

## Seminar 2: 19 December 2023, 6pm CET (chair: Aled Jones)

### ANDREW KING (University of Greenwich): 'Beyond the Taxes on Knowledge: the Law and the 1860s English Press'

Summed up in Carlyle's famous notion of the press as "the Fourth Estate", discussions of the Law and the British press in the nineteenth century have often been framed in gendered terms of a heroic struggle for freedom from government where opposition to the so-called "Taxes on Knowledge" from the 1830s to 50s has been a focal point. However, regulation of the press is conceptually much more complex than one issue or slogan (however effective such a unifying slogan can be). The laws concerning the press are many and varied, involving diverse actants in a multitude of conflicts on small and large scales: government and legislature (not always identical); owners and managers (again, maybe with different and conflicting aims); workers of many different kinds in manufacturing and distribution; consumers. I shall briefly relate a few case studies concerning some of the remaining legal regulations of the press in the 1860s after the last of the "Taxes on Knowledge" had been repealed in 1861, legal regulations concerning obscenity, libel, copyright, and – very often forgotten altogether – the labour conditions of both printers and distributors.

Andrew King is Professor of English at the University of Greenwich, London. He was the founding editor of *Victorian Popular Fictions* and is the author or editor of 8 books and many articles on the nineteenth-century press and popular fiction, most recently *Work and the Nineteenth-Century Press* (2022). He's currently working on a chapter on the global economics of the periodical and a 4-volume collection of annotated primary sources with Marysa Demoor, Andrew Hobbs and Lisa Peters on *Geographies of the Press*. This seminar paper comes out of a chapter he's written for a volume on the 1860s edited by Pamela Gilbert coming out from CUP in 2024.