posterity. Such preservation, the preface to *The Ladies Complete Pocket* for 1760 suggested, would enable ‘any Lady to tell what Monies’ she had ‘Receiv’d and Paid’ and ‘Visits’ made and ‘*return’d*’ during ‘any Period of her Life’.²⁸ Batchelor has argued that such instructions encouraged women to be ‘accountable for their social and financial selves’.²⁹ They certainly also suggest that such books were sold as spaces for writing a form of autobiography in which financial accounts and the memoranda of meetings constituted the evidence of a life well-lived. Books aimed at a male audience also encouraged their preservation as ‘the Annals of a Man’s Life’ which may be of use ‘even after his Decease’ as proof that certain financial and/or social transactions had in fact taken place.³⁰ Some owners did indeed save their books in this fashion. Several copies of *The Daily Journal*, now in the British Library, were originally preserved by an owner who differentiated each volume by writing the year clearly in ink on the outside cover.³¹

The frontispiece to the 1762 edition of *The Gentleman’s New Memorandum Book Improv’d* provides an idealised image of the book’s use by a man seated at a desk in an office or library who is conducting a conversation with a more formally dressed

²⁸ *The Ladies’ Compleat Pocket Book for the Year 1753* (London: John Newbery, 1753); *The Ladies Complete Pocket-Book* [for 1760] (London: John Newbery, 1760).

²⁹ Batchelor, ‘Fashion’, pp.5-7 (p.5).

³⁰ *The Kentish Companion: Or, Useful Memorandum and Accompt Book* [for 1773] (Canterbury and Rochester: Simmons and Kirkby, [1772?]), p.1.

³¹ British Library RB.23.a.31718, *The Daily Journal* [for 1767] (London: R. Baldwin [1766]); RB.23a.32190, *The Daily Journal* [for 1768] (London: R. Baldwin, [1767]).

visitor who appears to be carrying a ledger under his arm.³² It is possible that the two men are supposed to be discussing information recorded by the owner in either the 'Receipts and Expenses' or 'Appointments and Engagements' sections of this volume. Like the prefaces to so many pocket books this image suggests that their owners were able to immediately put their affairs in order by consulting a volume small enough to be carried about the person. There may even be a play here upon the difference between these new works and the outmoded ledger carried by the visitor. The pocket memorandum book was designed to be portable and like a modern day mobile phone could be extracted from the pocket as part of a sociable interaction. The mutual making of notes on a meeting- at least as envisioned in some prefaces- suggests that these books were important tools for recording social intercourse and therefore had a significant role to play in structuring the interactions of the family and friendship groups of their owners.

Unlike a ledger, the pocket memorandum book really was designed to fit into the pocket. Completed in the early 1740s, *The Tête à Tête* (c.1743) from Hogarth's *Marriage A-la-Mode* sequence features a steward with a ledger under his arm and another book- presumably also detailing the debts incurred by the newly married couple depicted in the painting- that is slightly too big to fit into the pocket of his long coat.³³ Male clothing allowed small books to be easily secreted about the body and almost instantly retrieved when needed. Similarly, most women 'had one or several pairs of tie-on pockets, which were detachable items of clothing rather like bags worn under a woman's skirt and accessed through slits in her overdress'. These capacious

³² *The Gentleman's New Memorandum Book Improv'd: Or, the Merchant's and Tradesman's Daily Pocket Journal for the Year 1762* (London: R. and J. Dodsley, M. Cooper, C. Hitch and L. Hawes; T. Caslon; H. Whitridge [and 6 others], 1762).

³³ Details reproduced in Judy Egerton, *Hogarth's Marriage A-la-Mode* (London: National Gallery Publications, 1997), pp.20, 25.

pockets might hold a range of objects, including pocket books, that could either be kept secret (the pocket was a private space) or revealed for use at an appropriate moment.³⁴ An enigma included in *The Ladies' Own Memorandum Book* for 1780 refers to pockets as 'a faithful pair' who 'always cautiously conceal, whate'er to us you bring'.³⁵ The combination of the pocket and pocket memorandum book allowed women greater mobility, and as Ariane Fennetaux notes, legal records of the places in which pockets were stolen provides evidence of women's increasing 'mobility and enfranchisement from the domestic interior'.³⁶

