



DO WE STILL READ?

**The Society for French Studies
Postgraduate Conference 2026
Friday 29th May 2026
King's College London**

Keynote: Dr Madeleine Chalmers (University of Glasgow)

Call for Papers

Held annually, the Society for French Studies Postgraduate Conference offers postgraduate students the opportunity to share and discuss research-in-progress with a supportive and collaborative audience. Contributions are invited from across the full (and ever-expanding) range of sub-fields, disciplines, cultures, historical time periods, and geographies that make up French and Francophone Studies today. This year's Postgraduate Conference invites reflection on the question: *Do we still read?*

This provocative line of inquiry poses a direct challenge to the catastrophist narratives of textual and hermeneutic decline that abound in the present conjuncture, a historical moment in which the meteoric rise of large language models has marked the putative end of the readerly *status quo*. With its playful *détournement* of today's fatalist mood, our chosen slogan extends a corrective: What if the future of reading was anything but a foregone conclusion? An open question and not an inevitability ascertained in advance? Indeed, to look beyond the undeniably transformative impact of technology, and towards a holistic conception of reading, is to be confronted by a picture of striking contrast to that painted by recent moral panics. Construed in the terms of this critical reflexivity, our titular question — *Do we still read?* — urges reassessment of our discipline's foundations in a singular practice that is by no means confined to the realm of the literary, or textual.

To this end, submissions to the Postgraduate Conference may wish to explore cultural, artistic, political, or socio-economic tensions as they arise from practices of reading. Through reference to theories or epistemologies of reading, papers might pose the question of *how* we read: by focusing on the technicalities of first-hand engagement with texts, literary or otherwise, this angle of investigation could situate reading in the past, present, or future. Considering the global landscape in which texts have long been produced and disseminated,

submissions may wish to analyse matters of minor and major languages, or focus on such themes as world literature or transnational cinema. In light of its significance to cultural and linguistic transmission, papers might opt to spotlight the problem of reception, and treat reading as a site for resistance and community — or, conversely, as a source of conflict and division.

Additionally, submissions could examine the vexed question of archives, with an emphasis on the possibilities afforded by colonial and anti-colonial 'readings' beyond postcolonial theory. Submissions centred around the issues of misreading, misinformation, and error, or non-traditional horizons of legibility, including touch, sound, and smell, are strongly encouraged. Linguistic approaches to the conference theme, and particularly those concerned with issues of translation and adaptation, are also welcome.

Further lines of enquiry may include:

- Reading and the built environment
- Reading and medicine
- Reading and affect
- Revisionism and re-reading
- Reading aloud
- Ways of reading (physical vs. digital)
- Reading communities
- Alternative ways of engaging with texts ('distant reading', '*non-lecture*')
- Reading in the original
- 'Reading' as metaphor
- Reading and narrative

Presentations should be no more than 15 minutes in length and may be given in French or English.

The conference will be held in-person at King's College London. The venue has step-free access. Registration and catering are free of charge. Students who are members of the Society for French Studies are eligible to apply for funding to help with transport costs. Speakers who are non-members are kindly asked to seek financial help from their own institutions to cover travel costs. Information about joining the Society (at a discount rate for postgraduates) can be found on our [website](#).

To apply, please send an abstract (300 words max.) along with your name, institution (if applicable), and level of study to postgraduates@sfs.ac.uk by **20 March 2026**.

If you have any questions, including questions about accessibility, please do not hesitate to contact the organisers at the above address.

Tobias Barnett (University of Cambridge) and Airelle Amédéo (University of Warwick)