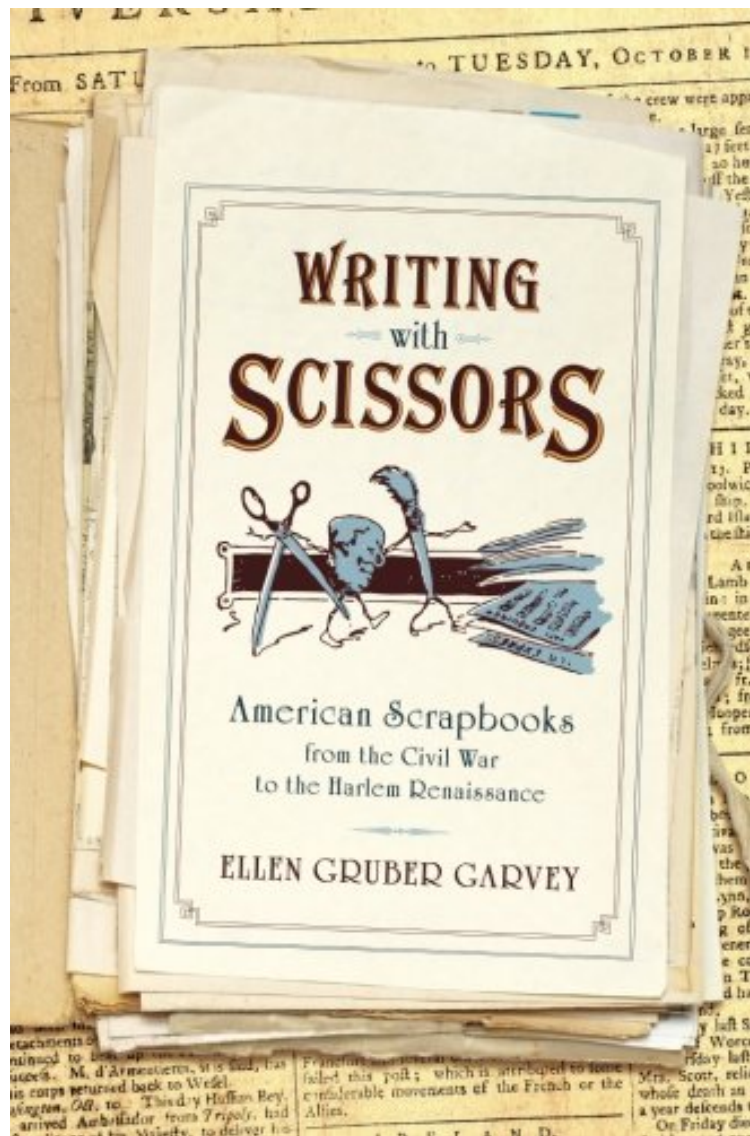


[Download pdf ebook] Writing with Scissors: American Scrapbooks from the Civil War to the Harlem Renaissance

## Writing with Scissors: American Scrapbooks from the Civil War to the Harlem Renaissance

Ellen Gruber Garvey

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**Ellen Gruber Garvey : Writing with Scissors: American Scrapbooks from the Civil War to the Harlem Renaissance** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Writing with Scissors: American Scrapbooks from the Civil War to the Harlem Renaissance:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Fantastic Book, Highly RecommendedBy Kate GilbertI can't

recommend this book highly enough. The only thing that could improve it, but then it would be mammoth in size and cost, is if it were as big as a coffee table book and had room for numerous full color illustrations. I have found something thought provoking and revealing on every page. The book is extremely well written, turning what might be a (to some) dry subject, early form of scrapbooks, into a literal page turner. I am an anthropologist with a glancing interest in US history and in women's work, forms of social communication, and pastiche. This book touches on all these issues--it explores and explicates a little understood part of our history as a people: the attempt by both men and women to organize their national and personal experience by clipping and arranging ephemera. Many things that you might find yourself doing, in your ordinary life, go back to this period: collecting and displaying playbills? Making collages out of your child's activities, gluing and scrapbooking tickets and candy wrappers from important trips? If you read and bookmark blogs, or use Evernote to keep track of your recipes or readings, you are engaged in the same activity. I happen to be reading both Proust and Walter Benjamin at the moment, as part of a project which I thought was like keeping a "commonplace book" but because I am also reading *Writing with Scissors* I see that I am also engaged in a process that is more like early American Scrapbooking. I highly recommend this book to people who are interested in US history, sociology of knowledge, anthropology, women's studies, library science and scrapbooking and commonplace books generally (oh, also, history of copywrite, the idea of the author, education and home economics). I find it pretty much touches on everything I'm interested in.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A groundbreaking book!

By Minton Brooks Because I've been trying to better understand my great-great grandfather from perusing two surviving scrapbooks, I have a high personal interest in nineteenth century scrapbooks. So I was really pleased to get my hands on *Writing with Scissors*, and even more so to read it. I now know the key role scrapbooks played as a means to share passions and interests, much the way Facebook functions today. Thankfully, 140 years later I can get a fairly rich snapshot of my ancestor through those pages. (I doubt my descendants will be able to say the same of Facebook 140 years from now). I am awed by the breadth of the research and the depth of Garvey's analysis. Particularly important, I think, is her groundbreaking research and insightful thinking about the important role of scrapbooks in the lives of African Americans. *Writing with Scissors* describes how scrapbooks filled a void as an accessible and authentic medium for the chronicling of black people's lives. I highly recommend the book!