If memorandum books were small enough to fit into the pockets of their owners, the way in which they were bound meant that they also functioned as a kind of pocket or wallet in which texts and objects could be stored. Newbery's *The Lady's Compleat Pocket Book* for 1763 was sold 'Neatly bound with cases for Notes and Letters' and Johnson's titles were advertised as 'bound in red leather with pockets for letters &c'. *The London New Memorandum Book*, also bound in red leather, had 'a flap and cases so as to be as useful as any letter case'.³⁷ Although blank books and notebooks were sometimes 'bound exactly like contemporary printed books' pocket books included features associated with the 'parallel tradition of stationery binding', such as the use of 'wrap-around flaps' held closed by 'clasps or toggles'.³⁸ Many of the pocket books preserved in the British Library, including *The Kentish Companion* for 1775, contain

³⁴ Barbara Burman, 'Pocketing the Difference; Gender and Pockets in Nineteenth-Century Britain', *Gender and History*, 14, 3 (2002), 447-469; Ariane Fennetaux, 'Women's Pockets and the Construction of Privacy in the Long Eighteenth Century', *Eighteenth Century Fiction*, 20, 3 (Spring 2008), 307-334 (308).

³⁵ 'Enigma V', *The Ladies' Own Memorandum Book, Or, daily Pocket Journal* [for 1780] (London: Robinson; Newcastle, Slack [1780]), n.p.

³⁶ Fennetaux, 'Women's Pockets', p.317.

³⁷ See advertisements in *London Chronicle*, 2 December 1762 and 7 December 1762.

³⁸ David Pearson, *English Bookbinding Styles 1450-1800* (London: The British Library, 2005), p. 90.

‘pockets’ at both front and rear.³⁹ Where these books have a surviving flap, as is the case with *The Ladies New Memorandum Book* for 1765 and the *Newcastle Pocket-Book* for 1767, it is usually covered on the inside with marbled paper.⁴⁰ The clasp that once secured the latter is missing, but the former still has a ribbon attached to the flap which allows the book to be tied securely shut. More ornate bindings included metal locks. If a book secured in this way ‘enforces a marked degree of privacy’, as Connor suggests, it functioned for women (especially if concealed in a pocket) as a rare private space in which personal memoranda and even small objects could be securely stored.⁴¹ That the contents of these pockets could be valuable is suggested by the inclusion of an ‘old black leather Pocket book, containing sundry papers’ amongst the items listed as lost in *The Public Advertiser*. That these pockets were used to store money is confirmed by a contemporary warning that ‘Pocket Books, with bank Bills &c’ had been stolen from ‘many persons in the city of London’.⁴² That these pockets were big enough to store small valuables is confirmed by a copy of the *Polite Repository* for 1797, which still contains a piece of tortoiseshell.⁴³

The ‘memorandum’ and account sections of memorandum books were, of course, designed to be written in and some publications, including the *Polite Repository*, were issued with a pencil and pencil holder built into the binding to make note-taking easier.⁴⁴ At least one other title that included a pencil, *Cummings’s Perpetual Memorandum Book* (1766), also contained pages from which the writing could be

³⁹ British Library RB.23a.29117.

⁴⁰ British Library RB.23a.9263 *The Ladies New Memorandum Book, Serving as a Compleat Register of all Their Transactions for the Year 1765* (London: J. Dodsley, L. Hawes, Clark and Collins, J. Rivington, W. Flexney, G. Woodfall, and J. Walter, [1765]); RB.23a.35789.

⁴¹ Connor, *Women*, p.28.

⁴² *Public Advertiser*, 20 April 1761; *Public Advertiser*, 15 June 1763.

⁴³ British Library C192A58, *Polite Repository or Pocket Companion* (London: Peacock, 1797).

⁴⁴ Jung, ‘Illustrated’, p.69.

erased. The tables in this title were ‘interleaved with’ Cummings’s ‘patent ass’s skin’, from which marks made in pencil or ink could be removed by rubbing with a damp cloth or a ‘few grains’ of wet sand.⁴⁵ This was, of course, not a new innovation in terms of technology. Small ‘table books’ and almanacs with erasable pages were being made from the late sixteenth century onwards. Indeed, Roger Chartier has suggested that one of the original definitions of a ‘memorandum book’ was a volume including erasable sheets or tables that were used for the ‘immediate transcription of the spoken word, recording of fleeting thoughts’, and when other resources were not available, ‘drafting short texts’.⁴⁶ Given that the capacity of the pocket is limited, erasable paper would have been a particularly useful addition to the memorandum book as it was developing in Britain during the 1760s, allowing the owner to record details of meetings that were perhaps too trivial or too private to be entered into the permanent record. The *Perpetual Memorandum Book* with erasable pages is a quite different sort of text from those which recommended the preservation of all financial affairs and meetings in order that individuals could become (in Batchelor’s phrase) ‘accountable for their social and financial selves’, but it once again confirms that these books were perceived as practical objects to be carried about the person for the making of immediate notes.

