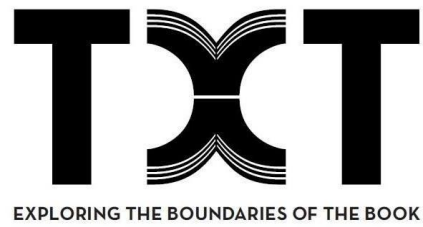


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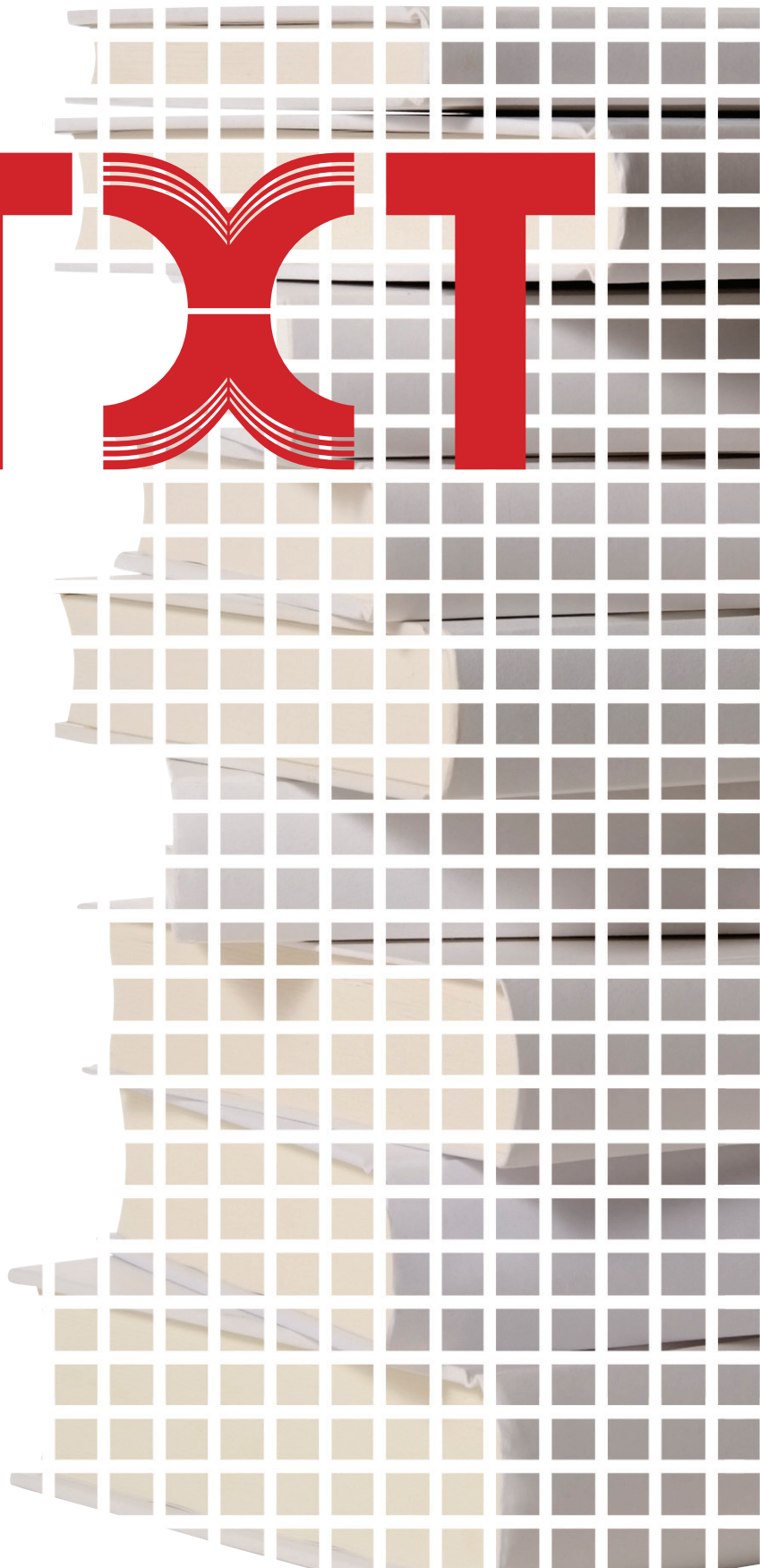
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EXPLORING THE BOUNDARIES OF THE BOOK

TXT







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Note from the Editor

Dear Reader,

You are holding in your hands a year's worth of writing, analysing and philosophising about textual transmission by the students of the 2014 Book and Digital Media Studies programme at Leiden University. Inspired by our predecessors, we wanted to build on a new tradition to create a magazine that brings together various aspects of the world of the book anno 2014, as witnessed by students, faculty members and industry professionals. In rapidly changing times like these, great insights can result from bringing together these three perspectives.

This year, TXT will explore the boundaries of the book in an age where the digital is increasingly taking over from the analogue. We are confronted with entirely new ways of presenting and transferring the written word. How does this affect the reader, the book industry, the world? What can we do with text that was not possible before? And what contribution can the paper book still have? We have attempted to answer these questions and more in this publication.

TXT could not have existed without the help of a number of people. First of all, our editorial board, which consists of twelve motivated students, all with a passion for text: for its physicality (or not), for its meaning, or for its design. Secondly, I would like to thank all the students, faculty members and industry professionals who have contributed to TXT. We are thrilled about the high quality and rich content of the articles in this magazine, which all shed a different light on the boundaries of the book. Finally, this publication could not have been produced without the kind support of Boom Uitgevers. We want to thank them for their constructive advice and for printing our magazine. We hope you enjoy it as much as we do.

Marian Spruit
Editor-in-Chief

*A digital edition of TXT is available on our website, txtleiden.org and in the Leiden Repository.
Please send any remarks or thoughts to info@txtleiden.org.*







Introduction

Jeroen van Honk

Student of Book & Digital Media Studies at Leiden University

We are at war. I do not know if the reader realises this, but there is a battle raging, and it shows no signs of ending. Paper versus the screen; ink versus pixels; the book versus the e-reader; John Updike versus Kevin Kelly; flicking versus scrolling. We love to put the new up against the old and watch them have a go at it. *Des Anciens* against *des Modernes*: winner takes all. This is the dominant manner in which developments in the book industry seem to be portrayed these days, and it is harmful. The death of the book has become a cliché, an exercise in saying the same thing in a thousand different ways.

If there is one thing that connects the articles collected in this volume, it is that while they are all situated on this battlefield, they are all trying desperately to fan the flames. Not that they do not take position: some argue in favour of the digital and some stick to the printed book, but the former avoid the pitfalls of technology fetishism and the latter do not revel in nostalgia. What all authors share is a preference for the two to be exhibited side-by-side, for them to be if not on romantic then at least on friendly terms with each other. As the publishers of Visual Editions have it: ‘what is more important is using both mediums to complement each other, rather than championing one and acting against the other.’

The first section of this reader, ‘Beyond Boundaries’, tries not so much to solve this dispute, but to make it visible. ‘Artists’ Books’, as discussed in Van Capellenveen, constitute a part of print culture that is not easily transferred to the screen. They highlight the tactility and the aura of the printed book. At the same time, Soulellis takes digital-born material, art—a form of art that is the digital equivalent of readymades, the author argues—created on and through the web and on and through the screen, and sees what is gained by transferring this to paper. Texts ‘scraped’ from the internet and then sent directly to the printer are insightful: what, thanks to the fluidity and interactivity of the digital paradigm makes sense online, sometimes looks awkward and uncomfortable when imprisoned within the confounds of the traditional, rectangular page. While artists’ books might amplify the strengths of print, the automagically and algorithmically





compiled texts that make up Soulellis' Library of the Printed Web project do the same for the digital platform.

Perhaps that much is obvious. That first section is concerned with breaching the boundaries, so it will always play out in that borderland. Nevertheless, we find the same unwillingness to wave flags for either side of the querelle in the rest of the articles. This nuance is perfectly illustrated in the title of Spruit's article, where the rather ominous phrase 'Bye-bye bookstore' is qualified with a question mark. The article shows that although there are some worrying figures for bookstores, there are good reasons for these, and the success stories of innovative booksellers prove that there is no reason for defeatist sentiments. The interview with Soetenhorst, director of Boom Publishers, similarly suggests that continuous innovation and change can garner success in the industry. Bhaskar, in theorising publishing, once again poses the bold and by now familiar claim that 'digital technology [...] is the greatest single change to happen to publishing for hundreds of years,' only to immediately ensure us that, 'publishing, a mutable, flexible and essential activity of filtering, framing and amplifying content, remains.'

Open Access, another topic that in a way could be considered an affordance (or at least a direct result) of the internet and digital text, is represented through articles by Leiden University faculty members Van der Weel and Verhaar, in which they discuss the pros and cons of the topic. Other subjects discussed in this section on digital innovations include such diverse ones as green publishing (Vermaas), the edges of books in the Bibliotheca Thysiana (Hoftijzer), bibliophilia (Beros) and Arabic typography (Vrolijk).

Notable, also, are the geographical boundaries that are explored in this volume, reminding us of the diversity of cultures and how this is reflected in the publishing industry. Kesaree talks about book culture in Thailand (as does Visel, by the way, talking of his move to Bangkok when discussing the subtle influences of the digital revolution on literary communities) and the influence of listening upon reading habits there, Birtle discusses Japanese publishing, and Papazova's first article takes us to Russia.

Every generation, at any time, has been wont to think of its own era as defining, revolutionary and more important than the one that came before and the one that will follow. Given the current ubiquity of the term 'sea-change', it is therefore important to remind ourselves that this sea changes more often than we care to remember. Gangel reminds us of the concerns of Czech writer Čapek, who thought that film would prime us to be more visual (that is, more immediate) as opposed to the more patient reading paradigm that reigned before. These thoughts anticipated Heidegger's division between calculative and meditative thinking, which in turn inspired Nicholas Carr's influential tract *The Shallows*. Papazova backtracks reading practices all the way to the Middle Ages, in order to argue for a continuous evolution of reading towards discontinuity. Her theory admits some eras to be more 'disruptive' than others, but at the same time underlines the truism that the waters of change are always in motion. A similar historical perspective is taken by Vermaas in 'Social Developments and Reading'. The article by the authors of the wonderfully named blog *Sexy Codicology* perhaps does





most to link the past to the present. *Sexy Codicology* was created to gather some much-needed attention for digitised manuscripts. Their article concerns a project called DMMmaps, an aggregator of sorts for the manuscripts hidden several clicks away in university library databases worldwide. Effectively, *Sexy Codicology* is trying not so much to breach as to bridge (a subtle yet significant difference) the boundaries between the paradigm of the present and the culture of the manuscript, a feat which has proven quite challenging in the digital environment. That such past developments can help us put our own times into perspective should be obvious. We can speak of it from a safe distance; we are not as emotionally involved with Gutenberg as we are with Zuckerberg, I would think.

At the same time, the constant flux of the digital revolution is fascinating and you could argue, as Soulellis does, that we would do well to document it. Let this volume be a small contribution to the flood of data; let it be a drop of water in the sea of change. We are interested in text—no matter what form it takes and in what manner it reaches us. ■





Illustration: Kesaree Prakumthong





BEYOND BOUNDARIES

Books are not only words on paper (or screen).

There have been many experiments with books that
go beyond this most basic concept.

With digital developments it has become even easier
to move beyond the boundaries of the written word and
create new possibilities in books.

In this section are articles about books that
seek to be more
than
words on paper,
and books about new practices
that have been created
to develop
the book.







Breaching the Boundaries

An Interview with Visual Editions

By Elisa Nelissen

Student of Book & Digital Media Studies at Leiden University

In 2010, a new publishing house hit the market that aims to explore and defy the boundaries of the book. With 'Great looking stories' as their tagline, Visual Editions has published five books so far, using a storytelling technique founders Anna Gerber and Britt Eversen have dubbed 'visual writing'. I talked to editorial assistant Leah Cross about the publishing house, visual writing and the physical vs. digital debate.

Consisting of two new editions of already existing books, two entirely new works and one collection of maps, Visual Edition's portfolio looks quite varied at first sight. This is partly explained by the fact that the publisher does not have an in-house design team, 'as we like to work with different designers depending on what we're working on'. What ties it all together, however, is this notion of visual writing, which Leah describes as a combination of 'the written word and the aesthetic which surrounds it. It can alter a text in many ways by enhancing the reading experience visually and/or aesthetically.' Almost any text could be made into visual writing. '[S]ome may lend themselves to the aesthetic more than others, but ultimately there are so many interpretations of the written word that literature cannot be easily separated into two columns.'

Our books are
aesthetic and our
description
'visual writing'
breaches the
boundaries of the
traditional book.

In *Tree of Codes*, for example, author Jonathan Safran Foer literally cut a story out of an existing story (see Figure 1). The result is a book with 'holes', created with a die-cutting machine, in which you read from multiple pages at once. After a long search for a company that was up for the task, the book was

Fig. 1: *Tree of Codes* by Jonathan Safran foer





You can't lose track,
as there is no track.

printed by the Belgian Die Keure. One could worry that this technique intervenes with a continuous reading experience, but maybe that is not the point.

Tree of Codes is not designed and thought out in the same way a standard paperback is. 'Our books are aesthetic and our description 'visual writing' breaches the boundaries of the traditional book.'

Composition No. 1 by Marc Saporta, originally published in 1960, evokes a different kind of confusion (see Figure 2). The 'book' consists of a box filled with loose sheets, each with 'a self-containing narrative'. It is then up to the reader to form his or her own unique version of the story. 'There is a purpose of *Composition No. 1* to be un-bound: Saporta's intension was to create something which can be read in any order. You can't lose track with VE3 as there is no track.'

Maybe the visual elements can even help the reader, whose concentration is increasingly put to the test because of continuous distractions as a result of the digital age. Is it then easier to read books with visual aids? 'Isn't everything visual in some way? Even a Penguin paperback has a designer working hard to create the right cover, format, layout, font, etc. I think there is more to engaging concentration than the visual alone. It is indeed striking and of course it's engaging, that cannot be denied, but it's not that black and white. When thinking of a reader, there are many things which entice. Visual elements can complement a text and catch the reader's eye, but the writing and the subject matter also have to be enticing.'

What is more
important is using
both mediums
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each other, rather
than championing
one and acting
against the other.

Saporta's book was republished after his death in 2009. Another new edition of an older book is VE01, Visual Edition's version of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* by Laurence Sterne, originally published between 1759 and 1767. With all this experimentation, this may have been a safe bet, since the author was not there to give his veto and they could go their own way with the editing and design. 'In many ways it makes sense for a small company's first text to be public domain, and it can act as a foundation for future publications. We like to work with both reimagined classics and new authors, no preference there.'

While it seems that Visual Editions is all about the paper book, the digital realm is definitely not left out. 'In some ways I think we are making a case for the book, we create beautiful editions which can be cherished. However, I personally have always bought books and I'm not going to stop doing that just because someone invented the Kindle or the blog. We also create websites and apps to complement our publications, and I think what is more important is using both mediums to complement each other, rather than championing one and acting against the other.' For *Composition No. 1*, the publisher released their



firs—and so far only— app along with the book. The app allows the reader to randomise the pages in a much quicker and less tedious way than the paper version. Though Leah adds that the company is not necessarily focusing the digital. For their last publication, *Where You Are*, they created www.where-you-are.com, a beautifully crafted website which allows you to navigate the contents of the book. It seems that it is all about the right balance. ‘We like to branch out into the digital world when it works for us, and not confine ourselves to either print or digital publishing.’

The *Where You Are* website is open to everyone and the app for *Composition No. 1* costs a mere £2.99, which brings us to the next issue: that of price. It seems that the people at Visual Editions have understood that people do not like to pay for virtual things, but what about the physical ones? Are these highly customised and beautifully designed books not incredibly expensive? Well, no. Ranging between £15 and £35, the books are surprisingly affordable. This is especially so when compared to art books, similar in their function as cherished objects of which the materiality is of key importance. When asked whether they see their audience as design lovers or if it also includes the general public, Leah answers: ‘Someone in between, I suppose! We have a lot of admirers from the design world, but our books aren’t exclusive or elitist, they are for anyone who loves great looking stories. Does there have to be such a strict boundary between the two?’ The answer is, again, no. This is a refreshingly open and democratic view that highly prized (and priced), limited edition art books often lack.

In a review of Saporta’s *Composition No. 1* for *The Guardian*¹, Jonathan Coe lists a number of other visual writing books, such as B.S. Johnson’s *The Unfortunates*, which is suspiciously similar to Saporta’s book in a box, and Tom Philips’ *A Humument: A treated Victorian novel*, which is practically the same concept as Safran Foer’s *Tree of Codes*. Coe concludes that this proves ‘that there is nothing new under the experimental sun’. He continues by warning for ‘a frequent pitfall of experimental fiction,’ which is that authors often worry more about presenting an innovative form, rather than a well-

developed content.



Fig. 2: *Composition No. 1* by Marc Saporta



However, the great merit of Visual Editions' publications lies not in its originality but in the fact that 'at a time when so many publishers are in a panic about the rise of electronic formats, here is an object whose visual and tactile beauty simply cannot be reproduced digitally.'² And that is exactly what the publisher is about: finding the best suitable format to tell each story. In an interview with Bookseller,³ co-founder Anna concludes: 'What we've laid our foundations on is that it is an exciting time to give books a reason to be. Throwaway, three-for-two paper-backs probably do live better on the Kindle, but there is loads of potential for books that can only live as an object. It is as much about pushing the boundaries for physical as it is for digital.'

No worries about the future here; with an ambitious Don Quixote project in the making, it seems like there are still many boundaries to breach for the publisher. When asked if we should worry about the paper book, Leah simply replies: 'Maybe. I don't.' If more people would be thinking so innovatively about publishing, maybe no one should. ■



The Unlimited Artist's Book

By Paul van Capelleveen

Curator at Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague

As a curator in a library—the National Library of the Netherlands—I am supposed to buy books, not paintings, or drawings, or prints, or other non-book objects. However, when it comes to artist's books, I regularly buy objects that can almost not be identified as books, such as gilded etching plates, hand painted concertina screens, or even handkerchiefs.

The terminology of the artist's book is confusing. Essays on artists' books more often than not start with a failed attempt to define the subject, sounding like a deep sigh: 'The term artists' books is difficult to define,'¹ or: 'Es gibt keine verbindliche Form, noch existiert eine allgemeine Übereinkunft darüber, was denn ein Künstlerbuch letztendlich nun eigentlich ist.'²

The combination of the terms 'art' and 'book' became an issue in the 1970s, when people started to collect, exhibit, and write about the modern (American) artist's book, that has been around since the early sixties.³ The intentions of the makers, the production, and the distribution of these books diverged vastly from the older French tradition of the artist's book, that, up to then, was called the 'livre d'artiste', and went back to the 1890s.⁴ It took some time for people to realise that 'artist's book' was not a literal translation of the French term 'livre d'artiste', but rather the name of an entirely different phenomenon. The 'livre d'artiste' was a book that resulted from a collaboration between an artist and a writer (and, usually, an art dealer). The 'artist's book', on the other hand, was a work of art, that had taken on the form of a book, for which only one artist was responsible. The art of the book versus the book as art.

From this terminological intersection emerged an extravagance of new terms. The French 'livre d'artiste' could now be called a 'livre de peintre', a 'livre de conversation', or a 'livre de luxe', but, 'Le débat reste cependant ouvert.'⁵ And, after the 1980s, when new book types were published, the number of terms increased to include the





'livre manuscrit', the 'livre objet' (or even 'poème objet') and the 'livre-collage'. The American artist's book acquired new names as well, such as 'bookworks' and 'book art'.

The gap between the 'livre d'artiste' and the 'artist's book' has since been filled with a multitude of other book forms, and 'the rubric now covers the full spectrum from expensively-produced limited editions to inexpensive multiples.'⁶ The original boundaries between 'livre d'artiste' and 'artist's book' have disappeared.

With the rise of digitised book forms the term 'book' itself has ended up in an identity crisis, of which it has not yet recovered. A book that used to be a book—the Gutenberg Bible for instance—did not stop being a book. Its digitised versions were labelled e-books, but might deserve a radically different name, depending on the use(r). The book as an object versus the book as a virtual entity.

Collecting
artists' books
is adventurous
because of
these unsettled
boundaries
of art and
of the book

Book historians have discussed the possible expansion of the term 'book', as was already the case with 'text'. Text could be a printed page, an image, an oral communication, and even an object that transmitted meaning. The definition of the 'artist's book' is complicated, not only because of the term 'book'; the other word, 'art', is also elusive. What is art? Wikipedia (our man in the street) answers: 'Art is a diverse range of human activities and the products of those activities.'⁷ This is not very helpful.

What if we go one step further, and try to eliminate our understanding of the term 'artist's book'? Or, put differently: can we learn more about the artist's book by embracing its seemingly borderless existence? Can we define the artist's book by crossing boundaries? It is not unthinkable that I buy books that later will not be labelled as books at all, but as works of art. Or, it might be that I am buying art works that will not be seen as such (as art) by future generations; and there is always the risk that one collects objects that are neither art nor books. Collecting artists' books is adventurous because of these unsettled boundaries of art and of the book.

This being said, an audience immediately recognises the bookishness and the art qualities of an object in a library, even if it is a novelty kind of artist's book. And, as Johanna Drucker argued, 'the compelling quality of artists' books is the way in which they call attention to the specific character of a book's identity while they embody the expressive complexity of the book as a communicative form.'⁸ It implies that the book will reveal its visual, verbal, literal and metaphoric information in a complex way, and that the term 'reader' has lost its plain meaning. The reader has to be a viewer—and, reading and viewing at the same time, an interpreter is at work.

In a sense, every reader has always been a viewer, as the form of each character or series of characters (words and word sequences) has to be recognised. Words are images. The reader may not consider words to be images—the words make up a text. It should be born in mind that every text, for example the word 'tree', is actually a series





of signs (images), that transcend meaning. Other images, for example a photograph of a tree, do not have the advantage of a language-based system of interpretation to convey meaning. In a work of art, the personal intentions of the artist can obscure an objective significance even further.

In words, the meaning of 'tree' is well defined, although, the exact meaning may vary according to the situation. If the word is found in a work of art, a poem for example, the meaning can be less explicit. In art, in an image, significance always has this ambiguous quality, this uncertainty. The artist's book brings the two together and the reader—who at the same time is the viewer of an artist's book may struggle with the confusing fields of significance: text and image, while the materiality of the book brings to this a third field of significance. Paper, ink, structure, folding, binding, interaction of text and image: all these elements (may) have a meaning as well.

Book historians, art historians, librarians, and curators may have struggled over the terminology—because they needed terms and definitions for a thesis, a budget report, or a collection policy statement. The user of a library or the visitor of a museum, however, could not bother less. The viewer wants to enjoy the artist's book. That is, if it is on show. Apart from a terminological battlefield, there is the no-man's-land of the exhibition space with its glass cases where the artist's book cannot be shown to perfection. The viewer has access to two pages, or a cover (or a digitised version), and nothing more than a short description. The opportunity to handle the book is rarely given to the viewer, as the books are considered too fragile or, when they are expensive, liable to theft, however, it can be done. Usually a curator presents the objects to a limited number of people gathered around a table, and sometimes they will be allowed to handle a number of books.

The presentation intensifies the complexity of inter-woven meanings of text, image, and material. In a group setting, the number of possible interpretations of an artist's book is multiplied. The view of the 'reader(s)' and the curator (can) create a multi-level new concept of the book. A publication of these views will reach an even larger audience and thus a widened circle of interpretations is created. But even if only one reader/viewer examines only one artist's book, the number of interpretations is unlimited. The order of sensations may be different each time, the impact of the book is not fixed, and, as Ulysses Carrión stated, 'in the new art every book requires a different reading.'⁹

My role as an intermediary between the (artist's) book and the reader/viewer is focused on access, on giving opportunities to the reader. This is possible only if I restrain myself to showing the book and telling the artist's story of the book. In fact, the artist's story may be obtrusive, distractive, and perhaps should not be told. The question is:



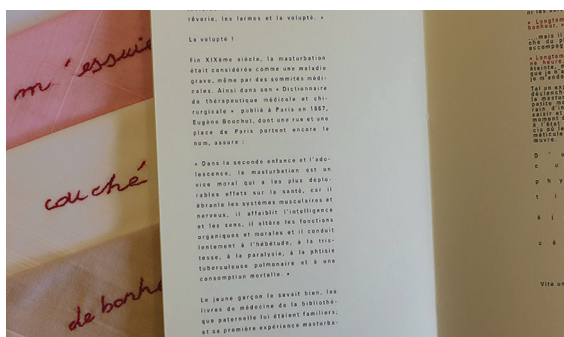
Fig. 1: The original etching plates for *Ilinx*, a book with text by Régine Detambel and etchings by Martine Rassineux, designed by François Da Ros.



Above, left: *Save Antarctica*, a hand-painted book by Nicole Morello.



Right, top and bottom: *Les mouchoirs de Proust* by Nicole Morello



how much do you need to know to be able to read and view the book? This can only be determined by the reader/viewer.

The 'books' that I mentioned in the first paragraph are contemporary works. The gilded plates belong to a unique copy of a book, *Ilinx*, with a text by Régine Detambel, and etchings by Martine Rassineux. The book was designed and printed by François Da Ros for Anakatabase in 2010. Figure 1, in a type case like wooden box, contains the original etching plates, which were made unusable by a layer of gold. For every





Anakatabase edition one unique copy is being made, usually for a library where a large collection of Da Ros's work is kept. The Koopman Collection holds an almost complete series of his books, including this unique copy.

The hand painted concertina screen is the work of Nicole Morello, published in Düsseldorf in 1998. Usually, Morello makes unique books only, but this time she produced an edition of thirty copies. The hand-painted book is called *Save Antarctica*, and it consists of thick paper pages that are pasted together to form a concertino book, showing hundreds of penguins on icebergs. The handkerchiefs, by the same artist, are part of a Marcel Proust edition, *Les mouchoirs de Proust*. Each copy contains a booklet and four uniquely embroidered handkerchiefs that contain an allusion to Proust's famous first sentence of *A la recherche du temps perdu*.

These factual comments may be enriched with a multitude of interpretations, and so much so, that the reader will be overwhelmed by them. One can practice the art of reading an artist's book with its combined skills of viewing, reading, and interpreting. However, reading is taught at school, like writing, but looking is not; perhaps it is time to add this discipline to the curriculum. ■

Notes

1. For example, J. J. Rossman, 'The Term Artists' Book', *Yale University Libraries*, n.d. <<http://guides.library.yale.edu/content.php?pid=17291&sid=4118526>> (accessed March 2014).
2. M. Glasmeier, *Die Bücher der Künstler. Publikationen und Editionen seit den sechziger Jahren in Deutschland. Eine Ausstellung in zehn Kapiteln* (Stuttgart/London: Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen: Edition Hansjörg Mayer, 1994), p. 11.
3. A famous example is Ed Ruscha's *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, published by his own National Excelsior Press (1963).
4. Often quoted is Paul Verlaine's *Parallèlement*, with lithographs by Pierre Bonnard, published by Ambroise Vollard (1900).
5. Syndicat national de la Librairie Ancienne et Moderne (SLAM), 'Livres de peintre', *International League of Antiquarian Booksellers*, n.d. <http://www.ilab.org/eng/glossary/443-livre_de_peintre.html> (March 2014).
6. J. Drucker, *Figuring the Word. Essays on Books, Writing, and Visual Poetry* (New York, NY: Granary Books, 1998), p. 175.
7. 'Art', *Wikipedia* <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art>> (accessed March 2014).
8. J. Drucker, *The Century of Artists' Books* (New York, NY: Granary Books, 1995), p. 359.
9. U. Carrión, *Quant aux livres. On Books* (Genève: Héros-Limite, 2008), p. 147.



The Book and Place, the Place of the Book

By Dan Visel

Cofounder of Unfold, and former researcher
at the Institute for the Future of the Book

Fresh out of college at the turn of the millennium, I spent a year in Rome, working on a magazine for tourists. I took with me a single book, *Ulysses*, thinking that I would finally have time to read it properly. I did; but I also found myself buying more and more books, most of them grievously overpriced at the handful of English bookstores in the city. I had the Internet while I was at work, though email was my primary use of it. Hearing from friends in New York and Boston, I had the feeling that I was living in some kind of cultural backwater. Exciting things were happening there: new books that I had to read, magazines that I could not get, new journals that were not making it out of States. And so I read, imagining what it would be like to discuss the new Jonathan Lethem in New York. I was on, I felt, the fringes of a world of letters that I wanted to be a part of. I was interested in Italy, of course, but the Italy I was primarily interested in was that of the past. Rome is not a place one goes to consider the future.

Looking back, the mindset I was in seems bizarre, even parochial. It is understandable in a certain sense: American publishing is (or was) disproportionately concentrated in New York. There are smaller centers—Minneapolis, western Massachusetts, once San





Francisco—but book culture in the U.S. is based in New York. I went there because I was interested in books; it did not seem like there was any alternative. Thousands of young people arrived in New York every year with the same idea; they still do, though the numbers may have dropped.

Arriving in New York in 2001 was paradisiacal, in no small part because of the book stores. St. Mark's had all the latest theory being mulled over by a clientele who seemed to care; the Strand had ancient hard cover editions of things I had always heard about, often for pennies. Shabby but pleasant used book stores were all over Manhattan. One apartment I lived in had five Barnes & Nobles stores within a twenty-minute radius: the selection was not good enough for a connoisseur such as I supposed myself, but it was easy to spend an extended lunch reading. The publishing world was there: I knew editors, agents, designers, illustrators.

Over the next decade, that changed as the publishing industry changed. Any book imaginable became available from Amazon, often as soon as you could think of the title, often for the price of shipping. Small bookstores closed, first the ones no one cared about; later, even Barnes & Noble would find itself on the ropes. That is not to say that book culture was not still happening: it was. New spaces opened up: but more spread out, on what had been the periphery of the city. iPods—which had appeared on the subways of New York a few months after I had—were replaced by iPhones and then iPads. People stopped reading newspapers in the subway; Kindles started appearing on the more affluent lines.

What I am describing is not the experience of reading itself, but the space in which reading occurs. In different ways, the book and the bookstore are places where this happens. There can be the same frisson of excitement when you discover a book on Amazon as when you pull it from a dusty stack; the same moments of revelation can happen whether you are reading from a scroll or a paperback or an iPad. (This is not, of course, to say that these experiences are the same: they are not. But that is a broader subject than I can take on here.) What happened in New York was similar to the experience of many people in the past decade: as attention shifted from the printed page to the networked screen, physical space seemed to recede in importance.

And New York's importance as a place for books shrank for me. Certainly I treasured dinners with old novelists, the pleasure of meeting someone interesting at a reading. But there was writing on the wall: cultural workers being forced to live further and further out, many giving up and heading to greener pastures. Publishing exploded, and people's understanding of book culture became increasingly atomized. The expectation that cultured people had read a certain book of the moment wore down with time, as one might

Books can mean
the pleasure of
interiority;
the flash of
understanding
that we are
not alone;
the understanding
to work our way
out of a situation.



expect: the Internet makes it possible to find exactly the sort of books we want (be they old or new), and, should you not have someone in the neighborhood who shares your taste in, say, minor Surrealist novels of the 1930s, it is easy to find someone online who wants to talk about them.

Where does this leave literary culture in New York? A cynical eye might paint it as more gossip than anything else, a record of who the hot young writer is, who did what at the latest party. It is entertaining enough, though it does seem to be played for embarrassingly small stakes. Too often what was being argued about in Brooklyn would mean nothing to those in Queens or the Bronx. Is there really the conviction that writing can change anything culturally? One wonders.

After twelve years of living in New York, I find myself in Bangkok: my wife, a librarian, took a job here, and I came along, shipping a few thousand books at ruinous expense. Bangkok is a city without much book culture: it is very difficult for most people to think of a Thai writer—any Thai writer—though it is comparatively simple to think of a Thai artist or filmmaker. (Certainly there are plenty of lurid memoirs and thrillers by Westerners about the city—but reading them one almost always feels they would make better movies.) Amazon does not bother delivering here.

But we do have the Internet. And in a strange way, Bangkok feels almost exactly like New York: everywhere you go, people are pointing smartphones and tablets at things to take pictures of them. The social networks are slightly different here—Line and Facebook rather than New York's Tumblr and Twitter—but the way they are used, like the games middle class workers play on their phones on the Skytrain, is not essentially different

It is what the image
of the book stands for:
a vehicle for
the transfer
of big ideas
and experiences



from the way they are used in New York. This leveling is not confined to reading: wandering the streets of Bangkok, you see as many 7/11s and ATMs as you do in present-day Manhattan.

I am not by any means claiming that Bangkok is devoid of culture: the city seethes with culture. But, by and large, it is not book culture. There are plenty of historical reasons for this: the lack, until relatively recently, of a large educated class; the persistent lack of





freedom of the press; the linguistic isolation that was a side-effect of not being colonised and a relatively peaceful history. What one can learn from Bangkok is that the road to the future does not necessarily proceed through books. The future is already arrived here.

What can we learn from this? I have my library: my unread books, were I to read them systematically, would keep me busy for years. And I have the internet: the arguments in New York are mostly available here at twelve hours' remove. I worry, sometimes, that I have not gone far enough. (In honesty, escape is no longer something we should think possible.) What about everyone else? Millions of other people in Bangkok are perfectly happy not having a library of their own, and this makes me wonder about my own relationship with books, culturally conditioned as it is.

Books are symbols. They can mean the pleasure of interiority; the flash of understanding that we are not alone; the understanding to work our way out of a situation. They can mean the beauty of a well-designed object. We connect them with our youth and self-definition. The form of the book has changed and continues to change. It is worth noting, of course, that the form of the book has never been more popular: maybe it took the threat of its disappearance to make the codex an object almost universally beloved. I love it as well, perhaps past sense.

It might be worth reflecting that it is not the form of the book that is most worth protecting. Rather, it is what the image of the book stands for, a vehicle for the transfer of big ideas and experiences. Any number of new forms can potentially accomplish this. But it's the already literate who are in a position to best take advantage of this: to analyse the bias of a post on Facebook without thinking about it, to find symbolism in the television drama of the week.

The book has been a force for change, although it is important to remember that it comes with high barriers to entry, though those barriers can be surmounted by almost anyone given enough time. We forget how long it takes to read: most of our education is devoted to learning to read in forms more and more specialised. New forms of media offer a useful immediacy that the book cannot match: a two-year-old can operate an iPad. What might be lost if we are not careful is what we have gained from books: how the book has transformed us, whether we realise it or not. ■





Search, Compile, Publish

Towards a New Artist's Web-To-Print Practice

By Paul Soulellis

Founder of Library of the Printed Web

This talk was presented at The Book Affair, at the opening of the 57th Venice Biennale, 30 May 2013 and published on Paul Soulellis' website. It is reprinted here with the approval (and encouragement) of the author.

I recently started collecting artists' books, zines and other work around a simple curatorial idea: web culture articulated as printed artifact. I began the collection, now called Library of the Printed Web, because I see evidence of a strong web-to-print practice among many artists working with the internet today, myself included. All of the artists—more than 30 so far, and growing—work with data found on the web, but the end result is the tactile, analog experience of printed matter.

Looking through the works, you see artists sifting through enormous accumulations of images and texts. They do it in various ways—hunting, grabbing, compiling, publishing. They enact a kind of performance with the data, between the web and the printed page, negotiating vast piles of existing material. Almost all of the artists here use the search engine, in one form or another, for navigation and discovery.

These are artists who ask questions of the web. They interpret the web by driving through it as a found landscape, as a shared culture, so we could say that these are artists who work as archivists, or artists who work with new kinds of archives. Or perhaps these are artists who simply work with an archivist's sensibility—an approach that uses the dynamic, temporal database as a platform for gleaning narrative.

