



Editorial - January 2000

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Editorial

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News and comment from the Editor.

After sitting on the tube opposite an adult who was reading **Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone** I am prompted to wonder in this first issue of **Books for Keeps** of the new century, whether books will survive into the 22nd century. (Will public transport? But perhaps that's one for John Prescott.) <!--break-->

According to our Millennium Questionnaire (reported on in **BfK 119**), you overwhelmingly (there was only a handful of dissenters) think books will continue to be around despite the new technologies. 'Books will survive in the same way that the oral tradition has survived,' wrote one of you. 'They will never kill the book,' wrote another and 'You cannot improve on perfection!' added a third. Others pointed to some of the inbuilt advantages of the book:

'You can't take a computer to bed.'

'Books work in power cuts and I know as I am an ICT co-ordinator!'

'You cannot cuddle with mum/dad over a computer.'

'You can't curl up with a laptop.'

'No batteries are needed.' (Not entirely true of some novelty books?)

While computer games, soaps and videos jostle for our children's attention, books, according to author Andrew Davies, also the adapter for television of **Pride and Prejudice**, **Middlemarch** and **Wives and Daughters**, 'are up there where the action is, in the most widely available art form'. Ironically, one of you makes the point that although books will survive, 'the classics will increasingly be seen in good film adaptation'.

'Fiction books will survive,' wrote another confidently and the new technologies certainly lend themselves well to non-fiction and reference. 'The distinctions will blur,' wrote yet another intriguingly, 'the categories of 'literature' will expand.'

Meanwhile **Books for Keeps** is expanding in various ways. Our coverage of books on tape will now be both more systematic and more coherent thanks to Julia Eccleshare, children's books editor of **The Guardian** and director of Listening Books (see Useful Organisations No. 9) who will be contributing regular reviews. We are also launching a **Books for Keeps** web-site which can be used initially to order the magazine and renew subscriptions. Later in the year it will be extended to include many other elements.



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