That the storage pockets found at the front and rear of many surviving copies were associated with the secretion of letters and the production of ephemeral writing is suggested by an inscription left on the rear pocket of *The Newcastle Pocket-Book* referred to above: ‘Command your hand and join your letters / Carless days is good

⁴⁵ Cummings’s *Perpetual Memorandum-Book* [...] *Interleaved with his Patent Asses Skin* (London: G. Cummings, 1766).

⁴⁶ Roger Chartier, *Inscription and Erasure*, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), p.26.

for letters'. Sadly this book's pockets are empty, but the rear case of *The Ladies New Memorandum Book* contains a tiny fragment of paper inscribed with the word 'Meat'.⁴⁷ Such notes of 'materials to acquire' are often found in seventeenth-century almanacs which, as Adam Smyth notes, also contain similar (though usually self-fashioned) pockets.⁴⁸ Unfortunately, the memorandum books preserved in research collections have often had papers once kept in these pockets removed and they are instead either tipped or bound into the book itself. For example, the copy of Kearsley's *Pocket Ledger* once owned by the Revd Chawnor has had its pockets unpicked and a number of receipts for goods tipped in.⁴⁹ The appearance of marks made by the volume's clasp on these receipts suggests that they were once stored in the pocket at the rear of the volume. That the details of the goods purchased have also been transcribed by Chawnor into the 'cash accounts' section reveals that he was an owner who used his book as a wallet for storing important documents that were also written up into the book itself.

Andrew Piper has recently argued that 'financial ledgers', 'diary spaces' and 'wallet bindings' were amongst the most common 'typographical invitations to get readers to write in books' during the 'making of the bibliographic imagination in the Romantic age' and he notes that during the early nineteenth century Goethe left poems for his translator in the pockets of his own works.⁵⁰ However, as the presence of ledgers, diary spaces and 'pockets' or 'cases' in the memorandum books of the 1750s and 1760s suggests, this practice was established long before the 'Romantic age'. Indeed,

⁴⁷ British Library RB.23.a.9263.

⁴⁸ Adam Smyth, *Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.39.

⁴⁹ British Library RB.8a.11, *Kearsley's Gentleman and Tradesman's Pocket Ledger* [for 1775] (London: G. Kearsley, [1775?]).

⁵⁰ Andrew Piper, *Dreaming in Books: the Making of the Bibliographic Imagination in the Romantic Age* (Chicago & London: Chicago University Press, 2009), p.134.

by the early 1770s these books were being advertised as essential everyday items- like mobile phones or tablet computers- that could be customised at the point of sale. In 1772 the standard model of Kearsley's *Gentleman and Tradesman's Pocket Ledger* was '1s 8d bound in red Leather with Pockets for Letters, Bills &c' but it could also be 'had in Morocco and other Bindings with silver or steel locks'. Similarly, *Cummings's Gentleman's Memorandum Book* was advertised as available in 'a variety of different Sorts of Letter Cases in red, green or black'.⁵¹ Some titles could be bought with added extras, such as a copy of an almanac bound in. *Harris's Pocket Journal* for 1772, for example, was 2s 2d if a copy of 'The London Sheet Almanack' was included.⁵² The advantage of having a sheet almanac included was that it gave the owner an overview of six months (or more) of the year at a single glance. Some owners chose to add this sort of material without the publisher's encouragement. A copy of Johnson and Payne's *Daily Journal* for 1764 once owned by a Mr Lloyd has a 'London Almanack' bound into the front on which the ownership mark for the volume has been inscribed. It is placed in much the same position as the fold-out fashion-plates included in books for women.⁵³ That the 'red leather' binding of the Revd Chawnor's *Pocket Ledger* also enclosed that year's edition of Moore's *Vox Stellarum: Or A Loyal Almanack* (available separately at 'nine pence, stitched') suggests that he had them bound together when purchased.⁵⁴ This suggests that pocket books were not fixed forms. Not only were they often customised by their owners who might add additional texts- such as almanacs- or decorate their covers, they were

⁵¹ These advertisements appeared in the *Public Advertiser*, 20 Nov. 1772.

⁵² *Harris's Pocket Journal for Town and Country: Or, The Gentleman's Memorandum Book, for the Year 1772* (London: W. Harris, [1771?]). The title page of a copy in the John Johnson Collection at the Bodleian Library records that it was also available in 'a larger size, Price 2s, without the Almanack'.