In fact, I would suggest that Library of the Printed Web is an archive devoted to archives. It's an accumulation of accumulations, a collection that is tightly curated by



me, to frame a particular view of culture as it exists right now on the web, through print publishing. That documents it, articulates it.

And I say right now because this is all new. None of the work in the inventory is more than 5 years old—some of it just made in the last few weeks. We know that net art has a much longer history than this, and there are lines that could be drawn between net-based art of the 90s and early 2000s and some of the work found here. And certainly there are lines that could be drawn even further into history—the use of appropriation in art going back to the early 20th century and beyond. And those are important connections.

But what we have here in Library of the Printed Web is something that is entirely 21st century and of this moment: a real enthusiasm for self-publishing, even as its mechanisms are still evolving. More than enthusiasm—it could be characterised as a mania—that has come about because of the rise of automated print-on-demand technology in only the last few years. Self-publishing has been around for awhile. Ed Ruscha, Marcel Duchamp, Benjamin Franklin (*The Way to Wealth*), Virginia Woolf (Hogarth Press) and Walt Whitman (*Leaves of Grass*) all published their own work. But it was difficult and expensive and of course that has all changed today.

Lulu was founded in 2002 and Blurb in 2004. These two companies alone make most of this collection reproducible with just a few clicks. I could sell Library of the Printed Web and then order it again and have it delivered to me in a matter of days. Just about. Nearly half of it is print-on-demand, but in theory, the entire collection should be available as a spontaneous acquisition; perhaps it soon will be. With a few exceptions, all of it is self-published or published by micro-presses and that means that I communicate directly with the artists to acquire the works.





Besides print-on-demand, some of it is also publish-on-demand, and both of these ideas put into question many of our assumptions about the value we assign to net art, artists' books and the photobook. The world of photobook publishing, for example, is narrow and exclusive and rarified—it is an industry that designs and produces precious commodities that are beautiful and coveted, for good reason, with a premium placed on the collectable—the limited edition, the special edition, and even the idea of the sold-out edition. Controlled scarcity is inherent to high-end photobook publishing's success.

But many of the works in Library of the Printed Web will never go out of print, as long as the artists makes them easily available. There is something inherently not precious about this collection. Something very matter-of-fact, straight-forward or even 'dumb' in the material presentation of web culture as printed artifact. It is the reason I show the collection in a wooden box. It is utilitarian and functional and a storage container—nothing more than that.

So we have print-on-demand as a common production technique. But what about the actual work? What concepts on view here might suggest what it means to be an artist who cultivates a web-to-print practice? And how is print changing because of the web? Are there clues here?

The content of these books varies wildly, but I do see three or maybe four larger things at work, themes if you will. And these themes or techniques have everything to do with the state of technology right now—screen-based techniques and algorithmic approaches that for the most part barely existed in the 20th century and may not exist for much longer. If something like Google Glass becomes the new paradigm, for example, I could see this entire collection becoming a dated account of a very specific moment in the history of art and technology, perhaps spanning only a decade. And that is how I intend to work with this collection—as an archive that is alive and actively absorbing something of the moment, as it is happening, and evolving as new narratives develop.

So here are three or four very basic ideas at the heart of Library of the Printed Web. They are by no means comprehensive, and in each case the techniques that are described cross over into one another. So this is not a clean categorisation, but more of a rough guide. My goal is not to define a movement, or an aesthetic. At best, these

are ways of working that might help us to unpack and understand the shifting relationships between the artist (as archivist), the web (as culture) and publishing (as both an old and a new schema for expressing the archive).



Grabbing (and scraping)

The first category is perhaps the most obvious one. I call them the grabbers. These are artists who perform a web search query and grab the results. The images or texts are then presented in some





organised way. The grabbing is done with intent, around a particular concept, but of primary importance is the taking of whole images that have been authored by someone else, usually pulled from the depths of a massive database that can only be navigated via search engine.

So a key to grabbing is the idea of authorship. The material being grabbed from the database, whether it be Google or Flickr or a stock photography service, is at least once removed from the original source, sometimes much more. The grabbing and re-presenting under a different context (the context of the artist's work) make these

almost like readymades—appropriated material that asks us to confront the nature of meaning and value behind an image that has been stripped of origin, function and intent.

A defining example of a grabber project is Joachim Schmid's *Other People's Photographs*. Amateur photographs posted publicly to Flickr are cleanly lifted, categorised and presented in an encyclopedic manner. This was originally a 96-volume set, and this is the two-volume compact edition, containing all of the photographs. Removed from the depths of Flickr's data piles, banal photographs of pets or food on plates or sunsets are reframed here as social commentary. Schmid reveals a new kind of vernacular photography, a global one, by removing the author

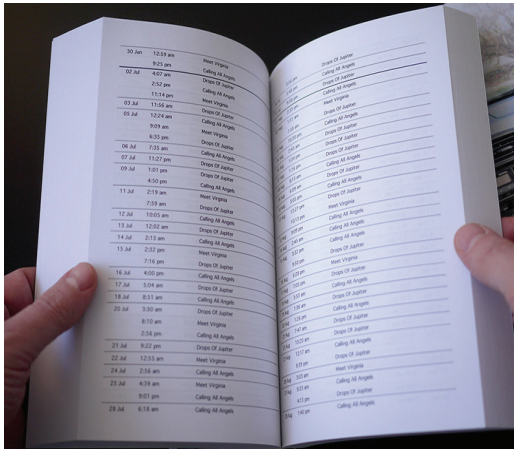


and reorganising the images according to pattern recognition, repetition and social themes—the language of the database. The work's physicality as a set of books is critical, because it further distances us from the digital origins of the images. By purchasing, owning and physically holding the printed books we continue Schmid's repossession of 'other people's photographs' but shift the process by taking them out of his hands, so-to-speak. This idea is made even more slippery, and I would say enriched, by it being a print-on-demand work.

Texts can be grabbed too. Stephanie Syjuco finds multiple versions of a single text-based work in the public domain, like Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* or Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (part of the installation *Phantoms* (H_RT_F D_RKN_SS)). She downloads the texts from different sources and turns them into "as is" print-on-



demand volumes, complete with their original fonts, links, ads and mistranslations. She calls them re-editioned texts. By possessing and comparing these different DIY versions as print objects she lets us see authorship and publishing as ambiguous concepts that



shift when physical books are made from digital files. And that a kind of re-writing might occur each time we flip-flop back-and-forth from analogue to digital to analogue.

If a grabber works in bulk, I am tempted to call it scraping. Site scrape is a way to extract information from a website in an automated way. Google does it every day when it scrapes your site for links, in order to produce its search results. Some grabbers write simple scripts to scrape entire websites or APIs or

any kind of bulk data, and then they 'send to print', usually with little or no formatting. The data is presented as a thing in itself.

Grabbing and republishing a large amount of data as text is at the heart of conceptual poetry, or 'uncreative writing', a relatively recent movement heralded by Kenneth Goldsmith. In conceptual poetry, reading the text is less important than thinking about the idea of the text. In fact, much of conceptual poetry could be called unreadable, and that's not a bad thing. Goldsmith tweeted recently: 'No need to read. A sample of the work suffices to authenticate its existence.'

Guthrie Lonergan's *93.1 JACK FM LOS ANGELES 2008* is a good example of a scraper project. JACK FM radio stations don't have DJs—the format is compared to having an iPod on shuffle. Lonergan wrote a simple script to download all of the activity of one of these JACK FM radio stations over the course of a year—the date, time, artist and the title of every track played—and presents it as a 3,070-page, five-volume set of print-on-demand books. The presentation of the data in bulk is the thing, and the project is richer because of it. Again, the questions at hand are about authorship, creativity, ownership and the nature of decision-making itself—human vs. machine. As Lonergan says on his site, 'Who is Jack? ... How much of this pattern is algorithmic and how much is human? You might begin to read the juxtaposed song titles as poetry.'

Chris Alexander's language-based *McNugget* project is another scraper, or so I thought. This work of poetry is a massive index of tweets containing the word McNugget from February to March 6, 2012, nothing more and nothing less. I was curious about how he did it—if he was a grabber or more of a scraper, if you will, and I asked him that directly. Here is his response:

Somewhere early in the process, I discussed automated methods of capture using the Twitter API with a programmer friend, but in the end I opted for the





manual labor of the search because I was interested in experiencing the flow of information firsthand and observing the complex ways the word is used (as a brand/product name, as an insult, as a term of endearment, as a component of usernames, etc.) as they emerged in the moment. Most of my work is focused on social and technical systems and the ways they generate and capture affect, so I like to be close to the tectonics of the work as they unfold—feeling my way, so to speak—even in ‘pure,’ Lewitt-style conceptual projects whose outcome is predetermined. Getting entangled with what I am observing is an important part of the process. At the same time, I think it is useful to acknowledge that much of what I do could be automated—and in fact, I use a variety of layered applications and platforms to assist in my work most of the time. Somewhere in the space between automation and manual/affective labor is the position I’m most interested in. [email 5/20/13]

So, his process is not automated. It is not scraping. But the potential to automate and this connection to conceptual art and predetermined outcome intrigues me—‘the idea becomes a machine that makes the art’ (Sol Lewitt). The art may be reduced to a set of instructions (like code?), and the execution is secondary, if necessary at all (dema-terialisation of the art object). So does it matter if the execution—the grabbing—is done by a human or a bot? Of course it does, but perhaps along a different axis, one that looks at this idea of entanglement vs non-interference. But that is another matter, one that I will not address here. I have come to suspect, after this discussion with Chris, that the distinction between grabbers and scrapers, on its own, is not so important after all. Without more information, it does not reveal anything about artistic intent or the nature of the object that has been created.



Hunting

So, let us talk about hunters. Some of the more well-known work in the collection is by artists who work with Google Street View and Maps and other database visualization tools. The work is well-known because these are the kinds of images that tend to go viral. Rather than grabbing pre-determined results, these artists target scenes that show a certain condition—something unusual or particularly satisfying. I call them the hunters. The hunter takes what is needed and nothing more, usually a highly specific screen capture that functions as evidence to support an idea. Unlike grabbers, who are interested in how the search engine articulates the idea, hunters reject almost all of what they find because they are looking for the exception. They stitch together these exceptional scenes to expose the database’s outliers—images that at first appear to be accidents but as a series actually expose the absolute logic of the system.





A great example of this is Clement Valla's project *Postcards from Google Earth*. He searches Google Earth for strange moments where bridges and highways appear to melt into the landscape.

They reveal a new model of representation: not through indexical photographs but through automated data collection from a myriad of different sources constantly updated and endlessly combined to create a seamless illusion;

Google Earth is a database disguised as a photographic representation.¹

Google calls its mapping algorithm the Universal Texture and Valla looks for those moments where it exposes itself as 'not human'. When the algorithm visualises data in a way that makes no sense to us, as humans in the physical world—the illusion collapses. By choosing to print his images as postcards, Valla says he is 'pausing them and pulling them out of the update cycle'. He captures and prints them to archive them, because inevitably, as the algorithms are perfected, the anomalies will disappear.

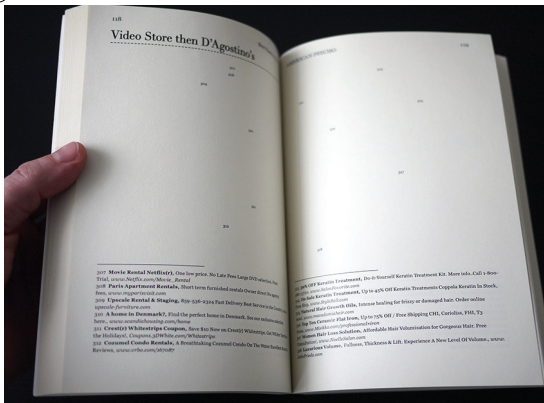
Performing

The remaining set of works in Library of the Printed Web is a group I call the performers. This is work that involves the acting out of a procedure, in a narrative fashion, from A to B. The procedure is a way to interact with data and a kind of performance between web and print—the end result being the printed work itself. Of course, every artist enacts a kind of performative, creative process, including the hunters and grabbers we have looked at so far. But here are a few works that seem to be richer when we understand the artist's process as a performance with data.

One of my favorite works in the collection is *American Psycho* by Jason Huff and Mimi Cabell, and it is performative in this way. The artists used Gmail to email the entire Bret Easton Ellis novel back and forth, sentence by sentence, and then grabbed the context-related ads that appeared in the emails to reconstruct the entire novel. Nothing appears except blank pages, chapter titles, and footnotes containing all of the ads. Again, another unreadable text, aside from a sample here or there. But the beauty is in the procedure—a performance that must be acted out in its entirety, feeding the text into the machine,

piece by piece, and capturing the results. It is a hijacking of both the original novel and the machine, Google's algorithms, mashing them together, and one can almost imagine this as a durational performance art piece, the artists acting out the process in real time. The end result, a reconstructed *American Psycho*, is both entirely different from and exactly the same as the original, both a removal and a rewriting, in that all that has been done is a simple translation, from one language into another.

My own practice is increasingly web-to-print, so I have a special, personal interest in





seeing Library of the Printed Web evolve in real time. It is too early to call it an anthology, but it is more than just a casual collection of work. I am searching for something here, a way to characterise this way of working, because these artists are not in a vacuum. They know about each other, they talk to and influence each other, and they share common connections. Each time I talk to one I get introduced to another. Some of the links that I have uncovered are people like Kenneth Goldsmith, places like the Rhode Island School of Design, and certain tumblr blogs where the work is easily digested and spread, like Silvio Lorusso's *mmmmarginalia*. I am curious—is anyone else doing this? Who is looking at web-to-print in a critical way, and who will write about it? I would like Library of the Printed Web to become a way for us to monitor the artist's relationship to the screen, the database and the printed page as it evolves over time. ■

Notes

1. <<http://rhizome.org/editorial/2012/jul/31/universal-texture/>>





Illustration: Kesaree Prakumthong





From PUBLISHER to BOOKSTORE

Books can not stand alone. They need institutions to create and distribute them. However, due to many changes in the

book market these institutions have been threatened.

Bookstores and publishers are finding that they need to adapt in order to remain a part of the book market.

The following section examines how publishers evolve to adapt to the changing book market and how bookstores strategise to avoid becoming obsolete.



Publisher and Scholar: An Interview with Wirt Soetenhorst

By Jamila Arichi & Colinda Verhelst
Students of Book & Digital Media Studies at Leiden University

Wirt Soetenhorst is the director of Boom Publishers located in the Hague. In 1992, Soetenhorst finished his PhD on the right of the publisher. Today he is working on his second PhD. His research focuses on the academic publishing industry in the 21st century, more specifically on the business- and innovation models that an academic publisher should use to sustain his position as a leading provider and disseminator of scientific information.

How did you end up in the publishing industry?

I actually studied law. When I got my law degree, I was entering the job market at a time when, just like now, it was very difficult to find a job. I already knew that I wanted to work in the publishing industry. Therefore I applied at Kluwer, but they didn't find me commercially enough. In addition I had no experience in publishing. I had written a scientific article on the protection of publishers. On the basis of this article I wanted to conduct further research for a PhD thesis. I knew I had an interesting topic. It was clear that if I did

an internship at the same time, I would gain a lot of relevant experience. I interned at Meulenhoff and Fuga. Ultimately Fuga offered me a job. That was in 1991. The trouble, however, was that I had not completed my PhD yet. Therefore I worked half of the time on my thesis, and the other half for the publishing house. I completed the manuscript in November 1992, I had written it in eighteen months, mostly on the weekends and during my work. The route I took into publishing was thus through internships and dissertations.

What is the added value of Open Access?

The added value of Open Access against Toll Access is, obviously that it is open. That means it is accessible to all. I used to think, 'Oh well, to anyone this must be very relative.' However, I have noticed the benefits of Open Access myself while doing research. When I started my research I thought, how do I get my information, because I cannot go to the library at the Mark Planck Institute. This is where I used to go, because at that time



it was the only institute where you had all of the resources! Today, you don't have to go there anymore. However, the most important added value is that it is open: this should not be up for debate, and it just needs to stay open. It is 'here to stay'. Moreover, I find that the added value of Open Access must be clarified by the publisher. The publisher needs to show what he adds to the first draft of the author.

When an author submits an article, or gets invited to submit an article, it is first reviewed by a board. Then it gets edited, reviewed and metadata are added. So a lot of things are done with it. One should understand that there is a limit to Open Access, in the sense that a publisher does all these things with the initial article, and therefore he is free to ask a fee for it.

The discussion should be turned around a little: the publisher should explain what he does. When Open Access is considered as one business model among others, then I see no problem with it.

What led you to do a second PhD in publishing?

I found that very little is written on scientific publishing in the Netherlands despite three of the greatest scientific publishing houses in Europe having their roots here: Springer, Kluwer and Reed Elsevier. If I write something about publishing, I want it to have a certain degree of validation. Wanting this validation, it makes sense to enter the field of scientific research. I got a position as an external

PhD in Maastricht.

I just wrote an article on the paradigm shift in juridical education, it was published by Cambridge University Press. The nice thing about this is that I try to apply in my job what I learn from scientific research.

Here at Boom we have two publishing houses, imprint Boom and in addition we have an imprint called 'Lemma' which

deals with the market of higher education. In the higher education market it can be seen that the demand for textbooks is plummeting. In any case the scientific publishing house has survived it all, while the internet by definition is trying to take out the role of the publisher as a communication intermediary. Even though Open Access is

changing this somewhat now. Publishers have embraced Open Access, and are all setting up their own platforms. What I research is how publishers are doing this, and what are the lessons the legal publisher can learn from this? I found that very little research was published on this in the Netherlands. There was a book written on this in 1986, called *Information about information* by van den Brink, a former minister and Elsevier man. In 1996, a book by Joost Kist, a former director of Kluwer appeared, *Biblio Dynamica*, on the information services of the scientific publisher. I figured that I would write the third book. However, my book will pay more attention to publishers of legal literature.

Publishers
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Open Access,
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own platforms



Do you think the problems scholarly publishers are dealing with are the same problems trade publishers are facing?

No, these are completely different markets. Our target market is either the scholar or the library. The libraries don't have the ability to spend much money, because of cuts in funding. Incidentally, with Open Access attention also should be paid to, for example, the public funds debate. Open Access is more nuanced than one would think.

On the contrary, the subscription model is much simpler, because it is not necessary for an author to search for funding.

The trade market is very different, as an overall market it is not innovative. The scholarly publishers were already busy innovating in 1994, when the internet was really starting to take off. With trade publishing houses this is still not the case. It is also important to consider that the situation for publishing houses globally is different than the situation in the Netherlands. Because in America for example, there are almost no bookstores left. There can be seen an increase of small specialised shops for lovers of specific genres. But the general book trade is really another story, it is simply not going well. While the scholarly publishers have to deal with much less regulation, the regulation in the trade market is very strict, which is very disruptive. So it really is a whole different market.

How do you consider the future of the scientific publishing trade?

The prospects for the legal publishing field in the Netherlands are not great. This is mainly because legal scholars in the Netherlands are not very high on the NWO priority list. I find this very unfortunate. In legal research and law school there are more parties than in the rest of the scholarly field. In the other scholarly fields there are publishers and scholars, and those two must work together, whether

they like it or not. In the legal field there is a third party, namely the participants from the practice field, lawyers, judges and prosecutors. This part is a vital share of the legal field. We earn our money not only in science, but actually more so in the practitioner field. This is a field in which I still have a lot of faith, cer-

tainly because we are a smaller and more specialised publishing house, I think the really big houses will have a harder time.

If bookshops are considered there can be seen an increase of small specialised bookstores for lovers of certain genres. I can see this happening in the publishing house as well. And make no mistake, the funny thing about publishing is, anyone can do it. Anyone can start a publishing house. The barriers to entry are very low. The success rate is, of course, not very high. But it could happen, just look at *PLOS ONE*.

PLOS ONE is a Gold Open Access publishing house. They started in 2006 and now have 30,000 publications a year in the

Instead of being pessimistic about earlier initiatives, we started up a new one.



biomedical field. It shows that the scientific publishing house is forever evolving. There is thus always a need for people who make sure that it is made accessible. I believe in the legal scientific publishing house and in publishing overall.

Boom Publishers launched Open Access Advocate in April 2014. What is the purpose of this platform?

In the legal market there is a discussion going on. This is basically the same discussion as in the academic market. Scientists say that they want Open Access, because the universities and their research are funded with public money. Law firms say the same thing. Lawyers are paid by the company they work for, however they write articles for free. But to use the information they have to buy the magazine. This is why one can see a similar movement in the legal professions as in the academic market: information needs to be freely accessible.

Three years ago a platform called Open Comments was established. It was an initiative started by large law firms at the Zuidas in Amsterdam. The reason for this was that these firms felt comments on legal articles and jurisdictions should be open and accessible for everyone. But not much came of this initiative. We figured it is two years later now, let us create a new platform. We have called it 'Open Access Advocate'. We put all the articles by lawyers in a magazine, and nine months later the articles are freely accessible. Instead of being pessimistic about earlier initiatives, we started up a new one. We experimented with it and we will see what comes of it.

Further, we found that there must be a

business model in dealing with the platform. We decided to use a combination of Green and Gold Open Access, which means we make all our own publications open. Other party publications are welcome on the platform. But when something new is offered, which needs to be edited and reviewed we do ask a fee for that.

On the one hand our platform is thus a reaction to other platforms that already existed. However, we also wanted to position ourselves as an inventive and bold publishing house, without immediately giving it all away. Because we have Open Access Advocate, it will not only get items that are placed in the depository by the scientists, but also get products of the lawyer. That is, on the one hand, of course, pretty scary, because that would mean that people can say: 'I will just wait for the articles to appear in the public registry.' However, it can also work out very positive as people say I want immediate access and I don't want to wait nine months. This reaction created our new model: not just a subscription but a membership. A Gold member has access to everything right away, while others have to wait.

What are promising initiatives, besides Open Access, in the publishing industry at the moment?

I strongly believe in showing what one does with semantics. Like the displaying of a semantic web in showing content in totally different ways. A part of that is of course the distillation of data, and that is exactly what everyone is talking about. So much can be done with it. A simple example I can give you is from our jurisprudence database. In that database we



add the names of the lawyers and judges to the cases. This means that a customer is able to look up which lawyer won most cases in a certain area. I believe that information like this is the publishing of the future. It is more about laying relations. Some of these relations we cannot even imagine using in the future. The same applies for scientific publications by scientists working at a hospital for example. It is going to be all about data, mainly about services originating from data. Developments in the science field are always ten to fifteen years more advanced than the developments in the legal field.

In the legal field it is only now that we are concerned with making a citation index, while in the scientific field, the discussion started on peer review tipping and on how we want to return to our roots. The root of legal publishing is education. My main concern is that we teach too little. There is still a strong pressure to give less education and to do more research. I hope we will see a contrary motion in the future with more focus on education.

I really believe in the development of platforms. We need more user-friendly ways to upload master theses and dissertations to depositories. This is still all very much in the early stages. STEM publishing houses no longer pay attention to books. The legal world is still very book oriented, so it is exciting to see what will happen.

What does the name Tablr Legal stand for?

Two years ago I had the idea that it should be possible to access all content on a tablet for a fixed amount of 15 Euros per month. Getting it on your tablet would mean you can read the content online

and offline. So we sent a letter to three hundred of our authors. Three out of three hundred authors signed up. This is only 1%, so maybe we were a little early. It could also be that laptops are still most often used and that the app is therefore less attractive.

Now we are seeing a two way movement. There is a search movement in the legal field. They want a great big database with everything in it where one can search for whatever he wants through all the resources. And on the other hand we see a read movement, which entails reading the downloads or books on a tablet. However the search is done somewhere else.

What we notice with our clients is that they find it strange that they have to pay for both the magazines as well as for Tablr. But from our point of view, these are different services. The magazines are placed in an aggregator, so it is readable online from a computer. However, if a tablet is used, the articles will also be read offline. There is thus a difference between those two, but the clients don't quite understand it. Having a business model is not the most important thing, aiming all the focus on having such a plan is a lost effort. Victor Tratch, a very clever businessman and founder of Biomed Central, once said: 'I do not think in models, I think in ideas'. Here at Boom we, for the moment, can still afford to do this. We execute an idea and see what comes of it.

In 2010 Boom started working together with Eleven International Publishing. What was the reason for this?

We can see that many of our authors publish in English. Publishers always have to make a choice: trade publishing and



thus no English-language scientific publishing or a scholarly publishing. I think that if a publisher chooses for the last one, then he should also publish in English.

At Boom we thought: if we limit ourselves to the Dutch market, we would be merely a distributor or a printer rather than a publisher. So we choose to be an international publisher. We now combine our list with international English authors with Dutch scientists. This way it has a little more cachet.

That was the idea behind it, but we have to really invest in it, because we have competition in the Netherlands: the biggest one is Kluwer, then there is the SDU (formerly the State printing company) and then there is us. Further, the market is very well organised and defined: universities, colleges, education, professionals in the legal market and the scholars. It is therefore important to find a specialty or a niche. For our English language publications we limit ourselves to the legal market and criminology. However, there are many providers for these markets. It is a tough market, but we want to continue to do it for as long as we can.

What is the next project on your agenda?

My next project is finishing my own research, with the help of professor Adriaan van der Weel. I want to get the legal and scientific community in the Netherlands a step further. I want them to be better organised, less reactionary and more aligned to international scientific publishing houses. We need much more cooperation in the interest of our customers. Today all publishers claim to be customer oriented, but specific custom-

er requests are all too often unmet.

I have written a piece for the *Legal Information Management Journal*. The article is based on a lecture I gave in November 2013, about how education has changed. When I look at the difference between when I started studying law in the early 1980s, and how it is now, I see that universities at the moment are very busy with e-books and online content. Universities are acting as publishers, which I quite like, but this means we as a traditional publisher should also be able to educate. So my second focus point is education.

We already teach, for example we started *Law at Web*. This is an online web-training, in this case for lawyers. Similar programmes can also be developed for students or for PhD candidates. We are seeing that the traditional roles are disappearing. This does not mean that publishers should fill up every role that arises. That is kind of the American principle of 'the winner takes all'. I, on the other hand, think that we should keep the more European thought: 'we are all in this together'. ■



Bye Bye Bookstore?

A Survey on Marketing Strategies of Dutch Bookstore Owners in the Digital Age

By Marian Spruit

Student of Book & Digital Media Studies at Leiden University

In November last year the results of the project 'Shopping 2020' were published. This was a large-scale investigation on the shopping habits of the Dutch consumer and how these will change by 2020. The research was based on a fifteen-minute questionnaire which was filled in by almost 12,000 consumers. Many corporations and institutions, such as Google, Rabobank, IBM, PostNL and ANVR participated. The results were surprising. During the last few years we have only heard alarming news about the disappearance of the physical bookshop. This study, however, presents a more nuanced image. Yes, consumers will order more and more products from the internet, but the pricing is not as important as we previously thought. Reviews by other users and delivery times also play a big role on deciding where to buy products. The most striking result in my opinion was that 9% of the people who buy online, experience stress because of the abundance of choices. 20% of this group stated that this leads them to purchase fewer products than they initially intended. There is thus still hope for the physical stores.

There were also some results which only concerned online book buying. 20% of the respondents said that they did not ever go to the store to buy a book anymore, but purchased it online. While 97% of the respondents who buy books online were very satisfied or satisfied with their book purchase. This sounds ominous for the physical book trade, and it gets worse. Whereas most websites of other products are only promoted by 20% of the consumers, the online bookstores are recommended by 35% of the purchasers. Only 12% of the book buyers surveyed actively dissuaded other consumers for using a website. 12% sounds like a lot, however, it is a small percentage compared to the online stores of other products (21% for shoes, 25% for telecom and 41% for sports gear).¹





The results of this research was good news for most retail branches, because consumers get stressed by the enormous number of products available on the internet and are more critical about their purchases. However, it is different for books, people are in general very satisfied with the books they bought online. So why bother to go to a physical bookstore? And in the long run: will there actually be an end to bookselling through physical outlets or can these institutions survive? I looked at several articles between 2010 and 2013 in the magazine *Boekblad*² to see how Dutch bookstore owners experience this situation. What do they do to increase or maintain their sales level?

There is a development in the thinking of Dutch booksellers from 2010 until 2013. In 2008 the economic crisis started. At first, booksellers did not notice the effects, but in 2010 there were already a few stores that had to close their doors. In interviews with the owners of these stores, external factors were mentioned as a cause for their bankruptcy. Not only did the economic crisis have a great impact, but also the local government and the location of the store were influential factors. The streets where many bookstores were located were not maintained well by the council and promises were not kept. Internet sales were only briefly mentioned or glossed over in these stories, but that would soon change.³

The first issue of *Boekblad* 2011 had the following heading: 'Bookstores and publishers have to tempt customers in order to achieve stable sales'. In this article, Journalist

Robertine Romeny discusses future possibilities for the physical bookstore. They should tempt the customers into buying a product, because often they do not come into the store with the intention to buy a particular book. According to Romeny, most people who have a specific book in mind will buy it online. In order to create a tempting environment the owners should broaden their stock by adding non-book products to their shelves. Only bookstores that sell gifts, wine, or CDs will survive the current crisis.⁴ Two years later, *Boekblad* provided examples of these new strategies. One bookstore sells board games, an-

The one
advantage that
physical
bookstores have
over
online stores:
a personal
touch





other DVD's and yet another reading glasses. There is even a company on the market which specialises in this new approach: 62Damrak Plus. The company can be hired by a bookstore to investigate the customer needs and what can be added to the shop in order to improve sales. One of the founders, Amin Usman, describes the five needs for a successful bookstore, namely: the physical shop, an online store, e-books, a suitable stock and catering.⁵ According to several interviews in the second issue of *Boekblad* 2013,

expanding the store's stock beyond books has both its pros and cons. The bookshops say that their clientele grew, but that the sales volume of the added product is not that significant. Also the employees have to acquire a lot of additional knowledge about these new products.⁶

Usman recommends an online bookstore over physical bookshops. But what does an online bookstore add if you cannot offer the diverse and vast range of large companies such as Bol, Amazon and Bookdepository? In the second issue of *Boekblad* 2012 four entrepreneurs discuss this. They suggest that an independent bookstore with an online shop should try to fulfil a regional role. In other words, the customers that visit the physical store should also

be the customers of the online shop. Of course an independent store cannot always deliver books for free. If this is a problem for the customer, they can suggest them to collect their books from the physical store and that of course is free of charge.⁷ This is not as appealing as a book being delivered to your front door, so the question if it will actually make any difference, remains unanswered.

Another solution for the decrease in sales is to economise on costs. Independent bookstore owners cannot easily increase their profit margins, because of the fixed book price policy. Still, there can be savings on lots of other things. In difficult times the bookseller has to be conscious of his purchasing costs and stock size. If there is only enough room for five books he should not buy ten. Also, staff and housing are costs that can be downsized. However, this solution has its limits. There is a limit to the amount of cost cutting that can be done, otherwise the quality of the service suffers.⁸

Not every bookstore owner is inventive. Most booksellers therefore use the easy measures that are discussed above. In my opinion these are not solutions, but work-arounds. In the past it was enough to have a store with books, the customers would come by themselves. Now booksellers have to advertise, pay close attention to costs and profit margins and they must have innovative ideas in order to attract new customers. These are difficult tasks for many booksellers who may lack expertise and knowledge in these fields.





The best advice I found in *Boekblad* is to create and maintain good relations with your regular customers. This will take a lot of effort and may not immediately produce results, but in the long run the customers will keep returning to the store because of the service and attention they receive. Some highly successful book traders gave examples of new approaches they were adopting. Martha Baalbergen (Boekhandel Van der Meer, Noordwijk) helps her customers with installing e-books on their e-reader or computer;⁹ Ad Peek (Boekhandel Van der Velde, Leeuwarden) arranges four to five dinners a year in his bookstore;¹⁰ Daan van der Valk (H. de Vries Boeken, Haarlem) posts new tweets and Facebook messages every morning, to inform customers about the arrival of new books and upcoming activities. Valk also organises contests in collaboration with local entrepreneurs.¹¹ This is the one advantage that physical bookstores have over online stores: a personal touch. A bookstore owner has to exploit this characteristic. So, every time a regular customer of the store buys a book in an online store, he should immediately get the feeling that he is lacking something. Only then the customers will return to their local bookstore.

The question that remains unanswered is: Should all bookstores survive? We have to consider that the Netherlands is one of the countries with the largest density of bookstores. Is it really a problem if some of them disappear? Is this not just natural selection? Only those entrepreneurs who can adapt their business to the new situation will survive. They show how a true bookseller should act. It is not just about the love of books, it is also about innovation and the entrepreneurial spirit. ■

Notes

1. The numbers came from a presentation by 'Shopping 2020' and can be downloaded from here: https://www.shopping2020.nl/view.php?action=view&Pagina_Id=57
2. 'Boekblad' the leading Dutch magazine for the book trade.
3. H. Jansen Morrison, 'Henk Thuis sluit boekhandel Krings in Geleen', *Boekblad*, 178 (February 2011), 24-25.
H. Jansen Morrison, 'Forse toename aantal boekhandelssluitingen in 2011: Hoge huren en andere redenen waarom boekhandels sluiten', *Boekblad*, 178 (September 2011), 9-11.
V. Elzinga, '2011 wordt het jaar van de verstandige sluiting: Natuurlijke sanering onder boekhandels zet door', *Boekblad*, 178 (February 2011), 9-11.
4. R. Romeny, 'Een vooruitblik op 2011: Boekhandel en uitgeverij moeten verleiden voor stabiele omzet', *Boekblad*, 178 (January 2011), 9-11.
5. R. Romeny, 'Non-books: de redding van de boekhandel?', *Boekblad*, 180 (April 2013), 16-21.
6. M. Dessing, 'Cd's, dvd's en spellen bij de boekhandel', *Boekblad*, 180 (February 2013), 16-21.
7. V. Elzinga & L. T. Vermij, 'De toekomststrategie van de boekhandel', *Boekblad*, 179 (February 2012), 16-19.
8. L. T. Vermij, 'De visie van Monique Cobben, boekhandelaar te Heerlen', *Boekblad*, 177 (July 2010), 12-15.
9. S. Kok, 'De visie van Martha Baalbergen, Boekhandel Van der Meer in Noordwijk', *Boekblad*, 178 (June 2011), 12-15.
10. H. Jansen Morrison, 'Klanten binden door diners in boekhandel', *Boekblad*, 178 (March 2011), 16-19.
11. R. Romeny, 'De visie van Daan van der Valk, boekverkoper van het jaar 2012', *Boekblad*, 179 (September 2012), 12-15.



Educational Publishing:

An Industry in Transition in the Digital Age

By Jocelyn Hargrave

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The digital age has incited a plethora of research on the 'literary crisis'.¹ A divide appears to have emerged: on the one hand, there are the enthusiasts who anticipate the demise of print books and who advocate the integrity and democracy of the electronic word; and on the other, those who envisage their co-existence. No matter on which side these academics reside, the common thread of discussion is the impact of digitisation on book culture. However vital, such research is of a theoretical nature, focusing more on the nature of book culture rather than on specific participants and processes within the publishing industry itself. Furthermore, very little research has been conducted into the Australian educational publishing sector, which is a disturbing discovery since, according to the survey into book publishers by the Australian Bureau of Statistics for the year 2003–2004, the sale of printed

educational books was A\$526.1 million of the A\$819.6 million worth of printed book sales as a whole.²

The neglect of data, both statistical and academic, indicates an assumption that educational publishing can be understood in light of academic and trade publishing scholarship. Such an assumption is

erroneous: educational

publishing operates within a separate sphere within the publishing industry; its acquisition of content, production processes, marketing, sale and methods of delivery—that is, the value and supply chains—are entirely different.

