Recovering contemporary genre histories – the development of chick lit as seen through the internet archive’s wayback machine and wikipedia’s history page

Sandra Folie¹

Received: 21 August 2020 / Accepted: 11 February 2021 / Published online: 11 May 2021

© The Author(s) 2021

Abstract

In the perception of literary scholars, the investigation of genre histories is still closely linked to ‘offline’ archival work. However, the Internet has been publicly accessible since 1991, and over the last thirty years, numerous new literary genres have emerged. They have often been proclaimed, defined, spread, marketed, criticized, and even pronounced dead online. By now, a great deal of this digital material is said to have disappeared. What many scholars do not consider, however, is that parts of the web are archived, for example by the *Internet Archive* and *Wikipedia*, which make their archives publicly available via the *Wayback Machine* and the *history page* respectively. This makes it possible to track early online definitions of contemporary genres and their development. In this paper, I will use the *chick lit* genre, which emerged in the second half of the 1990s, as a case study to show the benefits of including web archives in the reconstruction of contemporary genre histories. An analysis of both the first extensive and long-running fan websites, which are now offline but well-documented in the Internet Archive, and the history page of the Wikipedia article on *chick lit* will challenge some of the narratives that have long dominated *chick lit* research.

Keywords Genre history · Chick lit · Internet archive · Wayback machine · Fan websites · Wikipedia

1 Introduction

With genre history, one inevitably thinks of good old ‘dusty’ archival work. In literary studies, archives and libraries are still most often imagined as physical spaces and often

✉ Sandra Folie
sandra.folie@univie.ac.at

¹ Department of Comparative Literature, University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria

compared to archaeological activities. Susan Stanford Friedman, for example, employs the metaphor of recovery for “locating long unavailable texts buried in the bowels of libraries and collections; little magazines even more ephemeral than the better known ones; anthologies or catalogues reflecting networks parallel to those in the West; personal papers of forgotten writers, editors, and curators;” (2012, 510). What this list of possible archival sources omits, is that many of these materials have now been digitized and can be accessed online, albeit sometimes with restrictions that vary according to academic affiliation or location. Although the Internet has great democratic potential, its distribution and accessibility – about 57% of the world’s population was online in 2019 – is still very unevenly spread across the globe and across different social classes (Kemp, 2019). In principle, however, the Internet has been publicly accessible since 1991.

In terms of genre history, this means that many new literary genres that have emerged in the meantime coincided with the ongoing development of the web, where they have often been proclaimed, defined, spread, marketed, criticized, and even pronounced dead via a wide variety of actors and media. These include fans and their websites or blogs, online presences of newspapers, magazines, or publishing houses, and also the free encyclopedia *Wikipedia*. A great deal of digital material from the early 2000s – a time when the Internet had already assumed an indispensable role in the book sector – has now allegedly disappeared: many fans have at some point stopped running their websites; newspapers and magazines only started to systematically archive later and often have not made these records available for free use; publishers and their imprints, if they have not disappeared, have meanwhile updated their websites several times; and Wikipedia, as a collaboratively developed project, is constantly changing anyway. According to Aleida Assmann, the Internet and the archive are complementary institutions: “the archive fulfills the desire for reliable material preservation and long-term storage of information; the Internet fulfills the desire for an acceleration of the data flow and lightning-fast and targeted access to information.”¹ (2009, 174; my transl.) What many Humanities scholars do not know or, out of skepticism about the Internet as a ‘reliable’ academic source, simply do not consider, is that parts of the web are archived, for example by the Internet Archive, a non-profit library of free books, movies, software, music, and websites based in San Francisco. Their *Wayback Machine* is a service which, since its launch in 2001, has allowed users to go back in time and see what websites, some of which no longer exist, looked like at an earlier date. Wikipedia, which was also founded in 2001, has its own built-in archive, the *history page*, through which (almost) all versions of a Wikipedia article since its creation can be accessed.² In relation to the field of genre history, we can thus in many cases trace the first, or at least very early, mentions of new genres, their discussion and definition by fans or critics, and the development of Wikipedia articles about them. This applies above all to the examination of popular genres or ‘genre fiction’ (in contrast to ‘literary fiction’ or

¹ My translation. German original: “das Archiv erfüllt den Wunsch nach zuverlässiger materieller Konservierung und langfristiger Sicherung von Informationen, das Internet erfüllt den Wunsch nach Beschleunigung des Datenflusses und blitzschnellem und gezieltem Zugriff auf Information.”

² The “almost” refers to the possibility of deleting versions. Revision deletion “is generally reserved for edits which: (1) present a legal liability to the host (e.g. copyright issues, defamation), or (2) present privacy threats to individuals (i.e. contact information).” (West & Lee, 2011, 1).

Regarding the inclusion of the *history page* in literary research, see also Börner and Kopf (2018, 216–219).

‘literature’) that is usually not discussed in the feature pages of prestigious newspapers and magazines but has a strong fan base which is very active online.³

In this paper, I will use the *chick lit* genre, which emerged in the second half of the 1990s with bestsellers such as Helen Fielding’s *Bridget Jones’s Diary* and Candace Bushnell’s *Sex and the City* (both 1996), as a case study to show the benefits of including web archives in the recovery of contemporary genre histories. An analysis of both the first large and long-running fan websites, *chicklit.co.uk* (2002–2014) and *chicklitbooks.com* (2003–2015), through the Wayback Machine, and the history page of the Wikipedia article on chick lit (2004–now) will challenge some of the narratives that have long dominated chick lit research; especially, the unquestioning adoration by fans as well as the allegedly narrow, one-sided, and therefore academically irrelevant definitions of the chick lit genre published online. On a more general level, the aim of this paper is to present a critical comparative approach to the inclusion of archived web sources in the study of contemporary literary genres.

2 Early definitions of chick lit or the not so unquestioning adoration of its fans

When chick lit began to develop into a genre in the second half of the 1990s and early 2000s, journalists, fans, and Wikipedians were the first to comment on it, often online. Research, or at least the published research results, came much later. Annette Peitz, who wrote one of the earliest scholarly monographs on chick lit, disparagingly refers to those early comments as “utterly banal sources of definition” (2010, 27–28; my transl.), useful only in so far as they “determine current trends quickly and in a broadly intelligible way” (ibid., 28), often “before academic sources can address them in a scholarly manner” (ibid., footnote 29).⁴ The editors of the first academic collection of articles on chick lit, Suzanne Ferriss and Mallory Young, already provided an implicit reason for the skepticism about such early sources, which they describe as extremely polarized and therefore as biased: “On the one hand chick lit attracts the unquestioning adoration of fans; on the other it attracts the unmitigated disdain of critics.” (2006, 1) It was precisely the uncompromising rejection on the part of both critics and also renowned authors such as Doris Lessing or Beryl Bainbridge – who called chick lit “instantly forgettable” (quoted in Staff & Agencies, 2001) and “a froth sort of thing” (ibid.) – that created a strong desire among the fans to characterize it. Therefore, the first definitions of the genre can be found on their websites, with *chicklit.co.uk* (UK, 2002–2014) and *chicklitbooks.com* (USA, 2003–2015) being the two most popular

³ This does not mean that every new genre is equally likely to get a Wikipedia article. Wikipedia has notability guidelines for each of its language versions, which an article must meet before it is published. One of the most important guidelines is that “there must be verifiable, objective evidence that the subject has received significant attention from independent sources to support a claim of notability” (Wikipedia: “Notability”, 11 July 2020b). Experience shows that in the case of new, contemporary genres like chick lit, these do not necessarily have to be secondary academic sources; a continuous, frequent discussion of a genre in newspapers and magazines can also prove its notability. Ultimately, the assessment of the notability of a topic depends strongly on who reviews the article before publication.