⁵³ National Library of Wales, NLW MS.12472.A, *The Complete Pocket Book or Gentleman and Tradesman's Daily Journal for the Year of Our Lord 1764* (London: J. Johnson and J. Payne, 1763).

⁵⁴ British Library RB8a11, *Vox Stellarum: Or A Loyal Almanack* [for 1775] (London: Bowyer & Nicholls, for the Company of Stationers, [1775?]).

containers of many peripatetic forms of writing. Letters, notes, lists and bills, were amongst the texts that could be temporarily housed in the wallet or pocket before being transferred to a new location (perhaps after transcription), or removed as scrap.

What evidence is there for the way these books were actually put to use? Memorandum books contained designated spaces for writing, but as with most eighteenth-century books, surviving copies show that the end papers were used to record a wide variety of quotidian marks, including notes on ownership, pen exercises, mathematical sums and various lists of goods and people. The end pages of one copy of *The Ladies Complete Pocket-Book* for 1762 includes both pen exercises and a list titled 'Book lent and to whom'.⁵⁵ Remarkably the first entry in this list, 'Felicia to Charlotte', is identical to the only entry found under the same heading in the copy of *The Ladies' Compleat Pocket Book* for 1753 examined by Connor.⁵⁶ *Felicia to Charlotte* was an epistolary novel by Mary Collyer first published in 1744 and available in various editions thereafter. Connor puts forward several theories about why the name of the person to whom the book was lent is *not* recorded including one in which the lender and recipient have themselves adopted the names of Collyer's heroines ('Felicia' has lent *Felicia to Charlotte* to 'Charlotte') and another in which the object lent is the memorandum book itself rather than the novel (Felicia's account book is lent to Charlotte as its contents may prove as exciting as a novel). However, the reoccurrence of this novel under the same heading ('Book lent and to whom') in a memorandum book completed some years later suggests that it is just as likely to be an established and rather playful way of starting such a list which is designed to trip up the casual reader unaware of Collyer's novel, and thus likely to

⁵⁵ British Library C136bb.30, *The Ladies Complete Pocket-Book* [for 1762] (London: John Newbery, 1762).

⁵⁶ Connor, *Women*, p.21.

expose their ignorance of popular print culture by making the assumption that a novel titled Felicia had been lent to a woman called Charlotte. If such lists are part of a textual game they are similar in spirit to the riddles and enigmas found in many pocket books for women. Using the end papers as an informal space in this playful manner also subtly subverts the model of accounting that is explicitly endorsed in the main text, where the rituals of meeting and lending are designed to be formally recorded and accounted for.

By the 1760s most books included ‘a methodical Memorandum Book dispos’d in fifty two weeks’ in which the owner was supposed to record each week’s appointments and any related ‘memorandums or observations’ on the left-hand page and ‘minutes of all monies received and paid’ on the right. As the preface to John Newbery’s *Ladies Complete Pocket Book* for 1760 argues, this meant that each week’s meetings and financial accounts could thus be seen at ‘one View’.⁵⁷ For those (both male and female) inexperienced in keeping such accounts, an example of one day was usually reproduced for them to imitate. In such examples the compiler was, of course, always in credit. The example in *The Kentish Companion* for 1773 recorded an income of more than £20 from the sale of hops, against modest outgoings of less than £6, including the 1s 8d spent on the book itself.⁵⁸ Perhaps not surprisingly, these examples were designed to encourage the purchase of consumer goods (such as the ‘set of squares for children’ accounted for in one example) that were likely to be available from the very shop in which the book was bought.⁵⁹ Pocket books aimed at both sexes frequently contained catalogues of ‘New Books printed for and sold by’

⁵⁷ *Ladies Complete Pocket-Book for the Year of our Lord 1760* (London: John Newbery, 1760).

⁵⁸ *The Kentish Companion: Or, Useful Memorandum and Accompt Book* [for 1773] (Canterbury and Rochester: Simmons and Kirby, Fisher, [1772?]).