Publishers commission teachers and/or academics to write content in line with current state and territory curriculum; authors generally do not approach educational publishers independently with their manuscripts. Editorial standards tend to be more rigorous: the purpose of content is to educate

Multinationals still rely on a print–distribution business model, which is superfluous considering today's digital-first expectations.



students; therefore, educational publishers allocate equal importance to the accuracy of the content as to its saleability. The backlists of educational publishers are a vital component of their profitability: any revisions to a state's or territory's curriculum necessitate the release of new editions. Educational publishers' approach to marketing their titles is not customer-facing: their sales representatives liaise with teachers and academics in the hope of securing school or university adoptions respectively.

Therefore, the objective of this paper is twofold: first, to critically map educational publishing scholarship to date, particularly for the Australian market; and second, to reflect on an industry in transition, utilising the business theory of disruptive technology as a supporting framework. The Australian educational publishing industry is highly concentrated, mostly comprised of foreign-owned multinationals, peppered with foreign-owned and Australian small to medium-sized independents. Multinationals still rely on a print-distribution business model, which is superfluous considering today's digital-first expectations. Certainly, the nature of educational content is changing in response. Its disruptive future? Bite-sized hyperlinked journeys. How soon and effectively multinationals transition to a distribution-print model will determine their success in delivering digital-first content.

Critically mapping the state of educational publishing scholarship

Published research into the educational publishing industry is generally fragmentary—that is, analyses of the sepa-

rate areas, mostly academic and higher education; not the industry as a whole, including school textbooks. Internationally, for example, Michael Overdorf and Amy Barragree's prescient article 'The Impending Disruption of the Publishing Industry' discussed disruptive technology and how it applied to the publishing industry; however, it did not adequately consider the present and future state of educational publishing.³ John B. Thompson's *Books in the Digital Age* provided an in-depth investigation into the impacts of digitisation on educational publishing, though it concentrated only on academic and higher-education publishing in Britain and the United States.⁴ Similarly but more recently, Xuemei Tian and Bill Martin published research specifically regarding educational publishing, entitled 'Value Chain Adjustments in Educational Publishing'. While a significant portion of the article appeared to market the products of John Wiley & Sons, Pearson Education, Cengage, McGraw-Gill and CourseSmart, it did discuss instructively, albeit extremely generally for the higher-education market, how the form and supply of educational content are adjusting in response to technological innovation.⁵

Much of the research into the Australian market also appears to focus primarily on academic and higher education; very little exists for school textbook publishing. For example, Colin Steele, Emeritus Fellow at the Australian National University, has conducted significant research, though focusing on digital scholarly publishing and the state of Australian libraries;⁶ similar research has been published by Professor Jenny Gregory from the University of Western Australia.⁷ More recently, Jeremy





Fisher published his views on the state of Australian publishing in the digital age from not only a trade, reference and scholarly perspective, but also an educational publishing one.⁸ His pertinent appraisal of the latter contributes to placing the issues relevant to educational publishing to the forefront. My own research has an identical objective.⁹

Commentary from within the educational publishing industry exists, though the little uncovered certainly only begins to fill the gap in scholarship. For instance, Peter Donoughue, former managing director of John Wiley & Sons Australia, has discussed the digital challenges facing the educational publishing industry in the media and at industry conferences.¹⁰ Former managing director of University of New South Wales Press and now Honorary Professor in the School of Humanities and Languages at the University of New South Wales, Robin Derricourt's book chapter 'Book Publishing and the University Sector in Australia' discussed 'the position of book publishing from and for Australia's universities, and recent developments in this area'.¹¹ Ted Gannan, former managing director of Thomson Learning Australia (now Cengage Learning Australia), has expressed the importance of maintaining copyright in response to the proliferation of custom publishing and the perceived inevitable cannibalisation of textbooks.¹² Moreover, in late June 2010 the Australian Publishers' Association (APA) presented,

Students prefer
online sources for
bite-sized, non-linear
data gathering
and print-based
sources for
more in-depth
research

with the support of the Copyright Agency Limited (CAL), the 'International Digital Chat Series: Transforming the Landscape' that focused on the digital developments in the publishing industry, with some consideration given to educational publishing; three presentations—'Print on Demand', 'Publishing on Mobiles' and 'From Digital to Print'—by industry professionals from the United Kingdom and the United States.

The impact of digitisation on students—the end users of educational products, namely textbooks and multimedia—and their requirements and preferences should also be considered; however, limited research exists for both educational publishing generally and the Australian context specifically. For tertiary publishing, for example, Ziming Liu, from the School of Library and Information Science at San Jose State University, has analysed digitisation's impact on students' reading habits and their use of electronic resources in contrast to print, though his research pertains to the American market.¹³ Their conclusion: students prefer online sources for bite-sized, non-linear data gathering and print-based sources for more in-depth research.¹⁴ Similar research has been conducted by Mitchell Weisberg at the Sawyer Business School of Suffolk University in Boston, Massachusetts.¹⁵ A pilot study into the reading habits of children aged 7–12 was conducted by Sally Maynard, from the Department of Information Science at Loughborough University, England; the study revealed that half of





the children preferred electronic books, while their parents remained attached to print.¹⁶ For the Australian secondary-school market, Dean Mason and Bill Cope interviewed a group of Year 12 students as part of their research into Australian book production; however, their conclusions amounted to parenthetical comments in their chapter 'Australian Book Production in Transition', rather than a meaningful review.¹⁷ Nonetheless, their conclusions are still pertinent more than ten years later:

For the record, it is worth noting that a small group of Year 12 students interviewed as part of this research project, all agreed that they would prefer to pay for a book in a book shop than buy an on-line version, no matter what the cost differential might be. The underlying principle was not a cost or even a format preference issue, but simply that if something is available on the Internet, it is considered to be 'for free'. If a charge is attached to information found on the web, there is an automatic negative reaction to continuing the transaction.¹⁸

Looking more closely at educational publishing

Educational publishing is a sector within the publishing industry that focuses on publishing textbooks, student ancillary materials and teaching materials for the institutional education market, specifically primary, secondary and tertiary. Some educational publishers, such as Cengage Learning (via Gale, its reference imprint) and John Wiley & Sons (through its Online Library), also undertake scholarly

publishing, notably journal articles; however, monographs are traditionally published by the university presses, such as Melbourne University Publishing, or specialist publishers, such as the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO).¹⁹

Educational publishers rely on a well-used formula to produce, market, sell and distribute their products. For example, school publishers—that is, primary and secondary—work closely with teachers to ascertain how their own and their competitors' products fail (or otherwise) to provide what the teachers actually expect in their textbooks; they have intimate knowledge of the current and future curriculum of each state and territory; and they recruit experienced teachers and academics to write their textbooks and other multimedia products. With their knowledge of the market, publishers must decide on print runs with high-enough profit margins to make their projects worthwhile:

The average school text would sell 4000 copies per year and the average tertiary text 2500 ... successful texts in high-enrolment areas would usually sell 10 000 or more copies per year over a five-year period, or 20 000–30 000 over three years.²⁰

Publishers work closely with the production department to fine-tune budgets for each project, taking into account the projected page extent, artwork and text permission costs, author royalties, and editorial, typesetting and printing costs. Also, publishers decide on a publication date that coincides with the time when schools and parents purchase their books, which is usually around December. Once page proofs and marketing copy are available, sales representatives approach teachers to



sell the attributes of their own products in contrast to their competitors'. If successful, government schools and parents, as part of the school booklist system, will often approach textbook suppliers, such as Landmark School Supplies, in Victoria, who will order in bulk directly from publishing companies.²¹

Tertiary publishers adhere to a similar strict formula; however, rather than obtaining bulk orders similar to school publishers, tertiary publishers rely on university adoptions. This involves the textbook being 'marketed to professors and lecturers and sold to students'.²² The significance of this is that if a publisher decides to publish a first-year undergraduate textbook, the success or failure of that textbook is often determined by whether the publisher has successfully obtained the intended university adoption.

This well-used print-distribution formula is integral to the highly evolved processes that managers and other employees in established organisations utilise and depend on. Yet such dependence also becomes the seed of their failure, leaving themselves susceptible to disruption.

Relating disruptive technology to educational publishing

In *The Book is Dead: Long Live the Book*, Sherman Young argues that the future demise of the book can be largely attributed to book publishers:

The constraints by having to *print books* impede the potential inherent in writing and publishing them. Modern publishing is not about shifting ideas, it's about shifting objects.²³

Instead, Young believes that 'new technologies will save book culture'.²⁴ By divesting

content from its present form, the original intent of book culture can continue to thrive—the proliferation of ideas: 'Rather, the immediate future of the book can be assured (long live the book) by disconnecting the ideas from the object, removing the physical constraints of dead trees and building a future without the codex.'²⁵ Young's assertion that content will be divested from its material form is certainly pertinent for the educational publishing industry. It is an industry in transition in response to disruptive technological innovation: in the long term, moving from linear, highly illustrative long-form reading to bite-sized hyperlinked journeys.

Multinational publishers' traditional reliance on high profit margins has meant that they continue to focus mainly on publishing big textbooks with large print runs and high recommended retail prices. These big textbooks embody what Clayton Christensen terms 'sustainable technologies':²⁶ they maintain a rate of improvement in a product or service that customers already value in the mainstream market—that is, they improve on earlier versions while retaining the same, albeit enhanced, attributes.²⁷ They are evolutionary in nature. Pursuing high profit margins means that the titles the multinationals tend to cater for are the broader subject areas, such as science, mathematics and physical education—those with high student enrolments. Competition remains intense among the multinationals—such as Cengage Learning, John Wiley & Sons, Pearson Education and McGraw-Hill—and as the years have passed, these big textbooks have become more sophisticated in their typesetting: very little white space exists on the page as the margins often feature glossary



items, snippets of non-curriculum-specific facts, extra, non-essential student activities and curriculum-specific information. Where the body text does not occupy the entire page, photographs—often not vital to the understanding of the text, but mere ‘fillers’ to avoid white space—are inserted. Such sophisticated output, which consumers come to expect to be the norm, does not come cheaply—some textbooks feature hundreds of full-colour illustrations and photographs, most of which the multinationals do not own—and thus entraps the multinationals further in a print-distribution environment in their endeavour to publish bigger and better titles.

One other disadvantage in this cycle is that it leads to what Christensen terms ‘performance oversupply’: that is, multinational publishers’ efforts to remain ahead of their competitors result in supplying products that existing customers soon do not require.²⁸ During interviews I conducted in 2009 for my Master’s with an independent Australian educational publisher, Insight Publications, two very pertinent facts became evident: users of content considered the present prices for the big textbooks to be prohibitive, and they were less interested in textbooks with all the typographical bells and whistles. In regard to the latter, users, especially teachers, have expressed their preference for one- or two-colour textbooks with less illustrative and photographic material; that is, ‘downsized’ textbooks that focus more on the content

rather than on sophisticated layout.

Such ‘downsized’ textbooks symbolise independent publishers’ acknowledgement of, and movement towards, disruptive innovation: they provide new products or services with entirely different attributes that tend to appeal to customers from small or emerging markets (furthermore, their content can ideally transition

Multinational publishers' efforts to remain ahead of their competitors result in supplying products that existing customers soon do not require

to a digital-first hyperlinked environment). These technologies are referred to as disruptive because they do not ‘address the next-generation needs of leading customers in existing markets’.²⁹ They are revolutionary in nature. The quality of disruptive technologies is initially worse than that of their established, sustaining

counterparts; they therefore tend to underperform when introduced. However, they bring entirely new qualities to the products that ‘fringe’ customers consider valuable: they tend to be cheaper, smaller, simpler and more convenient to use.³⁰ For this reason, disruptive technologies are unattractive to the leading, established companies: the products are simpler and cheaper, which translates into lower profit margins; the products are developed in emerging or insignificant markets, which indicates low enrolment numbers; and most customers, from whom they derive significant sales, do not want or require them.

The ensuing problem for multinationals is that a significant disruptive niche becomes available to independent publishers: not only can the independents continue





to successfully publish textbooks catering to the smaller subject areas, which are not high earners historically and therefore not of commercial interest to multinationals, but they now also have an opportunity to pursue the broader subject areas. The independents' diminutive size and flexible structure enables them to alter their work practices in light of current and future trends. Producing 'downsized' textbooks enables the independents to respond almost immediately to users' requirements: provide content that appears significantly less homogenised and satisfy users' preference for less expensive textbooks. In this way the independents are able to compete directly and equitably with multinational publishers and therefore potentially appropriate the latter's market share.

Print versus electronic textbooks

During the seventeen years I have been working in educational publishing, the traditional delivery of content, particularly by the multinationals that dominate Australia's concentrated market, has not changed—that is, it is print-first and then distribute to customers. When I conducted initial research for my Master's in 2008, the multinationals' adherence to the traditional print-distribute business model for the school textbook market did not appear, at face value, to be either problematic or at risk; schools and parents continued to purchase print-based textbooks and their accompanying print and/or digital ancillary material (on CD).³¹ Students appeared to still prefer, and use, the physical characteristics of textbooks, such as their portability—textbooks can be accessed in a variety of settings, either indoors or outdoors, with no regard to battery life—their

ability to be easily, physically annotated and the convenience of quick referencing.³² Now this perspective is not clear-cut, particularly for more basic one- and two-colour textbooks, such as primary-school readers, with a range of e-readers and e-reading software available in the market and the in-classroom use of interactive whiteboards connected to the Internet. For such basic textbooks, publishers are increasingly releasing their content in digital form only; however, with the full-colour textbooks that feature elaborate typesetting and myriad artwork and illustrations, releasing digital-first content is a more complicated issue.

In regard to the tertiary sector, undergraduate students not only purchase their textbooks from specialised textbook suppliers, such as university bookshops, but they also rely on the used-textbook market and course packs supplied by their own university departments. In addition, they supplement their print-based sources, either purchased or borrowed from their own university's library, with online sources. Certainly, the Internet affords a seemingly unlimited amount of information, though often online sources cannot be verified to be either academically reputable or accurate. Fortunately, students can access their university's digital library via the Internet, from which they can locate print-based books, ascertain whether they are available to borrow and even place them on hold if they are presently being borrowed by another student. They can also access, for example, innumerable journals and newspaper articles for which their library pays subscription fees.

The former Federal Labor Government's 'Education Revolution', which included the objectives of spending 'one million





dollars per high school to allow every Australian student in Years 9 to 12 to have access to their own school computer' and of creating a national curriculum from Kindergarten to Year 12, enabled changing reading methods to be translated to the school environment.³³ For example, the notebook computers being acquired by primary and secondary schools do not feature CD-ROM drives. This has affected publishers by forcing them to desist from placing their ancillary material on to CDs (affixed to the inside cover of textbooks), and to release the majority of such material on to their companion websites. This would also be the case for those schools with interactive whiteboards.

One of the main functions of CD ancillary material is that its existence necessitates the purchase of print-based products—that is, the digital content ironically forces consumers back to print because they can only obtain the digital content on CD by first purchasing the book. If CDs were no longer produced in the medium term, the reason to purchase the print-based product might no longer exist—or, at least, be significantly diminished. The customer might be able to obtain a one- or two-colour, cheaper digital version by an independent publisher, with all the ancillary material also online, which can be downloaded or printed on demand.

In the United States, with its substantial student market, multinational publishers

have opportunities to successfully retain market share in the disruptive digital environment via CourseSmart, a digital clearinghouse of university textbooks.

CourseSmart, began supplying electronic textbooks (or e-textbooks) in 2008. Because of its affiliation with numerous educational publishers—such as Pearson Education, McGraw-Hill Higher Education, John Wiley & Sons and Cengage Learning—CourseSmart now offers thousands of e-textbooks from its website.³⁴ According to its

terms and conditions of service and use, students can subscribe to the service via the online or download model:

To access complete eTextbooks, you may either rent eTextbooks online from CourseSmart or purchase access code(s) from bookstores and other physical locations which you can use to access your eTextbooks.

Once you have accessed an eTextbook online, you have the ability to view it offline.³⁵

During the approximately six-month subscription period, students can view or download to one computer, depending on the model selected, any or all e-textbooks to which they have subscribed, print and/or copy and paste digital pages up to 150 per cent of the textbook's number of pages, create bookmarks and other personal notes, and receive a subscription refund if deemed eligible. On average, CourseSmart's e-textbooks cost 60 per cent less than a new printed textbook;³⁶ however, once the

Students appeared
to still prefer, and use,
the physical
characteristics
of textbooks



student's subscription expires, access to the e-textbook is no longer permitted—full copyright ownership therefore remains with CourseSmart and its affiliates.

Whether a student manages to save 60 per cent depends on the e-textbook product, price and the rental period. For example, the regular price for McGraw-Hill Education title *Exploring Exercise Science* is US\$136.00, while the reduced CourseSmart price is US\$77.44; therefore, the student saves US\$62.56. The rental period for this e-textbook is 180 days, or six months.³⁷ This is a significant saving for students; however, if the student requires this title for the school year, the rental costs increases to US\$154.88. In this case, it would be more economical to purchase the print textbook at full price and then sell it, if desired, on the used-textbook market. In contrast, the regular price for humanities title *Radio Drama*, published by Taylor & Francis, is US\$46.99, while the reduced CourseSmart price is US\$21.15 for a six-month rental period; the students saves US\$25.84. For an entire school year, the rental cost for *Radio Drama* would be US\$42.40;³⁸ therefore, it would be more economical to rent the e-textbook rather than purchase the printed textbook if the student requires is only for that year. Furthermore, CourseSmart provides unlimited rental periods for certain textbooks, most notably humanities titles, which is where the most significant savings for students resides. For instance, another McGraw-Hill Education title, *Read & Think English*, is available for unlimited rental for \$US19.99.³⁹

In the latter half of 2009, CourseSmart began 'offering e-textbooks for students on the iPhone and iPod touch. The platform consists of a free *eTextbooks for the iPhone*

application that interfaces with a student's free CourseSmart account'.⁴⁰ With this application, students can not only access the entire e-textbook from their iPhone or iPod touch (which is also now the case for the iPad), together with their notes, but also conduct specific word searches.

Despite the millions of dollars that Australian publishers can generate in educational publishing, the Australian market, in comparison to those of the United Kingdom and the United States, is insignificant;⁴¹ therefore, it is presently inconceivable, in my view, for such a service as CourseSmart to be viable. Such an insignificant market is characterised by a concentration of multinational publishers, such as Pearson Education Australia and Cengage Learning, and intermixed with small to medium Australian or international independents, such as Insight Publications and Oxford University Press respectively. Thus, the conundrum for the multinationals in Australia is how they can both retain their market share and regulate copyright ownership, such as through password-protected sites or future pay-as-you-go aggregation⁴²—though neither is foolproof against misuse—while conceding that the nature of reading is changing by releasing their digital-first content online, especially in a form that embraces hypertextuality.

Looking into the educational future

The design and typesetting possibilities of digital educational content are limitless and exciting. A 300-page Year 11 physics textbook that I edited in 2008 for Pearson Education Australia featured a chapter on cosmology. Accompanying a discussion of the Sun's rotation was a four-panel series of photographs that demonstrated the





rotation in two dimensions; almost half a page was dedicated to their inclusion. In a digital-first, bite-sized hyperlinked environment, a paragraph of content could be accompanied by an image of the Sun a little more than one-eighth of a page in size. Clicking on the image could link directly to a video, providing a three-dimensional perspective; it could be accompanied by authorial commentary and hyperlinks to further resources and sites; and students could electronically annotate sections of interest, if so desired.⁴³

Presently, adapting such possibilities across a multinational's publishing list in development exists in theory owing to the prohibitive upfront costs to manufacture educational textbooks. In reality, for this textbook whose print run was 3000, commissioning the illustrations and obtaining photographic permissions amounted to approximately A\$25,000; the offset printing cost just over A\$19,000; and the editorial, design and typesetting costs were more than A\$25,000. Taking all other costs not mentioned into account, the total manufacturing cost in the first year amounted to over A\$65,000. Furthermore, the estimated total production cost for this single title over the first three-year period was more than A\$100,000.⁴⁴ In a digital environment, printing costs would be eliminated while the balance would remain. The profitability of such sophisticated, highly illustrative and photographic textbooks is therefore measured over the medium to long term:

... the pay-off for educational titles is often slow in coming because course adoptions do not immediately follow publication. Cengage [Learning] Australia estimates that across its whole portfolio, sales within the first 12 months only account for about 30%

of the total across a title's lifetime.⁴⁵ Such profitability in the digital environment is also not guaranteed. Peter Donoughue confirms this:

... most publishers will want to protect their revenue base. Selling a book priced at A\$100 to 1000 students nets the publisher, after deducting GST and the 33.3 per cent bookseller discount, A\$60,640 in sales. Selling ten of the fifteen chapters at an average net price of A\$4.04 to those 1000 students will net only A\$40,400.⁴⁶

John B. Thompson argues in *Books in the Digital Age* that 'new technologies will enable publishers to reduce the size of the big textbooks and shift most of the illustrative material on to companion websites'⁴⁷—or, by extension, release digital-first content that can be accessed via desktop computers, notebooks or e-book readers, such as Amazon's Kindle (in greyscale) or Apple's iPad (in full colour); such conclusions mirror my own results from my Master's fieldwork, as abovementioned. For 'downsized' textbooks with minimal artwork and textual permissions, such considerations are possible. For more complex textbooks such as the physics one discussed above, however, until such time that multinational educational publishers are able to significantly reduce their artwork costs, such as by easing their dependence on illustrative material or delegating the responsibility to staff for their creation so that the organisation retains copyright ownership in both print and digital formats, and structurally transition to a distribution–print business model, they are not prepared to withstand future disruption: to embrace digital-first educational content delivery in a hyper-linked environment. ■



Notes

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Mescheryakov Publishing House

Books as Collectibles

By Ksenia Papazova

Student of Books and Digital Media Studies at Leiden University

Compared to many other publishing enterprises, this Moscow-based publishing house appeared out of nowhere. Launched in 2005 by a former vice-president of Rosbank, one of the largest banks in Russia, this small private publishing house managed to swiftly find its own niche on the Russian book market. The owner and the founder of the company, Vadim Mescheryakov, started a publishing house on surprisingly practical grounds: his wife wanted to find work after seven years of staying home to take care of their child. This was a chance to run a company of their own. At first, Mescheryakov planned just to give a hand to his wife in managing the company when needed, but step by step he got so involved in this business that he left his position in the bank in 2008 in order to fully devote himself to this new challenging activity. Needless to say, many of his friends and former colleagues were very skeptical about his chances to become successful, and they had a point. With no previous experience in publishing and few opportunities to enter a Russian book market saturated by

other publishing houses, his endeavour did not look very promising. Nevertheless, Mescheryakov was inspired by his dreams and followed his intuition as well as his literary taste. Finally, his business made net profits of eight million rubles on ninety-million-ruble sales by 2011¹ and now his publishing house employs 18 people and publishes 100-120 titles per year.²

Among its first published and noticeable titles was the book *La Science Amusante*—one of Mescheryakov's 'bestselling nonfiction titles for kids and teenagers'³—by the French journalist Arthur Good (1853-1928) who used the pseudonym *Tom Tit* for his works. This book together with *200 Best Works* by Herluf Bidstrup were successful enough to keep the business going.

At this point, it is interesting to mention that the book design in this publishing house is worked out under the direction of Vadim Mescheryakov too, its owner and editor-in-chief. Ironically, a publishing house with no history (it is only a decade old) made its name by creating and publishing a new series of books called



Kniga s Istoriej (The Book with History). This series consists of books appearing in print around the world in near the end of the 19th to the beginning of the 20th centuries. These books represent reprints from their originals (design, original illustrations) but usually with a special ‘vintage’ touch to them; the books are new, but they look very old and worn-out. What a reader can see contradicts what your hand feels: dirty spots and stains on pages (Fig. 1); traces of mould and water; damaged and glued together bindings. Indeed, these books look like they have a long story to tell their new readers. These ‘marks of time’

perhaps serve as a quality label for parents who buy these books for their children, reminding them of traditions of good quality literature.

The rounded corners of the half-cloth binding, and a slipcase in the same decrepit style as the book it contains are an interesting detail that contributes to the unique experience of reading, or just holding such a book and fingering it through. To correspond the original typeface of the books a new typeface called ‘William’ was used. Created by the Russian designer

Maria Doreuli in 2010 as a graduation project at the Moscow State University of Printing, this typeface is a modification of the classical 18th-century English typeface Caslon for Cyrillic alphabet.⁴

Children’s Stories from Dickens was the first book to open this vintage books series, printed as a reprint of the edition published in 1910 in England. Despite



Fig. 1: Dirty pages of a new book. Courtesy of the publisher.

being entirely new and ‘freshly’ printed in hardcover with bright pictures, this book has all the characteristics of a read-to-tatters book (Fig. 2). In fact, the whole series of these vintage books owe its birth to this 1910 English edition: when Mescheryakov’s staff saw this book, they were so impressed with the quality and beauty of this almost centenary volume that it was decided to reproduce this book in order to show its splendor to their readers. The response of their readers to the book was extremely favourable and





within three years, the publishing house published twelve books in this series. This 'vintage book' experiment did not pass unnoticed—some other Russian publishing houses launched similar products of their own.

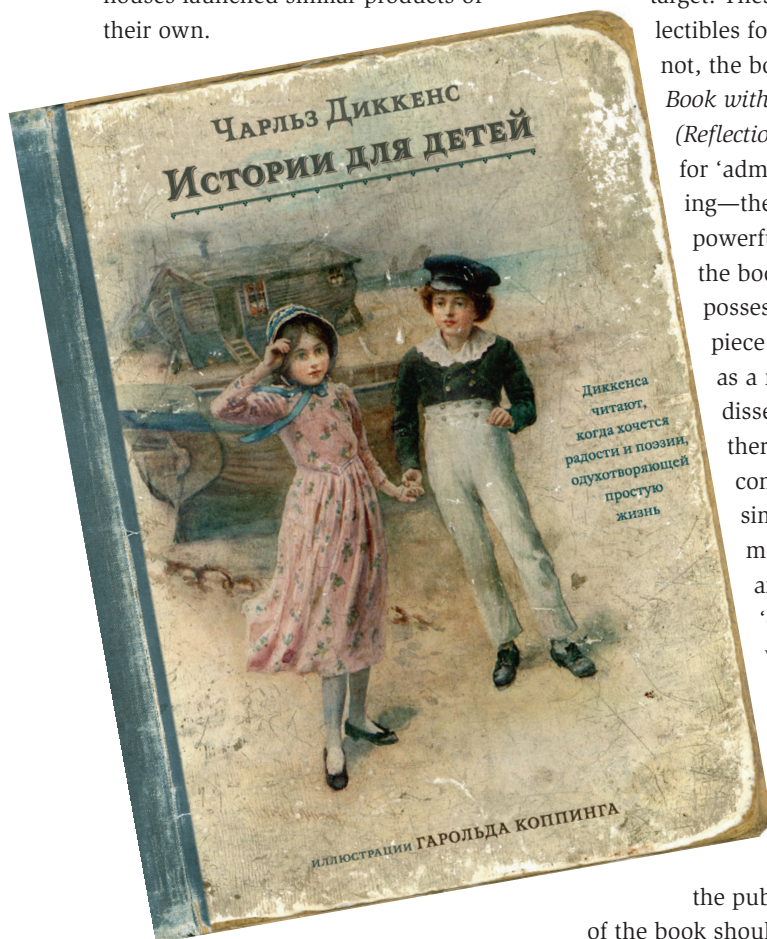


Fig. 2: It is difficult to distinguish the original book published in 1910 from its reprint published in 2010. Courtesy of the publisher.

The volume of copies published in this series may vary from 1500 to 3000 or even 5000 copies. However, as the publisher claims, there is no need to publish these books in greater volume because these

books are fairly expensive and, partially as a consequence, they are not meant for mass distribution—quite opposite, book-hunters and connoisseurs are their main target. These books are real collectibles for them. Intentionally or not, the books especially from *The Book with History* and *Otrazhenija* (*Reflections*) series are books more for 'admiration' than for reading—these editions have such powerful visual effect: these are the books that one wants to possess and they resemble a piece of art more than serving as a medium for knowledge dissemination. However, there is a certain turn in the company's policy to make simpler books that are meant primary for reading and cannot be seen just as 'decorative book-objects' which can be kept on bookshelves without being read'. However, it does not mean that from now on only 'visually empty' books will be published. As

the publisher realised the form of the book should not be more important than its content and the active and sophisticated design may be out of place or even prevent readers from adequate comprehension of the ideas of the author of the book. Rather opposite, 'a free space of a white page can be a much better frame for presenting the illustrations of prominent artists than original designers' mats and patterns'. This new vision and philosophy of the publishing house found its reflection





in a new series called *Bolshoe Illustrirovannoe Sobranie Sochinenij* (*The Large Illustrated Collection of Works*). Again the readers' reaction was very enthusiastic.

In this regard, it is also worth mentioning that the rebranding of *The Book with History* started last year and a new series of books called *Malaya Kniga s Istoriej* (*The Little Book with History*) was launched. The same content and design approach is used as for its bigger brother: the same fonts and bindings, the brand mats with

'dirty spots' for pages. What is different is its format: it is almost two times smaller and it makes the books more 'cosy' and easier to hold while reading (Fig. 3). Some other printing luxuries such as rounded corners and a cardboard slipcase were removed from the series, which resulted in a nearly 50% reduction of the retail price, but still these books possess the same 'charm of vintage' as the bigger series.

There were some attempts to experiment with electronic books and applications but 'we could not find anything interesting in this area'. And this is not surprising: the books with such a powerful visual and haptic appeal are unlikely to be thrust into the digital form. It may be

assumed that at the moment this is just the case when the all-mighty digital medium turns out to be powerless and unable to comprehend all the unique

characteristics of the physical object. And let's not forget about the smell of newly printed books either. Moreover, 'we strongly believe that many new generations of children will still use paper books and even the most perfect electronic medium will fail to substitute the sensation which paper books offer to us'.

To sum up,

here are the main series of quality children's books released by Mescheryakov Publishing House:

- *The Book with History* – pricey limited editions of classical works: some of them are published as abridged versions while others are not truncated and may contain explanatory commentaries). Among them there are such titles as: *The Happy Prince and Other Stories* by O. Wilde, *Alice in Wonderland* by L. Carroll, *Undine* by F. de la Motte Fouqué and many others;
- *The Little Book with History* (at the moment there have been 8 books published in this series: 6 of them are rebranded published titles from *The Book with History* and two are completely new).



Figure 3 *The Book with History* and *The Little Book with History* series. Courtesy of the publisher.



Figure 4: *Crane's feathers. Japanese tales* (2012) from the Reflections series. Courtesy of the publisher.

- *Reflections* – national fairy tales (Fig. 4) with classical illustrations by the French illustrator Edmund Dulac (1882-1953), the English book illustrator Arthur Rackham (1867-1939), the Swedish painter and illustrator John Bauer (1882-1918), etc. In 2011, this series of books was awarded a special diploma of the Russian book illustration contest 'The image of the book'.

- *Pero Zhar-Pticzy (The feather of the Firebird)* – classical children's literature with illustrations of the masters of the Soviet period and Russian prominent illustrators such as G. Kalinovsky, P. Tatarnikov, N. Kochergin, E. Rachev and others.

- *Kameshki (Little Stones)* – softcover books of tales for the youngest.

- *Masterskaja chudes (Workshop of Wonders)* – tales for older children.

- *The Large Illustrated Collection of*

Works – children's books written by famous Soviet authors such as Kir Bulychov, Vladislav Petrovich Krapivin and others; with explanatory commentaries and additional materials.

Printing beautiful and aesthetically 'right' sets of postcards was another novelty of Mescheryakov Publishing House. When

Mescheryakov came up with this idea, no one expected that his postcards would be in high demand. Perhaps Mescheryakov's success is a result of satisfying his own aesthetics and beautifully printed things which in turn conveys nostalgic feelings to people who cherish thumbing through collections of old postcards. Also, Mescheryakov Publishing House offers notebooks and other office supplies.

Today Mescheryakov mostly specialises in children's literature but also publishes non-fiction books and books for adults. The publishing house's mission is to publish excellent content with high-quality printing, even if it means a considerable rise in price. As Meshcheryakov puts it:⁵

We have forged a reputation for reliable quality and strong commitment to children's books ever since we launched our first title. Readers are aware of the





Meshcheryakov brand and know that our books are priced higher not because we want to exploit their love for our books, but simply because of the high cost of producing them.

The young Mescheryakov publishing house produces mainly for the Russian book market and its official website has only a Russian version.⁶ However, they have connections to several European publishing houses such as Hodder and Stoughton (UK), Salani Editore (Italy) and Prestel Verlag (Germany): 10 per cent of Mescheryakov's books are translations from foreign languages.⁷ Luckily for European readers, some of Mescheryakov's books in their original design were published in the German language by its

subsidiary company IDMI Verlag (Austria) (among them some books from *The Book with History* series).

While the history of Mescheryakov Publishing House dates back only a few years, its books have a recognizable mark of quality and design, and are loved by its readers. As Mescheryakov explained in one of his interviews: 'Who will remember V. Mescheryakov from Rosbank in thirty to fifty years? Nobody! But the books will remain'.⁸ What the future will bring is difficult to tell, as the fate of small publishing companies in this changing digital world is uncertain. Yet, Mescheryakov believes that there will always be a demand for children's books, especially for high-quality books. ■

Notes

1. 'Who will remember Mescheryakov from Rosbank in thirty-fifty years? Nobody! But the books will remain': Interview to Russian Forbes, April 15, 2011, n. pag. ('Кто лет через 30-50 вспомнит Мещерякова из Росбанка? Никто. А книги останутся', *Forbes*, 15 апреля 2011 <<http://www.forbes.ru/mneniya-opinion/66700-kto-let-cherез-30-50-vspomnit-meshcheryakova-iz-rosbanka-nikto-knigi-ostanutsya>>) (1 June 2014).
2. The information about the publishing house was provided courtesy of its editor, Aleksandra Kabanova.
3. T. Tan, 'Meshcheryakov on Cooking and Children's Books: Publishing in Russia 2012', *Publishers Weekly*, May 14, 2012, n. pag. <<http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/international/international-book-news/article/51944-meshcheryakov-on-cooking-and-children-s-books-publishing-in-russia-2012.html>> (22 June 2014).
4. The 'William' typeface can be found here: <<http://mariadoreuli.com/2012/02/02/william/>> (25 June 2014).
5. T. Tan, 'Meshcheryakov on Cooking and Children's Books: Publishing in Russia 2012', *Publishers Weekly*, May 14, 2012, n. pag. <<http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/international/international-book-news/article/51944-meshcheryakov-on-cooking-and-children-s-books-publishing-in-russia-2012.html>> (22 June 2014).
6. Official website: <<http://www.idmkniga.ru/>> (22 June 2014).
7. T. Tan, *Publishing in Russia: Special Report 2011* (Publishers Weekly, 2011), p. 12. (Also available via <<http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/international/trade-shows/article/46789-publishing-in-russia-special-report-2011.html>> (1 June 2014)).
8. 'Who will remember Mescheryakov from Rosbank in thirty-fifty years? Nobody! But the books will remain': Interview to Russian Forbes, April 15, 2011, n. pag. ('Кто лет через 30-50 вспомнит Мещерякова из Росбанка? Никто. А книги останутся', *Forbes*, 15 апреля 2011 <<http://www.forbes.ru/mneniya-opinion/66700-kto-let-cherез-30-50-vspomnit-meshcheryakova-iz-rosbanka-nikto-knigi-ostanutsya>>) (1 June 2014).





The Future for Foreign Publishers in Japan

Robin Birtle

Founder and CEO of Sakkam Press, UK

Each publishing market has an effective limit on the number of foreign language books translated and sold in print domestically. In Japan the figure is around eight percent of annual book sales and although a *Harry Potter* level event may nudge the needle a little, this figure is unlikely to vary by more than a percent. Given the Japanese print market is in steady decline, foreign rights teams are having to run harder each year just to stand still and publishers of all sizes are left scratching their heads when a strong seller in its home market flops in Japan.