⁴ My translation. German original: “ganz banale Definitionsquellen [...], die aktuelle Strömungen schnell und allgemein verständlich bestimmen” (Peitz 2010, 27–28), “bevor akademische Quellen wissenschaftlich darauf eingehen können” (ibid., 28/footnote 29).

and, with an online presence of over a decade, also the most durable ones. Wikipedia can look back on an even longer online presence. Although the article on chick lit was published in 2004, two to three years later than the fan websites, it is still available online today.

However, as Peitz' or Ferriss and Young's statements already indicate, scholars only used these sources because no better ones were available yet; references remained mostly anecdotal and selective and were in no way systematic. If the websites had not been archived and made accessible either by the Internet Archive and its Wayback Machine or by Wikipedia's history page, their content – with the exception of a few second hand quotations⁵ – would have been lost for research today. Since the Humanities have so far not given much attention to non-academic web sources, this 'loss' may not seem particularly relevant at first. However, in literary and cultural studies, and especially in genre history, the first mentions and definitions of a genre are considered highly relevant. I would argue that this convention does not have to be ignored just because the medium (digital instead of analog) and the actors (non-professionals instead of professionals) have changed. In the case of the two fan websites and Wikipedia, moreover, it is not only their early definitions that are relevant, but also their continuous preoccupation with the genre, which extends from the time of the genre's creation and consolidation until after its alleged 'death'.⁶

2.1 Digitally archived chick lit fan websites

The British chicklit.co.uk was online from 2002 to 2014. A search with the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine reveals that from the very beginning the genre was defined as entertaining or very marketable "contemporary women's fiction" ("Home and Competitions", 6 Nov. 2002). The books advertised on the website mostly revolved around the everyday challenges of their young protagonists: the search for Mr. Right, relationship problems, family planning, self-realization, and career planning (ibid.). Although the focus was on chick lit, the concept was interpreted more broadly, in the sense of a *chick culture*, which was later defined by Ferriss and Young as "a group of mostly American and British popular culture media forms focused primarily on twenty-to-thirtysomething middleclass women" (2008, 1). In addition to the popular formats of chick lit, chick flick, and chick TV programming, this chick culture could also be communicated via other media such as blogs, music, magazines, and even car designs or energy drinks. What Ferriss and Young were missing, however, is that media such as blogs and websites do not only communicate chick culture, but also actively (re)shape and combine its various forms. Accordingly, the founder of chicklit.co.uk, Paula Gardner, described the website a few years after its launch as "the online women's magazine that celebrates 21st century woman's contemporary fiction and lifestyle" ("Home", 3 Feb. 2006). In addition to authors and their books, lifestyle topics

⁵ In the early 2000s, web sources were usually not quoted at all, or, if they were, not completely and correctly, e.g. when Ferriss and Young (2006, 1) quote from the American fan website, they only give its short URL ("Chicklitbooks.com"), which makes it very difficult to trace the reference back; especially since it was a relatively dynamic website which adapted its layout several times. For comparison: Peitz (2010, 28) does not give a complete URL either, but at least the title of the subpage and the access date, e.g. "ChickLitBooks.com. 'What is Chick Lit?' (21.01.2007)" or "Wikipedia (16.02.2006)", which makes it easier to track her references.

⁶ The 'death' of the genre was increasingly postulated from 2011 onwards (cf. Coburn, 2012; Sherwin, 2011).

such as fashion, beauty, personal hygiene, nutrition, but also other media such as film and music were included. These focal points, which went beyond literature and were presented as modern female everyday practices, make it possible to draw conclusions about the settings in chick lit and thus implicitly contribute to the definition of the genre: literature by, about, and for the young woman of the twenty-first century who wants to be up to date in lifestyle issues and popular culture. Chicklit.co.uk did not only provide a broad definition of chick lit as part of a chick culture, but also as a genre that narratively processes, reflects, and brings forth this culture.

The changing mottos that preceded the start page of the American fan website chicklitbooks.com (2003–2015) – “It’s hip. It’s smart. It’s fun. It’s about you!” (16 June 2004a), “Hip, bright literature for today’s modern woman” (3 June 2005b), “Hip, smart fiction for women” (14 Oct. 2006), or “Smart, fun & modern fiction for females” (1 Aug. 2009) – convey a similar understanding of chick lit as part of a broader chick culture. However, Rian Montgomery, the website’s founder and operator from 2003 to 2013, also provided a concrete genre description from the first year of chicklitbooks.com’s existence:

Let me start out by telling you what Chick Lit is NOT:

- Lamé and ridiculous
- Cheesy romance novels
- Bad influence on women
- Brain-numbing fluff

I’m not speaking for all books with the above criteria – there are some really bad Chick-Lit novels out there. For the most part however, the books are entertaining, interesting, and many women can identify with them. The plots usually involve a woman in her 20s or 30s, going through everyday problems and challenges with her boyfriend, job, living situation, marriage, dating life, etc. (“FAQ”, 11 Oct. 2003)

Two conclusions regarding the development of chick lit can be drawn from this partly negative definition. First, there seems to have been a need to justify chick lit as a genre and to defend it against accusations such as being trivial or even anti-feminist. Second, at that time the plot of chick lit novels revolved largely around the protagonists’ relationships with men. In the following years, however, chick lit was also explicitly differentiated from romance – “A lot of chick lit usually has a romantic story line to it, but it’s rarely all that the book is about.” (“What is Chick Lit?”, 9 Dec. 2004b) – and from women’s fiction, which was usually less confidential/personal in tone and, unlike chick lit, did not have a constitutive element of humor (“What is Chick Lit?”, 9 Feb. 2005a).

The reconstruction of early genre definitions on the fan websites with the help of the Wayback Machine shows that from the very beginning the operators endeavored to place chick lit in a larger cultural (esp. chicklit.co.uk) or literary historical context (esp. chicklitbooks.com). This makes these archived websites remarkable sources for academic genre research, as they not only demonstrate early, but also nuanced

negotiations of the genre (connection to other cultural artifacts and media, defense mechanisms, differentiation from other genres).