⁵⁹ *Ladies Complete Pocket-Book* [...] 1760, p.2.

the same publisher bound into the end papers which were also designed to encourage consumption. *Harris's Pocket Journal for Town and Country* for 1772, for example, contained a list of nine 'new books' available from his shop in St. Paul's Churchyard, including his *British Ladies Pocket Book*. As Batchelor has argued, books aimed at women 'attempted to steer a middle course' between two contradictory models of female behaviour: 'unrestrained consumption and a failure to consume at all'. The pages of accounts were designed to inculcate a 'feminine ideal built upon a foundation of frugality, modesty and social and economic restraint', but the exemplary accounts, lists of books, and emphasis on fashionable dress in the plates actively encouraged women to be consumers.⁶⁰

The evidence presented so far in this essay seems to suggest that memorandum books helped produce the obedient subjects of modern capitalism. Conscious of diurnal time, and aware of issues of privacy yet keen to extend social bonds, these individuals needed a portable text in which their daily economic needs and desires could be recorded. However, Batchelor's brief survey of marked copies suggests that not all women responded appropriately to the disciplining demands of such books. The owner of a copy of Newbery's *Ladies Compleat Pocket-Book for the Year 1753*, for example, ignored the preface's advice about how keeping accounts would aid 'the elegant housewife and good oeconomist' in 'keeping her credit with all mankind' by choosing to complete only the 'memoranda' column and leaving those sections designed to record her economic life entirely blank.⁶¹ Of course some women may have been too young to have economic responsibilities of the type envisaged by the publisher, but Batchelor discusses only one example of an obedient female reader

⁶⁰ Batchelor, 'Fashion', pp.4-8 (8, 4).

⁶¹ Batchelor discusses British Library c.136.bb.30, *The Ladies Compleat Pocket-Book for the Year 1753* (London: John Newbery, 1753), in 'Fashion', p.13

who completed all of the sections of her pocket book appropriately.⁶² However, Batchelor almost certainly over plays both the disciplining elements of such books and the rebelliousness of contemporary readers' responses. Recent work on the history of reading has taught us to be alert to the reader's freedom to poach, to play games with the text, and by placing Batchelor's analysis of a handful of annotated ladies' books within a larger sample that includes works aimed at men it is possible to suggest that the owner of the 1753 *Ladies Compleat* seems typical of a class of reader who adapted the existing text to his or her own immediate demands without radically subverting its intended use. For example, manuscript additions to a copy of *The Ladies Own Memorandum Book* for 1780 show a legitimate (if incomplete) adaptation of the form. In this volume the 'memorandum and remarks' section has been used to record both when bills had been paid ('Paid for candles') and to memorialise or remind the owner of important events ('Mr Allen dyed at Eleven O' Clock this morning[.] [M]y father has been dead 19 years') while the rest of the pages for manuscript remain blank.⁶³ Such entries provide a record of the owner's economic life, even if she was not interested in keeping a running total in the 'paid' and 'received' columns of the sort envisaged in the preface. That the handwritten solutions to the enigmas in the literary section of this pocket book are incomplete suggests that this was an owner putting this book to work for her own ends rather than being concerned with faithful completion.

Other used copies confirm that their owners found the layout of the memorandum book useful in helping to structure their lives, but that they did not necessarily want to

⁶² British Library c.115.n.68, *The Ladies Museum, or Complete Pocket Memorandum Book for the Year 1774* (London: William Lane, 1774) is also discussed by Batchelor, 'Fashion', p.14.

⁶³ British Library RB.23.a.6836, *The Ladies' Own Memorandum-Book; Or, Daily Pocket Journal, for the Year 1780* (London: G. Robinson; T. Slack, Newcastle, [1780]), entries for 2 April and 2 January.

follow the instructions for use to the letter. The owner of a copy of R. & J. Dodsley's *Gentleman's New Memorandum Book* for 1764, for example, made sparse but regular use of both the 'Week's Account' and 'Appointment' and 'Memorandum' columns. His 'appointments' clearly set out the times at which he was 'to be with' others, rather than memorialising such events and he never records anything about these meetings in the memorandum column. Instead this column seems to shift between reminders to take action- such as getting his father to ask for a copy of Smollett's *History of England* when in London- and records of important events such as where he has placed his money before journeying to York. There is just one page of accounts in this volume, which records how he spent the £80 given to him by his father during a tour of Yorkshire.⁶⁴ Similarly, the owner of a copy of *Harris's Pocket Journal* used the pages designated for keeping accounts during January 1772 to record those for the entire year from November 1771. These accounts provide a detailed record of the cost of lodgings and other services, such as a 'washerwoman', that a single man living in the city of London might need to pay for.⁶⁵

Also recorded in detail in this book are the costs of the cultural diet of its anonymous owner, which included visits to an exhibition, the theatre, and regular payments to 'Jones the stationer'. The latter perhaps refers to the purchase of paper and / or writing equipment as the few texts purchased, which included several unnamed plays (at 2s each), *The Memoirs of* [the forger] *James Bolland*, a guide to short-hand, Biggs's

⁶⁴ British Library PP.2490.ee, *The Gentleman's Memorandum Book Improv'd: Or, The Merchant and Tradesman's Daily Pocket Journal for the Year 1764* (London: R & J. Dodsley [and eleven others] [1763?]). Entries for 9-18 November 1764.