Foreign rights deals in Japan are brokered by a handful of international agents whose expertise lies in handling contractual matters and arranging for a domestic publisher to take on a book. The international agent has little influence over the release schedule and marketing of the book and is in no position to demand from a publishing major an explanation for poor sales of a promising release. Foreign rights teams, several layers removed from the actual booksellers on the streets of Tokyo, have to accept that these deals are 'fire and forget'—take the advance and move on without looking back. I suspect that not even Lee Child was told why his first *Jack Reacher* novel is out of print in Japan. However, you can now join me on a virtual tour of a Japanese bookstore and see for yourself what is going on.

Virtual Tour of a Japanese Bookstore

Even gifted with the virtual ability to read Japanese you will find the layout of this store confusing. The Japanese equivalents of mass market paperbacks, *bunko*, are not





arranged by author name but instead are grouped by publisher. This peculiar arrangement is in place to ease the process of book returns to the distributor and certainly does not benefit Japanese consumers who, just like book civilians worldwide, think author name and not publisher when looking for a specific book.

Let's take a look at two big publishers which are active in bringing foreign content to Japan, Hayakawa Shobo and Kodansha. Your first thought might be that foreign authors are getting less than their 8% share of shelf space. Do not cry foul just yet, though, since that is simply not the case. Kodansha is much the larger of the two publishers and hence provides a better sample size. In our virtual store, as with the real ones, Kodansha sets aside a single section for foreign books and this is, indeed, around 8% of Kodansha's total *bunko* real estate. (See Figure 1. Virtual Kodansha). So far, so fair. Now take a look at which authors are being exposed to the consumer who is undertaking an ambulatory discovery exercise (or 'browsing' in print speak). Patricia Cornwall and Michael Connelly are up there but something odd is going on. Assign a score of 10 to an exposed cover and a score of 1 to an exposed spine to get a list of the ten foreign authors most likely to be discovered by a consumer browsing the Kodansha section.

Author	Discoverability Index
Tove Jansson*	90
Patricia Cornwall	76
Daniel Suarez	44
Michael Connelly	43
L.M. Montgomery*	20
William K. Krueger	15
Martin E.P. Seligman**	12
Aldous Huxley*	11
James D. Watson**	10
Armstrong / Jenkins**	10

This list is a snapshot but reflects a persistent problem for market entrants. Not only does a new author have to contend with contemporary giants such as Patricia Cornwall and Michael Connelly but also a panoply of ghosts of authors past. In the above list, the authors marked with an asterisk are dead and those marked with two asterisks are very much alive but make the list on the back of works published over a decade ago. Some new authors will benefit from posters, advertisements and book reviews in the national press but for many, the spine or cover of their book is the only publicity their literary effort will receive on initial entry to Japan. In the case of *Killing Floor*, the debut work of Lee Child, the cover art was entirely inappropriate for a fast paced thriller. A new book has a window of twelve weeks to perform on the shelves before being returned to the publisher and the publishers presumably do not care which authors succeed, provided some do.





Japan's emphasis on established authors is reflected in the term *rongu seraa*. This word, common in publishing parlance is derived from the English words long and seller and is a handy phrase to describe reliable, old book franchises which are guaranteed a certain amount of turnover. Just slap them up on the shelf, no publicity required whatsoever. Really old material will be out of copyright and, for foreign material, the translations are already in place. Anne of Green Gables, the gift that keeps on giving.

Hayakawa specialise in mystery and science fiction. Perhaps they have a different approach. Have a look at the Hayakawa display (Figure 2. Virtual Hayakawa), though, and you will see their shelves are also heavy with *rongu seraa*. The entire top shelf and a good deal of the second from top is handed over to dear Agatha Christie. Bless.

It is extremely difficult for an overseas publisher to get a publishing deal in Japan in the first place. But as we have seen from our virtual tour, even that is no guarantee of success since the odds are heavily stacked against new entrants to Japan. Does digital change anything?



Figure 1. Virtual Kodansha

What difference does Kindle make?

Amazon launched a Kindle bookstore for Japanese consumers at the end of 2012 after what appeared to have been difficult negotiations with the major Japanese publishers. Given that these major publishers remain half-hearted about digital, overseas publishers and authors could be forgiven for asking 'What has changed?'

For splashy releases from mainstream publishers, nothing has changed. Working through one of the international agents is still the most sensible option. These publishers have the best access to the top translators, a royalty advance will be paid and the book will benefit from the marketing activities and reach of an established organisation.

Outside of the mainstream, though, *everything* has changed. Before the arrival of Kindle in Japan, an overwhelming majority of overseas authors had absolutely no access to the Japanese market since they were unable to secure a deal through one of the international agents. Now, these same authors and their publishers can ask themselves a question which should terrify the army of digital foot draggers in the big Japanese publishers. The question is 'What business model will I use?'



Barbarians are at the Gate and these are their Business Models

The English-Japanese language pair is one of the most expensive when it comes to translation. Finding a way to underwrite translation costs is now the only barrier to reaching the Japanese market and business models are emerging that address this issue. My own company, Sakkam Press, has published under such a model and we are considering each of the following.

Author/ publisher funded. This is the simplest of the four. The author or publisher of the original English book commits to funding the translation.

Sponsorship. Under this model, a commercial sponsor unconnected with the book is found to underwrite the translation costs. For example, an airline may be interested in sponsoring the translation of a book that raises the profile of a particular country and may lead to more travel to that country. In another example, a Hollywood studio releasing a film that is based on a book may wish to ensure that the book is available in translation prior to the film's release in Japan.

Crowdfunding. Use a crowdfunding platform to spread the cost commitment across many readers.

Product-market fit. Most publishers acquire a book and only then do they start to market the book. To borrow a term from the technology world, the acquired book may not have 'product-market fit' with its intended audience. The standard approach can be turned on its head by engaging a potential audience in advance of committing to translate a particular title. Work with, say, a popular blogger to present a small number of sample translations from different titles to a potential audience. Ask that audience to tell you which of the samples they would consider buying if a full translation was available. The response of the audience will be a clear indication of which book is closest to having product-market fit.



Figure 2. Virtual Hayakawa



Access Agents

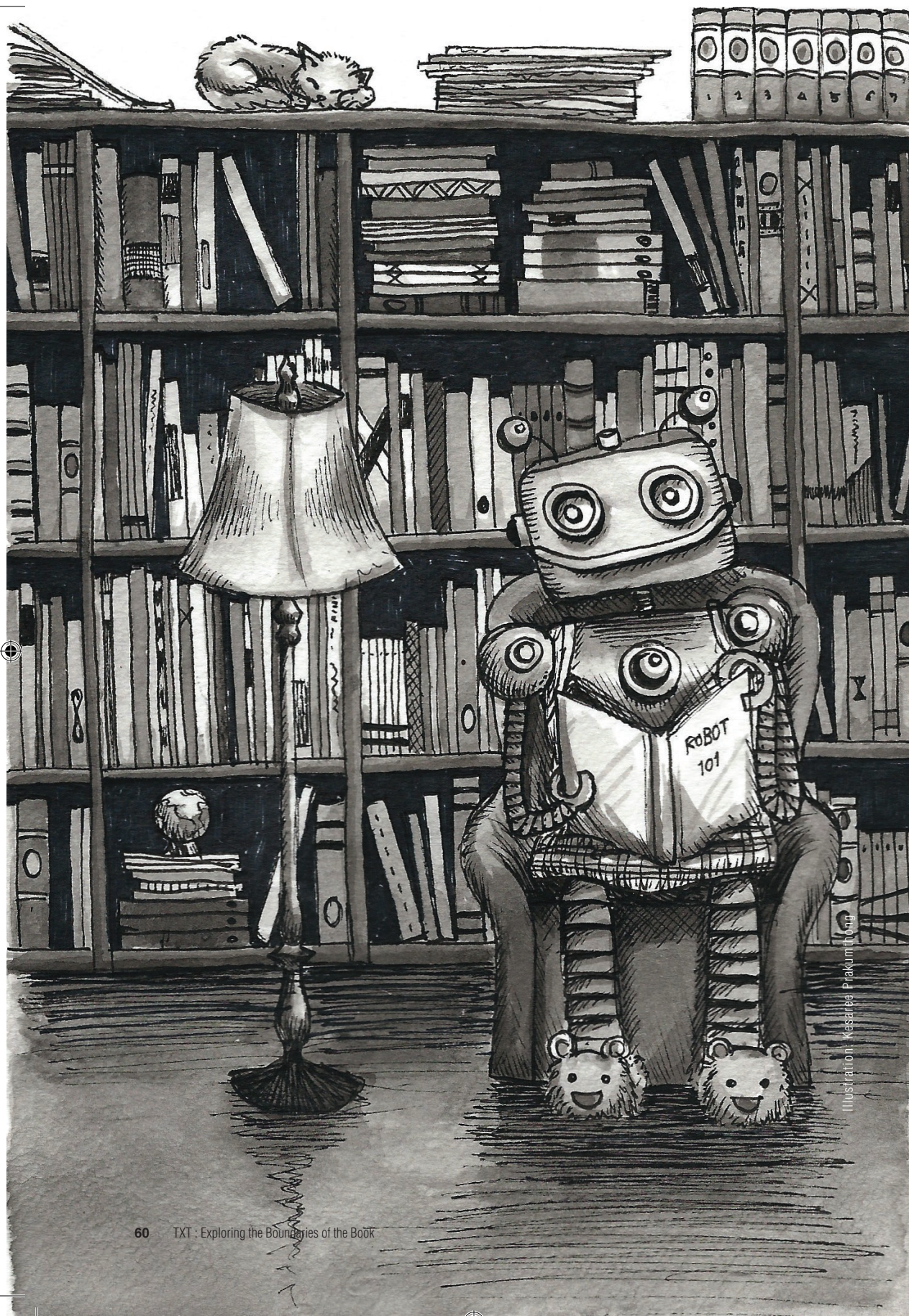
These new business models will lead to the emergence of *access agents* that will specialise in giving access to readers through marketing activities that build communities and facilitate reader-author interaction. There will be a shift towards commercial relationships that are not deal based but instead are based on a long term, ongoing relationship between author and access agent. The corollary of this approach is that the financial focus moves from the advance to both author and access agent being rewarded for nurturing a franchise over a period of years. Finally, the access agents will also undertake the role of trusted third party who ensures translations are not only accurate but are in keeping with the author's style and are consistent across a series.

Japanese publishing, in decline for twenty years, is badly in need of fresh ideas as to how to get Japan reading again. Overseas authors with little to lose may be the best placed to pioneer new ideas and business models. ■

Notes

This article is based on 'Why Foreign Bestsellers Often Fail in Japan', which was published in *Publishing Perspectives* in 2012







OPEN ACCESS & Other Digital INNOVATIONS

The way people experience books is changing.

With the digitisation of text the reading material available to us has grown exponentially. It is possible to read all sorts of texts on screen, from medieval manuscripts to the newest publications.

Changes in the medium from paper to screen have effected the way people read, access and own text.

The articles in this section discuss new concepts that digitisation has brought to reading, such as digital manuscripts, screen-reading, and open access.







The Costs of Visibility

By Peter Verhaar

Senior Project Manager, Leiden University Library and
Lecturer at Book and Digital Media Studies

The open access movement largely began as an idealistic and rebellious initiative led by researchers aiming to make inroads into changing the way the existing scholarly publication system operates. It developed, somewhat unassumingly, out of mildly anarchic acts of academics who reacted to the rising prices of journal subscriptions by sharing preprints on personal websites or by setting up semi-legal file-sharing servers. At present, however, OA is a subversive movement no longer, as the objective to provide unfettered access to research materials has become an integral part of the overall research infrastructure. Numerous governments, publishers and funding agencies have formulated open access guidelines, and have implemented various measures to stimulate compliance with these policies. While OA emerged originally from rebellion, any attempt to stop or to delay the rise of OA is clearly a case of civil disobedience today.

Until recently, publishing in OA was mostly a matter of choice for Dutch academic authors. Nevertheless, it seemed en route to becoming an inevitability in November 2013, when State Secretary Sander Dekker of OCW (the Dutch ministry of Education, Culture and Science) first announced his plans to accelerate the transition to full OA in the Netherlands. Dekker proposed that 60% of all government funded research should be made freely available by 2019, and also, even more ambitiously, that all Dutch publications should be fully OA by 2024. He added that when Dutch universities do not commit themselves sufficiently to these aims, publishing in OA will be ruled

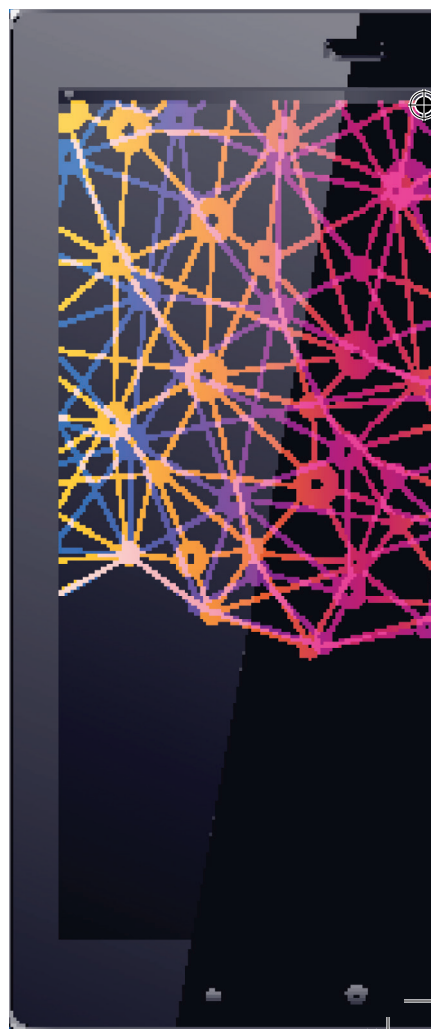


mandatory by law in 2016. With this planned policy, the Dutch government followed the example that was set earlier in the UK, where, in agreement with the recommendations from the 2012 Finch report, the RCUK stipulated that publicly funded researchers ought to make their full output openly accessible.

Advocates of openness generally claim that OA helps researchers to enhance their overall visibility. When scholars and scientists produce new knowledge, they usually aim to disseminate their findings as widely as possible, and with as little obstacles as possible, financial or otherwise. The subscription-based model, however, largely restricts the access to readers at well-funded universities, since prices of journals have risen to such an extent that they have become prohibitive for less affluent universities, or for research institutes in developing countries. Importantly, OA may be viewed as a democratisation of academic knowledge, as it makes publications accessible to anyone with an internet connection. Via OA, authors may also spur the adoption of results by institutes in the private sector. Independent research institutes, non-academic hospitals, and commercial law firms can clearly benefit from the results that accrue from academic research.

Next to these advantages for authors, it is clear that the removal of paywalls for readers also poses a range of difficulties for publishers. The traditional business model of academic publishers is based on the commercial exploitation of copyrights, and of the associated right to provide access to the results of the intellectual efforts of researchers. The revenue that is generated within this model enables publishers to provide a number of services which are clearly valuable within the broader ecosystem of scholarly communication. Lay-out editors, for instance, typically ensure that the text is presented in a clear and orderly manner, and that specific pages or fragments can be cited appropriately. Publishers generally manage technical infrastructures for the dissemination and the marketing of academic texts. Importantly, publishers also organise peer review processes to assess the quality of publications. Since, in the gold OA model, publishers cease to charge readers for the access to articles and monographs, they need to find alternative ways to recoup the investments needed for the provision of these services. To ensure the viability of OA publishing, publishers frequently make a transition to a model in which authors need to pay APCs to have their articles made publicly available.

In his letter to the Dutch parliament, Dekker expressed a clear preference for the gold route. This preference may be interpreted as an acknowledgement of the value of the services that are currently provided by publishers, and, simultaneously, as a concern for their continued existence. Gold OA, and the associated need to pay publication fees, has the disadvantage that it confront authors directly with the fact that the publishing process generates costs. Especially in the natural sciences,





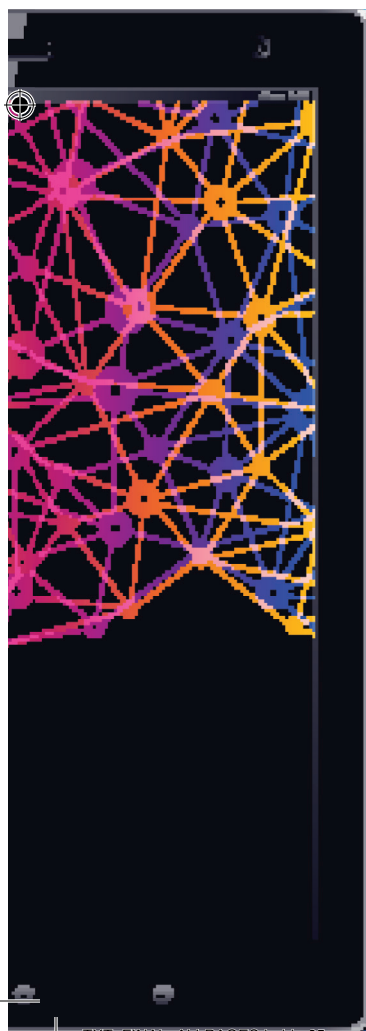
where APCs of more than 1,000 euros are not exceptional, these costs will place a heavy burden on the budgets of researchers. As such, they may also set a limit to the number of articles that can be published within a research project. Publication fees may also have the effect that publishing becomes the privilege of researchers who actually have a budget, as the payment of APCs will generally be difficult for amateur scientists, external PhD students or emeriti.

In his proposal, Dekkers had estimated that Dutch researchers collectively produce around 33,000 articles on an annual basis. If it is assumed that an APC costs 500 euro on average, which is arguably a low estimate, providing open access to 33,000 articles may amount to some 16 million euro in total per year. Evidently, not all journals require the payment of APCs, and, in the case of international co-authored articles, the publisher's invoice may also be paid by authors in other countries. While it is clearly difficult to offer a precise estimate of the expected costs, it seems clear that gold OA will have a considerable impact on the financial resources of Dutch institutes of higher education. The continued existence of hybrid journals, combined with the fact that the transition to open access is not coordinated on an international level, is likely to aggravate the situation. The vast majority of OA articles are currently published in journals which are subscription-based in principle, but which allow authors to make individual articles OA after the payment of APCs. Even when Dutch universities manage to make their

entire output available in OA, research institutions will still need to pay to receive access to articles emerging from countries without an OA mandate.

The transition to OA is also likely to demand investments of another kind. Given the current complexity of the OA field, it seems clear that any institutional support in managing OA can be highly valuable. Without local guidance, researchers will be forced to spend their valuable time learning funder requirements, understanding the intricacies of licences, and monitoring financial transactions with publishers. To encourage a more productive use of research capacity, it seems sensible to establish local research support offices which can develop expertise on a more continuous basis. Such staff members may advice and support authors, and may perhaps also manage contacts with publishers on behalf of researchers. In addition, a central OA team may also enter into negotiations with publishers about the height of publishing fees and about mechanisms for the collection of APCs. Managing OA is clearly a new task for many institutions, and funds will consequently be needed to hire and to train support staff.

Evidently, OA can also be implemented via the green route, which generally implies a scenario in which the published version of the article remains available to subscribers only, while the author is allowed to place a preprint of the accepted manuscript in an institu-





tional or a subject repository. This option is clearly attractive from a financial perspective. To a large extent, the infrastructure for green is in place already, and articles can usually be deposited free of charge. Nevertheless, a number of disadvantages are also connected to the green option. Repository-based OA does not generate any revenue for publishers. Assuming that services such as the design of the typographical layout and the organisation of peer review cannot be performed effectively by universities themselves, an extensive uptake of OA may eventually endanger the existence of such functions. At present, to minimise the effect of green OA on sales, journals frequently require long embargo periods, which may range from six months to two years or even longer. In disciplines that move fast, research papers may already have lost much of their relevance before the termination of the full embargo period.

In conclusion, two striking paradoxes can be observed in the current state of OA publishing. Firstly, while the movement began as a rebellious initiative, it has currently been transformed into an institutionalised set of objectives which are collectively supported vigorously by virtually all stakeholders in the world of academic publishing. A second paradox inheres in the fact that the OA movement arose as a reaction against the serials crisis. It initially aimed to reduce the overall costs of the scholarly communication system and to avoid unnecessary strains on the scarce financial means of universities. As was shown, the various financial challenges which are produced at present by the imposed transition to OA clearly thwarts this original aim. OA publishing may eventually be even more expensive than the current subscription system, especially as long as systems of subscription fees and publication fees coexist.

A focus on costs, however, may obscure the fact there is also a strong ideological aspect to the pursuit of the movement's central objectives. The declaration that was formulated as part of the 2002 Berlin Open Access Initiative explicitly stated that knowledge is a public good, and that, to advance science and scholarship, information and ideas must be allowed to travel as freely and broadly as possible. Still, while accessibility and visibility are obviously vital, they clearly come at a price. ■



It's Not Easy Being Green

Towards Truly Sustainable Books

By Linda Vermaas

Student of Book and Digital Media Studies at Leiden University

The publishing industry has not been left unaffected by society's concern for climate change; book production is now expected to be concerned with the environmental impacts of paper use and other aspects associated with publishing that can have a negative effect on the environment. 'Green publishing' has thus been an interesting development in the book industry, and many publishing houses have indeed adopted strategies to limit their contributions to climate change.

So far, these strategies mainly concern the amount, type and recyclability of the paper used for printing books. Some have, however, also claimed that new media, such as e-readers and e-books, contribute to a more environmentally conscious approach. Research, however, shows that digital devices may not necessarily be less of a burden to the environment than paper. The question thus arises whether publishing houses are right to refer to their digital projects in their attempts in green publishing, and in what way the industry could really become greener.

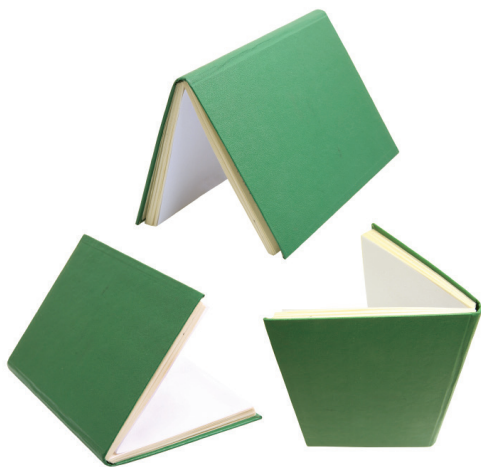
This paper will examine these questions, by analysing the environmental impact of both paper and digital books.¹ It will also be argued that it would be foolish to think that the solution to environmental issues in the book industry would lie in choosing either paper or digital, even though it is worthwhile to invest in e-reading more than is done now. It should be attempted to find a way to produce books with a valid concern for sustainability, which requires first and foremost a good insight into the environmental impacts, as well as including a concern for the environment into marketing strategies. An approach that will optimise the best of both worlds, and that includes governmental



policies, publisher's marketing strategies and technological developments will prove most effective, and may help the book industry to adopt a truly green way of publishing.

Current Initiatives towards Green Publishing

Green publishing is not new. Initiatives to make the publishing industry more environmental-friendly and durable have been around for several decades now. Already in 1996, the Recycled Products Cooperative programme was founded, which aimed at promoting recycled copy paper. From this very successful national program, the Green Press



Initiative arose, which is one of the largest and best-known initiatives in the field of Green Publishing.² This American association wishes to make book and newspaper production and consumption more sustainable.³ They have identified the following main issues that need to be resolved with regards to making these industries more environmental-friendly:

The impact on endangered forests

The source of all the printed materials, is to a great extent harvested in forests all over the world (Indonesia, Canada, South America) that are suffering severely from the enormous rate of deforestation. This has affected the wildlife, as well as the hu-

man residents of these regions, who depend on the forests for their livelihood. Unfortunately, a large portion of the trees is cut illegally, which complicates the effectiveness of any regulations regarding responsible harvesting. The number of species of trees is also dropping dramatically in some forests, which affects the habitat of wildlife in a very negative way.⁴

The impact on the climate

It is not well-known that the paper industry takes up the fourth place in the list of largest industrial sources of greenhouse gasses in the United States. No less than 40% of all the wood that is harvested is used for paper products. Undisturbed forests are able to store much more carbon than regrown forests. The gasses produced during manufacture also contribute to climate change.⁵

The impact on people

Deforestation also affects the local inhabitants. Especially in poorer countries, people are suffering from the industrial wood harvesting, as they are often forced to move, lose op-



portunities to harvest wood themselves, or hunt.⁶

The impact of the book and newspaper industry is thus large and wide-ranging. The question is of course, how these effects can be reduced. The Green Press Initiative has formulated an extensive list of actions as solutions to these issues.

The main focus should lie on the use of recycled paper, or paper from non-endangered forests, that bears FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) certification. Moreover, the absence of chlorine in the bleaching process can lower the amount of toxins used in the production of paper. To indicate this, another set of certificates was introduced: PCF stands for processed chlorine free; TCF for totally chlorine free, and ECF for elemental chlorine free. Ideally, less paper would be used altogether. Furthermore, vegetable inks (for instance, soy based) are to be preferred to petroleum inks. Climate impacts can be reduced by offsetting greenhouse gas emissions⁷ and limiting energy use in offices. To achieve these goals, the Book Industry Treatise on Environmentally Responsible Publishing was introduced, which was signed by more than 220 printers, publishers and paper manufactures in the United States.⁸

The above is thus a good example of how paper and printing can become more environmental-friendly. These initiatives have proven very successful indeed: FSC paper is used ever more, as is recycled paper (between 2004 and 2007, the use of recycled fiber increased by 600%).⁹ And in total, the industry reduced its emissions with over 25 % between 2006 and 2010.¹⁰

Table 1. Environmental Progress Reported by Paper Manufacturers

Source: Milliot, 'Keeping te Green in Publishing', <<http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/manufacturing/article/58373-keeping-the-green-in-publishing.html>> (17 January 2014).

Environmental Metric	2006	2010	% Change
Total Paper Consumption	1,763,698 tons	1,159,000 tons	34%
Average Recycled Content*	5%	24%	380%
Percentage of FSC Certified Paper	<5%	16%	>320%
Industry Greenhouse Gas Emissions**	12,400,000 metric tons	9,009,190 metric tons	-27%

*Estimate based on average for printing and writing sector

**Scope 1 and 2 Emissions, Inclusive of forest carbon loss. Source: Book Industry Environmental Trends

Therefore, although we must not forget that publishers may represent themselves as 'greener' than they in fact are in order to satisfy society's concern with climate change, responsible paper use has become an issue that the industry can no longer ignore.

However, these figures are influenced also by an increase in digital publishing in the form of e-books.¹¹ Many people have indeed found here a solution to the impact of paper





for book production; technological developments eliminating paper and printing are presented as the only way to produce and distribute books, and e-books are thus promoted as the solution to the industry's struggle to become greener. *Het Boekenschap*, a Dutch website that promotes self-publishing, claims to contribute to sustainability by sending mail digitally, and stimulating the use of e-books.¹² Another Dutch website, devoted to Green Publishing, also advertises e-books as the greener choice.¹³ This thus sounds like a fairly straightforward solution to overcoming the environmental issues concerned with paper and book production: we simply need to go digital. Unfortunately, there are many indications that the solution is not quite that simple: the environmental impact of digital reading devices needs to be assessed and compared to that of paper; in other words, if the production of these devices causes as much or even more harm to the environment than the production of paper and books, the optimistic numbers reporting a trend towards sustainable book production may be nothing more than misleading, as the cause of non-sustainable book production would only be transferred from the book industry to the technology industry. In the second chapter, we will compare the impact on the environment caused by printed books to that of e-books, e-readers and tablets.

It's not Easy being Green: Paper vs. Digital

E-books are widely advertised as the 'greener' choice in books. The main arguments for the environment-friendliness of e-books rely mostly on the fact that for the consumption of e-books no paper is needed, and the above downsides and environmental impacts of the production of paper books are thus avoided. Furthermore, transportation of books in a digital fashion is less of a burden to the environment than the use of trucks and freight trains to transport paper books.

However, the production and use of e-books is to be reckoned with as well before we can be certain that reading digitally is 'greener' than reading printed books, and many people have started to doubt the initial support for e-books as sustainable options for reading books. Furthermore, several studies have been conducted to assess the carbon footprint of e-books, and the comparison indeed does not yield a straightforward answer in advantage of e-books.

Even though no paper is required for the production of e-books, the production of e-reading devices is not exactly environmentally neutral. Only a few companies, such as Apple, have given insight into the carbon footprint associated with tablet production, and therefore much remains unknown about the production process of these devices. Nevertheless, it is clear that the use and mining of rare metals, the poisonous gasses that are released during production, and the minimal recyclability of these electronic devices are a serious problem with regards to the environmental-friendliness of e-books.¹⁴

Besides the impacts of production, which is responsible for the largest part of the carbon footprint of e-books, e-readers also require electricity to be operational. As in many countries, such as





the United States of America, electricity is produced with the help of fossil fuels, reading digitally becomes even less harmless.¹⁵ However, it must be said that e-ink screens are less burdensome in this respect, because they only use power to load a page, and not to display it, as their screens are not back-lit.¹⁶

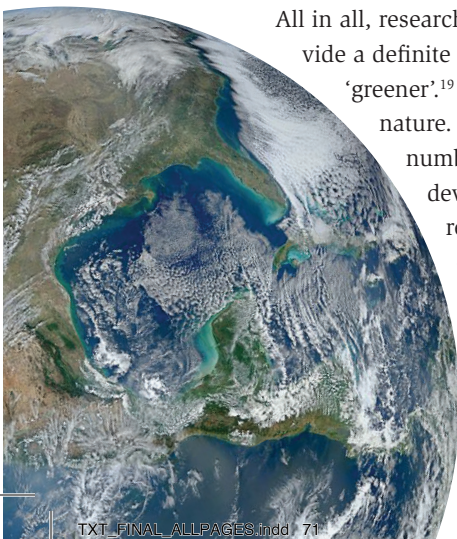
On the other hand, it has been observed that, as with reading a paper book, a light is needed for reading from an e-ink device at night.

Though studies do not consider this factor, because technically it is not regarded as pertaining to the environment, we must not forget the impact on the people who produce these devices. As with paper, local inhabitants are suffering from the production of e-readers as well. It was recently in the news that a shockingly high rate of the employers of the factories in China that produce Apple's iPhones and iPads, committed suicide.¹⁷ Though this may be an avoidable effect of the production of e-readers, it still is a factor to be reckoned with when examining the impact of e-reading.

Another factor in the comparison between the paper book and its electronic counterpart, lies in the extent to which recyclability is an option. With paper, as we have seen, this is increasingly done, but electronic devices such as e-readers and tablets are hardly recycled at all. Plastic is a difficult material to reuse, and these devices are not collected systematically for recycling.¹⁸ Moreover, as e-readers and tablets are still being improved and developed, new features and better devices are released every year, which results in a shorter lifespan for these devices. This adds to the environmental impact as well. Finally, people use different devices for reading books, and besides e-readers, tablets, computers, laptops and smartphones are used for reading. Owning three devices obviously has a greater impact than owning just one. In that sense, one could argue that e-readers are quite unfriendly to the environment, because most people already have other devices that can be used for reading books.

All in all, researchers are still struggling to acquire the necessary data to provide a definite answer to the question of whether paper books or e-books are 'greener'.¹⁹ It is difficult to compare two mediums that are so different in nature. In general, it is assumed that the decisive factor lies with the number of books that are being read, and the amount of time the device is used per day. If the e-reader is used frequently, and replaces the acquisition of paper books, e-reading will in the end be 'greener'. The limit generally lies somewhere around

Even though customers
now usually go for
the cheapest option,
this may change once
their awareness
of sustainability
with regards
to books and reading
rises





twenty-five to thirty books (or ten books per year, with the device having an average life-span of three years), which is in line with the reading pattern of an average reader, and with this number of books being read on the device, the carbon footprint of e-reading becomes smaller than that of buying this number of paper books.²⁰ When the iPad is used, e-reading produces a lower carbon footprint than reading paper books when the device is used for two hours per day.²¹ Whether e-reading is indeed more sustainable, thus depends on how much you use your e-reader, and whether you use it exclusively, or also purchase paper books.

Thus there is still much more research that needs to be done before a definite verdict can be given regarding the question whether e-reading is better for the environment than reading printed books. A number of factors are crucial: how many books one reads on the e-reader, what type of e-reader is used (e-ink versus backlit screen), etcetera.

Moreover, we should realise that it is highly unlikely that either form of reading will completely disappear in the near future, and thus, instead of asking which is better, we should rather focus on the question how to benefit from the particular strengths of both modes of reading, in a way that appeals to the customer. It is with these questions that the final chapter will be concerned.

Towards a Greener Future

How are we to envisage a development towards truly green publishing? With the above facts, a number of steps can be identified which will help to make the best of both worlds: the printed book and e-books. These questions will be discussed from the perspective of the situation in the Netherlands.

First, we need to have a good insight into the developments regarding e-reading in order to establish what will be the best way towards a greener future, as it depends on the popularity of digital reading whether the most sustainable option is to focus on developments in the e-reading sphere. As it stands, e-books and e-reading are indeed becoming increasingly popular. In 2012, 1.1 million e-books were sold in the Netherlands, which means an increase of 75% compared to 2011. Printed book sales dropped with 7,3% in the same period, with 43,5 million books being sold.²² Moreover, there are four million tablets and one million e-readers in use at this point in time, which means that approximately a third of the Dutch population owns an e-reading device.²³ However, printed books are still the main focus of the book industry.²⁴ It is thus likely that e-books and p-books will continue to exist side by side for many years to come, if not forever, but there is a clear trend towards more e-reading, and less p-reading. We should thus not focus solely on the question whether paper books or e-books are more environmental-friendly, but should rather find a way to find a balance between the two to achieve the most sustainable outcome possible. Nevertheless, as tablets are becoming increasingly popular,²⁵ it would be wise, from an environmental perspective, to put more eggs in the e-book basket, than in the p-reading one, as in the latter options for increased sustainability are already widely available.



It should be clear that the least sustainable option is to provide both a digital and a paper edition of a single book, which brings along the environmental impacts of both for the production of a single title. Still, this is what usually happens, as titles are published in different formats, as hardback, paperback and e-book. Sometimes, a combination deal is even offered, where buying both the e-book and the p-book is the most attrac-

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tive option.²⁶ The problem with providing only a digital version of a book, from the publishers point of view, however, is that e-books have a lower profit margin than paper books; even though the costs of paper are absent in the production process of e-books, publishing e-books brings with it other types of costs, which do not make an e-book necessarily cheaper to produce. These aspect include conversion costs, database storage, and DRM contributions.²⁷

An additional difference between paper books and e-books is the VAT rate; taxes on paper books are only 6%, but 21% on e-books in the Netherlands. A final obstacle for publishers to make publishing e-books alone for certain titles a profitable undertaking, is the mindset of the customer; many people are not willing to pay the same amount of money for a digital file as they would for the physical object when it

comes to books.²⁸ How can these obstacles be overcome?

First of all, the policy regarding the higher VAT rate should be changed. In fact, the European court is investigating whether e-books should be promoted from a service (high VAT rate) to an actual book, which is a cultural product (low VAT rate).²⁹ France and Luxembourg already have a lower VAT rate, and it is likely that European legislation will be altered.

The attitude of the customer is perhaps more difficult to overcome in order to provide publishers with a motive to produce certain titles as e-books only.³⁰ However, with the rise of public concern for environmental issues, it may simply be the case that the book industry can profit from this current awareness. This requires a certain marketing strategy that would make the most of environmental concerns. For instance, an estimate of the levels of CO₂ that were necessary to produce the item could be displayed by websites such as Amazon and Bol.com. This at least provides the customer with more insight into the environmental impact of books, which is always the first step towards a greener future. The same goes for e-readers and tablets. Even though customers now usually go for the cheapest option, this may change once their awareness of sustainability with regards to books and reading rises.