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Wow! The comparisons to today's digital world are amazing!

By E. Snoeyenbos It's amazing that this part of American history has not been more thoroughly plumbed. Seeing history through the window of the personal archive of a scrapbook makes the events even more poignant. Both the famous and the common folks indulged in this pastime and we are the richer for knowing what they valued and why. Written in an accessible narrative, full of current references to remind us of how timely this topic is, I couldn't put it down until I was done!

Men and women 150 years ago grappled with information overload by making scrapbooks--the ancestors of Google and blogging. From Abraham Lincoln to Susan B. Anthony, African American janitors to farmwomen, abolitionists to Confederates, people cut out and pasted down their reading. *Writing with Scissors* opens a new window into the feelings and thoughts of ordinary and extraordinary Americans. Like us, nineteenth-century readers spoke back to the media, and treasured what mattered to them. In this groundbreaking book, Ellen Gruber Garvey reveals a previously unexplored layer of American popular culture, where the proliferating cheap press touched the lives of activists and mourning parents, and all who yearned for a place in history. Scrapbook makers documented their feelings about momentous public events such as living through the Civil War, mediated through the newspapers. African Americans and women's rights activists collected, concentrated, and critiqued accounts from a press that they did not control to create "unwritten histories" in books they wrote with scissors. Whether scrapbook makers pasted their clippings into blank books, sermon collections, or the pre-gummed scrapbook that Mark Twain invented, they claimed ownership of their reading. They created their own democratic archives. *Writing with Scissors* argues that people have long had a strong personal relationship to media. Like newspaper editors who enthusiastically "scissorized" and reprinted attractive items from other newspapers, scrapbook makers passed their reading along to family and community. This book explains how their scrapbooks underlie our present-day ways of thinking about information, news, and what we do with it.

"Ellen Garvey's *Writing with Scissors* provides a meticulously researched and provocative glimpse of the ways that men, women, and children used the newspapers they read in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century United States." --reception

"*Writing with Scissors* transports us beyond the well-known world of books, newspapers, and magazines, of internet websites, blogs, and databases into a bygone world of texts created with scissors and glue. Ellen Garvey shows us how nineteenth and early twentieth century readers became writers as they recycled and repurposed scraps from various sources to create secret, unwritten histories that often worked against the grain of accepted official narratives of the times." --Carla L. Peterson, author of *Black Gotham: A Family History of African Americans in Nineteenth-Century New York City*

"American scrapbooks may just be our most precious time capsules. Fragile containers of personal memory and public reflection, they're potent--if ephemeral--receptacles of social history. To

decode such volumes requires a curious mind, a steady compass, and a generous heart--qualities Garvey possesses in abundant supply. An extraordinary book." --Jessica Helfand, author of *Scrapbooks: An American History*"Writing with Scissors is cutting-edge! Drawing on an exquisite trove of original research, Garvey explains how earlier generations of Americans thrived amid an unprecedented onrush of information, tailoring media to individual ends and expressing--and making--themselves in the process. Writing with Scissors is the perfect prequel to Henry Jenkins's *Convergence Culture*, one part celebration of the grassroots and one part history of the ways that people consume the media they do." --Lisa Gitelman, author of *Always Already New: Media, History, and the Data of Culture*"By pointing out the connections between the paper technologies that preceded digital archives and social media, Garvey opens conversations between scholars of nineteenth-century print culture, twentieth-century modernism, digital humanists, and archivists. ...Writing With Scissors makes a huge contribution to scrapbook studies, and I imagine it will be a jumping off point for many further projects. Let's run with it." --The GC Advocate"A well-researched, well-written, thoroughly enjoyable book that provides a glimpse into the relationship between information and readers over a hundred-year span...Writing with Scissors shows us a way to glimpse their personal thoughts on their contemporary lives and times. In a way, it brings them back to life as human beings acting in their world." --H-Net"[A] well-researched study...Should appeal to a broad range of readers interested in visual culture and theories of communication--especially because of Garvey's judicious comparisons to contemporary digital strategies of engaging text...Highly recommended." --Choice"[A] pleasure to read... Writing with Scissors adds invaluable material to a growing and significant body of research, and it also brings in theories about the connection between making scrapbooks and managing today's profusion of digital information." --The Journal of American History"[P]roves Garvey to be a dedicated archival researcher and a skilled cultural historian... Writing with Scissors is a richly imagined, original contribution to our understanding of periodical literature, book history, and the history of authorship and reading practices. --Legacy"Writing with Scissors uncovers the lively culture of clipping, saving, and rearranging text in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries..it nevertheless remains faithful to the recalcitrant materiality of information, even as it transforms in the digital age." --American Literature

About the Author  
Ellen Gruber Garvey is Professor of English at the New Jersey City University and the author of the award-winning *The Adman in the Parlor: Magazines and the Gendering of Consumer Culture*.