⁶⁵ Bodleian Library, John Johnson collection, *Harris's Pocket Journal for Town and Country: or the Gentleman's Memorandum Book for the Year 1772* (London: W. Harris [1771]).

Military History of Europe, and *The Lady's Magazine*, are usually listed by title.⁶⁶ It is not always clear whether this mixed diet was purchased for the owner's own use, although goods bought for his brother and father are usually signalled. Jan Fergus has provided extensive evidence that some periodicals aimed at a female audience, including *The Lady's Magazine*, were purchased and read by men. A volume on 'rapid writing' (or brachigraphy) would have been particularly useful for anyone hoping to use their memorandum book to take down immediate notes.⁶⁷ The book itself appears in these accounts as a 'Gentleman's Pocket Book' and was apparently purchased in August 1782 for 1s 8d- i.e. the full price for a copy without an almanac even though much of the year had already gone.

The 'memorandums' page in this volume is used only once at length, when the owner recorded a reminder to ask the waiter at Tom's Coffee House to supply a copy of 'the Gazette of Novr 21st' in order that he might read a particular article. This memorandum book user doesn't refer to the experience of play-going or the contents of the texts purchased. Indeed, there is very little room for extended commentary in such books, which as Vickery notes, tended to restrict regular users to about fifteen words per entry.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, the presence of such details of cultural consumption suggests that memorandum books have been overlooked by historians of reading who often work with diary or journal entries from which details about the cost, times and places of texts purchase are usually missing. That the only substantial item in the memoranda section of this copy of *Harris's Pocket Journal* indicates that its owner

⁶⁶ *Memoirs of James Bolland [...] Executed at Tyburn, March 18, 1772, For Forgery* (London: S. Bladon, 1772); Thomas Gurney, *Brachygraphy: or, Short-Writing, Made Easy to the Meanest Capacity* [many editions after 1750]; William Biggs, *The Military History of Europe* (London: R. Baldwin, J. Marshall, and P. Davey and B. Law, 1755).

⁶⁷ Jan Fergus, *Provincial Readers in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp.206-09. On 'rapid writing' and the memorandum book, see Chartier, *Inscription*, p.18.

⁶⁸ Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, p.54.

was someone who visited a Coffeehouse to consult texts suggests that such books had a role to play in organising their owners' consumption of contemporary print culture, as well as supplying them with articles on the latest fashions, or appropriate behaviour.

That some memorandum book owners continued to adapt these texts to their own ends, entering only what they thought necessary and ignoring the command for complete recall of financial and social events, for several consecutive years suggests that it was an acceptable practice. For example, the owner of the marked copies of Baldwin's *Daily Journal* referred to above, regularly added to the 'accounts of monies' but made very little use of the pages supposed to be dedicated to 'memorandums and observations'. In October 1768 only the single word 'Bury' was added to the 'memorandums' page as a signal that the following pages of accounts referred to his temporary residence in the English town of the same name. The accounts in these books remain very matter of fact- ('24 October- Account of Monies': 'Wm Middleton for Two Horses 2 Weeks & 2 nights- £2 15s') even when registering a winning lottery ticket (20 June 1768- 'Drawn £20 prize'). Indeed this owner seems actively resistant to those elements of the memorandum book that are designed to illicit a more considered assessment of the individual self. The page headed in print 'Memorandums and Resolutions at the Beginning of the Year 1768', for example, has been used instead to note 'the price of [transporting] wood'.⁶⁹ The manuscript additions to this and several other surviving books reveal that they were used primarily to store important business information by owners who were often

⁶⁹ British Library RB.23.a.32190: *The Daily Journal, or the Gentleman's and Tradesman's Complete Annual Account-Book- for the Pocket or Desk. For the Year of our Lord 1768* (London: R. Baldwin [1768]).

resistant to the recording of ‘memorandums’ and other methods of (re)presenting the self that are closer in style to the diary.