As we have seen, e-reading can outdo paper books with regard to sustainability when the number of e-books read rises above approximately twenty, and thus, as the popularity of e-reading is rising, customers should be motivated to buy as many e-books as possible. This means that bulk deals, or discounts on the purchase of multiple e-books should be provided, which have indeed started to appear more frequently during the last few years. It is likely that these offers will be popular, as readers are already acquiring e-books in bulk illegally.³¹ Of course, a way should first be found to stop this type of crime in order for publishers to make a reasonable profit margin.

The source of all the
printed materials is to a
great extent harvested
in forests all over
the world
that are suffering severely
from the enormous rate
of deforestation

A particular sector for which e-reading would most likely be a more sustainable choice, is that of schools and universities. Here, students are required to purchase a great number of books, and especially for this specific group of readers, e-reading is unequivocally a more sustainable option than the use of paper textbooks.³²

Therefore, though there are some additional conditions that need to be met when the impact on the environment is compared to paper books, the claims for a greener

future with e-books can indeed become true, but the book industry is not yet exploiting e-reading as the greener choice in an adequate way.

However, by and large, paper editions are still the dominant mode of reading, and it is not realistic to assume a paperless future altogether. To overcome the issues attached to paper books, as well as the common problem of overproduction, printing on demand can prove promising. It is not only more sustainable because no more copies are produced than are sold, but also because with traditional offset printing, much paper is wasted during the initial preparation of the presses.³³ If the paper used for printing on demand is from recycled and sustainable forests, printing on demand is the way to go for a truly green future for the printed book.

Another necessary step towards sustainability is to invest in making the production of technological devices more environment-friendly. Initiatives are now still quite rare, but they have proven very successful (one can think of the 'FairPhone', which was sold out almost immediately after its production was announced).³⁴ The average production processes of tablet and e-reader, however, are still lagging behind with regard to sustainability.

The publishing industry can thus contribute to a more sustainable future for books, but many elements for a truly green way of publishing are out of their hands, such as the VAT rate, the production of e-reading devices and the willingness of the customer to make green choices. Moreover, more research is necessary to establish the environmental impacts of all forms of reading that are current right now. But even though we are trying



to put our finger on a moving target, and many question still remain, the primary factor in whether the future for books will be a green one consists of the awareness of the public, and the willingness of both customer, publisher, the technological industry and the authorities to take sustainability into account.

Conclusions

The publishing industry is faced with a challenge in its efforts to become 'green'. The developments towards digital reading complicate these attempts even more, and further research is required for an accurate estimate of the impacts on the environment of all types of reading that are currently available.

Producing a paper book, however, is as yet far from sustainable; forest devastation and the amount of greenhouse gasses released in the production of paper and the transportation of books makes the industry a great contributor to global warming. Fortunately, the paper industry has started to resolve some of these issues by developing recycled paper and paper from responsibly grown forests, which, if this becomes the norm, can make the book industry significantly more sustainable.

With the advent of paperless reading in the form of e-books, many have seen a solu-



tion to the environmental concerns of the book industry. However, the production of e-reading devices such as e-readers and tablets, is far from sustainable, as rare metals and poisonous gasses are part of the fabrication process. However, when the carbon footprint of paper books and e-books are compared, e-reading proves most sustainable when approximately thirty books are read on the device, which is in line with the average reader's consumption pattern. Especially considering the popularity of e-reading devices (tablets and e-readers) and e-books, investments should be made to take advantage of these developments in order to make the book industry as sustainable as possible.

To achieve this, publishers should change their habit of publishing a paper edition





together with an e-book of a single title, and should try to produce more titles only in e-book format. In order to help publishers make reasonable profit margins, authorities should lower the VAT-rate. Moreover, customers should be made more aware of the environmental impacts of reading, and the technological industry should be required to produce in a more sustainable fashion. Printing on demand should be the default mode of book printing, and education in particular should make more use of digital reading.

All in all, green publishing is still work in progress, but if cooperation between authorities, publishers, technological industries and customers can be accomplished, the future of sustainable publishing is predominantly digital—and very green indeed. ■

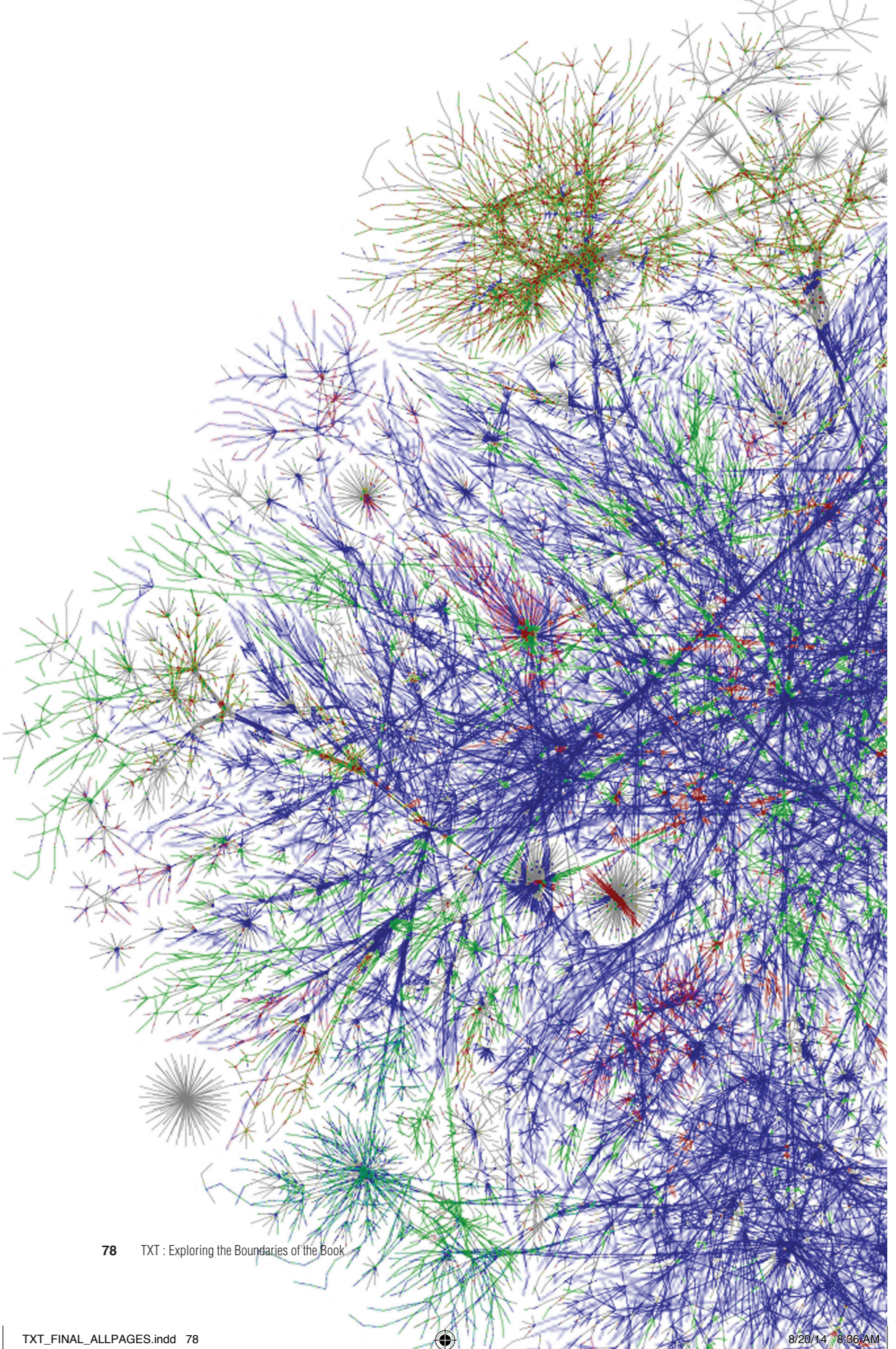
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Filtering, Framing, Amplifying

The Core of Publishing
Now and Then

By Michael Bhaskar

Author of *The Content Machine* and Digital Publishing Director
at Profile Books and Serpent's Tail.

In *The Content Machine* I outlined a theory of publishing; a set of actions which over history have defined this diverse, extraordinary, often bizarre but always essential activity. Since then I have not stopped thinking about how these three shape my own practice as a publisher; I still believe that this is what, when all is said and done, we do. In the book I spent considerable time arguing that over time although this trinity of publishing has changed, they stayed constant. What precisely constitutes amplification is always changing, what remains is the idea of amplification itself. I want to boil down the ideas in the book, so show how this works by looking at each now—in the post-digital age—and then—in the print era from Gutenberg to the 1990s.

Filtering

Then: In a print world scarcity was a constant. In the early days of printing and publishing all aspects of the process would have been difficult, rare and extremely expensive. Paper and ink, for instance, were both difficult to get hold of. Texts were not in huge abundance either, the literate population being small. Although productivity increased and all aspects of this changed a great deal, the limitations and costs of the physical remained. This meant publishers were about active choosing—in a world of limits, publishers chose what to make happen. Publishers filtered content in an active way to make the content a reality.

Now: Content on the Internet is almost limitless. Thanks to its generative and disseminative power (not least through piracy) the web has made content ubiquitous and abundant. This changes the filtering role of publishers, making it more properly filtering or curating. Publishers now increasingly pick content from an existing sea, their impri-





matur, the fact of their choice not making the content happen as such, but making it noteworthy. This curatorial shift is, I believe, part of a wider shift in the economy to curation, selecting and arranging rather than producing.

Framing

My concept of framing content has two components: the distribution mechanism (the book, the CD, the file) and the surrounding set of preconceptions, both of which overlap to some extent.

Then: The distributional aspect of framing, e.g. the print book, was the most important. Sure print books were about design and presentation, status, wealth and culture, but it was the fact they could convey information that was key to the frames. Frame as distribution mechanism meant a function of the publisher was the ability to facilitate this distribution. Bluntly, publishers meant frames that were mechanisms to distribute. Indeed right up until the 1980s this was still the near exclusive preserve of publishers of one kind or another who had a quasi-monopoly on framing texts.

Now: The frame as distribution system has been exploded. New frames—code, servers, screens—are still distributional, but because they are so democratic, distribution doesn't mean so much. Instead the work of framing here shifts to subjective aspects. The brand of the publisher, the buzz around a book, the design signals, the messaging—all of these elements of the frame, the subjective parts that were always there, have, thanks to the framing power of the Internet, come to the fore. In practice this means publishers should rethink their framing. They are no longer

just makers of books—they must be framers of content in the widest possible sense.

Amplification

Amplification is at the heart of publishing and cuts through the many messy definitions and debates of what publishing is. Amplification is also simple: ensuring that a work is more widely encountered than without the amplifying act. That's it; that's publishing.

Then: In a world of print scarcity simply to print a book was a de facto amplification. As this situation alleviated throughout the long boom since the turn of the nineteenth century, amplification became about exposure—principally by getting

Amplification is at the heart
of publishing and cuts
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reviews and above all by securing slots in bookshops. Ownership of this channel was a publisher monopoly on content amplification. In all of them however, amplification is about using scarcity—of print matter, of review and retail space, to funnel readers towards your content and so amplify it.

Now: Inventory is, on Amazon and the web more widely, unlimited. Simply having your book available on Amazon no longer qualifies as amplification if no one is looking at it. As with framing, the amplificatory burden has shifted: amplification is not about making a work available,



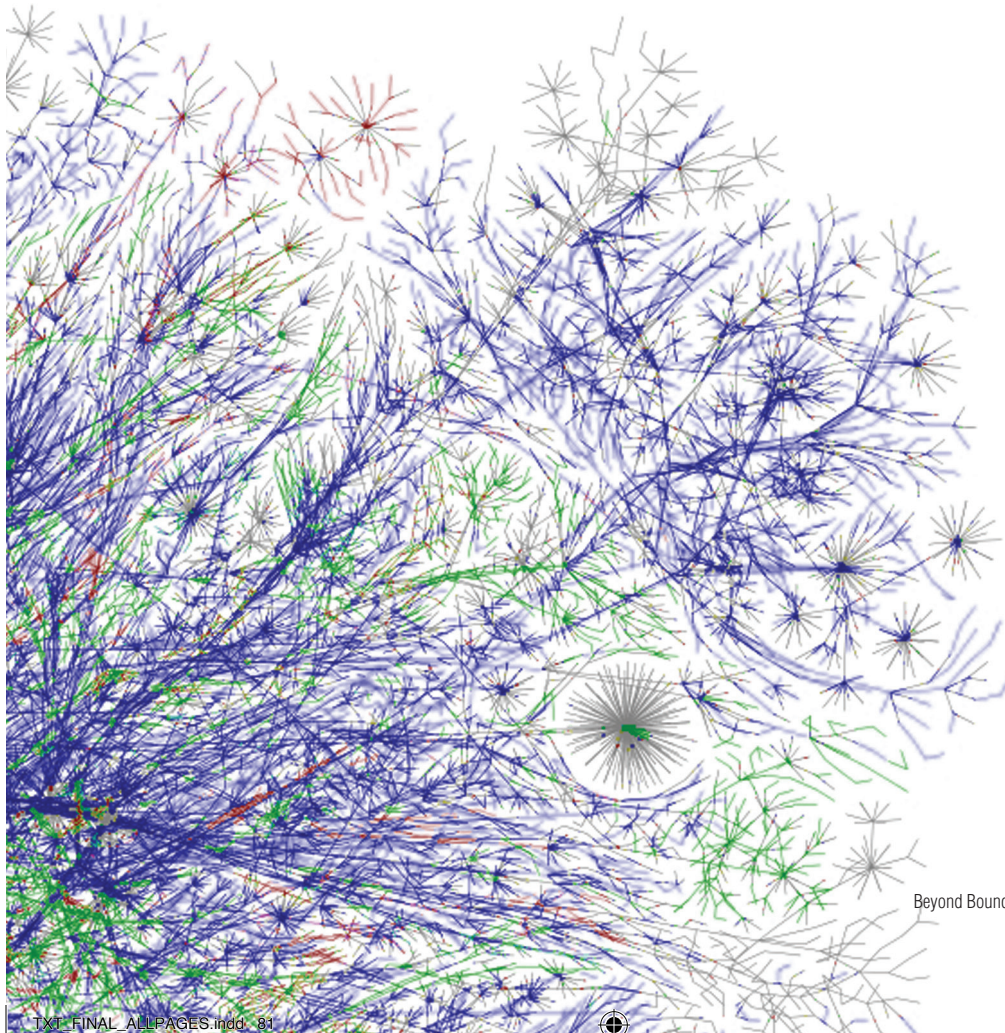
it is now about making it known. Attention is the resource at a premium; claiming that attention for your book the main goal of amplification. This explains the rise and rise of publicity and marketing as forces in publishing as they, more than anything, do the work of amplification today.

So publishing is the same yet different. We shouldn't be surprised as this has always been the way. Publishing has been reinventing itself from medieval scriptoria, through the earliest printers in Germany, to the great publishers of Renaissance Venice and Antwerp like Manutius and Plantin, to those who invented intellectual property in seventeenth century England, to cultural powerbrokers, to the pioneers of steam printing like the Harper and

Chamber brothers, to the great conglomerates of the 1980s and 1990s that horizontally integrated into modern and global corporations.

Digital technology as the above shows is the greatest single change to happen to publishing for hundreds of years. It changes everything core about publishing. Yet publishing, a mutable, flexible and essential activity of filtering, framing and amplifying content, remains. ■

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Downloaded from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/722133160400/3065344110/> by Frank Kovalick, 2008





The Trojan Horse of Open Access

By Adriaan van der Weel

Extraordinary Professor of Book & Digital Media Studies, Leiden University

Among the many treasures looked after by the UK heritage organisation the National Trust are 140 stately home libraries, containing around 230,000 books in 400,000 volumes. The books are now increasingly discoverable through the UK COPAC union catalogue and accessible on location, even if often by appointment only. That the libraries have been preserved, and that the books they contain can be located and consulted is an accomplishment of the first order. However, even this fantastic achievement apparently still fails to meet today's digital expectations. Not content with the existing possibilities for access to these National Trust libraries, historian Malyn Newitt recently contributed an op-ed article to the *Times Literary Supplement*¹ suggesting that the books still had not been made properly available to the 'everyone' mentioned in the NT's mission statement:

We take care of historic houses, gardens, mills, coastline, forests, woods, fens, beaches, farmland, moorland, islands, archaeological remains, nature reserves, villages and pubs – and then we open them up for ever, for everyone.

However, Newitt complains, '[o]pening them up for ever, for everyone does not ... seem to apply to its libraries'. Only full digitisation of the books' contents, so Newitt asserts, would live up to that promise.

As one astute commentator remarked, 'The antique chairs in the Trust's properties may (in some sense) belong to its members; that doesn't, however, give you the right to sit on them!' Indeed, by comparison, being allowed to physically handle those 400,000 volumes seems like a wonderfully generous degree of opening up. Yet the comparison between reading and sitting is of course a misleading one. One may not be able to sit





on virtual chairs (because the experience of sitting on chairs cannot be mediated), but one *can* read virtual books. It has in fact become so normal for digitised books to be made available as a substitute for the real thing that it may puzzle, if not affront, the public (here represented by Newitt) that there remain books whose contents are not publicly accessible online.

Many early adherents of the digital faith believed in the credo that ‘information wants to be free’. A paper world may have to obey the laws of scarcity but, so the early digerati reasoned, on the World Wide Web different rules obtain, better suited to information’s ‘desire’ to be freely available. Critics have scoffed at their economic naiveté and dismissed them as politically driven idealists, but it is true that digital

The number of
places where
the curious
information seeker
finds his path
obstructed by a
paywall is in fact
extremely limited:
paying is the
exception rather
than the rule

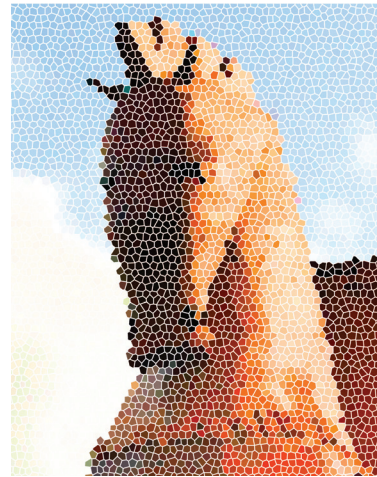
copies come at effectively zero marginal cost. In other words, once the cost of initial creation and production have been met, any additional copies can be made available free. In these circumstances to restrict access seems unnecessary, even whimsical. Certainly the ‘information wants to be free’ slogan proved powerful and tenacious. In 1993—to the intense dismay of the digital pioneers, and in direct contradistinction to the ‘information wants to be free’ rhetoric—the Web was opened to commercial interests. This gave rise to a flood of entrepreneurial initiatives aimed at using the Web to make money. In the light of this commercialisation of the Web, the extent to which especially textual information has actually become or remained ‘free’ is perhaps astonishing. Of course ‘free’ needs defining—creation, production and, to an extent, distribution cost money even in a digital world, and someone has to pay the bill for that. Nevertheless, the number of places where the curious information seeker finds his path obstructed by a paywall is in fact extremely limited:

paying is the exception rather than the rule.

Apart from the *need* to pay, the *willingness* to pay for one’s reading on the Web is also low. Still, the places where consumers *are* prepared to pay, though limited in number, are as it turns out exceptionally strong domains and ecosystems, such as Apple and Amazon. These ecosystems can be said to have made themselves indispensable, certainly in the Western world. It was through extreme convenience and user friendliness that Apple’s iTunes managed to persuade consumers to draw their wallet, helping to wean them off pirated music. A willingness in e-commerce to pay for material goods is of course more natural, and in that respect Amazon, which started by selling atoms: paper books, had it easier. While the company is selling just about anything today, Amazon customers are still prepared to pay for what they buy, including digital media like e-books, games, and music.



Other information providers have fared less well. The few paywalls that exist protect some of the best information, and because not enough people are prepared to pay for that information, it is in many instances effectively languishing. Newspapers are a prominent case in point. With ‘citizen journalism’ abounding, and large sections of the public evidently prepared to make do without expert analysis and interpretation, and without a process of due checking and fair hearing, professional journalism is finding it harder and harder to make ends meet. Paper editions are the first to close down, only to be followed by their websites, though not without having first put up a heroic struggle.



And then there is the book industry. If it has benefited from the Web at all, for example in the shape of e-commerce opportunities, it has turned out a double-edged sword. As online sales grew, new entrants like Amazon and Bol profited more than any established booksellers. As brick-and-mortar sales drop, the book becomes less visible in daily life. Also, people who spend a lot of time online may not read less—if anything, probably more—but they obtain less of what they read through book trade channels. In today’s attention economy, the wealth of free reading and entertainment to be found on the Web can only detract from sales. On balance the Web’s potential opportunities may not compensate the book industry for the loss of readers to free online information and other pastimes.

In this precarious balance between the ever-expanding ‘docuverse’ of free online information and conventional toll-access exploitation of textual resources (traditional publishing and bookselling), enters Open Access. I would like to suggest that the struggle between free and paid access to (textual) information sketched above, gives the significance of Open Access publishing an extra dimension.

The Open Access movement began with a very straightforward practical aim: to stem the rising tide of the cost of knowledge. After a prolonged initial struggle to be taken seriously the movement has gained momentum over the last few years, and is now chalking up one victory after another. Almost five hundred organisations have so far signed the Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities (2003), and the number of signatories is still growing. As the Registry of Open Access Repositories Mandatory Archiving Policies shows, Open Access mandates have been adopted by 208 institutions worldwide. Add such recent milestones as the UK and Dutch governments’ plans for a national Open Access policy, and it becomes obvious that the march of Open Access is unstoppable.

It is true that the knowledge system as we know has become very expensive. With its journals, peer review, libraries, etc. it evolved on the foundation of a print paradigm and the inherent properties of printing on paper. This meant that economic principles such





as scarcity, ownership of the means of production, and shareholder pressure for profit maximisation were at play. Open Access, by contrast, rides on the back of the same fact that we have just observed: that digital information can be copied without limitation at no extra cost. Knowledge (but the same goes for such another mainstay of the conventional publishing industry as fiction, for instance) has always been a non-rivalrous good. Sharing one's knowledge in no way detracts from it: knowledge can be enjoyed by any number of people simultaneously as well as consecutively without any risk of depleting

The digital file
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it. However, as long as knowledge is distributed in the form of a paper product, it is de facto a finite resource: each extra copy costs money to produce and distribute, and a print run can get depleted. The digital file, by contrast, has, as it were, a built-in printing press. That is to say that in a digital context, the *distribution* of knowledge can join knowledge itself (the 'content') as a non-rivalrous good. Therefore it can be referred to as a service rather than a product, the

service being that of offering access to the content. This suggests that when the knowledge system is reinvented in a digital paradigm we can—and should—make a fundamental separation between the two costs that used to be covered by a single figure: the cost of the product and the cost of the access that the product provided to the content. As we saw before, the costs of authoring, peer reviewing, production and storage will still need to be covered, even if each copy of a work is distributed free of charge.

Whether or not Open Access will actually manage to bring about the intended reduction of the cost of knowledge, there are two unintended side effects of a knowledge system based on Open Access that warrant pondering. The first is that it will variously affect different fields of academic disciplines according to their publication culture. Most scientific knowledge products are journal articles, and journal articles is what Open Access policies are chiefly concerned with. In the case of articles digital consumption is not a problem: they are short, and anyway not necessarily fully read (or if they are, they can be printed by individual readers at little extra cost). However, for the Humanities, Law and, albeit to a lesser extent, the Social Sciences—the situation is different. These fields continue to set great store by monographs for the purpose of scholarly communication. What this means in effect is that Open Access will cause inequality between STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) disciplines and the humanities in terms of the level of public access to its research output. Most STEM research will become publicly available free of charge to the public, while much if not most of the knowledge produced in the humanities, published in the form of monographs which are not (yet) affected by OA policies, will remain behind a paywall. There is no reason in principle why monographs might not also be published in Open Access form. In fact there are a number of initiatives to do so already. However, reading long-form texts from screens remains much less popular than reading them from paper, and probably largely



as a result of this these initiatives have not had a great deal of impact yet. The extent to which the *distribution* of knowledge can in actual practice become non-rivalrous as a service is in other words obviously dependent on the extent to which text is consumed digitally.

A second effect of Open Access that has to the best of my knowledge not received much—if any—attention is that it contributes to establishing the expectation that paying for information is the exception rather than the rule. This makes Open Access a significant reinforcement of the troops beleaguering the ‘old economy’ of the textual media. The more digital reading takes off—which seems inevitable given the rise of screen use, and especially in the shape of tablets, phones (and phablets)—the more the public’s habits and expectations will be based on their online experience of free information. Open Access will, moreover, confirm the perception that *all* textual information, even important and valuable information—such as that published in academic journals—*should* be available to the public free of charge: that information not only wants to be, but indeed *ought to be* free. One may well wonder how that will end up affecting the book industry. ■

Notes

1. *Times Literary Supplement*, 28 March 2014; <<http://www.the-tls.co.uk/tls/public/article1392148.ece>> (Accessed 25 March 2014)



Defragmenting Digitised Manuscripts Sources

The DMMmaps: A Unified Portal
to Medieval Manuscripts

By Giulio Menna and Marjolein de Vos
Managers and Editors, Sexy Codicology

Introduction

A search with the terms 'Digitised Medieval Manuscripts' in search engines leads to well established libraries on the first results page: The British Library, The Houghton Library, et al.¹ in combination with other results, such as articles and blogs on the same matter. These search results make finding other online repositories difficult due to the fact that many digital libraries have not been optimised for easy access by search engine crawlers. Sanderson et al. have estimated that only around 1 % of existing medieval documents have been digitised to date, and most of the effort has been spent in taking care of the visual presentation of the digitised projects. Many institutions, furthermore, have used independent approaches to the subject.² These various factors have led to a fragmentation of digitised resources over the internet, which makes discovering and browsing medieval manuscripts difficult.

To battle this issue the DMMmaps Project was created. The DMMmaps is an independent project that aims to collect web-links to digitised medieval manuscripts repositories and make them available on an interactive map. The project originated as an attempt to unify well-known digitised sources already available (E-Codices in Switzerland, Digital Scriptorium in the United States and *La Bibliothèque Virtuelle des Manuscrits Médiévaux* in France) along with many other less known repositories and present them in a single place, in order to create a faster and easier way to find and access these sources. The DMMmaps are aimed both at scholars and at enthusiasts interested in medieval manu-



scripts. It is designed as a free service with further potential developments and contributions from anybody interested.

This paper will explain the various aspects of the project: how the DMMmaps originated and were initially developed, the reasons behind the choice of a virtual map as an interface, the way that DMMmaps operates, difficulties that have been encountered, and the crowdsourcing aspect. The importance of a social media presence will be also discussed throughout the paper.

How the DMMmaps project originated and why the use of maps

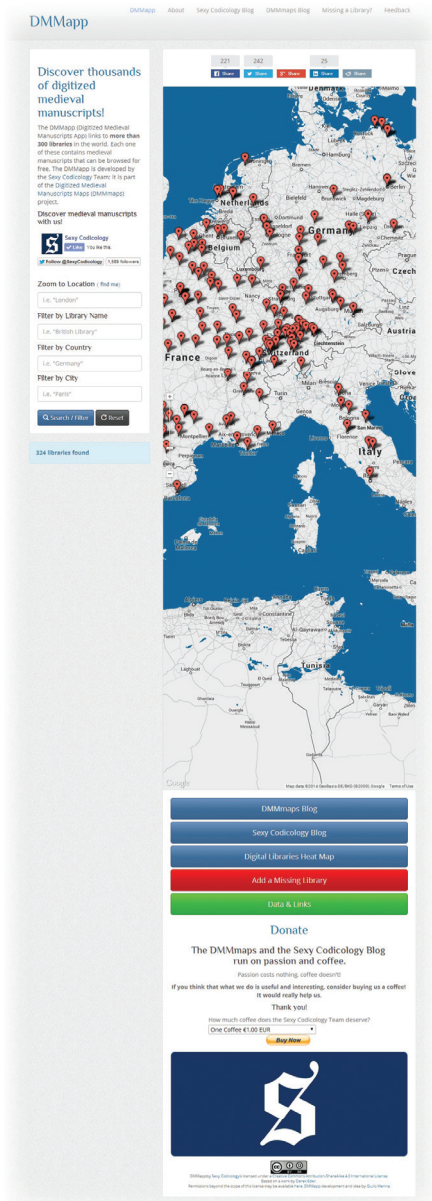
The DMMmaps is the direct result of another project managed by the authors of this article: The Sexy Codicology Blog. This blog aims to promote an interest in medieval manuscripts and relies heavily on the use of digitised manuscripts images to create articles and videos. While searching for content to post, digitised repositories that were arbitrarily discovered were added to a list of 'Favorites' in the browser. This led to the creation of a long list of links that was difficult to browse and not shareable with other interested parties. The easiest solution to this issue would have been to create a simple database that would have allowed users to filter digitised repositories based on nation, location and name.

What this solution lacked was interactiveness and navigability: the user would have been presented with either a long list of names, links and information, plus the filtering system; or the filtering system without the information of all the libraries available. With these issues in mind, a small test in which these librar-

ies would be represented on a digital map was created, and the basic information concerning the digital libraries (i.e. name of the library, city, nation, and number of digitised manuscripts) was added. The service used at this time was Google Maps Engine Lite.³ This 'alpha version' of the DMMmaps project underwent private testing for two weeks. The solution appeared to work. The user was not overwhelmed by a huge amount of information from a large number of libraries, the navigation of the map was easy and straightforward, and the service was free to use. After this trial period, an early example of the project was made public. The response of scholars and enthusiasts were key in order to understand if what was being done was useful or not.

From July 7th 2013 until August 7th 2013, the publicly available maps were viewed 838 times. This became 1885 views in the period from September 8th 2013 until October 6th of the same year. By December 20th 2013 the DMMmaps project was visited a total of 5116 times. On this date, the project, which was hosted on the Sexy Codicology website, was moved to its current domain: digitisedmedievalmanuscripts.org

The response of the public was exceedingly positive but as a consequence, the limits of the Google Maps Engine were reached. The number of libraries that were added forced the creation of four different maps for the libraries in Europe alone, causing confusion to the visitors who would not see a library on a map and would send a link for it to be added. Because Google Maps Engine would only allow a hundred pins per map, not all libraries of the world could be displayed on one map. Even one map of, for example



Europe, was not possible. This forced the complete redesign the DMMmaps. It was now necessary to develop a customised app that would be easier to use, aesthetically appealing, and also usable from a mobile device (smartphone or tablet), which could also accommodate more than 300 libraries on a single page.

Google maps API was chosen in order to modify the look and feel of the map in

JavaScript. The database that had been previously created with the links, number of digitised manuscripts, and geographical position of the libraries was transferred into Google Fusion Tables. Together, the Fusion Tables and the API visualise the information as a map with pins. The app was then uploaded to *digitisedmedievalmanuscripts.org*, along with a WordPress installation for blogging purposes, followed by search engine optimisation and made available to everyone. The total cost of this operation was 18 euros, the price for renting space on a shared server for a year.

Collecting the links to digitised medieval manuscripts and the social media factor

The collection of links to digitised books is mainly done through crowdsourcing. These contributions, containing links and basic information about digital repositories, are sent to the DMMmaps project in a variety of ways, primarily with the use of a simple web-form on the project's website. In this form the contributor must add the name of the library that he would like to see added, the nation and city where the institution is located and the link to the digitised manuscripts. There is also an option for users to add to the number of digital objects available and post further remarks. Any user aware of a missing digitised manuscript collection can contribute to making the DMMmaps complete. This method led to 67 different contacts and the addition of around 50 libraries to the DMMmaps. Another way in which the links to digitised manuscripts were acquired is by the active research by the project's authors. This was espe-





cially true in the beginning of the project due to the fact that there were not enough users to feed the links. Many tips were also received through social media interactions. 'Tweets' led to adding four libraries to the database; three were added through the Sexy Codicology Facebook Page.

This 'social media' aspect of the project is essential and cannot be underestimated: it is only thanks to the power of social media that the DMMmaps project has reached more than 30,000 visitors in little more than four months. Statistics coming from the digitisedmedievalmanuscripts.org website show that, in the time period from the 1st of January 2014 until April the 30th 2014, 66.6% of the visitors of the website came via the Sexy Codicology social media channels. Organic Search (i.e. referrals from Google, Bing, Yahoo and other search engines) accounted for only 4%; referrals from other websites were 5.9%; direct visits (i.e. visitors who bookmarked the website) accounted for a total of 22.9%.

Another important aspect of the DMMmaps project is that it is backed by the Sexy Codicology blog. This is a project that we created one year before launching digitisedmedievalmanuscripts.org. Sexy Codicology is a blog concerning medieval manuscripts. With over 4,000 likes and



1,500 followers on Twitter, it helped generate public awareness of the DMMmaps project.

Thanks to the careful social media strategy and crowdsourcing, today the DMMmaps database connects to 312 libraries, containing at least 30,000 digitised medieval manuscripts.⁴ The project has received at least 57 crowd-sourced links to digitised repositories and, furthermore, institutions such as the Reynolds Library in Manchester, have kindly requested to be added to the database to enhance the visibility of their collections.

Now that the links' acquisition has been explained, it is time to explain how they are entered into the database. The process is straightforward and efficient: the information sent by a user is inserted in a datasheet (Google Spreadsheet file), latitude and longitude are added with Google Earth. The same data is then inserted into the Google Fusion Tables file, through which the link is 'pinned' to a





virtual map that can be navigated by the user. Clicking these pins shows the following information of the repository:

- *Name and location of the institution that hosts the digitised manuscripts.*
- *Number of digitised objects available on the institution's website (including date of availability).*
- *Link to the website of the digital repository.*

Copyright license & budget

Although the project is maintained privately, the database on which the project is based is shared under a Creative Commons Attribution - Sharealike License, allowing free use of the data acquired.⁵ The intent of this approach is to push as many people as possible to create their own project, based on the data we have created. The choice of using a free culture license came naturally due to the fact that the project is based on a series of web links, which are presented in an effective and easy to use format. It would be possible for anyone to locate these websites, copy and paste the links into a new database and do the work all over again. It is the hope of the creators of this project that someone, one day, will step up and improve what has been done until now, maybe creating an even better version of the DMMmaps.

The DMMmaps currently receives no funding and the project is made possible by using free software available on the Internet. Specifically, the project uses the following software and services:

- *Google Spreadsheets*
- *Google Fusion Tables*
- *Google Maps API*

The interface of the app is simple HTML5

and CSS3, based on a freely available template by Derek Eder.⁶ Although free to use, the products offered by Google guarantee the flexibility, power and possibilities given by paid software. These three services are also characterised by a distinctive ease of use; the DMMmaps were, in fact, created in a matter of days. There are, however, still issues with using these programs. Google has recently shut down a series of products of its own family (including Google Reader, Google Latitude, iGoogle in 2013) and there is no guarantee that the products on which the DMMmaps are based will be active and available indefinitely. This issue could be fixed by creating a database that does not rely on Google services, but on well-established and standardised programmes (or by hard coding the data directly into the script). In the specific case of DMMmaps this was not possible, due to the fact that including all the collected data in the script directly would make it extremely slow to load. Using a professional database was also impossible due to the lack of funds available.

Issues

An ambitious project like DMMmaps is always met with difficulties. Currently the major issues that have been identified are as follows:

Generic issues:

It is time consuming to manage social media channels.

The maintenance of active and interesting social media channels is an inevitably time-consuming task. The time involved in searching, sharing, and resharing content is only partially mitigated by the use of scheduling tools.