2.2 Academic sources as a basis for comparison

The early definitions on the archived websites overall make a balanced impression and do not seem like the “unquestioning adoration” (Ferriss & Young, 2006, 1) of fans. In fact, they are relatively consistent with early academic attempts at definition and what became known as the ‘chick lit formula’: confessional, ironic, and humorous narratives about young metropolitan women in their 20/30s – white, heterosexual, and affluent – who face the everyday challenges of their careers and the search for Mr. Right along with their friends (see, for example, Ferriss & Young, 2006, 3; Peitz, 2010, 38–39). Overall, there seems to have been a kind of consensus among authors, fans, journalists, and scholars about the central constituents of the chick lit genre. To depict such a minimal definition is, in due course, the task of tertiary sources such as literary encyclopedias, handbooks, or dictionaries. The chick lit article in the *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (2008), which is probably the first academic tertiary representation of the genre, however, turned out to be surprisingly biased and more reminiscent of the “unmitigated disdain of critics” (2006, 1) that Ferriss and Young considered no less problematic for a genre definition than the one-sided adoration of its fans. The author of the article, Chris Baldick, defines chick lit as

[a] kind of light commercial fiction addressed to British women readers of the late 1990s and early 2000s and subsequently imitated in the United States and beyond. The term appeared from 1996 as a flippant counterpart to the lad-lit fiction of that time. The defining model for the genre was Helen Fielding’s comic novel *Bridget Jones’s Diary* (1996) [...]. Chick-lit novels are written by women about the misadventures of contemporary unmarried working women in their 20s or 30s who struggle with multiple pressures from reproachful mothers, inadequate boyfriends, and tyrannical bosses while consoling themselves with shopping trips, chocolate, and erotic daydreams. The stories are commonly told in the first person in tones of humorous self-deprecation. As the boom in this kind of fiction, sometimes referred to as **chic fic**, continued into the early 21st century, new subgenres emerged, including ‘nanny lit’ and ‘mommy lit’. (Baldick, 2015a, [2008], 57–58; emphasis in original)

Considering that this is an article in a prestigious academic dictionary and not the intervention of a literary critic, one can only wonder about the inherent national and male chauvinism. The latter is even more evident in the corresponding article on “lad lit”, in which Baldick writes that “[s]ince British lad lit arrived in the USA slightly later than the more successful first wave of chick lit, it was mistakenly believed to be a backlash against the Bridget Jones phenomenon; in fact the correct answer to the question ‘which came first, the chick or the lad?’ is: the lad.” (2015b[2008], 195). His argument is flawed. First, the US-American counterpart to *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, Candace Bushnell’s *Sex and the City* (1996), can hardly be called an imitation. On the one hand, the narrative situation and the constellation of characters in the latter

differs substantially from the diary-writing Bridget in Fielding's novel⁷; on the other, Bushnell's column, which was published in the *New York Observer* from 1994 to 1996 and formed the basis for her novel, appeared one year before Fielding's column in *The Independent* (1995–97). Chronologically speaking, *Sex and the City* – and thus US-American chick lit – came first. The same applies to the term chick lit, which the American novelists and scholars Cris Mazza and Jeffrey DeShell coined in their anthology *Chick Lit: Postfeminist Fiction* (1995),⁸ a compilation of short stories by female authors, which can be described as experimental and very different from what would later become popular as chick lit (see also Mazza, 2006). Mazza describes the aim of the anthology as a search “for something different, something that stretched the boundaries of what has been considered ‘women’s writing’, something that might simply be called ‘writing’ without defining it by gender, and yet at the same time speak the diversity and depth of what women writers can produce rather than what they’re expected to produce” (Mazza, 1995, 8). This rather subversive use of the term ‘chick lit’ is completely omitted in Baldick’s definition. Moreover, he mistakenly reduces the ambivalent and complex history of the label to a mere commercially calculated reaction to the British *lad lit*; a genre, which, oddly enough, is described by other scholars as almost the reverse: “as the extent of chick lit’s remarkable ability to transform itself into new varieties” (Ferriss & Young, 2006, 7). With the words “Now, it seems men are getting in on the act [...]” (“ladlit”, 1 June 2003), chicklit.co.uk had similarly commented on the emergence of *lad lit*, one of several subgenres to which they dedicated a subpage.

2.3 Wikipedia’s history page and chick lit

An important correction to the idiosyncratic genre history in the *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* can be found in Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia that, according to its slogan, “anyone can edit” and that today provides over six million articles in the English language version – one of them being the article on chick lit which has been online since 22 July 2004. This early date of publication – one to two years after the launch of the fan websites, but before any academic publications on the topic appeared – makes the Wikipedia entry the very first encyclopedic article on chick lit. A study of its history page, which archives the genesis of the article, shows that already some of its earliest versions provide important information about the genre’s history. In the first two to three years of the article’s existence (2004–2006), without citing sources it already implicitly referred to Mazza’s and DeShell’s subversive use of the term. Specifically, the article points out that “[c]hick lit’ has also been claimed as a type of ‘postfeminist’ fiction, perhaps in an attempt to rehabilitate its literary reputation” (22 July 2004). Then from December 2006 onwards, it directly references *Chick Lit: Postfeminist Fiction* (Mazza & DeShell, 1995) in the section “Origins of the term”.

⁷ In Bushnell’s book, the story is mostly narrated by an anonymous third-person narrator and not by Carrie Bradshaw (as in the TV show); the repertoire of characters is large, going far beyond the four protagonists of the TV series. Fielding’s *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, on the other hand, is a first-person narrative, told through the diary entries of the title character and narrator Bridget.

⁸ They at least coined the use of ‘chick lit’ for a kind of contemporary literary genre. However, the term was already in use in the 1980s for Elaine Showalter’s course on the Female Literary Tradition at Princeton University (see Betterton, 1988, 113).

By comparing the different versions of the Wikipedia article on chick lit (see extracts in Table 1), it becomes clear that Baldick could have already consulted Wikipedia, while writing his encyclopedia article. His primarily student readership, who were most certainly often reminded not to rely on Wikipedia, would also have found some valuable advice there. To be fair, at times the article also presented strange (non-)information, such as the assumption “that the reader is likely to be the sort of clichéd nonintellectual female who chews gum and avoids serious literature” (22 July 2004) or that the term chick lit sounds “hauntingly similar to ‘chocolate’ and reminds one of chocolaty ‘sweetness’” (4 May 2006b). However, the chick lit article is mostly in line with Wikipedia’s general upward trend of quality⁹ (Wikipedia: “Researching with Wikipedia”, 21 April 2020a): Both of these claims did not last long compared to the correct information regarding the origin of the term. The latter addition regarding chick lit’s chocolaty sweetness disappeared after only eleven days on 14 May 2006; the former was deleted on 22 April 2006, after an editor on the *talk page* – another useful tool that shows most of the article-related discussions between editors – made the following criticism: “Is there really a stereotype about the chewers of chiclet gum? Why does the term chick lit imply that the people who read it avoid other literature, are unintellectual, and clichéd? Seems like the person who wrote the connotations section has opinions about chick lit.” (“Talk: Chick lit”, 3 Jan. 2006a) Wikipedia may be a free encyclopedia that anyone can edit, but it has its own control mechanisms: on the one hand, any editor can question, modify, or delete changes to an article; on the other, there are also several levels of “volunteer stewardship”¹⁰ such as the position of administrator (Wikipedia: “Wikipedia”, 20 July 2020g).¹¹

