Harry Potter

On July 21st, 2007, at 12.01am, the seventh and supposedly last volume in the Harry Potter saga found its way to a bookstore (or mailbox) near you… provided, of course, that you were one of the over 2 million people who pre-ordered the book on Amazon.com, or were one of the countless others who reserved their copies at Borders, Barnes & Noble, or other bookstores across the country. Perhaps you attended a release party; perhaps you took the day off to stalk your mailbox and make sure no one else got their hands on YOUR book…

Or perhaps you couldn’t care less. Whatever your opinion of Harry Potter, J.K. Rowling, or the empire that her stories spawned, you can’t deny that Harry Potter will forever hold a permanent place in the history of publishing and young adult literature in the late-20th and early 21st century. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* (or *Philosopher’s Stone*, if you were in Britain) first appeared in 1997, and the subsequent series has gone on to garner severe criticism from such luminaries as A.S. Byatt and Harold Bloom, and comparably enthusiastic praise from equally esteemed authors, including even Stephen King who, it must be admitted, has referred to his own work as “the literary equivalent of a Big Mac and fries.”

Rowling and her books have received numerous awards, including four Whitaker Platinum Book Awards, two Scottish Arts Council Book Awards, the Whitbread Children’s Book of the Year award, the W.H. Smith Book of the Year award, not to mention the Hugo Award for the best book in science fiction or fantasy, and repeat listings on the best books lists of the American Library Association, *The New York Times*, the Chicago Public Library, and *Publishers Weekly*. At the same time, the Harry Potter series is number seven overall on the American Library Association’s list of the 100 Most Frequently Challenged Books of 1990-2000 – and number one from 1999-2003 – joining the likes of Mark Twain, Maya Angelou, J.D. Salinger, Harper Lee, and Judy Blume, among many others.

The phenomenon of Harry Potter has grown much larger than merely the books, however… or the movies, toys, video games, etc. etc… It has even found its way into hallowed halls of academia. Fan-centered meetings and conferences started up right away, but it didn’t take long for scholars of popular culture, literature, ethics, cultural studies, anthropology, sociology, psychology, media studies, and more to follow along, sometimes devoting entire conferences to the Harry Potter stories and what their explosive popularity means to contemporary understandings of gender, race, children, good & evil, religion, and any other aspect of culture in this, our so-called modern age.

A quick search in WorldCat reveals a plethora of book titles: from *Harry Potter and International Relations* to *The Science of Harry Potter*, *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter*, *The Wisdom of Harry Potter*… even *The Gospel According to Harry Potter*. The number of articles on Harry Potter available through LORA are almost beyond counting, and deal with Harry Potter together with almost every conceivable topic.

Visit the libraries website at <http://libraries.ou.edu> to see what other resources are available about Harry Potter and the world of young adult literature. Both the catalog and the databases in LORA will provide you with access to a whole host of resources related to this topic. If you have questions related to your research or our collections, please email us at librarian@ou.edu or call us at (405) 325-4142.