The need for specific technical knowledge to manage the website and integrate the results.

Although the DMM-maps project is aimed at a purely humanities subject, the development is based on the capabilities of its developers to use web services, coding, and scripting appropriately to the needs of the digital project. This leads to the consideration that as cultural heritage becomes increasing digital, it is becoming more essential for humanities scholars to code and create basic applications. Improving digital literacy is crucial for humanities scholars in order to allow more effective sharing of research and studies.

Gaining momentum and audience attention.

As mentioned earlier, the Sexy Codicology blog is a powerful ally to the DMMmaps project due to its consistent number of followers that are specifically interested in medieval manuscripts and ancient books. One can easily understand that if the project did not originate from such a favorable position, it would have had to work much harder to gain the same interest and following. This thought leads us to several considerations on the importance of social-networking for digital humanities projects.



Project-specific issues:

Difficulty in counting the total number of digitised objects.

A core objective of the DMMmaps is to collect data in order to better understand the current situation of manuscript digitization in the world. Part of this data collected therefore concerns the number of digitised manuscripts that can be accessed in any given library that is linked on the map. What we often observe is that few institutions clearly indicated the number of digitised manuscripts they have available online. This noticeable lack of data concerning online digitised manuscripts prevents researchers from creating interesting statistics and correlations. For example the Heat Map created for this project, clearly indicates which countries have the most institutions involved in the digitization process. What would have been interesting to create is another heat map showing which parts of the world





hold the highest concentrations of digitised medieval books, and then correlating this with the aforementioned map of digitised institutions.

Broken links to digital repositories (absence of permalinks).

Although not a direct fault of the DMMmaps project, broken links are a major issue. To give an example, recently the Vatican Library migrated all its digitised medieval manuscripts to a new website, without giving prior notice or, more importantly, without implementing a 301 redirect from the old page. This meant that users will no longer be able to access digitised Vatican manuscripts through their bookmarked webpage. This also resulted in a blank page being linked from DMMmaps. Once the situation was noticed, the link was updated in a matter of minutes.

It is possible to quickly report broken links through the app, but the only true solution would be the use of proper code and solutions on behalf of the webmasters and web developers of the digitised libraries.

Conclusion

First and foremost, the experience with the DMMmaps project shows that a useful digital humanities resource, usable by researchers and enthusiasts, does not necessarily have to be expensive and complex. As we mentioned earlier, the cost of developing and maintaining the project website is merely 18 euros per year. By taking advantage of free programs readily available on the internet, it is possible to develop a professional project without necessarily possessing a high level of expertise in coding and developing app. The risk in

using free software is that the infrastructure on which a project is developed might not be available for long. Nonetheless, this remains a highly viable way for young researchers and independent scholars to become noticed in the professional world.

The development of the DMMmaps also highlighted the highly fragmented world of digital libraries. Often, the effort made to digitise medieval manuscripts and make them publicly available, is hindered by poor web design and deficient search engine optimization. In fact, very few of the manuscripts that were added to the project were discovered via search engines. Most of the links that were added to DMMmaps came from crowd sourcing. More specifically, the researchers and librarians working for institutions that housed digitised manuscripts have been the most active contributors. It is still too early to make any conclusive claims about the effectiveness of the strategies we have discussed in relation to the DMMmaps project.

However, the number of crowd-sourced contributions we have received appears to indicate that an approach based on a strong social media presence is an effective way of creating a complete database of digitised repositories. Social media allows potential contributors to be in direct contact with the project and share their suggestions for future improvements.

This DMMmaps project will continue to be developed and updated in order to become an even more comprehensive tool for both the scholar and enthusiast, in search for digitised medieval manuscripts. ■



Notes

1. The results taken in consideration here are those of a search done in Google's "Incognito Mode" in order not to have personalised results. For further information on personalised results: <https://support.google.com/accounts/answer/54041?hl=en>
2. Sanderson, Robert et al. 'Sharedcanvas: a collaborative model for medieval manuscript layout dissemination.' *Proceedings of the 11th annual international ACM/IEEE joint conference on Digital libraries* 13 June 2011, 175-184.
3. This service can be accessed here: <https://mapseengine.google.com>
4. A precise count of the number of digitised objects is currently impossible to obtain. Some libraries count the number of digitised folia; others do not insert the exact numbering of digitised objects at all. 30,000 is the sum of the digitised books from libraries, which have added a precise counting of digitised manuscripts.
5. Creative Commons. 'About the licenses.' *Creative Commons* (2009).
6. This useful project can be found here: http://derekeder.com/searchable_map_template/





Problematic Screen Reading

Is it Caused by Our Brain?

By Esther de Groot

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It is probably experienced by almost every adult reader that reading from any kind of screen can feel more complicated than reading from paper. Somehow screens do not give the reader the same kind of experience as a print copy would do. It is therefore often mentioned that people do not want to trade in their paper books for an e-reader or tablet, even though they hold several advantages over paper books. But what is it exactly that causes people to shy away from these new technologies?

In his book *Reading in the brain: the new science of how we read* Stanislas Dehaene examines the way in which the brain analyses letters and words and gives them meaning. The next section will give a brief overview of Dehaene's explanation to see whether screens already cause problems on this basic level of reading letters and words. Afterwards other possible causes will be discussed.

How does reading work?

For the brain to give meaning to a letter, it first needs to be transferred into the brain via the eyes. The piece of the retina that is used for reading is called the fovea.

This middle part of the retina is sensitive enough for light to see the letters. Because this part of the eye is very small it can only take in one or two words (depending on the number of letters in the word) at a time, causing the constant small movements of the eyes when reading.¹ Enormous letters we read will cause us to read more slowly because one letter will take up more space in the fovea. More movements of the eyes are needed in this case to take all the letters in.² The eye only sees the words focused on and maybe the initial letters of the next word to make sure our gaze begins at the right spot. The time needed to take in a word is only a mere one twentieth of a second.³ The visual system is equipped in such a way that it can disregard varieties in letter shapes. The recognition of a word is not impaired by a different size or shape of type of the same letter.⁴ For example, the brain does not see difference in meaning between 'E', 'e', 'E' and 'e' even though there are clearly differences in terms of shape. This is why we are able to read and understand different handwritings.

When the eye sees symbols that do not have any further meaning, only limited visual areas will be activated. When the



symbol has a meaning though, it needs pathways that connect it to the visual and conceptual areas and visual and auditory specialisation areas.⁵ Before this happens the word is being placed in a mental lexicon of every word ever encountered to be encoded in a hierarchical order of letters, syllables, morphemes and words. Graphemes are placed together by our brain as

having a single sound value, neglecting there are actually two letters there. In this stage it might spike the recognition of similar words that may have a completely different meaning before the right word is selected.

Afterwards the word can have two routes to get to its meaning. Firstly it can go straight from letter string to meaning.

The Major Lobes

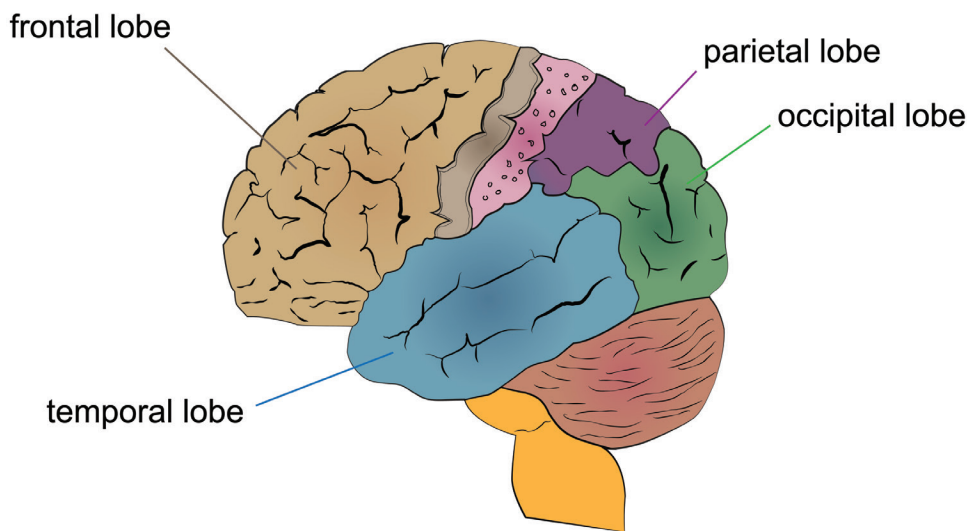
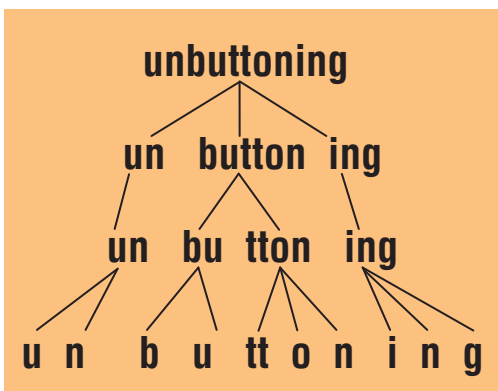


Fig 1, below: The way a word is encoded in a hierarchical manner. Note that on the letter level the two t's are placed together as one.⁶
Fig2, above: The places of the frontal and temporal lobes.



This is called the *lexical route*. The second option is called the *phonological route* in which it first has to be transferred into sound before coming to the meaning. This is usually the case with words that are new to the reader or very rare.⁷

Deheane describes the mental lexicon in a comparison to an assembly of daemons, each of which are assigned to a single word. When a word comes in resembling a particular one, its daemon will shout, as will others that have similar words. In this competition the best one will get chosen to represent the meaning





of the word.⁸ In the case of a misspelled word, the best suited one is chosen, often leading to the reader probably not even noticing this if the shape is similar to the one that was expected.

The region where the identification of letters takes place in the brain Dehaene calls the *letterbox*. This area is universally located in the same place regardless of nationality and language. The information from this part of the brain is sent to the temporal and the frontal lobes that encode sound and meaning.⁹ Different areas of these lobes are activated when hearing, reading, producing or associating words. These areas are again universal, no matter how we read, how we learned to read and what our cultural background may be.

The area referred to as the letterbox only responds to written language. It is thus a visual area. The recognition of faces and objects are handled in areas close by this letterbox.¹⁰ This makes clear that the brain deals with letters as if they were physical objects. In fact, this part we now use for reading is the same as the one which is still being used by primates to recognise objects. Since the invention of writing it has been adapted by human beings to be used for the recognition of letters, while it has been an object identifier for millions of years.¹¹ Because there is a need to recognise every object no matter of its size, location, distance, if it is in light or shade, this also counts for letters, for the brain deals with them as a kind of object. The speed with which letters are encoded can also be linked to the history of the visual part of the brain. For our ancestors it was of the utmost importance to recognise shapes in nature (such as the footprints of a predator in the sand) that were vital for survival as quickly as possible.¹²

Primate brains do not respond very much to every single object, but to fragments of shape of these objects. These shapes could be called some sort of *neuronal alphabet*. Separate neurons react to the different shapes in objects and how they are arranged in space.¹³ It does not come as much of a shock to see that the neuronal alphabet is quite similar to the Hebrew, Greek and Roman alphabets.¹⁴ Humans have not so much invented the shapes of letters, but made use of the shapes that have been linked to the neurons in our brains for years.¹⁵ The connections made in the brain to make reading possible are, unlike those for speech and vision, not genetically organised. In every brain connections thus have to be made anew when learning how to read.¹⁶ It is in fact the ability of the human brain to make new connections that made it possible for humanity to read at all.¹⁷

The fact that this specific area of the brain has evolved into visual recognition of letters is partly due to its neurons that are connected with the fovea. They are the neurons best suited for the finer visual details of letters. Moreover it is placed in the left hemisphere, because this handles small local shapes better, while the right hemisphere deals with global shapes. Furthermore, the processing of speech is tied to the left hemisphere.¹⁸

Reading in the brain: the screen

After seeing how reading in the brain works, it seems that the level of reading separate letters or words is not what causes problems with reading from a screen. Reading begins with the recognition of an individual letter (which in its turn builds up graphemes, syllables and words) which





is first visualised on the fovea before being transferred to the next stages of encoding. The only thing that matters here is the shape of the letter. And it does not even matter if there are varieties in the different ways to write this letter as long as its basic shape is still recognizable. For the fovea the shape of a letter does not change just because it appears on a screen of any kind. It is still the same letter and will thus be processed in exactly the same way as letters do when they are read from paper, vellum, parchment, etc.

Screens that reflect light also do not interfere with this recognition either. This is due to the evolutionary history of the part of the brain which is now used to read. Objects needed to be recognised no matter if in light or shade. Because this is still the same now that this part of the brain is being used for the recognition of letters as objects, the light reflected from a screen should not interfere with the identification of letters.

The fact that the brain sees the letter as a physical object means that it does not matter where it is depicted. If the brain identifies a tree, it remains a tree, whether it stands far or near, in a forest or in a garden or in a picture book. The same goes for letters.

So what then is it that makes reading from a screen more difficult? To answer this question we need to take a look at the text as a whole instead of focusing on individual letters and words. Moreover some psychological reasons are in play.

Navigation

Besides interpreting letters and words as physical objects, the brain does the same with entire texts. How this precisely works remains unknown, but it is suggested that a text is seen as a landscape. When a book is read the brain maps the steps the reader has taken through the landscape. Because of this, it is fairly easy to remember where a specific passage is located in a book or magazine. The brain takes in information that can help to relocate the passage. For example how heavy the book was on each side when the passage was read. Was the left side lighter than the right side? Then it

must be located more towards the beginning of the book instead of the end. Were both sides equally heavy? Then it is located somewhere in the middle. Moreover the brain remembers where on the page it is located (left

page or right page, top or bottom corner, inner or outer corner). The flipping of the pages makes us physically feel the text, the progress and where we are located in the story.¹⁹ This can be compared with an actual landscape. If a person is blindfolded and then dropped somewhere in a town he has never seen before, he will have no way of navigating himself back to where he came from without the help of other people or navigational devices. But if he had been led there and seen every turn he made and all the buildings he passed it would be a lot less difficult to find his way back home.

Reading from a screen can be compared

One of the reasons for difficulties with screen reading may lie in some kind of unwillingness to accept the new medium



to being a blindfolded man. Our minds have no idea where they are located. Either we scroll down on a computer, phone or tablet or tab to the next page on an e-reader. But never can both pages be seen, thus limiting the reference corners to four instead of eight. Also, the book always has the weight of the device that is being held. It does not matter if we are reading a 100-page

book or one that has 1000 pages. The only way of knowing what is to come is checking the page numbers, but it cannot be physically felt. Just like the blindfolded man we cannot find our way back to a specific passage as easily as in a book because we do not know where we are placed in the landscape of the screen text. Moreover there was no right or left side that felt heavier than the other. The physical connection with the text as a landscape that can be mentally walked through and the context of the landscape are lost.

A study done by Noyes and Garland showed that there was no difference in correct answers and study time between students using paper and students using texts. However, when looking at the qualitative comprehension a difference was noted between remembering and knowing. The group that studied via a screen had a higher level of remembering than the paper group. This means that they remembered information connected to the last study session instead of really knowing it without having to attach it to a contextual association. The

The study showed that
the participants preferred
the computer less
because it reminded them
of the things
that still had to be done

transition from the episodic memory to the semantic memory is not made.²⁰ Another study suggests that this is due to the fact that the students find it more difficult to

recollect the location of details in the text.²¹ A third study done by Anne Mangen shows that 'if texts are longer than a page, scrolling and the lack of spatiotemporal markers of the digital texts to aid memory and reading comprehension might impede reading performance'.²² These results

show that the navigation of a text also aids the memorisation of it.

The attitude towards screen reading

After years of reading from paper, parchment or vellum, one of the reasons for difficulties with screen reading may lie in some kind of (subconscious) unwillingness to accept the new medium for reading. When someone really wants to dig into a text in a critical way, to study or for work, that person will probably still go to a paper version. While people get articles more and more via the internet, when these articles need to be critically read the text will often get printed.

Text on screen is not taken as seriously as text on paper. This may be something that has been set in our minds for years. The printed book has authority because not just anyone can have a book published. Texts that can be read in books have been approved as good enough by a publisher. And while this may also count for (most) e-books, texts on the internet



can be placed there by anyone and be of any quality. Moreover, texts that are read on screens can quickly be associated with short messages like e-mails, text messages and Facebook statuses. More serious (longer) texts are associated with paper. Maybe this is why people feel the urge to print articles when they want to critically read them.

This entails that people do not make as much of an effort when they are reading a text on screen. A study done at the San Jose University has also shown that people take a lot of shortcuts when they read from screen. They browse and scan, looking for a specific keyword.²³ A study executed by Terje Hillesund has pointed out that expert readers who want to study a text do so with the paper edition. In this way they can flick back and forth and use a pencil or highlighter and make annotations to connect their reading to their writing. If an entire book is read from beginning to end they will all prefer the printed version.²⁴ Although it is possible to scribble notes and underline in an article on a tablet, e-reader or on the computer these people still prefer to do this on paper. For this generation it is obviously easier to do it the old way, like they have been used to for several years.

Perhaps a future generation will have less difficulties reading a serious text on a screen as they grew up in a world where quality is less linked to a printed book with the approval of a publisher. Furthermore, they will probably study via a screen more often, because the technology to underline etcetera will come easier to them than to those of previous generations.

Screen light

In this case a distinction has to be made between the e-reader that works with so called e-ink and other screens. E-ink reflects light in the same manner as the letters in a paper book will do. On other screens such as the laptop or tablet however, the light will constantly shine on the readers face. This light can make that the reader can get a headache, eye strain or even a blurred vision. Studies have reported a higher level of tiredness and stress in comparison to reading from paper.²⁵

The brain will still process the letters in the same way, but, logically, when having a headache or blurred vision this will not happen at a normal speed.

Distraction

Again a distinction needs to be made between e-readers and texts that are read online. Computers lack the transparency that is needed to enter the state of immersive reading as there are just too many distractions. As Hillesund describes in his study the web lacks this transparency due to toolbars, side panels and icons which are in their turn placed in the interface of a web browser or operating system. In digital reading there is also a kind of immersion, but this is a different kind than the one paper reading can create:

In imaginary reading and reflective reading, the text is fixed and the signs arbitrary and transparent; meaning and engagement are for the greater part created by internal processes in the user's mind. By contrast, online immersion is the result of external stimuli and the user's response to a flow of pictures, animations, videos, and text snippets.²⁶



There is thus a greater deal of multimodality than we are used to in books. Sure, there can be pictures in books that have the power to create some distractions, but they will occur inside the text that is being read and be of a related topic. Pictures on the web do not need to be related to the text at all, as they are often of unrelated advertisements. Moreover, hyperlinks can lead the reader to a completely different text. It is psychologically very hard to resist the urge to follow such a link. A participant of Hillesund's study reported that when reading an online text he would first scroll down and then sideways to avoid seeing the advertisements keeping him from immersing in the text. He would preferably read the newspaper on his iPhone, because the only thing visible is the text itself.

Furthermore, the study showed that the participants preferred the computer less because it reminded them of the things that still had to be done. When the computer is switched on and is online, why not check your email and respond to questions regarding work? Paper does not have this contextual factor.²⁷

In her book *Proust and the Squid* Maryanne Wolf also wonders if the way digital texts are presented has an influence on the way a text is processed:

The basic visual and linguistic processes might be identical, but would the more time-demanding, probative, analytical, and creative aspects of comprehension be foreshortened?

The web creates expanding amounts of information and the need to multitask. There is a higher cognitive load on the reader, which could effect the comprehension of the text.²⁸

Conclusion

Studying how the brain works when reading letters and words has turned out to be not the cause of the difficulties with reading from a screen. The letters are first taken in by the part of the retina that is called the fovea. The visual system disregards variations in shape, because of which different shapes of the same letter can be recognised. The word will end up in a mental lexicon where it will be hierarchically encoded in letters, morphemes and eventually words. In this mental lexicon an analogy can be made with an assembly of daemons, each assigned to a specific word. The daemon will be activated if its word is seen by the fovea. The letters are identified in a part of the brain that is called the letterbox. This part of the brain is an area for visual recognition which has evolved into a reading area. It sees letters and words as if they were actual objects. The letters that are encoded by it rely on shapes that have long been linked to its neurons as a kind of neurological alphabet. For the encoding of sound and meaning the word is transferred to the temporal and frontal lobes. It can go to meaning via the lexical or phonological route.

If a letter is displayed on a screen it will still have the same basic shape. There is nothing different in the way the individual letter is seen by the fovea. Discrepancies caused by light, shade or size should not matter, because the brain is equipped to recognise an object no matter where or how it is placed.

The problems start however at the higher level of the text. This has to do with the navigation of a text. Just like the brain sees letters as objects, it also sees a text as a whole as a physical object. This probably



functions as a sort of landscape map. In a digital text the context of that landscape is lost. There is just a street, but the brain has no idea whether that street is located on the map. Finding back a specific passage is very difficult because the brain has fewer points to remember it by. There are no eight corners to orientate oneself with and the weight of the text does not change on the left and right side after proceeding in it. The physical connection where the text can actually be felt is lost.

Next to this neurological reason there is also a psychological one. This entails people's attitudes towards digital texts. In our society the printed book has been placed on a pedestal for years. It stands for quality that the mark of a publisher gives to it. Not just anyone or anything can be published. Online texts do not have this quality check and are associated with less serious matters. This is maybe the reason why people bring less attention and effort to reading texts online than on paper. A change in the attitude towards online texts might lift some of the difficulties that occur in screen reading.

Another reason for a preference to paper is the light produced by screen devices that does not work with e-ink. Long-term reading can lead to eye strain, headaches and blurry vision. These of course do not enhance the reading experience and the reading speed.

Computers also cause a high degree of distraction that make immersive reading very difficult. The presence of toolbars, side panels, icons, advertisements and hyperlinks cause a high level of multi modality and an urge to click (and thus leaving the page). These are not the best conditions to read longer texts in a serious manner.

In short, the brain does not experience difficulties when reading from a screen on the level of individual letters and words. It does cause problems when reading an entire text. The navigation of the text is made very hard, which can make the reader feel a bit lost. Extra difficulties occur due to the attitude towards digital texts, screen light and distractions.

E-readers could definitely have a bright future. They do not have the distractions the internet has and because of the e-ink there is no bright light. Moreover, unlike texts on the internet, books on the e-reader are taken seriously by the reader. It is not just any text, published by any kind of person, but by a writer whose story is approved by a publisher. If the producers of e-readers work on ways to improve the navigation of the texts, so that the brain can conceptualise the landscape of the book, nothing is making the reading any harder than a normal book would do. ■

Notes

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3. Ibid., p. 17.
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5. M. Wolf, *Proust and the Squid: the story and science of the reading brain*, (Cambridge: Icon Books Ltd, 2008), p.29.
6. *Reading in the brain*, p. 25.
7. Ibid., p.28.
8. Ibid., p.43.
9. Ibid., p.53.
10. Ibid., p.74.
11. Ibid., p.125.
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13. *Reading in the brain*, p.133-136.
14. Ibid., p.137.
15. Ibid., p.139.
16. *Proust and the squid*, p. 11.
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23. F. Jabr, 'The reading brain in the digital age: the science of paper versus screens', *Scientific American*, 11 April 2013, <<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/reading-paper-screens/>> (Accessed 20 January 2014)
24. T. Hillesund, 'Digital Reading Spaces: How expert readers handle books, the Web and electronic paper', *First Monday*: peer-reviewed journal on the internet, April 2013, vol. 15, no 4-5, <<http://firstmonday.org/article/view/2762/2504>> (Accessed 20 January 2014.)
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The Future Of the Book

A Short Excursion with Čapek and Birkerts

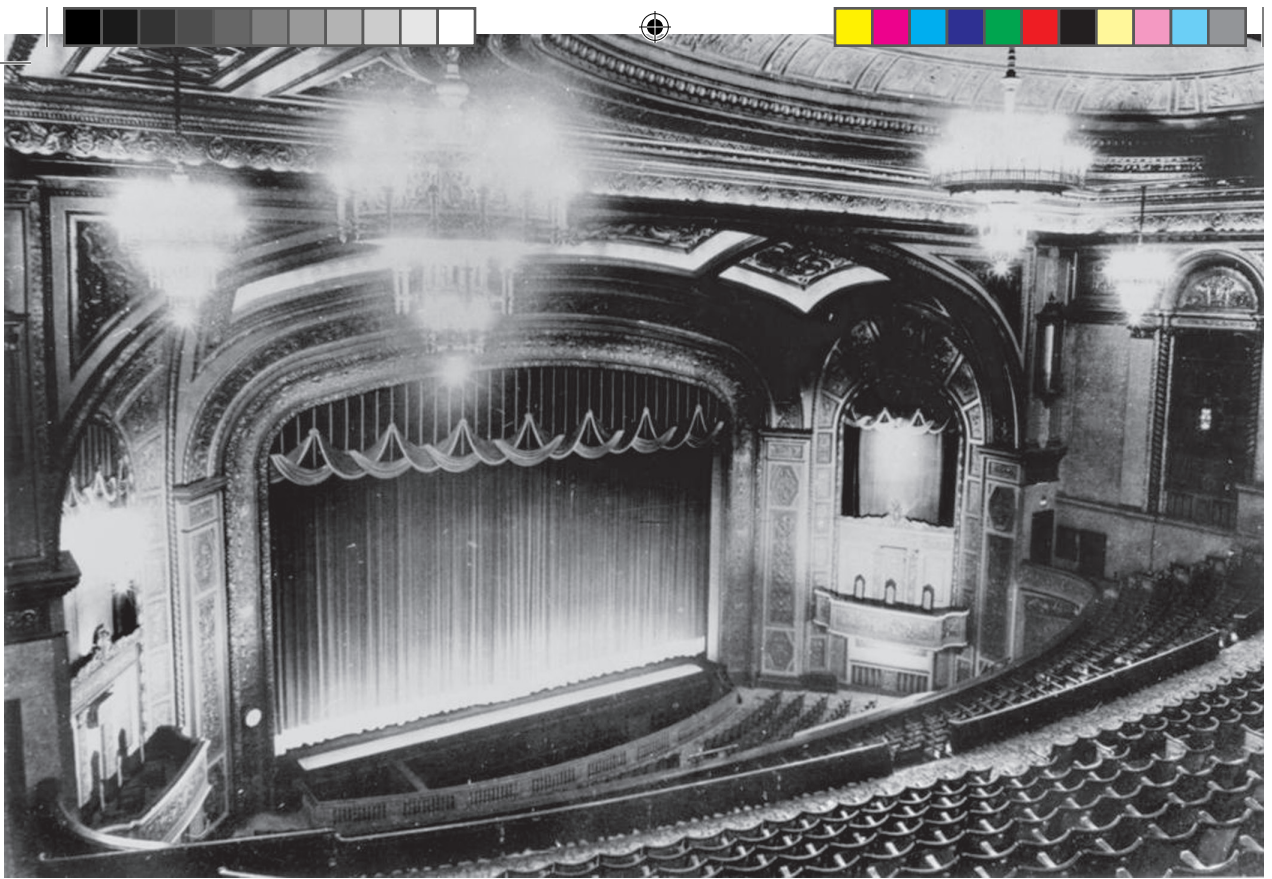
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In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, many changes have taken place in society when it comes to reading and the status of the book. With the development of television, cinema and especially the Internet, reading a book is no longer the primary activity of spending one's spare time. Once these new mediums are gradually becoming integrated in society—for example almost everyone has a television and computer nowadays—people have more options of spending their leisure time and the book has to compete with these new mediums. At present, with the multi-modality of the digital medium and the Internet, and the improvements that have been made in the digital realm, some people fear that the book as such will eventually disappear, that we will only read digitally or stop reading altogether.

Such anxieties brought about by changes in mediums have been bothering people for a long time. Around 1920 the well-known Czech playwright, novelist and journalist, Karel Čapek (1890-1938), wrote about subjects concerning everyday life. His columns had a very broad scope and it is not surprising that, as cinemas were becoming increasingly popular, he chose to write about the position of literature in society. Another writer discussing the possible fate of reading is the American literary critic and essayist Sven Birkerts (1951-). When Birkerts wrote *The Gutenberg Elegies* in 1994, cinema was no longer the only threat literature was facing. At the end of the twentieth century the computer and the Internet were quickly developing, exposing readers to yet another medium and this time one that gave a new dimension to the written word: digital text.

Both Čapek and Birkerts consider the element of speed as one of the reasons why people are reading less and less. From 1910 silent films were being produced in Prague



and many cinemas were opened, especially in Bohemia and Moravia.¹ Film was becoming very popular and was often based on older literary novels, but, according to Čapek, this did not persuade the older generation to visit the cinema nor did it encourage the younger generation to read more literature. In his column *The Age of the Eyes* Čapek tries to find an explanation for this observation of the younger generation rather going to cinemas than reading literature.² He distinguishes two different types of people:

[Film] develops another kind of people—a visual instead of a reading type. The reading sort is patient; it takes time to penetrate the circumstances, to bask in the descriptive passages and follow the conversation from start to finish. The visual type will not be so patient; it wants to seize the situation in a single glance, to comprehend the story without letting it last, and immediately see something new.

This division between the patient, thorough reading type and the quick, visual type is one that Birkerts also encounters when considering the digital medium and especially the Internet with its constant and immediate presence. Unlike film, the digital medium can serve different purposes. Through the digital medium and the Internet people can instantaneously and without delay communicate with one another or quickly browse through texts. The availability of large amounts of texts and the ease with which one can browse them partly fits Čapek's description of the visual type with its preference for the quick and the immediate. Birkerts mentions the shift from in-depth reading to skimming and the swift browsing between texts as a result of the many texts available and the amount of time it would take to actually read them.³ Unlike the book, film and



the digital medium both lack a fixed form, since these mediums make use of moving images. Digital texts can offer the possibility of getting extra information on the textual content. Printed novels have to be read as they are, without complementary effects or information, the reader has to think about the written text and use its own imagination to visualise the story. People who are used to reading can find the patience and concentration to immerse themselves in a story and eventually be in a 'reading state'.⁴ However, as people's attention span seems to become shorter and more people develop into 'visual types', the popularity of the printed book is declining.

In the previous paragraph I mentioned that according to Karel Čapek, most young readers were not inspired to read a novel after having seen the film version in the cinema. This might have been the case for some, but Birkerts writes about his own experience with a film version of Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* though he calls it paradoxical himself. The version shown on television was mainly a soliloquy by Eileen Atkins and Birkerts was mesmerised: 'By the acting, sure, but more by the sheer power and beauty of the spoken word.'⁵ Usually, film, television and the digital medium are all seen as technologies that alter reading and language abilities, and still Birkerts was reminded of the 'beauty of the spoken word' through television, which even persuaded him to return to the printed text. In some cases technical development might then actually encourage reading, especially in the present when popular novels and classics are often turned into a film. Nowadays one can see the same happening with series as *Harry Potter* or *Twilight*. However, the question is to what extent these books are considered to be literature. Čapek rather does not want to make the distinction between high and low literature. In *Instead of Criticism* he writes that he would like 'high literature to become popular.'⁶

The distinction that exists between levels of literature may have been stimulated by technological developments as well. The reading public has changed, many readers do no longer want to read long difficult books, but rather something light, a text they can in some way relate to. Like Čapek, Birkerts is not too optimistic about the future of literature:

Difficult books have always depended on loyal coteries, but as these have dwindled we find publishers less and less willing to take a chance. [...] The result is that our arts increasingly cater to the lowest common denominator; they express recognitions that are likely to appeal to a more general audience.⁷

The publishing business is mainly a commercial one, which means most books will only be published if the publisher thinks people will actually buy them. When readers are no longer interested in 'difficult books', the standards for literature will 'dwindle' until it meets the taste of the general reading public. Čapek wrote *Instead of Criticism* at the end of 1920, while Sven Birkerts' text was written about 70 years later. Despite the large time span between the two critics the fear has remained the same, yet complicated works are still being read today. This large time span emphasises how slow and gradual the change actually is. The general public may not read difficult literary texts, but one may wonder if it were not always the same select group who read these works. In the past, when books became available to everyone and publishers tried to find a niche in the market,





new genres were created, for example detectives, which were not considered to be difficult texts either.

The fear of books disappearing because of the development of new media technologies has been with us for a very long time, mainly because of its important position in society as a source of knowledge and pleasure. For a long time reading books was the main occupation of people in their free time, either for pleasure or education, but with the invention of the radio, television, the digital medium and the like, the book is no longer the standard first choice. Reading requires concentration, interpretation and time. Today, people are used to speed, movies do not require as much concentration and time as reading does, and with the Internet the notion of time and space has changed even more. Karel Čapek foresaw this decline in the popularity of literature already with the arrival of the cinema. However, it can be doubted if the consequences were as severe

With the invention of
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as he thought them to be. Even though people may read less, because of the different mediums available, libraries, bookshops and publishers still exist today. Sven Birkerts writes at a time when, again, a new technology is introduced in society: the digital medium. This new medium is constantly developing, which, similar to previous inventions, leads to a fear of a loss of present practices. The high speed of browsing and the large amount of available information on the Internet lead to the reading of bits and passages from an entire text only. At the present, twenty years after Birkerts wrote *The Gutenberg Elegies*, people are still reading popular

as well as high literature, though no longer necessarily in the form of a printed book. Experiments are taking place with e-books and tablets, although, the quality of these mediums does not yet equal the printed page. Čapek's fear of losing the younger generations to film has turned out to be somewhat extreme. People might not be reading books as regularly as they did in the past, but reading is still an important and popular activity today. Čapek's observation of the visual type and Birkert's ideas on the changing ways of reading are rather accurate to the present-day situation. Due to the presence of different digital mediums and the availability of large amounts of texts, people are finding more efficient and faster ways of reading. On the other hand, the fear that the book might disappear because of these new mediums may be a bit too dramatic. Literature and other longer texts are often still being read from paper. The e-book is an upcoming device, but as I have mentioned before, the quality is not yet equal to an actual paper book. Besides the limits and quality of the digital medium, the book as an object continues to carry a certain cultural value. Some readers choose the traditional book over the e-book just because they enjoy the flipping through the pages and prefer the look, feel or smell of a paper book. The changes when it comes to reading are gradual and the actual impact



of the digital medium might not be completely visible until a long time from now. Until that time arrives, people will probably still be reading literature, either from paper or a screen, and continue to discuss the possible future of the book. ■

Notes

1. P. Hames, *Czech and Slovak Cinema: Theme and Tradition* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 10.
2. Čapek writes about the silent film here, which strengthens the term 'visual type', since he thinks that the older generation needs text to create an atmosphere and time to think about the text:
I am of the opinion that older people would take pleasure in going to cinema if texts instead of pictures were projected on the screen. [...] A picture in itself, a picture without language, doesn't mean anything; it must get words to acquire reality.
K. Čapek, 'The Age of the Eyes', in Š. Tobrmanová-Kühová and J. Carrey (eds.), *Believe in People: The Essential Karel Čapek* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010), p. 19.
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7. S. Birkerts, *The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age*, p. 184.