A major advantage of Wikipedia – especially with regard to popular genres and genre fiction – is that it “goes beyond the boundaries of an old-fashioned educational canon and embraces the zeitgeist, pop culture and the subcultures of geeks, nerds and all kinds of hobbyists”¹² (Van Dijk, 2015, 3; my transl.). This is a stark contrast to the *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, which includes terms from literary popular culture such as chick lit, but does not exactly embrace these phenomena and in fact may even be overly dismissive of them. Although Wikipedia also tends to reproduce an existing literary canon of values (cf. Hube et al., 2017; Wojcik & Picard, 2019¹³) and

⁹ Wikipedia describes its upward trend of quality as follows: “In a wiki, articles are never ‘finished’. They are continually edited and (usually) improved over time. In general this results in an upward trend of quality and a growing consensus over a fair and balanced representation of information.” (Wikipedia: “Researching with Wikipedia”, 21 April 2020a)

¹⁰ This commitment begins with the position of administrator: “privileged users who can delete pages, prevent articles from being changed in case of vandalism or editorial disputes (setting protective measures on articles), and try to prevent certain people from editing.” (Wikipedia: “Wikipedia”, 20 July 2020g)

¹¹ The position of administrator is the lowest level of volunteer stewardship and includes some additional rights such as deleting pages or preventing articles from being changed (e.g. disputes, vandalism). For more information on administrators and other forms of volunteer stewardship see Wikipedia: “Wikipedia: Administration”, 21 Aug. 2020k.

¹² My translation. German original: “Überhaupt überschreitet sie die Grenzen eines altertümlichen Bildungskanons und nimmt sich dem Zeitgeist, der Popkultur und den Subkulturen von Geeks, Nerds und allerlei Hobbyisten an.”

¹³ Hube et al. emphasize that Wikipedia “seems to convey a rather conservative, old-fashioned version of world literature, but a version derived from reproducible facts revealing an implicit literary canon based on the editing and reading behavior of millions of people” (2017). Wojcik and Picard supplement Hube et al.’s study with their observation that the canon is not only reproduced in Wikipedia, but also expanded. The page view statistics show that the range of authors tends to be more contemporary and also more diverse in terms of nationality and gender (2019, 163–164).

Table 1 The development of the Wikipedia article on chick lit (2004–2020)

Date	Minimum Definition (first sentence)	Information on the origin of the term
2004	“Chick lit” is a slightly uncomplimentary term used to denote popular fiction written for and marketed to young women, especially single young women in their 20s, working in the business world. [no references]	“Chick lit” has also been claimed as a type of “ <u>postfeminist</u> ” fiction, perhaps in an attempt to rehabilitate its literary reputation. The term itself includes a derivative reference to “Chicklet” brand <u>chewing gum</u> , with the implication that the reader is likely to be the sort of clichéd nonintellectual female who chews gum and avoids serious literature. [no references]
2005	“Chick lit” is a term used to denote a <u>genre</u> of popular <u>fiction</u> written for and marketed to young <u>women</u> , especially single, working women in their twenties. [no references]	Aside from its obvious source (<u>chick</u> is an American slang term for young woman and <u>lit</u> is short for “literature”), the term “chick-lit” includes a reference to <u>Chiclets</u> brand <u>chewing gum</u> , with the implication that readers of the genre are likely to be clichéd, unintellectual females who chew gum and avoid “serious” literature. However, the genre has also been claimed as a type of <u>post-feminist</u> fiction which covers the breadth of the female experience which deals unconventionally with traditional romantic themes of <u>love</u> , <u>courtship</u> and <u>gender</u> . [no references]
2006c	“Chick lit” is a term used to denote <u>genre</u> <u>fiction</u> written for and marketed to young <u>women</u> , especially single, working women in their twenties and thirties. [no references]	One of the first uses of the term was in the title of the 1995 anthology <u>Chick Lit: Postfeminist Fiction</u> , edited by <u>Cris Mazza</u> and <u>Jeffrey DeShell</u> . The work in this anthology was not chick lit as we know it today, and the term was used <u>ironically</u> . However James Wolcott’s 1996 article in <u>The New Yorker</u> “Hear Me Purr” co-opted “chick lit” to define the trend of “ <u>girlishness</u> ” evident in the writing of female <u>newspaper columnists</u> at that time. This is significant, as major chick lit works such as Helen Fielding’s <u>Bridget Jones’s Diary</u> and Candace Bushnell’s <u>Sex and the City</u> originated in such columns.
2007	unaltered	The term was introduced by <u>Cris Mazza</u> and <u>Jeffrey DeShell</u> as an ironic title for their edited anthology <u>Chick Lit: Postfeminist Fiction</u> , published in 1995. The genre was defined as a type of <u>post-feminist</u> or second-wave feminism that went beyond female-as-victim to include fiction that covered the breadth of female experiences, including <u>love</u> , <u>courtship</u> and <u>gender</u> . The collection emphasized experimental work, including violent, perverse and sexual themes. James Wolcott’s 1996 article in <u>The New Yorker</u> “Hear Me Purr” co-opted the term “chick lit” to proscribe what he called the trend of “ <u>girlishness</u> ” evident in the writing of female <u>newspaper columnists</u> at

Table 1 (continued)

Date	Minimum Definition (first sentence)	Information on the origin of the term
		that time. Works such as <u>Helen Fielding's <i>Bridget Jones's Diary</i></u> and <u>Candace Bushnell's <i>Sex and the City</i></u> are examples of such work that helped establish contemporary connotations of the term.
2008	Chick lit is a term used to denote <u>genre fiction</u> within <u>women's fiction</u> written for and marketed to young <u>women</u> , especially single, working women in their twenties and thirties. [reference: Hooten, 2007]	unaltered
2009–2010	Chick lit is <u>genre fiction</u> within <u>women's fiction</u> which addresses issues of modern women often humorously and lightheartedly. [reference: Hooten, 2007]	The term appeared in print as early as 1988 as college slang for a course titled “female literary tradition.” [reference: Betterton: <i>Alma Mater</i> 1988] In 1995, <u>Cris Mazza</u> and <u>Jeffrey DeShell</u> used the term as an ironic title for their edited anthology <i>Chick Lit: Postfeminist Fiction</i> . The genre was defined as a type of <u>post-feminist</u> or second-wave feminism that went beyond female-as-victim to include fiction that covered the breadth of female experiences, including <u>love</u> , <u>courtship</u> and <u>gender</u> . The collection emphasized experimental work, including violent, perverse and sexual themes. James Wolcott's 1996 article in <i>The New Yorker</i> “Hear Me Purr” co-opted the term “chick lit” to proscribe what he called the trend of “ <u>girliness</u> ” evident in the writing of female <u>newspaper columnists</u> at that time. Works such as <u>Helen Fielding's <i>Bridget Jones's Diary</i></u> and <u>Candace Bushnell's <i>Sex and the City</i></u> are examples of such work that helped establish contemporary connotations of the term.
2011–2014	Chick lit is <u>genre fiction</u> which addresses issues of modern womanhood, often humorously and lightheartedly. [reference: Hooten, 2007]	unaltered
2015b	Chick lit or Chick literature is <u>genre fiction</u> which addresses issues of modern womanhood, often humorously and lightheartedly. [reference: Hooten, 2007]	unaltered
2016–2020	Chick lit or Chick literature is <u>genre fiction</u> , which “consists of heroine-centered narrative that focus on the trials and tribulations of their individual protagonists.” [reference: Smith, 2008]	Chick lit scholars note that the term was first used ironically in 1995 by <u>Cris Mazza</u> and <u>Jeffrey DeShell</u> as the title for their edited anthology <i>Chick Lit: Postfeminist Fiction</i> , which contains 22 short fiction pieces in response to Mazza and DeShell's call for “postfeminist writing.” [reference: Mazza & DeShell, 1995]