If these owners obeyed some of the reading practices dictated by the memorandum book form while neglecting others, some surviving copies suggest rather different approaches to this sort of book as a site for writing. The copy of *The Ladies New Memorandum Book* for 1765 (described above) is one of several surviving books used to compile personal notes over a number of years, rather than acting as a record of a single year as the publisher intended. It contains two ownership marks (‘Ann Mont No.18 Green Market’ and ‘Doll Bishop, bottom of Milk Street’) and its binding has been repaired several times in order to maintain the pockets at both front and rear.⁷⁰ This book appears never to have been used as intended, but instead had the triple purpose of recording significant family, or personal, events (such as the date on which a child was sent to school), useful information such as recipes, and business records relating to the organisation of gambling and music at fairs. Many of the events recorded are dated more than twenty years after the book was first produced and some entries have been written on separate pieces of paper and pinned in. For example, the page originally designated for ‘memoranda’ relating to February 1765 has a note recording that John Rednage ‘was baptised on 16 June 1778’. The author of this note has then added ‘He ran away’, but unable to find room on an already crowded page, started this entry again on a separate sheet that needed to be pinned in. This addition records the detail that ‘Having run away on 15 December 1792’, John’s ‘father brought him back’. Elsewhere in this volume pages are pinned together, perhaps to conceal information from prying eyes, and there are also some additional notes

⁷⁰ British Library RB.23.a.9263, *The Ladies New Memorandum Book* [for 1765] (London : J. Dodsley [and 7 others], 1765).

loosely tipped in. As some pages of the volume remain blank, the pinning in of additional material, such as that on a disobedient child, suggests a desire to bring relevant material together in a single (easily accessed) entry rather spreading additional information across the blank pages preserved elsewhere in the volume. Designed to record the memoranda and cash accounts of a single year, this volume (perhaps bought second hand), went on to become a compendium and storehouse of information that continued in use long after its tables had become uselessly outdated.

Other surviving copies also reveal that memorandum books could be put to use long after they were first published. Amy Burnett signalled her ownership of a copy of Newbery's *Ladies Pocket Book* for 1760 by adding her name and the phrase 'her book 1787' to the title page.⁷¹ Burnett chose to reuse this text in a number of different ways. Most striking are the detailed diary-like notes on a voyage to Guernsey undertaken in May 1787, which are written continuously across the page, as are subsequent entries (dated 1790 and 1791) that refer to Burnett and her husband. In these instances Burnett simply amended the year of the original and began to write, ignoring the original references to appointments, memorandums and accounts. Other pages have been used for pen exercises, to record a name and address, to compile a list of goods and to transcribe a poem. In these instances the book has often been turned on its side so that the right hand margin becomes the top of the page. However, even in a book with some many instances of the modification of the form, Burnet still used part of the 'accounts of monies' section to monitor income and bills paid much as intended.⁷² By the 1790s some titles, including *The Christian Lady's Pocket Book*,

⁷¹ Bodleian Library, Vet. A5.g.113, *The Ladies Complete Pocket-Book for the Year of Our Lord 1760* (London: John Newbery, 1760).

⁷² These accounts run from 9 April to 7 June using the original columns designated for 'Account of Monies Received and Paid'.

encouraged female readers to enter only serious comments rather than record ‘trifling’ social events, but at least one reader refused to comment on her own life at all and instead filled the right-hand memorandum page with religious verse in a tiny hand that makes the volumes closer in form to a commonplace book or personalised miscellany.⁷³

Pocket books are sometimes classified as ephemera, and there is in some sense an ambiguous relationship between their disposability and their monumentalising purposes. These were annual publications destined to be replaced at the end of each year by a more up-to-date model and yet they contained a permanent record of the owner’s recent past in the form of memoranda and financial records, which it might be important to preserve. As Leah Price’s recent work on the Victorian period makes clear, books and papers were valuable commodities and whenever possible were recycled.⁷⁴ This may account for the fact that many memorandum books survive with the pages of accounts removed. For example, a *sammelband* with the ownership mark ‘Sarah Pye, June 4th 1819’ contains various memorandum book titles for women dating from 1782-93 from which all the memoranda pages have been stripped.⁷⁵ This suggests that the essays and puzzles contained in such books continued to be valued and read long after the date of their first publication. It is possible, of course, that the pages for manuscript were removed to be stored elsewhere- in a more formal diary or autobiography perhaps-, or even as part of a more permanent set of business records. All the memorandum pages up to 17 April have been cut out of the copy of *The Newcastle Pocket-Book* for 1767 (referred to above). Selected pages have been

⁷³ British Library RB.1606.200, *The Christian Lady’s Pocket Book for the Year 1792* (London: Jordan, & Terry, 1792).