Debunking the Democratisation Myth

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Introduction

Utopianism has been an important characteristic of the digital revolution from the git-go: from its roots in counterculture to its decentralised structure, and from its early adoption primarily in university settings and its anti-corporal attitude up and until the beginning of the 1990s, the movement has had its fair share of utopians outdoing each other in their claims for the future of the internet. There was an important anti-elitist element in all this, spurred on by the absence of hierarchy in the network. Therefore, the claims pertaining to democracy made intuitive sense. However, since the early 90s many things have changed, and the internet has taken turns that nobody back then had predicted. It has drastically changed from anti-corporate to a web dominated by capitalist ventures. Before expounding upon the problems of the internet as it

stands now concerning democracy, it will be helpful to repeat some of those early claims here. Al Gore, for instance, as Vice President of the United States in 1994, announced:

The Global Information Infrastructure will not only be a metaphor for a functioning democracy, it will in fact promote the functioning of democracy by greatly enhancing the participation of citizens in decision-making. And it will greatly promote the ability of nations to cooperate with each other. I see a new Athenian Age of democracy forged in the foras the GII will create.¹

This parallel to Athenian democracy has been a popular one from the start. It also pops up in a 1999 report by the European Information Society, who claims that the



new information technologies will usher in 'the perfect information arena, the agora of Ancient Greece, a meeting place where citizens could go to be fully informed and to participate directly, with no intermediary, in the government of the city.'² Kevin Kelly, of *Wired Magazine*, pronounced that 'the internet revives Thomas Jefferson's³ 200-year-old dream of thinking individuals self-actualising a democracy'.⁴ Perhaps most famously, *Time Magazine* chimed in by announcing 'You' as their coveted person of the year in 2006, stating that it was all about 'the many wresting power from the few', and pronouncing not the World Wide Web as invented by Tim Berners-Lee in 1991, but Web 2.0, a revolution.

What all these claims have in common, is a firm belief in the willingness of the people to fulfil their latent political potential. They suggest that up until now, well-intentioned citizens have been silenced by malignant elite forces, and that the internet will offer them direct influence on how they are governed. As this essay will make clear, there is no evidence for this. For instance, one of the more popular new initiatives in the digital era has been to offer citizens the chance to contact their representative by email or some other electronic way. This is not necessarily a new possibility. In the past, it was also possible to write to your representative, to make your voice heard. While the threshold of sending an e-mail might be lower, this can hardly constitute a revolution.

One of the problems in the claims made above might be the very word democracy, which over the years has become a vague concept, meaning vastly different things to different people. We will look at this definition first.

Defining democracy

If we want to discuss 'democratisation', it is of course necessary to first define it. Over the years, many different definitions have been given. A discussion of these is beyond the scope of this essay. I will therefore focus on the different definitions that the advocates of digital democracy allow. Dahlberg outlines four major 'positions' through which the extension of digital democracy is seen. These are *liberal-individualist*, *deliberative*, *counter-publics*

The Internet is considered
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and *autonomist Marxist*. I will focus on the first two positions, since these are the most discussed, and they are often problematically, though interestingly, confused, whereas the latter two are somewhat more marginalised, concerning, among other things, the potential for activism and the construction of a completely new society.

The first position, the liberal-individualist position, is by far the most common and popular of these four. It considers the internet as a resource or tool, a place where citizens can educate and inform themselves, free of censorship. This also includes interaction with representatives, petitions, and aggregational tools, etc. This position considers the citizen as a rational



individual actively seeking out information to inform himself. Generally speaking, it sees the extension of democracy by digital means as an extension of the communicational possibilities between politicians and citizens, focusing on interaction. This is also the position that has most readily been adopted by governments, making all state documents available and easily accessible online, and facilitating channels through which representatives and citizens can communicate.⁵

Deliberative democracy advocates, on the other hand, consider the digital medium as a new public sphere for discussion and deliberation. Like the liberal-individualists, they presuppose the citizen as a rational individual actively aiming to inform himself, but theirs is a more *participatory* approach, suggesting discussion between individuals can create wholly new positions instead of simply allowing the individual to make up his mind concerning the traditional voices of politics. Dalhberg has formulated six criteria to which a democracy should adhere in order to be deliberative: autonomy from state and economic power; reason rather than assertion; reflexivity; ideal role taking; sincerity; and discursive inclusion and equality. Though most of these are subjective and difficult to test, the first and the last are relevant, assayable, and particularly interesting. Autonomy from state and economic power was one of the prime feats with which the internet was initially heralded, but the increasing tendency of all internet traffic to

run through large corporate companies has made this criterium more and more problematic. This will be discussed in section three. The last criterium, discursive inclusion and equality, brings up the problem of the digital divide to which we will return in section two.⁷

The distinction drawn above between interaction and participation is also made in Carpentier. Basing himself on audience

theory, he names two dimensions, active/passive and interaction/participation, along which audiences can be divided. As pointed out above, both the liberal-individualist and deliberative position consider the individual as active, contrasting

their stance with traditional one-to-many broadcasting media like television and newspapers, where the individual can only take information in. He then defines 'the interaction component of audience' as referring 'to the 'traditional' processes of signification and interpretation that are triggered by media consumption' and more broadly explains this to mean engagement 'with the media texts that are offered to them'.⁸

Both sides of the discussion, the liberal-individualist as well as the deliberative, are prone to wishful thinking. To support their ideas, they presuppose the average citizen as active, willing but previously unable to better inform themselves. However, even if the internet expands the possibilities to do so, it is not as if the possibilities that existed before were completely exhausted and in dire need of expansion. The internet is a pull technology, as op-

The internet is
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as opposed to push
technologies
like television





posed to push technologies like television which do all the selecting and filtering, and send it out regardlessly. This is seen as a benefit to democracy by digital optimists, but it could just as easily be an actual disadvantage. If people do not actively seek out political topics on the internet, and they also stop watching television and reading newspapers, they will be even less informed than before. Indeed, as we will see in the next section, political web sites are not even close to being amongst the most popular ones online.

Technological determinism might be at hand here, but the root of the problem lies deeper. As Lax notes,

the problem is a lack of political accountability. If electors have little control over decision-making once they have voted their politicians into government, they are unlikely to get very excited about the formal political process. Without some means of ensuring that collective decisions will result in political action, there is no reason

to imagine that electors are any more likely to participate in political debate on computer networks than they are currently to vote or write to their representatives.⁹

Even if people do turn out to be more eager to look for information online, there is the problem of veracity. The Web 2.0 revolution that gave everyone a voice is a double-edged sword. There will be many opinions available online. Moreover, it is the algorithms of search engines, social networks and news aggregators that will decide what opinions will be most easily found, and veracity—to name one critical element—is not a part of the algorithm (because it cannot be computed). This issue will return in a later section.

Everybody's talking, but who's listening?

On October the 27th, 2009, Intelligence Squared held a debate in which prominent people from within the news industry argued over the motion 'Good riddance,



mainstream media.' The argument was formulated as follows:

The democratisation of news, in an unfiltered internet to which all bloggers and news aggregators have equal access, is a good thing. It encourages a diversity of voices, competing to provide information and analysis.

In his conclusive remark, panellist David Carr, journalist for the *New York Times*, arguing against the motion, first held up a print-out of the front page from popular news aggregator Newser. He pointed out that Newser was an interesting site and recommended people to visit it. Then he held up another print-out where he had cut out all the news articles of that front page that had come from mainstream media. Hardly anything remained.

There are now so many voices on the internet, there is now so much data generated, that far more is produced than can be actually appreciated. Only a small selection will make it to public attention, and that small selection still primarily comes from mainstream sources. Just because these new voices, these so-called 'producers' are there, does not mean anyone is reading them. Are they not just trees falling in a forest where no one wanders, not making a sound? The empirical evidence quoted in this section will argue strongly against both the liberal-individualist and the deliberative democratic positions outlined above, not so much in theory as in practice.

ualist and the deliberative democratic positions outlined above, not so much in theory as in practice.

In *The Myth of Digital Democracy*, Hindman analysed the traffic of various political and news websites and blogs and reached various interesting conclusions. First of all, he finds that of the top 100 most frequently visited websites, not one can be considered political. In fact, he finds that among all web traffic, political sites have a share of less than 0.1%. In April 2007, he found the Huffington Post ranked 796th and FreeRepublic

ranked 871st as the most visited political websites.¹⁰

More interesting, perhaps, is the large share which the top ten sites consistently have through all Hindman's data. One of the arguments in favour of the internet was that it would allow more voices to be heard, that it would be less concentrated than traditional media. This doesn't show in the statistics. In fact, the top 10 websites in

The top 10 websites in general and the top 10 news and media websites, have a larger audience share than the top 10 radio stations and newspaper outlets

general, as well as the top 10 news and media web sites, have a larger audience share than the top 10 radio stations and newspaper outlets (respectively 26% and 29% versus 9% and 19%). Even when the same newspapers online and in print are compared, online audience is substantially more concentrated (the top 10 holding 42%) than print (30%).¹¹ The data of this experiment were replicated and confirmed



by Pitts.¹² Similarly, Wired reports that ‘the top 10 Websites accounted for 31 percent of US page views in 2001, 40 percent in 2006, and about 75 percent in 2010’.¹³

This argument of large online giants

has been countered by the concept of the long-tail, popularised by Anderson. The long-tail theory suggests that the internet is particularly suited for niche markets, where if you make a small number of sales many times, you can still be successful.

While this might be true for commodity markets, Anderson’s claim that ‘all those niches can potentially add up to a market that is as big as (if not bigger than) the hits’ simply does not match the data provided above.¹⁴ There is a tail, it is just not as long as Anderson claims.¹⁵

Instead of a long-tail, Hindman argues that we are dealing with a ‘missing middle’. He thereby opposes Benkler’s view that the internet allows more ‘moderately read outlets’ to find an audience.¹⁶ Though it is true that the very small websites have gotten a (slight) boost from the internet when compared to newspaper concentration,¹⁷ they have been eating from the plate of the middle class, not the elites. Lanier comes to a similar conclusion, when he points out that the Web is a star-system or winners-take-all paradigm, and that this will eradicate the middle class.¹⁸

The effect of the internet on political engagement and participation has been widely researched, but unfortunately a

clear research paradigm and methodology is absent. In most cases, a more liberal-individualist reading of participation was used (including civic (more general, non-political) engagement and petition-

ing). Even then, a positive correlation was hardly found (nor was a negative one, as has also been predicted by some scholars).¹⁹

One of the problems here is that two of the participatory affordances of the internet outlined above, the deliberative aspect that includes voicing an

opinion and discussing it, and the broadcasting aspect that gives every one of these opinions a potential audience of millions of people, are generally conflated. Deliberative democracy, almost by its nature, can only work in small groups, where every voice is listened to and reasoned with, where less vocal people are still able to get themselves heard. Perhaps the affordance of the internet is many-to-many, but as the statistics show, the reality is few-to-few: few people participate, and even fewer people listen to them. This confusion is also clear in the online media’s affection for the term ‘user’. Carpentier explains:

Arguably, the notion of the user became popular because of its capacity to emphasise online audience activity, where people were seen to ‘use’ media technologies and content more actively. This semantic process only emphasised the passive

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you can still be
successful



connotations of the signifier audience by creating a distinction between the signifiers audience and user, but at the same time problematically privileged online media worlds (and their (prod) users) as sites of audience activity. But paradoxically, when user, producer and audience become conflated, the user-component dominates the chain of equivalence, articulating all audiences as active participants; rendering passive consumption either absent or regrettable. Moreover, the lack of attention for the reception of online content leads to the presupposition that this content is appreciated and considered relevant by its audiences (in the assumption that the content is even ever discovered).²⁰

There is, indeed, a lack of attention for news reception with regard to the internet, which, as we have seen, might be related to that parenthesised final comment of Carpentier. There might be no attention for it simply because there is hardly any feedback to be had.²¹

There is also, still, a digital divide. Initially, this term was used to point to differences in access to new technologies across different social groups. If the internet were to truly democratise, people from every strata and demographic should be involved. While many of the divides signified in the past—gender, race, age, education—are gradually closing (though they are still significant), as of 2010 there was still, for example, an enormous gap between the number of households with access to internet in developed (66%) and underdeveloped (16%) countries.²²

So the *digital divide* has not disappeared, but in as far as access to internet has become more equal, the problem of the digital divide has mostly shifted in nature from access to skills—or what is sometimes called digital literacy—and patterns of usage. Age and education were found to be important contributors to skill levels in performing certain tasks on the internet,²³ men were found to be more politically active online than women, and more affluent people more politically active than the less affluent.²⁴ In the same study, the same differences were found in willingness to become politically active in the next year, with those above 60 also significantly more willing than their younger peers.

In analyses of the producers of online content, we find a perpetuation of the elite classes instead of a more diverse group. Education, class and the ‘information environment’ greatly influences people’s likelihood to blog or contribute online.²⁵ Moreover, Hindman finds that of the most popular blogs, nearly all were run by ‘either educational elites, business elites, technical elites, or traditional journalists.’²⁶ Many other studies also confirm digital divide effects in online content creation.²⁷

Disintermediation

We have seen that an extension or improvement of democracy by digital technologies requires, under both of the popular definitions of democracy, active ‘users’ of the internet, either interacting with representatives or discussing prevalent issues amongst each other. We have also seen that the internet’s many-to-many affordance is at this point not much more than a theoretical possibility. We will now



see why, as we look at the evolving structure of the internet that can explain the research results discussed above.

Contrary to popular belief, the structure of the internet as it is now is not egalitarian, and it is not (being) disintermediated. 'The rise of networking did not eliminate intermediaries, but rather changed who they are'.²⁸ The traditional gatekeepers, the publisher and the editor, have been replaced by new ones, the very Web 2.0 services that appeared to

facilitate democratisation. While methods of quality assessment between the traditional and modern gatekeepers differ, they both function in effectively the same way: they decide what will and will not gain attention. Just because the latter uses an algorithm does not mean it is more fair or more democratic, or serves an objective truth.

Large companies like Amazon, Google, Yahoo! and Microsoft, as the Web has progressed over the last two decades, have together moved more and more into a system of oligopoly.²⁹ Just these four companies, in the Alexa top 100 most visited websites of August, 2013, owned 35 of the 100 domains listed.³⁰ In this sense, the Web is nothing new. The introduction of new technologies in the past has often featured a brief unrestrained period—akin to the incunabula period of books—before crystallizing into a fixed pattern. Similarly, other, non-technological, industries have moved and are still moving more and more

into oligopolies.

As Lawrence Lessig wrote, 'code is the law' meaning that the architecture of the services that we use shapes our behaviour and nudges us towards certain predestined goals.³¹ Morozov, via Tim O'Reilly,

calls this algorithmic regulation: 'Information-rich democracies have reached a point where they want to try to solve public problems without having to explain or justify themselves to citizens'.³² While Web 2.0 gave everyone the

tools to raise their voice, it is done only through these intermediary technologies. Like all technologies before them, these empowering tools have their own biases, their own blind spots. They are effectively mediums, and often enough they *are* the message.

In 1994, Nicholas Negroponte wrote, excitedly: 'The medium is *not* the message in a digital world. It is an embodiment of it. A message might have several embodiments automatically derivable from the same data'.³³ Certainly, this is a possibility of the Web. But services that store most of our data, like Google and Facebook, offer us access to data only, data that does not come to us in raw form but rather in the specific form in which the services want us to access it. Lanier elaborates on this:

Individual pages as they first appeared in the early 1990s had the flavor of personhood. MySpace preserved some of that flavour, though a process of regularised

The traditional gatekeepers,
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formatting had begun. Facebook went further, organizing people into multiple-choice identities, while Wikipedia seeks to erase point of view entirely.³⁴

Web 2.0 services are by definition a double-edged sword: they make publication and interaction on the internet easier and more accessible, and they do this by doing a lot of the work. By doing a lot of the work they make implicit decisions for the user.

Google's PageRank algorithm, for instance, creates what has been termed a 'googlearchy', an online infrastructure where the number of incoming links, not the content, is the predominant factor for visibility. Since most people using search engines do not browse past the first page of search results, this results in a vicious cycle, the winner-takes-all effect that was described before. Other search engines, though claiming to use different cues, were found to produce predominantly similar results. PageRank has essentially turned the internet into a free market, where those with the largest influence and resources come out on top.³⁵

This is a curious instance of technological determinism. PageRank uses quantity, not quality, at least in part because quality is not computable. If quality is in fact the desired variable, it has to be defined by proxy, and that proxy has become the variable of inbound links. Google defines a link as a vote from one site for the other. Like in politics, a vote cannot necessarily be bought, but participants with more money, and therefore more visibility, have better chances. Making matters even worse is Google's apparent shift to a 'shareholder democracy'³⁶ where the votes of more influential websites are allotted more

weight.³⁷ This again mirrors the political situation off the web, where, at least in the United States, 'wealthy interests play an outsized role in the election'.

A more recent development is personalisation. In recent years, probably due to the vast growth of information generated online, many websites have started offering users individual search results, book recommendations and news updates. While such a feature can certainly be useful, the problem is its non-optionality in the majority of the cases. There is no objective search result in Google given a certain query at a certain time. Location and user information (at the least) affect the results considerably. Search results are hidden from users, and it is not clear on what exact grounds this happens. This is a new, impersonal (and at the same time highly personal) method of censorship in the same way that PageRank is a new method of gatekeeping and, again, its algorithmic nature does not necessarily make it more democratic or objective.

Moreover, a personalised internet can greatly harm democracy, both the liberal-individualist and, especially, the deliberative interpretation. This is related to the concept of the public sphere touched upon in the first section. In a personalised environment, all groups of people that coalesce on the internet will be increasingly homogeneous, and discussion and deliberation will be reduced to yea-saying. This is what Pariser has dubbed the 'filter bubble'.³⁹

Even without such algorithmic personalisation, filter bubble effects already occur. Both Sunstein and Hindman found, in analysing political blogs, that 'liberals link mostly to liberals and conservatives link mostly to conservatives'.⁴⁰ What this means is that once someone is on a web-





site supporting a certain view, he will most likely remain on such websites for the rest of the session. Combined with a search engine which after guessing your view on something returns only websites supporting that view, this is a very powerful polarising effect, since groups tend to become more extreme when dissent and appraisal of alternatives are suppressed.⁴¹ While this polarisation is often understood in terms of audience fragmentation, this is not necessarily the case. As we saw in the second section, online audiences are even more concentrated than offline audiences. What is more likely, then, is that audiences will become more segregated, that the common public sphere will multiply in a few largely unconnected public spheres, divided by ideological borders and internally strengthened by the popular ‘sharing’ features of social media.

The idea behind personalisation is, ostensibly, to help users find what they are looking for. The assumption, then, is that people are always looking for something. But this is just one out of two methods of research. The other is browsing. It is no accident that we use ‘browsers’ to navigate the Web: this was the dominant mode in the early years. The very idea of hypertext serves itself perfectly to browsing. It brings order to vast amounts of information and allows for semantic paths to step through

them. However, somewhere along the way, the ‘search’ mode has come to dominate the ‘browse’ mode. Now, ‘the vast digital library is there to help you answer the question with which you began’. The concept of ‘distant reading’ (or ‘not reading’), in digital humanities, is related.

This method, though useful, is only meant to corroborate an idea that was already there from the start. It will skim over the irrelevant (new) parts. Pariser speaks of a ‘shift from a discovery-oriented Web to a search-and-retrieval focused Web’.⁴³ He points out that this is a problem not just for politics, but also for science and arts. Some degree of serendipity—an element of random chance—is necessary, he argues, to spur

creativity and come to new ideas.

To sum up, personalisation, by only preaching to the choir, so to speak, will help crystallise society into their multiple public spheres, into partisan factions. Web 2.0 services, while giving their users a voice, have the power to shape and manipulate this voice. Digital profiles of people reduce them to information, and ‘information underrepresents reality’.⁴⁴ Finally, the plurality of voices that the advent of the internet announced, apart from being filtered by personalisation algorithms, is also reduced by search engine algorithms, with a bias towards elite and resourceful people and organisations, just as it was before the internet.

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Conclusion

The two popular ‘positions’ of democracy described in the first section both depend on active, wilful ‘users’ of the internet. This has been shown to be overly optimistic. Moreover, insofar as citizens are willing to actively look for data, their quest is complicated by the changing structure of the web, which promotes targeted search over exploratory browsing, and hides from them the very sources most likely to expand their views. The research cited in section two confirms that this plurality of voices is not heard, and that democracy, at least in the nature and variety of the information people consult, has not been substantially altered by the digital revolu-

tion. In fact, the multiplied public sphere that personalisation algorithms are creating might actually harm instead of benefit democracy, especially a deliberative one. Research on the digital divide, as well as considerations on the ‘Googlearchy’, question the idea of the Web’s being more egalitarian. In general, opaque algorithmic regulation has replaced traditional power structures with structures that are also biased, albeit in different ways. Whether these algorithms will provoke democratic change in the future and in what way remains unanswered, but under present conditions there is no good reason to believe so. ■

Notes

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4. P. Baczewski, *The Internet Unleashed* (Indianapolis: Sams Pub., 1994).
5. L. Dahlberg, ‘Re-constructing Digital Democracy: An Outline of Four “Positions”’, *New Media & Society*, 13 (2011), pp. 855-872.
6. J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Boston: MIT Press, 1991).
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8. N. Carpentier, ‘Contextualising Author-Audience Convergences: ‘New’ Technologies’ Claims to Increased Participation, Novelty and Uniqueness’, *Cultural Studies*, 25 (2011), pp. 517-533.
9. S. Lax, ‘The Internet and democracy’, in D. Gauntlett (ed.), *Web. Studies* (London: Arnold, 2000), pp. 158-69.
10. To be fair, since then, *the Huffington Post* has gotten much more popular, ranking 86th on Alexa.com as of January 2014. Then again, their website is not solely dedicated to political news. At the same time, news websites, who do somewhat better in Hindman’s results, can also be political, as many people traditionally use newspapers for both reporting and op-ed political articles.
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12. B. Pitts, *Evaluating Googlearchy: Assessing the Diversity of Political Websites*, (Georgia: PhD dissertation, University of Georgia, 2010).
13. C. Anderson & M. Wolff, ‘The Web Is Dead. Long Live the Internet’, *Wired*, 17 August 2010, <http://www.wired.com/magazine/2010/08/ff_webrip/> (24 January 2014).
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15. C. Anderson, *The Long Tail: Why the Future of Business is Selling Less of More* (New York: Hyperion Books, 2008).
16. Y. Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).
17. The top 500 news and media web sites have a 79% share, whereas the top 500 newspapers have a 91% share.
18. J. Lanier, *Who Owns the Future?* (London: Allen Lane, 2013).
19. For an overview of the research, see Boulianne, S., 'Does Internet Use Affect Engagement? A Meta-Analysis of Research', *Political Communication*, 26 (2009), pp. 193-211.
20. N. Carpentier, 'Contextualising Author-Audience Convergences: 'New' Technologies' Claims to Increased Participation, Novelty and Uniqueness', *Cultural Studies*, 25 (2011), pp. 517-533.
21. Besides, as we will see in the third section, this specific trait of the internet is now seriously threatened by the algorithmic regulation of the largest and most influential websites, from Google and Facebook to aggregators like Digg and Huffington Post.
22. Anonymous, 'ITU: Measuring the Information Society 2011', <<http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/publications/idi/>> (20 January 2014).
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35. M. Hindman, K. Tsioutsoulis & J.A. Johnson, 'Googlearchy: How a few heavily-linked sites dominate politics on the web', In Annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, 4 (2003), pp. 1-33.
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37. Google's refusal to be transparent about their algorithm is an additional concern (if logical for a large corporate business) given the importance of the algorithm for the whole of society. For an overview of such concerns, and speculation as to the many variables considered in the algorithm, see Granta (2010).
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39. E. Pariser, *The Filter Bubble* (New York: Penguin Press, 2011).
40. C. Sunstein, *Republic.com 2.0* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), pp. 150.
41. I.L. Janis, *Victims of Groupthink: A Psychological Study of Foreign-policy Decisions and Fiascoes* (Oxford: Houghton Mifflin, 1972).
42. S. Ramsay, 'The Hermeneutics of Screwing Around; or What You Do with a Million Books', *Stephen Ramsay*, 17 April 2010, <<http://www.playingwithhistory.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/hermeneutics.pdf>> (17 December, 2013).
43. E. Pariser, *The Filter Bubble*, pp. 103.
44. J. Lanier, *You are not a Gadget*, pp. 69.







A BIT of HISTORY

Currently there are many transitions in the book market.

However, these are similar to previous changes. Books have changed and developed over the ages and will continue to do so.

This last section of articles explores transitions and developments in the history of books, book collecting and typography.





Image 1: Tabs on the edges of Dionysius Gothofredus (ed.), *Corpus juris civilis* (Geneva: J. Vignon, 1614). Thysia 1803.





Living on the Edge

The Boundaries of the Book in the Bibliotheca Thysiana

By Paul Hoftijzer

Extraordinary Professor of Book History, Leiden University

On 29 September, 1653, a couple of days before his untimely death at the age of 31, Johannes Thysius drew up his last will and testament. It was the founding document of the Leiden Bibliotheca Thysiana, since one of the testament's stipulations was that after Johannes' death his library should be turned into a public institution, in his words 'for the public benefit of study' (*tot publijcque dienst der studie*). Moreover, a vast sum of 20.000 guilders (for comparison, a craftsman earned six guilders per week) was made available from Thysius's legacy for the construction of a modern library building (presently Rapenburg 25) (image 2), as well as an annual rent of 300 guilders for the upkeep of the collection.

Johannes Thysius must have been quite pleased had he known that more than 350 years later his library would still be used by scholars, not only, however, for the contents of the books, but also for their physical appearance. Surely, one of the main assets of the Bibliotheca Thysiana is that it enables us to study the vibrant cultural and intellectual climate in the Dutch Republic at the middle of the seventeenth century. But the library also provide evidence on a range of other topics, such as the ways in which books in the early-modern period were made and used. The collection is rich in information about patterns in early-modern printing and publishing, previous owners of the books and their reading behaviour, and trends and traditions in book binding and ornamentation. This contribution will look at one small, but specific aspect of the material make-up of books in the library, their edges.



Image 2: Interior of the Bibliotheca Thysiana in Leiden.





The last phase of the production process of a book is its binding. In the pre-modern period, books were hardly ever bound in prefabricated, uniform bindings. The ‘clothing’ of the book was very much dependent on its intended use, as well as on the taste and financial means of the individual buyer, who upon acquisition decided what sort of binding he preferred. It explains the abundance of different book bindings in the *Bibliotheca Thysiana*. The binding could be made by the bookseller in whose shop the book was bought (and this might very well be the publisher himself as the functions of publisher, bookseller and bookbinder were not yet separated), but one could also take the book to one’s favourite bookbinder. Johannes Thysius himself employed one Leiden bookbinder, Wolther de Haes in the Houtstraat, who made good calf and parchment bindings and decorated them with blind and gold tooled ornaments. Those ornaments were only to be found on Thysius’s books.

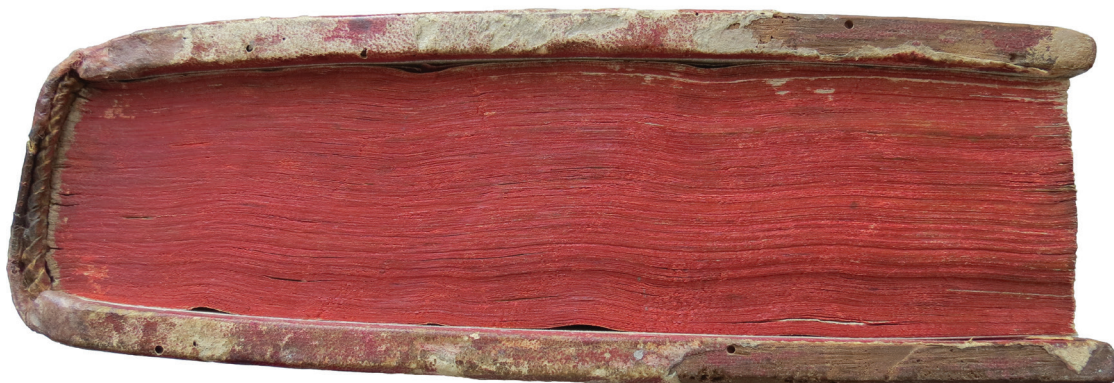
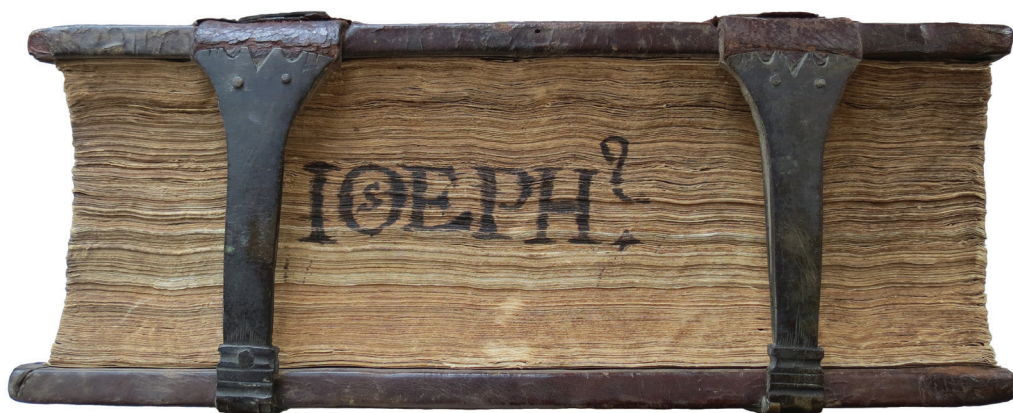
The main function of the binding was protection against wear and tear and external threats, such as dust and dampness, which determined the choice of material: animal skin, mostly that of goat, calf and pig. Another was aesthetic pleasure and status; the binding could express one’s taste and position in society, for instance by the application of fashionable ornamentation or a family crest (*supralibros*). When the binding was finished, however, three of the four sides of the book were still uncovered, the edges (head, tail and fore edge). Often, these edges, after being trimmed smooth, were also worked on by the bookbinder. Protection again was the dominant consideration, the edges being, as it were, the soft underbelly of the book.

Protection could be provided by dying, sprinkling, or even marbling the edges with a coloured ink, paint, or oil, which provided a shield against dust (and since dust attracts moisture, the much more dangerous mildew) and which camouflaged spots. But here, too, the visual aspect was not forgotten. The dyes which were used were often a bright red, yellow, green or blue (image 5); sprinkling equally produced a striking effect, particularly when more than one colour was used (image 7).

Protection and aesthetics joined forces when gold, an incorruptible metal, was used on the edges. Applying it was a delicate and costly operation, as gold leaf had to be brushed very carefully onto the pressed edges, which had been treated first with an adhesive ‘glair’ on the basis of eggwhite. The effect even after hundreds of years can still be breathtaking. It could be further enhanced by gaufring (from the French *gaufre*, to emboss) the edges, that is impressing a heated instrument or roll onto the gilded edges. Examples in the *Bibliotheca Thysiana* show a variety of patterns with curling lines, flowers, hearts, etc. (image 3).

Apart from protection and decoration, the edges of a book were also treated for another purpose. Until the middle of the seventeenth century books were often placed on the shelves with their spines against the wall. The reason for this curious habit may have been that the protruding clasps, bosses and other metal fittings that were attached to the binding to reinforce and protect it, could easily damage neighbouring books when placing the book with the fore edge facing the wall. But whatever the reason, it created the opportunity to use the edges as a surface to write upon, for instance to register the name of the author, a short title of the work or its volume number (image 4), or to





Top to bottom:

Image 3: Gilt and gauffered edges of *Het boeck der psalmen* (Middelburg: R. Schilders, 1591). Thysia 66.

Image 4: Manuscript title on the fore-edge of Flavius Josephus, *Praeclara opera* (Paris: F. Regnault, 1514). Thysia 594.

Image 5: Dyed fore-edge of a heavily annotated manuscript of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (15th c.). Thysia 1674.





secure its place on the shelf by giving it a number (image 6). A particularly nice example is found on an 1582 Italian edition of the *Summa theologiae* of Thomas of Aquinas (Thysia 207), which has the portrait of the author on the spine (image 8). Thysius himself never seems to have practiced the custom; he used to write the name of the author and a short title on the spines of his books bound in parchment, which means that he shelved his books as we still do today. No examples, by the way, have been found of hidden fore edge painting, which can only be seen when the pages of the book are ‘fanned’. It is a type of decoration that became very popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Finally, one other use of the edges occurs in the collection of the Bibliotheca Thysiana. In a couple of books, especially the more voluminous handbooks on law, such as the 1614 Geneva edition of the *Corpus iuris civilis* (Thysia 1803), small numbered tabs or markers made of parchment have been attached to the fore edges for easy reference (image 1). The effect is quite nice, and has been compared to a piano keyboard, hence its Dutch name *klavier*. ■

Left to right:

Image 6: Fore-edge with shelf-number 13 of Elias Reusnerus, *Opus genealogicum catholicum* (Frankfurt am Main: N. Bassaeus, 1592). Thysia 781.

Image 7: Sprinkled fore-edge in red and blue of Georgius Buchananus, *Rerum Scoticarum historia* (Frankfurt am Main: heirs of S. Feyerabend, 1594). Thysia 516.

Image 8: Fore-edge with a portrait of the author of Thomas of Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, vol. II (Turin: heirs of N. Bevilacqua, 1582). Thysia 208.





Beyond Boundaries







Reading Practices during Times of Transition

An Eternal Circle

By Ksenia Papazova

Student of Books and Digital Media Studies at Leiden University

It has always been a matter of deep interest for scholars and people attracted to the written word to know what people read in the past, are reading now and will read in the future. A list of certain titles considered classics or must-reads has been a person's business card to the intellectual world of printed culture for quite a long time. However, we know little about such lists in earlier centuries. Can the limited number of available books caused by the imperfection of the 'hand-made' technology be considered as an excuse for a scribe or a monk for not reading this or that particular title? Were there any books that had a greater value in the eye of ones contemporaries? Did a sort of 'best-seller' (or should we say a 'best-copier'?) manuscript, which determined the literary or intellectual taste of a person from the Middle Ages, exist? The answers to such questions are not necessarily obvious, but these questions fall into the same paradigm that can be formulated as 'What did they read in the Middle Ages?' Fortunately for us, there are still records concerning book production, numerous enough to feel quite safe in this subject area. Yet we will find ourselves in a tight corner if we ask how people read.

The problem of understanding the way people read books is relatively recent for the history of the book and it is a difficult one. Remarkably, this interest can arise with renewed force as a consequence of new technologies, especially when e-readers are being developed. New characteristics of paper books such as linearity, analogue-like character, physicality, etc. have been discovered recently. In the same way as scholars found themselves looking for and describing features of paper books compared to the possibilities of the digital era, the study of reading practices gained a new stimulus. 'How do we read books now and how were books read before?' is not something that naturally comes to our mind. The process of reading seems to be so built-in into our lives as well as our consciousness and world perception that it does not allow us to question it. Even today, with the advancement of Web 2.0 and the omnipresent Internet, people may have





difficulty defining their reading experience when asked to describe the way a person reads. On the other hand, a question about their reading preferences is fairly simple.

In a chapter about making a medieval manuscript, R. Clemens and T. Graham claim that ‘few books in the Middle Ages would have been read from cover to cover. Most books were read discursively—that is, the reader would read some chapters or lines in one part of the book and then skip to another book.’¹ This statement sounds very familiar and may remind us of modern digital reading practices. Of course, we use another term—discontinuity—and another perspective to look at to describe the way we read today, but present-day digital reading seems to have some common features with medieval reading. This is probably due to the unset character of reading in the Middle Ages in general, compared to those of the order of books of today or recent past. Besides, the term ‘discursive’ should be understood as discontinuous in accordance with its medievalist usage.

Thus several questions arise:

a) What are the reasons for reading to move from continuity to discontinuity?

Can this discontinuity be a temporary characteristic of the period moving into the digital order?

b) Which books were read from cover to cover in the Middle Ages and which books can we expect to be read in this way in the digital future?

c) What were the methods of finding essential information then and do they have any traces of similarity with present-day search engines or strategies?