structural inequalities such as gender and racial bias,¹⁴ there is more space for new, less established, and also anti-canonical topics, which, according to the encyclopedia's guidelines, should be described "from a neutral point of view (NPOV)" (Wikipedia: "Neutral point of view", 12 July 2020f),¹⁵ as is the ideal for all articles in the encyclopedia. However, such an almost neutral perspective usually takes several years to develop. This is not possible with academic publishing. Although tertiary sources are occasionally revised and expanded, the extent of such revisions usually depends on the resources of the editors and authors, which may be very limited, especially if their involvement with the topic in question dates back several years. The *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, for example, was reprinted in 2015. However, the revisions did not affect the article on chick lit, which was left exactly as it was originally published in 2008. One of the great advantages of web sources such as fan websites and Wikipedia compared to academic print and digital publications is that they regularly update and revise their content. Thanks to web archives, researchers are able to trace and critically evaluate these developments.

3 The evolution of the chick lit definition or the transparency of web archives

3.1 Chick lit as women's fiction

In the early attempts to define the genre, the focus was mainly on a kind of 'pure' chick lit of the early 2000s. However, especially the fan websites, which initially tried to identify chick lit as an independent genre and distinguish it from romance and women's fiction, were quick to react to changes and continuously adapted their definition of chick lit. On chicklitbooks.com, the restriction to young women in their 20s and 30s was already removed in 2004, just one year after the launch of the website: "A great many of the books [...] feature young single heroines looking for love, but more and more books are having married women, older women, and mothers as the main characters." ("What is Chick Lit?", 9 Dec. 2004b). The last update of the subpage "What is chick lit?" (22 Sept. 2012) goes even further by emphasizing the general openness and flexibility of chick lit:

Chick lit is smart, fun fiction for and/or about women of all ages. Story lines often revolve around jobs, children, motherhood, romance, fame, living in the 'big city', friendship, dieting and much more, usually with a touch of humor thrown in. Many of these books are written from a first-person viewpoint, making them a

¹⁴ The average Wikipedia editor is about 26 years old, male and from the United States, Germany, or Russia (Wikipedia: "Wikipedians", 24 July 2020h). There is broad agreement that there is a considerable gender bias in Wikipedia (Wikipedia: "Gender bias on Wikipedia", 12 July 2020e); a racial bias has also been criticized (Wikipedia: "Racial bias on Wikipedia", 30 July 2020j).

¹⁵ The Wikipedia article on "the neutral point of view" (NPOV) defines it as "representing fairly, proportionately, and, as far as possible, without editorial bias, all the significant [views](#) that have been [published by reliable sources](#) on a topic." (Wikipedia: "Neutral point of view", 12 July 2020f)

bit more personal and realistic. The plots can range from being very light and fast-paced to being extraordinarily deep, thought-provoking and/or moving.

In 2007, chicklit.co.uk also distanced itself from its earlier definition of the genre. The owner of the website, Paula Gardner, pointed out that “pure chicklit [...] has changed so much that we now want to celebrate women’s writings and women’s lives, per se, whether they fall into the traditional ‘chicklit’ category or not” (“About us”, 15 July 2007). These altered definitions already approached the vague catch-all term of *women’s fiction* – fiction by, about, and/or for women – that chick lit only came to be associated with in research several years later. For example, take Sorcha Gunne, who wrote about the immense global popularity of “[w]omen’s commercial fiction, or ‘chick lit’ as it has become known” (2016, 241) or Heike Missler, who also recognized a tendency to define chick lit more inclusively, quasi-synonymously with women’s fiction (2016, 70). What distinguishes Missler from other chick lit scholars so far is that she already came to her conclusions by including chick lit blogs in her research and by conducting a special survey among bloggers. However, neither Wikipedia nor fan-websites such as chicklitbooks.com and chicklit.co.uk, which at that time were already offline and only accessible via the Internet Archive, were part of her analysis.

Yet the free encyclopedia in particular represents one of the most suitable websites for tracing the evolution of chick lit or any other contemporary genre that has emerged in the digital age. Although the fan websites were created earlier and are therefore indispensable sources of information, especially for the very first attempts at definition, the free encyclopedia has the advantage of a decidedly collaborative and dynamic definition and, as a tertiary source, also claims to represent already proven facts in a neutral way. There were also guest editors and reviewers involved in the fan websites, but their number was limited – at least compared to the 84 authors of the chick lit article on Wikipedia¹⁶ (Wikipedia: “Chick lit, Authorship”, 22 June 2020d) – as was their influence on the exact definition of the genre, which was worded and published by the operators. While chicklit.co.uk and chicklitbooks.com both went offline in 2014/15, the Wikipedia article has been constantly revised and updated since 2004. Initially narrowly defined as popular fiction, genre fiction, or a subcategory of women’s fiction aimed at a limited target group of young women (see extracts in Table 1), the current definition is very broad:

Chick lit or **chick literature** is genre fiction, which “consists of heroine-centered narratives that focus on the trials and tribulations of their individual protagonists”^[1]. The genre often addresses issues of modern womanhood – from romantic relationships to female friendships to matters in the workplace – in humorous and lighthearted ways^[2]. At its onset, chick lit’s protagonists tended to be “single, white, heterosexual, British and American women in their late twenties and early thirties, living in metropolitan areas”^[1] (22 June 2020c; emphasis and footnotes in the original)

¹⁶ It should be noted, however, that most authors have only made small contributions and changes. More than 50% of the text mass was written by two authors with the nicknames Mrthbtl1 (36.9%) and Madelynleighe13 (18.7%). (Wikipedia: “Chick lit, Authorship”, 22 June 2020d)

Compared to the first definition on Wikipedia, in which chick lit was identified as a “slightly uncomplimentary term” (22 July 2004) in the first sentence, the promotion from ‘lit’ to ‘literature’ is particularly striking. Thus, similar to chicklitbooks.com, the genre is granted a certain qualitative spectrum. The fact that the current Wikipedia definition refers to two scholarly publications – Caroline Smith’s book *Cosmopolitan Culture and Consumerism in Chick Lit* (2008) [footnote 1 in the block quotation above] and a review by Jessica L. Hooten of Ferriss’ and Young’s chick lit anthology (Ferriss & Young, 2006) [footnote 2 in the block quotation above] – already indicates that the editors have increasingly included scholarly literature – a development that can be followed very well on the history page of the article. While its first version was completely without bibliography, there are now 24 individual references and another two academic articles are recommended under the sub-heading “Further Reading” (22 June 2020c). Although Wikipedia articles are never finished and tend to improve over time, an analysis of the history page can also reveal notable exceptions to this general upward trend of quality.