⁷⁴ Leah Price, *How to do Things with Books in Victorian Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), esp. 219-257.

⁷⁵ British Library RB.8.a.214 (8).

removed thereafter, and the obliteration of a hand-written note on one of the surviving memorandum sheets suggests that the owner was deliberately obliterating any personal information in order to create a blank book that could be used for another purpose. Some of the tables (perhaps removed when the end papers at the rear of the volume were cut out) have been pasted back in despite being damaged.⁷⁶ The removal of this manuscript material resulted in the production of a book, bound in a wallet, which contained some useful local information and blank spaces for notes. If the increased competition amongst publishers to sell these titles is evidence of the increased commercialisation of ego documents it seems a legitimate activity for this owner to have removed personal information- as one now removes data from a computer- before putting the book back on the market, or reusing it in a new context.

Given that ‘the financial account was one of the most common genres of writing in early modern England’, the memorandum book deserves to be taken seriously as a unique form of autobiographical writing that is quite distinct from other forms of commercial ego document, such as the diary and the retrospective autobiography, that were also in use at this time.⁷⁷ Although memorandum books prescribed reading modes through their material form, the evidence of their use shows that their owners frequently reorganised this form in relation to their needs, whether that be to use the book only for memoranda or only for accounts, or to ignore its prescriptions entirely and use it solely as a container of other texts. Indeed, as Smyth argues in the context of early modern almanacs, the way in which users manipulated the material form of these books may well have led publishers to redesign their product to suit such uses.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ British Library RB.23.a.35789, *The Newcastle Pocket-Book: Or, Gentleman and Lady's Compleat Journal for the Year MDCCXVII*.

⁷⁷ Smyth, *Autobiography*, p.60.

⁷⁸ Smyth, pp.41-42.

That by the end of the century most pocket books resemble something closer to a diary (as Jung notes) may well be a response on behalf of the publisher to those readers who chose to ignore the pages designated for accounts in earlier memorandum books.

Frequently advertised by bookseller-stationers as mainstays of their stock, memorandum books were amongst the most commonly consulted printed objects of the late eighteenth century.⁷⁹ Surviving copies reveal that such books had multiple uses. Those (usually aimed at ladies) which contained fashion plates, essays, poems, acrostics and riddles, were similar to literary miscellanies and magazines, but most titles were also repositories of information about the modern world, and contained spaces designed to record information that would help the owner maintain a successful social and economic life. They were both fashionable and practical objects designed to be carried in the pocket and used as a store for loose papers and valuables. Indeed, it is possible that it was these *blank* spaces for writing and storage that made the pocket book so successful. As such, these texts usefully complicate our ideas about the history of reading in the eighteenth century, which has tended to concentrate on how readers responded to the printed page. However, whenever a memorandum book was retrieved from the pocket, the text read was perhaps more likely to be a manuscript entry, or a manuscript text pulled from the book's own pocket, than it was one of the volume's own printed pages. These texts, difficult to define in generic or bibliographic terms, thus open up new ways of thinking about print culture and the expansion of the book trade in that they are books that depend on being *completed* or *used* by their purchaser rather than being in the traditional sense read by them. Like

⁷⁹ Todd of York's catalogue for 1790 is typical of many that offer 'almanacks and memorandum books' in 'special bindings'. *J. Todd's Catalogue for 1790* (York: Todd, 1789).

the acts of commonplacing described by David Allan, which reveal eighteenth-century readers reworking quotations in ways that are sometimes radically at odds with their original context, the pocket memorandum book is yet another form of textual encounter that depends upon the owner-users ability to work with the pen -to combine reading and writing- in the actualization of the text.⁸⁰ That the evidence of their use shows that owners frequently improvised, reworking the material form to suit their own ends, fits into a model of thinking about ‘reading as poaching’ that has dominated book history in the wake of Roger Chartier’s own reworking of Michel de Certeau’s concepts.⁸¹ However, whereas De Certeau conceives of poaching as a form of resistance to the passive consumption of print, the success of the memorandum books suggest that such patterns of use were actively encouraged within an emerging culture of the book, which allowed purchasers to modify a text that would be put into play in public as a sign of its owners capable handling of a modern form of sociability.

⁸⁰ David Allan, *Commonplace Books and Reading in Georgian England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), esp. pp.120-36.

⁸¹ Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors and Libraries in Europe Between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, trans. Lydia Cochrane (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), esp. pp.1-23.