3.2 Gender and racial bias

While chicklitbooks.com stressed that chick lit was literature for and/or about women and chicklit.co.uk emphasized the ‘by and about women’, the definition on Wikipedia since 2009 has focused on the gender of the narrators and protagonists, who, as is added later in the article, can differ greatly “in ethnicity, age, social status, marital status, career, and religion” (22 June 2020c). A definition that focuses more on content and characters than on the gender of authors and readers is not only more productive from a literary studies’ point of view, but also breaks with stereotypes such as that women – simply because they are women – prefer to write and read romance and chick lit novels. In February 2014, an amendment to the Wikipedia article (which has since been deleted) explicitly emphasized that chick lit was not exclusively written by female authors: “recently there have been some male-authored novels, such as Zack Love’s ‘Sex in the Title’, that center on the traditional themes of chick lit: dating, relationships, and love.” (11 Feb. 2014) It comes as no surprise that men also write chick lit. In the same way that female authors who write in traditionally male genres such as fantasy or science fiction often use gender-neutral names (e.g. Robin Hobb, J. K. Rowling), male authors such as Alex Coleman (aka Damien Owens) or Chris Dyer (aka Christopher Santos) choose gender-neutral pseudonyms to publish chick lit or women’s fiction and romance. What was new and interesting about the development mentioned on Wikipedia was therefore not that male authors wrote in ‘female’ genres, but that they were able to do so openly and without a pseudonym. This conclusion has since been relativized by the deletion of that paragraph on 1 September 2016 without specific justification or prior discussion. Nevertheless, it can be said that gender bias, especially derogatory remarks and prejudices about chick lit as a ‘women’s genre’, have decreased over the years.

However, there is still a need to catch up in terms of the genre’s diversity and its wide international spread. The current Wikipedia article does not mention chick lit by women of color such as African American, Latin American and Asian American authors or chick lit from the global South. And while the misinformation that “British author Catherine Alliot’s *The Old Girl Network* (1994) was the start of the chick lit

genre” (22 June 2020c) has persisted for some time now (since 18 Jan. 2018, to be exact), the important role of African American chick lit or sistah lit – and in particular Terry McMillan’s novel *Waiting to Exhale* (1992) – for the genre’s genealogy still has not been addressed (Hurt, 2019b). On 26 September 2013 an editor named *Jeross 12* added a new section entitled “Criticism” to the chick lit article, in which they address the whiteness not only of the genre, but also of the discourse that surrounds it:

Common criticism that arises from this genre is the emphasis of western liberal views^[7]. The plot typically centers on a ‘white’ woman’s narrative of the issues that surround her^[8]. Critics argue that these stories often reflect a fixation on consumerism of [sic] designer brands and sexuality rather than addressing global issues such as equality^[9]. Although there are subsections of this genre that include protagonist [sic] of various ethnicities, cultures, and backgrounds, these generally fall second to the dominant ‘white’ chick lit^[10]. [...] (emphasis and footnotes in the original)

The section ends with the statement that “[t]he women of color genre of chick lit is becoming increasingly important as it presents questions regarding the issues these women must deal with that relate to race, the state and political economy, even if it is in a fictional sense^[14]” (ibid.). This critical addition to the article was backed up by a trustworthy academic source: Pamela Butler’s and Jigna Desai’s acclaimed article *Manolos, Marriage, and Mantras: Chick-Lit Criticism and Transnational Feminism* (2008), published in the prestigious interdisciplinary journal *Meridians: Feminism, Race, and Transnationalism*.

Two years later, however, an editor with the nickname *Amakuru* deleted the entire section, giving the dubious reason that “[t]his article doesn’t currently have enough detail on the matter itself to warrant a detailed ‘criticism’ section” (“Chick lit: Revision history”, 10 Dec. 2015c). The same editor substantiated the deletion by referring to a previous discussion about the section’s (ir)relevance on the talk page of the article. However, this ‘discussion’ was actually limited to a highly problematic and insulting comment titled “Which PC halfwit wrote the ‘criticism’ section?”:

Pamela Butler or Jigna Desai? Whichever one of you managed to get your narrow, tendentious p.o.v. (with something like 7 straight footnotes to the exact same source) turned into an entire section of this article should be very, very proud. Not. (“Talk: Chick lit”, 13 Jan. 2015a).

I argue that the incomprehensible deletion of the criticism section represents an example of the often criticized racial bias in Wikipedia, which “stems in part from an under-representation of non-white people within its editor base” (Wikipedia: “Racial bias on Wikipedia”, 30 July 2020j). While formally it is indeed not particularly elegant to add seven footnotes to a short paragraph that all lead to the same source, the information given was correct, state of the art chick lit research. The sensible approach in accordance with the “Wikiquette” (Wikipedia: “Etiquette”, 29 July 2020i) would have been to constructively critique the new paragraph on the talk page, pointing out the formal weaknesses to the author, and then to jointly improve it.

While chicklit.co.uk never put a focus on women-of-color chick lit, chicklitbook.com from 2005 to 2012 had a subpage titled “Multicultural Chick Lit” about books “with

heroines from all different nationalities and from different cultures” (25 Nov. 2005c), divided into *Indian Chick Lit*, *Latina Lit*, *Asian Chick Lit*, and *African-American Chick Lit*. This page was under construction from July 2012 and did not go online anymore. For the fan websites, however, the deficit with regard to the diversity of the chick lit genre can be partly excused by the fact that they were not obliged to take a ‘neutral’ and balanced position in the first place. Moreover, they went offline in 2014/15 and were no longer regularly maintained and updated in the years before – a time when women-of-color chick lit had already existed for two decades, but was not yet widely discussed in research. This justification or excuse, however, no longer applies to the editors of the Wikipedia article on chick lit, because in recent years the diversity of the genre has been increasingly addressed and researched (see Hurt [ed.] 2019a).

4 Conclusion and outlook

Based on the case study of chick lit, this article showed how web archives such as the Internet Archive and Wikipedia’s history page can be productive tools to research contemporary genre histories in the digital age. For chick lit, the claim that statements on fan websites are not relevant for the academic study of genres can be refuted. The definitions on both websites under examination, chicklit.co.uk and chicklitbooks.com, proved to be balanced; they were also regularly updated and adapted to new developments such as the emergence of new subgenres and the expansion of the genre’s definition. This speed and flexibility is a great advantage over academic publications. Regarding the evolution of the definition of chick lit, many researchers have noted an expansion and differentiation of the genre that had already been observed by chick lit fans and Wikipedia editors several years earlier. This is not surprising, considering the slow pace of academic publishing.

What may be surprising, however, is that online sources are still neither cited nor included in genre research, and thus, to a certain extent, written out of genre histories. This is all the more surprising as many of the online sources are available in different stages of their development that can be easily accessed through the Wayback Machine of the Internet Archive. Wikipedia’s history page even allows comparisons between almost all versions of their articles. Due to the collaborative nature of Wikipedia, not only the step-by-step evolution of the chick lit genre becomes transparent, but also disputes between authors and editors on the talk page. These discussions make it possible to draw additional conclusions from certain changes and deletions within an article. Although the comparative analysis of different versions of the chick lit article made it clear that the gender bias has become less severe over the years, the article does not seem to be exempt from the racial bias of Wikipedia, which, in the case of chick lit, also overlaps with a delay in academic research regarding women-of-color chick lit and global variants of the genre.

It could be very productive in the future if the relationship between academia, non-academic web sources and web archives was to be strengthened; and if not only academic material would find its way into digital formats and archives – as has been the case for many years in Wikipedia – but conversely also web content into research. This would not only enrich research – and the histories of contemporary genres is only one possible and very evident example of a whole range of fields of application in the

Humanities – but also the digital formats and archives themselves. The more researchers participate, e.g. by writing and editing Wikipedia articles or by suggesting websites for filing in the Internet Archive, the better web archives can support research.

Acknowledgements Open access funding provided by University of Vienna.

Open Access This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence, and indicate if changes were made. The images or other third party material in this article are included in the article's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the article's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

References

- Assmann, A. (2009). Archive im Wandel der Mediengeschichte. In K. Ebeling & S. Günzel (Eds.), *Archivologie. Theorien des Archivs in Philosophie, Medien und Künsten* (pp. 165–175). Kadmos.
- Baldick, C. (2015a). Chick lit [2008]. In C. Baldick (Ed.), *The Oxford dictionary of literary terms* (pp. 57–58). 4th ed. Oxford UP.
- Baldick, C. (2015b) Lad lit [2008]. In C. Baldick (Ed.), *The Oxford dictionary of literary terms* (p. 195). 4th ed. Oxford UP.
- Betterton, D. M. (1988). *Alma mater: Unusual stories and little-known facts from America's college campuses*. Peterson's Guides.
- Börner, I., & Kopf, S. (2018). *Wikipedia Studies: sprach- und literaturwissenschaftliche Zugänge zu Wikipedia*. In I. Börner, W. Straub & C. Zolles (Eds.), *Germanistik digital: Digital Humanities in der Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft* (pp. 212–227). Facultas.
- Chicklit.co.uk. (6 Nov. 2002). Home and competitions. <https://web.archive.org/web/20021106194720/http://www.chicklit.co.uk:80/>. Accessed 21 July 2020.
- Chicklit.co.uk. (1 June 2003). Ladlit. <https://web.archive.org/web/20030601232145/http://chicklit.co.uk:80/ladlit.asp>. Accessed 29 July 2020.
- Chicklit.co.uk. (3 Feb. 2006). Home. <https://web.archive.org/web/20060203215126/http://www.chicklit.co.uk:80/articles/>. Accessed 21 July 2020.
- Chicklit.co.uk. (15 July 2007). About us. https://web.archive.org/web/20070715153700/http://www.chicklit.co.uk/articles/about_us.asp. Accessed 21 July 2020.
- Chicklitbooks.com. (11 Oct. 2003). Frequently asked questions. <https://web.archive.org/web/20031011005846/http://chicklitbooks.com:80/faq.html>. Accessed 21 July 2020.
- Chicklitbooks.com. (16 June 2004a). Home. <https://web.archive.org/web/20040616015212/http://www.chicklitbooks.com/>. Accessed 21 July 2020.
- Chicklitbooks.com. (9 Dec. 2004b). What is chick lit?. <https://web.archive.org/web/20041209172906/http://www.chicklitbooks.com:80/whatis.php>. Accessed 21 July 2020.
- Chicklitbooks.com. (9 Feb. 2005a). What is chick lit?. <https://web.archive.org/web/20050209084737/http://chicklitbooks.com:80/whatis.php>. Accessed 21 July 2020.
- Chicklitbooks.com. (3 June 2005b). Home. <https://web.archive.org/web/20050603075624/http://www.chicklitbooks.com/>. Accessed 21 July 2020.
- Chicklitbooks.com. (25 Nov. 2005c). Multicultural chick lit. <http://web.archive.org/web/20051125124151/http://chicklitbooks.com/all/multiculturallit.php>. Accessed 1 Aug. 2020.
- Chicklitbooks.com. (14 Oct. 2006). Home. <https://web.archive.org/web/20061014035302/>, <http://www.chicklitbooks.com/>. Accessed 21 July 2020.
- Chicklitbooks.com. (1 Aug. 2009). Home. <https://web.archive.org/web/20090801114026/http://www.chicklitbooks.com/>. Accessed 21 July 2020.

- Chicklitbooks.com. (22 Sept. 2012). What is chick lit?. <https://web.archive.org/web/20120922045224/http://chicklitbooks.com/what-is-chick-lit/>. Accessed 21 July 2020.
- Coburn, J. (2012). *The decline of chick lit*. The San Diego Union-Tribune. <http://web.archive.org/web/20200920133413/https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/entertainment/books/sdut-the-decline-of-chick-lit-2012feb11-story.html>. Accessed 20 Sept. 2020.
- Ferriss, S. & Young, M. (2006). Introduction. In S. Ferriss & M. Young (Eds.), *Chick lit: the new woman's fiction* (pp. 1–13). Routledge.
- Ferriss, S. & Young, M. (2008). Introduction. Chick flicks and chick culture. In S. Ferriss & M. Young (Eds.), *Chick flicks: contemporary women at the movies* (pp. 1–25). Routledge.
- Friedman, S. (2012). World modernisms, world literature, and comparativity. In M. A. Wollaeger & M. Eatough (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms* (pp. 499–525). Oxford UP.
- Gunne, S. (2016). World-literature, world-systems, and Irish Chick lit. In J. Habjan & F. Imlinger (Eds.), *Globalizing literary genres: Literature, History, Modernity* (pp. 241–253). Routledge.
- Hooten, J. L. (2007). In the classroom or in the bedroom (Review of Ferriss & Young (Eds.), *Chick lit: The new woman's fiction* 2006). *JASNA News*, 23(1), 21.
- Hube, C., Fischer, F., Jöschke, R., Lauer G., Thomsen, M. R. (2017). World literature according to wikipedia: Introduction to a DBpedia-based framework. arXiv.org. <https://arxiv.org/abs/1701.00991>.
- Hurt, E. (Ed.). (2019a). *Theorizing ethnicity and nationality in the chick lit genre*. Routledge.
- Hurt, E. (Ed.) (2019b). The white Terry McMillan. Centering black women within chick lit's genealogy. In E. Hurt (Ed.), *Theorizing ethnicity and nationality in the Chick lit genre* (pp. 150–174). Routledge.
- Kemp, S. (2019). *Digital 2019: Global digital overview*. <https://web.archive.org/web/20200908213048/https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2019-global-digital-overview>. Accessed 16 Sept. 2020.
- Mazza, C. (1995). What is postfeminist fiction? In C. Mazza & J. DeShell (Eds.), *Chick-lit: postfeminist fiction* (pp. 8–9). Carbondale: Fiction collective 2.
- Mazza, C. (2006). Who's laughing now? A short history of Chick lit and the perversion of a genre. In: S. Ferriss & M. Young (Eds.), *Chick lit: the new woman's fiction* (pp. 17–28). Routledge.
- Mazza, C. & DeShell, J. (Eds.) (1995). Chick-lit: postfeminist fiction. carbondale: fiction collective 2.
- Missler, H. (2016). *The cultural politics of Chick lit: Popular fiction, Postfeminism and representation*. Routledge.
- Peitz, A. (2010). *Chick lit: Genrenkonstituierende Untersuchungen unter anglo-amerikanischem Einfluss*. Frankfurt am Main et al.: Peter Lang.
- Sherwin, A. (2011). Have we fallen out of love with chick lit? *Independent*. <https://web.archive.org/web/20191110095214/https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/have-we-fallen-out-of-love-with-chick-lit-2361445.html>. Accessed 16 Sept. 2020.
- Smith, C. J. (2008). *Cosmopolitan culture and consumerism in Chick lit*. Routledge.
- Staff & Agencies. (2001). *Bainbridge denounces chick-lit as "froth"*. The Guardian. <https://web.archive.org/web/20190411232047/https://www.theguardian.com/books/2001/aug/23/bookerprize2001.bookerprize>. Accessed 16 Sept. 2020.
- Van Dijk, Z. (2015). Die Wikipedia – das ideale Hilfsmittel für den Einstieg in ein historisches Thema? In T. Wozniak, J. Nemitz, & U. Rohwedder (Eds.), *Wikipedia und Geschichtswissenschaft* (pp. 1–13). de Gruyter.
- West, A. G., & Lee, I. (2011). What wikipedia deletes: characterizing dangerous collaborative content. In *WikiSym '11: Proceedings of the 7th International Symposium on Wikis and Open Collaboration* (pp. 25–28). <https://doi.org/10.1145/2038558.2038563>.
- Wikipedia. (22 July 2004). Chick lit. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Chick_lit&oldid=4789452. Accessed 21 July 2020.
- Wikipedia. (15.12.2005). Chick lit. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Chick_lit&oldid=31493513. Accessed 23 July 2020.
- Wikipedia. (3 Jan. 2006a). Talk: chick lit (sec. 5: connotations and origin of term). https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Talk:Chick_lit&oldid=969364576. Accessed 30 July 2020.
- Wikipedia. (4 May 2006b). Chick lit. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Chick_lit&oldid=51523959. Accessed 21 July 2020.
- Wikipedia. (16 Dec. 2006c). Chick lit. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Chick_lit&oldid=94749285. Accessed 21 July 2020.
- Wikipedia. (24 Dec. 2007). Chick lit. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Chick_lit&oldid=179885812. Accessed 23 July 2020.
- Wikipedia. (25 Dec. 2008). Chick lit. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Chick_lit&oldid=260030886. Accessed 23 July 2020.

- Wikipedia. (27 Dec. 2009). Chick lit. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Chick_lit&oldid=334179241. Accessed 23 July 2020.
- Wikipedia. (30 Oct. 2011). Chick lit. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Chick_lit&oldid=458064897. Accessed 23 July 2020.
- Wikipedia. (11 Feb. 2014). Chick lit. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Chick_lit&oldid=594999667. Accessed 21 July 2020.
- Wikipedia. (13 Jan. 2015a). Talk: chick lit (sec. 19: Which PC halfwit wrote the 'criticism' section?). https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Talk:Chick_lit&oldid=969364576. Accessed 30 July 2020.
- Wikipedia. (10 Dec. 2015b). Chick lit. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Chick_lit&oldid=694622566. Accessed 23 July 2020.
- Wikipedia. (10 Dec. 2015c). Chick lit: revision history. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Chick_lit&offset=20170920193653%7C801616364&action=history. Accessed 30 July 2020.
- Wikipedia. (7 Dec. 2016). Chick lit. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Chick_lit&oldid=753512396. Accessed 23 July 2020.
- Wikipedia. (21 April 2020a). Researching with Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Researching_with_Wikipedia&oldid=952202689. Accessed 23 July 2020.
- Wikipedia. (11 July 2020b). Wikipedia: notability. <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Notability&oldid=967201154>. Accessed 16 Sept. 2020.
- Wikipedia. (22 June 2020c). Chick lit. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Chick_lit&oldid=963866005. Accessed 21 July 2020.
- Wikipedia. (22 June 2020d). Chick lit, authorship. <https://xtools.wmflabs.org/authorship/en.wikipedia.org/Chick%20lit>. Accessed 1 Aug 2020.
- Wikipedia. (12 July 2020e). Gender bias on Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Gender_bias_on_Wikipedia&oldid=967296726. Accessed 30 July 2020.
- Wikipedia. (12 July 2020f). Neutral point of view. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Neutral_point_of_view&oldid=967336587. Accessed 30 July 2020.
- Wikipedia. (20 July 2020g). Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia&oldid=968545007>. Accessed 21 July 2020.
- Wikipedia. (24 July 2020h). Wikipedians. <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Wikipedians&oldid=969260024#Demographics>. Accessed 30 July 2020.
- Wikipedia. (29 July 2020i). Wikipedia: etiquette. <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Etiquette&oldid=970206082>. Accessed 1 Aug. 2020.
- Wikipedia. (30 July 2020j). Racial bias on Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Racial_bias_on_Wikipedia&oldid=965571790. Accessed 1 Aug. 2020.
- Wikipedia. (21 Aug. 2020k). Wikipedia: administration. <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Administration&oldid=974249589>. Accessed 16 Sept. 2020.
- Wojcik, P. & Picard, S. (2019). Klassiker@wikipedia. *Klassikforschung und Digital Humanities. Ein Kommentar zur Studie World Literature According to Wikipedia*. In S. Matuschek, S. Picard, P. Wojcik & M. Wolting (Eds.), *Klassik als kulturelle Praxis: Funktional, intermedial, transkulturell* (pp. 149–164). de Gruyter.