It might be useful to limit this essay to one or more types of reading in order not to lose the thread in this potentially huge subject: different types of reading, for example by purpose (entertainment, studying, devotion, etc.) can be categorised, and one of them can be described in detail, but such limitation may turn out to be less fruitful because some types of reading (for example, reading for entertainment) are an invention of a later period, or some types of reading can be regarded as interpenetrative as it is in the case of devotional and studying types of reading. Perhaps a rigorous distinction between different types of reading can be drawn at a later stage of the development of reading culture connected with the invention of printing and increased availability of books for a broad audience. That is why a fairly imprecise or overly generalised approach to the categories such as ‘reading’ and ‘reader’ (by which we mean ‘the historical reader’² to make a clearer distinction between a present-day reader and abstract readers from the Middle Ages) should not be considered a grave disadvantage of this essay, as it is mostly caused by the character of the research material itself and the on-going debate in the field of terminology and methodology of this particular discipline. Moreover, a broad period of time called the Middle Ages does not contribute to the precision of these categories; however, special emphasis will be placed in the Later Middle Ages as well as on the period of advanced book production and changing reading practices.

This essay is an attempt to show reading as an evolutionary process (from reading discursively to reading discontinuously), particularly touching upon two time periods in the long history of reading: the Middle Ages and the so-called transitional age, with some





speculations about a third time period known as the digital age. The period of time we are living in is often referred to as transitional due to the rapid changes that are taking place in all the spheres of life. However, this suggests that there should be some kind of a transition or a shift which implies instability and an unsettled character of new, incipient practices. The digital world in general and digital reading in particular are products of new technologies and have not reached their final stage of development and therefore cannot be ranked properly yet. Nevertheless, a paradigm shift with accompanying anxieties is obvious. The order of the book is changing into something that can be described as a 'disorder' of the book (until the moment when a full digitisation is complete) when old rules seem to stop working but new ones are not yet developed. Discontinuity, as a prominent feature of this transitional period, has already been mentioned and it is natural to wonder if it will be preserved in the course of digitisation, or if a new shift to continuous linear reading can occur again. Speculations of such kind are purely theoretical and it is advisable to look at the current changes in reading from a long historical perspective. Moreover, we will see that some features of the transitional age (fluidity, discontinuity, non-linearity, etc.) that are presented as new, bear the traces of familiarity that had been enjoyed before.

The process of reading seems to be so built-in into our lives that it does not allow us to question it.

The shift from hand-made manuscripts to printed books could have had more consequences than we have thought before. The whole tradition of reading may have changed in the same fashion in which we are experiencing such changes today while moving to digital reading. The way we read today is determined to a certain extent by the medium we are using for it. Modern devices with touch screens connected to the Internet are common in a digital age, and reading online is becoming as natural as shopping online. There are still many fervent debates about the nature of online reading, its characteristics, quality and differences with reading a paper book; however, they should be all omitted due to the limited length of the essay. What is of primary concern here is that the invention of printing made the book linear and fixed. Not only the order of words, chapters, etc. on the page was fixed physically, but also the possibility of different versions of the same text was obliterated. It is intriguing to see that the same change, only backwards, is taking place now, as if we are going back to the origins of the codex. The profound changes a new digital medium causes are quite visible and traceable, but what kind of a medium was the hand-written codex?

To answer this question we should know much more about reading practices of that period; however, it is almost impossible to get any information of this kind. The only reliable source, besides limited written evidence, is the books themselves, yet no one can assume that we would use the book in the same way as our predecessors.³ In a zealous debate about the importance of the content of the book before its format (for instance, in *Print is dead* the author denies the significance of the book (paper) as a medium⁴ and



in his new foreword to the book he claims that ‘after all, the printed page is a display device, and thus is no different than an iPhone’⁵) we should admit that denying the latter will produce no results. So the main question before us at this point is to define what can allow us to perceive a medieval book culture as non-linear. As Arthur Bahr writes,

The Internet has made it easy, normal even, to read in all sorts of nonlinear ways, but the evidence of medieval compilations suggests that people were already doing that many centuries ago.⁶

In his recent and provocative book, Bahr gives a fresh look at the idea of a composite manuscript. Traditionally codicology is engaged in finding out the way such a manuscript was made from a historical and technical perspective (its provenance, the time of assembling, etc.) but it has little to do with finding the meaning behind these composi-

For several centuries
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tions. However, numerous examples of composed manuscripts suggest that the practice of manuscript composition was quite common for the Middle Ages,⁷ thus implying its importance for a medieval culture. One more key issue here is that these compositions were initiated by the medieval readers themselves⁸ (we will return to this idea later). Bahr analyses different composite manuscripts to answer what he defines as an interesting literary-historical question, ‘why specific assemblages got put together the way they did.’⁹ For instance, while scrutinising the corpus of Andrew Horn, who was an early fourteenth-century London lawyer, the author comes to the conclusion that binding together separate

works (among them there are legal treatises and a piece of French poetry) has an intention behind it:

One poem just doesn’t make sense, but if you read the poem in juxtaposition with the legal treatise that comes after, then the two pieces make sense.

He’s suggesting that the law and literature are sort of the yin and the yang, you need both.¹⁰

So the applications of Bahr’s research method can help to put an end to the discussion about irrelevance of the medium for a written culture (from scrolls to printed and digital books) as well as be of much use for the literary criticism which completely ignores the problem of a medium; and parses only the text as a thing in itself by opening new perspectives for interpretations, and by analysing perception of the texts by the contemporaries. Besides, one of the important implications of Bahr’s work concerns his successful attempt to discover a non-linear eclectic mode of reading in the Middle Ages. Thus, Bahr succeeded in showing that a medieval reader was accustomed to jump from one piece of writing to another, even if it involved different (often quite opposite or unusual) genres or sorts of reading matter. However, we can argue to which extent continuity-discontinuity and intensive-extensive reading are correlated. We can assume





that medieval reading practices were highly intensive (though discontinuous) compared to those of today which can be described as extensive, as the reader is scanning and skipping through the text. Such fast modes of reading can probably be explained by the flood of reading-material for devouring, yet new realities bring together new methods to deal with them. A medieval book culture could not afford to read extensively, simply because of the lack of books.

Besides similarities in reading modes between the Middle Ages and a digital age, another vital characteristic of reading practices should be mentioned, i.e. readers' interactions with texts. While pondering over the future possibilities of reading offered by the development of digital technologies, Jeff Gomez¹¹ emphasises the necessity to adapt to the new habits of digital natives. He predicts that reading will be more intertwined with writing, which will find its reflection in a huge amount of comments on a particular book or reading matter (we will avoid the issue what is or will be the book in the digital realm because this question is beyond the scope of the essay). So a door to the collaborative work is being opened again. We cannot but agree that:

Medieval literature is also always collaborative in one way or another: readers often commented on texts by writing notes in the margin or underlining passages, and scribes frequently altered an author's words to suit the purpose of the compilation at hand.¹²

In the same way as medieval people gathered together different booklets or parts of different texts into one book, people of the future will be able to choose to have one or more chapters from different books in their digital collections instead of purchasing a whole book. Gomez says that they will get the right to shuffle different parts from different books or to modify them any way they like.¹³ At this point we can conclude that changes in reading practices of today and tomorrow touch upon two usually opposed sides of the book: its content and the physicality of the object. The book as a physical object was manipulated and modified while the same thing was happening to the content—glosses or other marginal notes were added or the text was altered by cutting, expending or even distorted by mistake. In the digital future, this opposition is going to disappear because of the disappearance of the book, not only in terms of physicality, but also in terms of authorship. The notion of authorship developed quite late due to the fact that printing fixed text. Before the introduction of print, anonymity was common and the author could call himself 'our humble servant'.

Fluidity is another prominent feature of the digital medium to feel anxiety about. New practices of turning texts into 'digital water' (flexible but unable to keep its own form) make us think about the problem of authoritative copies of a certain text and trustworthiness of the knowledge itself. It is more interesting how medieval readers managed to live in the world of juxtaposition of different variants of a text. Freedom in altering and combining texts from different resources enjoyed in the Middle Ages, may be compared with what we are going to get in the nearest future. Such openness for modification will probably make a creator a second-rate figure; who would remember the name of the author if we have only one chapter or a chunk of it on our device,





and will it make sense to refer to an author if a reader has modified the original text?

These questions lead us to another issue in the field of the history of reading, namely the problem of establishing the volume of reading: if reading a book from cover to cover was a rare practice in the Middle Ages, what were the reasons for it and how fast were people able to read? There is little evidence how fast professional scribes could write (an interesting attempt to clarify this issue is made by Michael Gullick¹⁴) and the same research question about the speed of reading may turn out to be unanswerable. We can assume the speed of reading was fairly slow and connected with the fact that many people, who were able to read, read aloud or in a low voice, and could not read silently.¹⁵ As A. Petrucci writes about reading in the Middle Ages:

The overall impression is that there was no effort to shorten the time required for reading, for indeed everything contributed to keep reading extremely slow, attentive, almost stumbling.¹⁶

Also, we may suggest that there is an interdependence between the speed of reading and intensive-extensive modes of reading. Taking into consideration the fact that the human brain was not actually meant for reading,¹⁷ it is fascinating to understand how humans managed to shift to a silent mode, when it happened and whether the availability of books was among those factors to influence this process.

In the light of the speculations stated above we should not be surprised that linear lengthy narratives will probably disappear because of the salient character of a new medium. Moreover, before lamenting the death of a novel, we should not forget that the habit of reading long narratives is not really that old. However, it is of great interest to understand in which way the classics can be read in the future, provided that new generations are willing to read them. New reality can spur the appearance of new genres or modifications of old ones. It is equally plausible that an old genre of digests will revive in full bloom in order to meet new demands of a modern reader, because it is possible that the (full-text) great works of literature will be beyond the grasp of coming generations. Remarkably, the percentage of people who read the works of classical antiquity today is relatively small too. Also telling may be that the notion of reading from cover to cover will disappear as well, because new digital books do not have covers or dust jackets (at least as long as we think of them in 'paper' terms). The limitations of the text within a physical object (i.e. a book or a scroll) contribute to the feeling of the end-ness or finiteness of the text itself. But if the digital reality seems infinite and there is no end to it while we are moving from one page to another, the text can also lose its quality of being finite.

The infinity of the text implies the advanced methods of searching—the last issue we are going to touch upon in this essay, which is logically connected to the previous part, i.e. how information can be retrieved after finishing a book. Before turning to the medieval and 'digital' methods of finding information, let's examine a book published in 1971 in Great Britain. Marshall McLuhan's *Gutenberg galaxy* is an interesting specimen of what that can be described today as an obsolete way of thinking. The book has a table of contents, but neither running titles nor indexes. Three parts make up the book





and the first part covers about 250 pages. Within each part there is a number of rather short chapters which are introduced with the help of an asterisk (probably a substitute for medieval initials), and the title of a chapter (which is usually a whole sentence; again a reference to the medieval typography) is presented in bold bigger type within a frame (for example, pages 152-153 of the mentioned edition).¹⁸ The size of these titles makes them stand out on the page; thus their searchability increases. However, in the table of contents, only the three parts of the book are listed, for some reason (probably because the sentences-names of chapters are not suitable for making the table of contents so pleasant for our eyes) all the chapters are omitted. The feeling while dealing with this book can be described as frustration (maybe intentional); it feels as if we are back again at the origins of the codex with no possibility to retrieve information in a fast and efficient way. It can be compared with the same feeling which a person experiences trying to search anything in manuscripts before a consistent introduction of running titles, table of contents, hierarchy of fonts and colours for more and less important parts of the text, marginal notes, etc. So the question is 'How can anything be found in this book?'

It looks like we will have to follow Hugh of St. Victor's piece of advice (dated back to 1120s) to memorise graphic features on the page¹⁷ in order to locate a passage we want to refer to. However, coloured initials or shapes made by the patterns of words so common for codices, are of little help in the age of printed book with standardised layout. Trying to evaluate the full range of means provided by human ingenuity for retrieving information from the paper book (from pagination to bookmarks and colourful sticky page-tabs, a modern variation of finger tabs made from the page itself or objects attached to the page such as pippes or ball-tabs), we will come to an unpleasant conclusion that 'the late fourteenth-century book differs more from its early medieval predecessors than it does from the printed books of our own day'.²⁰ For several centuries the manner of locating information in books has not been revolutionised or changed considerably. In order to find information a book should be read at first, then it may be marked up in the way a person finds it appropriate (by highlighting or underlining, by writing a summary, etc.). Most interestingly, present-day search engines allow us to scan digital texts for hits (and basic statistics) without reading them at all. This can be rendered as a considerable step forward in processing information.

Logic suggests that future generations can share the same feeling of frustration looking at the paper books of today. Detailed lists of contents, different types of indexes at the end of the book are unlikely to change the situation for the better. These things are not productive and they are undeniably time-consuming: for instance, an index can refer to a certain page but it doesn't tell a reader which line he or she should look for; a reader will have to scan the whole page to find a necessary word combination if there

A medieval book culture could not afford to read extensively: simply because of the lack of books.



is only one reference to this subject in the book. However, there are usually multiple references on a number of pages. So the verdict is obvious: paper books are not searchable at all!

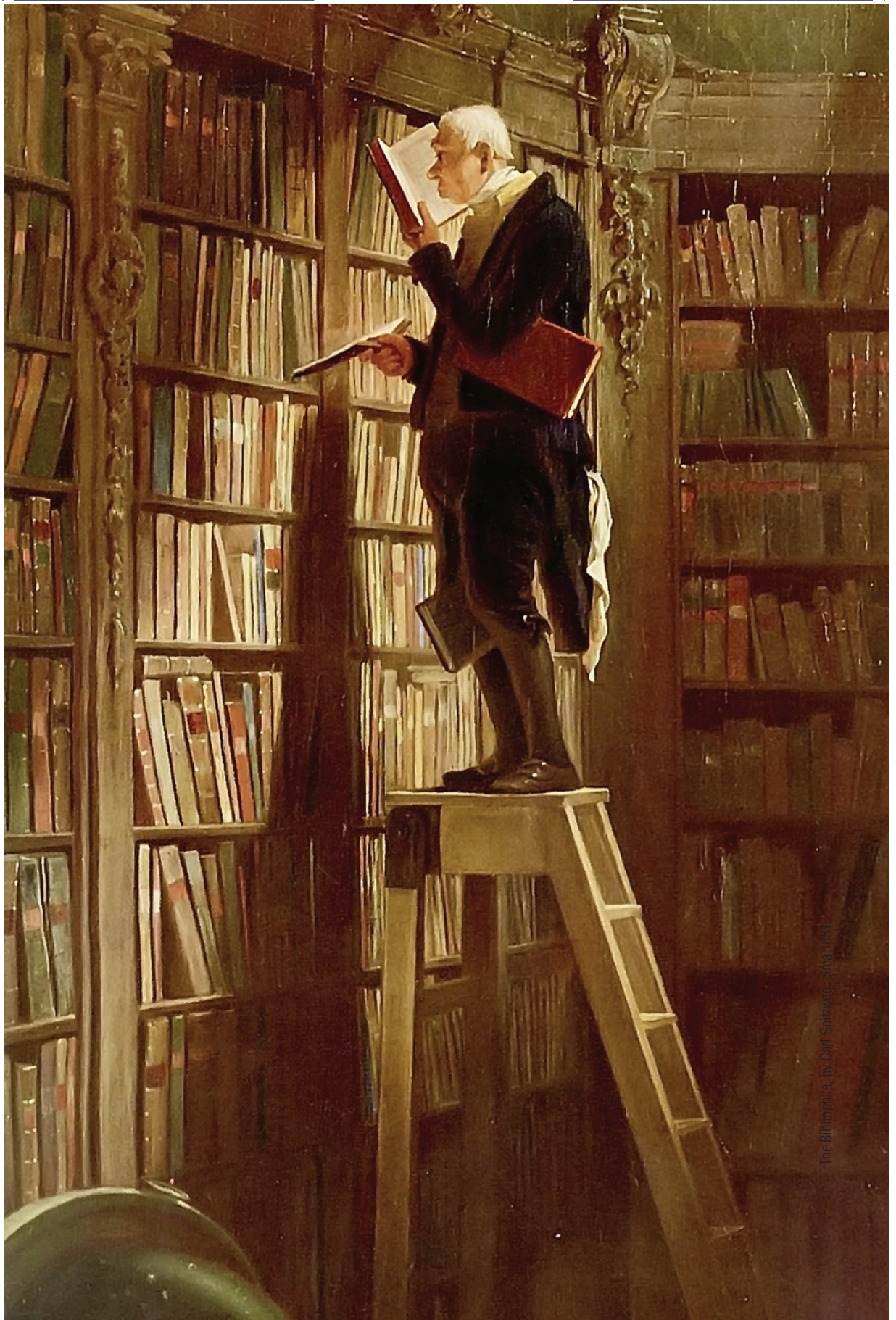
Conclusion

It is quite easy to imagine a highly-digitised world a few hundred years from our time onward which will have another system of counting time. A.D. or B.C. will be of little importance; our epoch will be described as B.D. (Before Digitisation) and considered as a society of bookworms (however, there is a strong probability that this word will also disappear together with paper books) who literally ate books because every use of a paper book by a new reader brings the end of its life span closer. On the contrary, a new society whose members are unable to hand-write or read long narratives (which will be probably substituted by visualised presentations of a message to forward), may return to reading aloud or to reading at a low voice in order to grasp the written message by making it audible. This mode of reading may lead again to the reduced speed of reading and will result in the reviving of more intensive reading practices. However, the days of linear and continual reading which characterises the order of the book, seem to be numbered and it will co-exist with discontinuity and non-linearity as long as the new medium allows. It is obviously difficult to predict or claim that discontinuity is a temporary feature of the disorder of the book but in all probability it will stay with us for a relatively long period of time until new technologies give birth to a digital medium suitable for continuous reading. Also, it is very unrealistic to expect future generations to read books from cover to cover due to the abundance of reading materials. No matter how nostalgic we can feel about our beloved bookmarks sticking out from our books or about underlining traces and other notes on the pages for finding important passages, searching information is just a practical matter that new technologies help us to deal with more successfully. All in all, even if the history of humanity should make another circle, it doesn't look like we will face it unprepared: new things are somehow familiar—the past repeats itself—*plus ça change*. ■



Notes

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2. The term is used in the same way as it is discussed in 'Readers: book and bibliography' by S. Colclough, pp. 53-54. S. Colclough, 'Readers: book and bibliography', in *A companion to the history of the book*, ed. Eliot, S. and Rose, J., (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), p. 51.
3. S. Colclough, 'Readers: book and bibliography', in *A companion to the history of the book*, ed. Eliot, S. and Rose, J., (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), p. 51.
4. J. Gomez, *Print is dead: Books in our digital age*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).
5. J. Gomez, 'Reading 2.0', p. 30, <http://dontcallhome.com/speed_of_light_reading_gomez.pdf> (23 January, 2014).
6. 'Medieval reading lessons', n.pag. <<http://shass.mit.edu/news/news-2013-medieval-reading-lessons-arthur-bahrs-new-book>> (23 January, 2014).
7. P. R. Robinson, 'The booklet': A self-contained unit in composite manuscripts,' in *Codicologica*, 3 (1980), p. 56.
8. *ibid*, p. 56.
9. Dizikes, P., 'The strangely familiar browsing habits of 14th-century readers', 22 May 2013, n.pag. <<http://web.mit.edu/newsoffice/2013/arthur-bahr-fragments-and-assemblages-0523.html>> (23 January, 2014).
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17. 'Does the brain like e-books?', (New York Times, 14 October 2009).
18. M. McLuhan, *The Gutenberg galaxy: The making of typographic man* (London, 1971).
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The Bibliophile, by Carl Spitzweg, circa 1851





Bibliomania:

Thomas Frognall Dibdin
and Early 19th Century Book Collecting

By Matthew Beros

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*It is important to understand the bibliophile as a type,
for everything indicates that he will soon disappear.*

– Nodier, *L'Amateur de Livres* 1841

In 1812 the sale of the vast library amassed by John Ker, third Duke of Roxburghe, became one of the defining moments of the bibliomania which was sweeping throughout Europe and marked the beginning of a new era of British book-collecting. The centerpiece of the collection was a notoriously rare *editio princeps* of Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* printed by Christopher Valdarfer in Venice in 1471. The Valdarfer *Decameron* is a unique surviving copy bound in dark green Morocco with gilt ornaments, edged in gold fillet and stamped in the arabesque style. A bidding war between two aristocratic bibliophiles Lord Spencer and the Marquis of Blandford drove the price up to the extraordinary sum of £ 2,270, making a price record that stood for 72 years.¹ It was after this auction that Thomas F. Dibdin formed the Roxburghe club, the first rare book society in Britain. Members of the club included Lord Spencer, the Marquis of Blandford and Richard Heber who had spent as much as £100,000 on his personal collection, which was used as the basis for many popular editions of English poetry.²

Bibliomania was both celebrated as an erudite hobby, a new form of the eighteenth century virtuoso and derided as a superficial display of learning remote from wisdom or scholarly work. Book-collectors during this period included aristocrats, amateur bibliographers as well as nouveaux-riches eager to acquire the symbolic capital and class status conferred by owning a library of antiquarian books. The earliest recorded use of





'bibliomania' in England is in 1734 by Thomas Hearne when he commented on the sale of manuscripts from Rawlinson's library but it is more commonly associated with the unprecedented prices for rare books in the 19th century.³ Thomas Dibdin's *Bibliomania or Book-Madness* was one of several popular works published in the early 19th century that purported to diagnose the 'book disease'. Phillips Connell describes *Bibliomania* as a series of bizarre, rambling dialogues which together comprise a kind of mock pathology of the symptoms of various aristocratic book collectors.⁴ Dibdin lists the symptoms exhibited by bibliomaniacs as an insatiable desire for uncut copies, vellum, first editions, illustrated pages, unique copies, 'black letter editions' and suppressed works.⁵ Throughout the dialogues the figure of the bibliomaniac who amasses a large collections of books without reading them is gently mocked:

'I will frankly confess,' rejoined Lysander, 'that I am an arrant BIBLIOMANIAC—that I love books dearly—that the very sight, touch, and, more, the perusal—' 'Hold, my friend,' again exclaimed Philemon, 'you have renounced your profession—you talk of *reading* books—do BIBLIOMANIACS ever *read* books?'

A 1494 woodcut *The Book-Fool* by Sebastian Grant is reproduced in the frontispiece of the 1809 edition drawing on the Renaissance tradition of the bibliophile as a figure of folly.⁷ In a similar fashion an excerpt from Pynson's *Ship of Fools* 1509 advertises the reprinted first edition. Dibdin claims his book 'excited general curiosity' amongst the public for rare volumes and even had an impact on the Roxburghe book sale prices.

In an age of
mass production,
pulp paper and the
penny dreadful,
the bibliophile sought
refuge among rare and
fine volumes

Bibliomania did in fact have five subsequent editions (1811, 1842, 1856, 1876, 1903) and was well known in book collector circles.⁸

The reception of Dibdin's book however was mixed. Thomas De Quincey and William Beckford satirised his scholarly pretensions as a bibliographer and tended to dismiss Dibdin as a self-indulgent dilettante.⁹ Part of this dismissive attitude towards *The Bibliomania* on the part of the literati is due to the lowly status assigned to bibliography during the 19th century.

The Monthly Review deplored the 'extravagant value placed on petty and insignificant knowledge' such as bindings, format and paper.¹⁰

Also they heavily condemned the tendency for bibliomanes such as Dibdin to prefer the anecdotes of printers, publishers and purchasers to 'historians, orators, philosophers and poets of antiquity'. In 1810 James Beresford penned a critique *Bibliosophia or Book-Wisdom* which he describes as a 'remonstrance against the prose work, lately published by Thomas Frogall Dibdin under the title *The Bibliomania*'. Beresford praises an appetite for collecting books which are 'fully distinguished, wholly unconnected and absolutely repugnant to all idea of reading them'. The superiority of the collector is



asserted over that of the 'emaciated' student who can never possess more than a 'wretched modicum of his coveted treasures'.¹¹ Dibdin's bibliophile friend Isaac D'Israeli was more vitriolic in his treatment of book hoarders. D'Israeli was associated with the Romantic authors and opposed to the French Enlightenment and Lockean empiricism. For D'Israeli the increasing commercialisation of literature in the 19th century was linked to the rise of political economy and the positivistic style of thinking typical of the Enlightenment *philosophes*.¹² The obsessive acquisition and hoarding of books was symptomatic of a mercantile, decadent age where humanist values were in decline. D'Israeli complained that 'bibliomania had never raged more violently than in the present day' and denounced 'collecting an enormous heap of books' as a vice 'infecting weak minds'.¹³ Dibdin's also

seems to suggest a commercial context for bibliomania when he advocates as possible cures: the cheap reprints of scarce works, the founding of literary institutions and well-bred librarians to 'direct the channels of literature to flow in their proper courses'.¹⁴

Accompanying the trend for antiquarian book collecting was the proliferation of cheap duodecimo reprints, anthologies and journal reviews dedicated to vernacular works. *The Retrospective Journal* describes the multiplication of books as leading to the

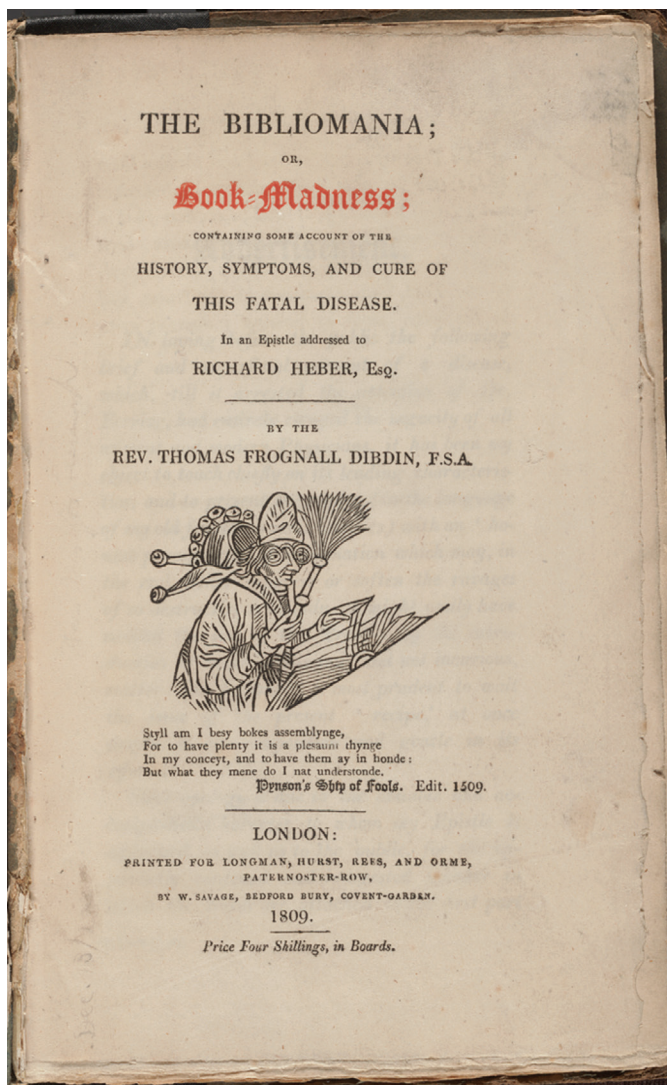


Figure 1: Frontispiece for the *Bibliomania or Book-Madness: Containing Some Account of the History, Symptom, and Cure of the Fatal Disease: An Epistle Addressed to Richard Herber, Esq* by the Rev, Thomas Frognall Dibnin , F.S.A (1809) from McGill University Library Bibliotheque—Digital Collection





eventual dissipation of the mind. 'The alluring catalogue of attractive title-pages unfixes the attention and causes the eye to wander over a large surface.'¹⁵

Since the end of perpetual copyright in 1774 the British publishing industry had been revolutionised with the commercial conditions to create competitively priced editions of canonical works. The literary canon was no longer the preserve of the elite with affordable Augustan and Elizabethan texts available for the masses.

Recent scholars such as Phillip Connoll suggest that the loss in symbolic capital resulting from the new accessibility of literary texts amongst the masses may have been a large component of the 'bibliomaniacal impulse' for rare and fine books.

Bibliomaniacs were both praised for preserving heritage and condemned for their taste for vellum, Moroccan leather, Etruscan bindings and fine editions. La Bruyère famously dismissed a certain bibliomane's library as a tannery.¹⁶ Michael Robinson argues that the book lust of English bibliophiles especially those of the Roxburghe club was characterised in terms of a perverse materialism.¹⁷ An article in *the Athenaeum* describes a meeting of Dibdin with Richard Heber, 'the Unknown Author of Waverley', Sir Masterman Sykes owner of a Rome *Livy* and Edward Vernon Utterson owner of three Shakespeare folios. The anonymous critic condemns the Roxburghe club as an oligarchy opposed to the republic of letters and describes their bibliophilic tendencies as a kind of odious 'gourmandizing and guzzling' of books.¹⁸

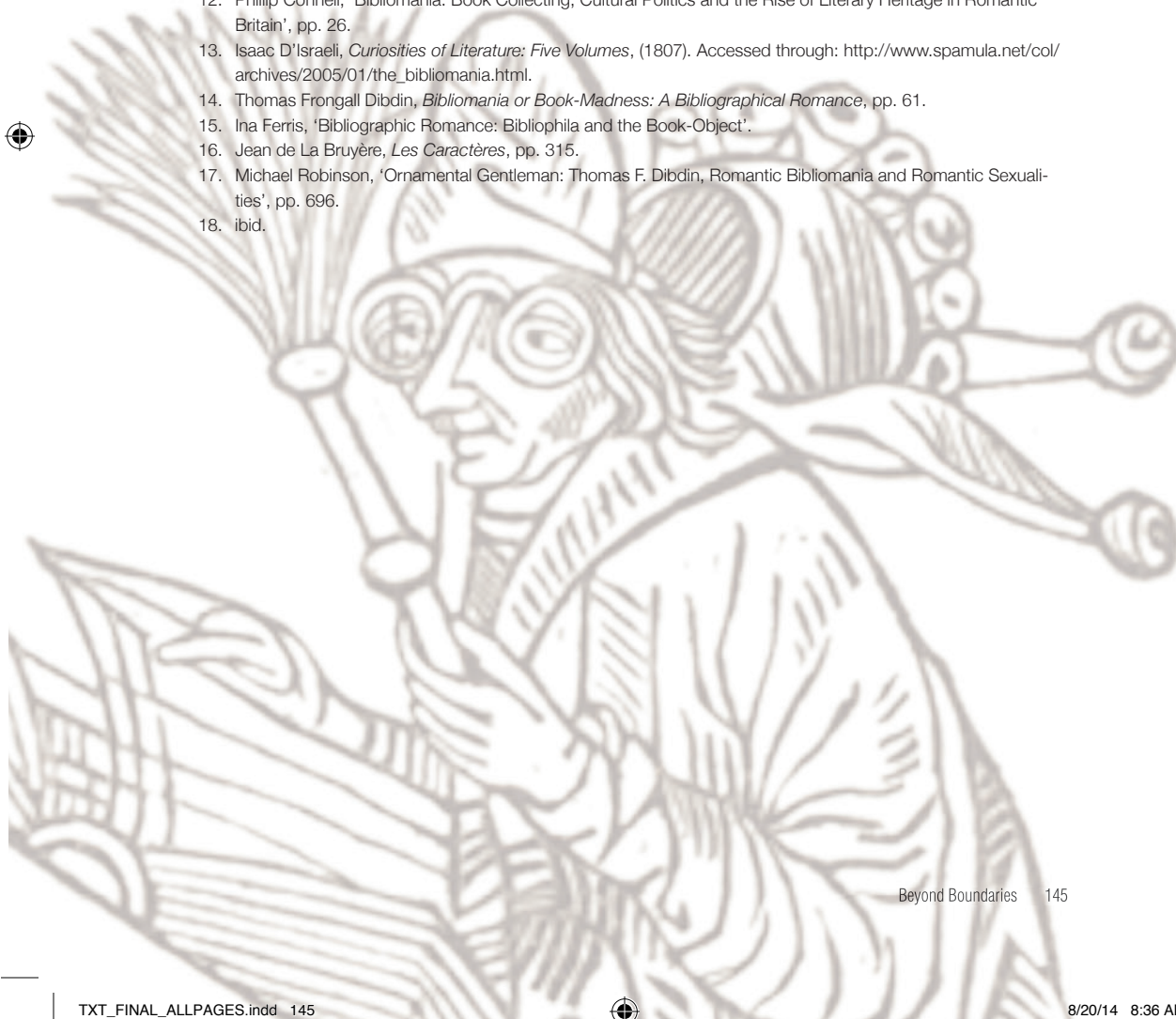
Perhaps to such critics the obsessive desire for luxurious books presented a threat as it was opposed to broader trends such as the democratisation of the book and growing mass literacy. In an age of mass production, pulp paper and the penny dreadful, the bibliophile sought refuge among rare and fine volumes. The era of Dibdin's bibliomania seems to have come to an abrupt end in the early 1830s with a downturn in the antiquarian book market. Dibdin marked the occasion with a new work entitled, *Bibliophobia: Remarks on the Present Languid and Depressed State of Literature and the Book Trade* published under the pseudonym Mercurius Rusticus about a booklover who goes on a pilgrimage to find out that the era of bibliomania had come to an end. ■





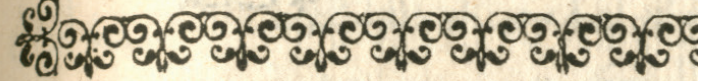
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2. Michael Robinson, 'Ornamental Gentleman: Thomas F. Dibdin, Romantic Bibliomania and Romantic Sexualities', *European Romantic Review*, 25:2 (2011), pp. 698.
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4. Phillip Connell, 'Bibliomania: Book Collecting, Cultural Politics and the Rise of Literary Heritage in Romantic Britain', pp. 25.
5. Thomas Frongall Dibdin, *Bibliomania or Book-Madness: A Bibliographical Romance*, (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1811), pp. 467-565. Accessed through: <https://archive.org/details/bibliomaniaorboo00dibduoft>
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15. Ina Ferris, 'Bibliographic Romance: Bibliophilia and the Book-Object'.
16. Jean de La Bruyère, *Les Caractères*, pp. 315.
17. Michael Robinson, 'Ornamental Gentleman: Thomas F. Dibdin, Romantic Bibliomania and Romantic Sexualities', pp. 696.
18. *ibid.*





الاب والابن والروح القدس الاله
الواحد *



يسن الجليل التلميذ الرسول يوحنا
بدي حبيب ربنا يسوع المسيح *

الفصل الاول *

البدء كان الكلمة والكلمة
كان عند الله والله
الكلمة * كان هذا قدما
عند الله * كل به كان
وبغيره لم يكن شيء مما
كان * وبه كانت
الحياة والحياة في نور
نور اضافي الظلمة والظلمة لم تدركه
ن ارسل من الله اسمه يوحنا هذا جاء
للسهادة

يوحنا

للسهادة ابشهاد للنور لبوم
النور بل ليشهد للنور
يضى لكل انسان ات الى
والعالم به كون والعالم لم
وخاصته فلم تقبله * قاما
سلطانا ان يصيروا بني الله
ولبس هم من دم ولا من هو
لكن ولدوا من الله
فبنا وراينا مجده مجدا مثل
الامتلي نعمة وحقا
هذا الذي قلت انه ياتي بعد
مني * ومن امتلاية نحن با
نعمة * من اجل ان الناموس
والحق وجبا بيسوع المس

الفصل الثاني

الله لم يره احد قط الابن الوحيد
ابنه هو خبير
البه من يروشلیم كهنة ولاوي
انت * فاعترف ولم يذكر
فسالوه فن انت ايلياء فقال له
كلا * فقالوا له فن انت
ارسلونا ماذا تقول عن نفسك
الضارح في البرية سهلوا طريق
النبي * فاما اولئك



Arabic Typography in the Netherlands

A Brief Introduction

By Arnoud Vrolijk

Curator of Oriental Manuscripts and
Rare Books at Leiden University Library

Few people realise that Arabic is the only living language to have been taught almost continuously in the Netherlands for more than four centuries.¹ Admittedly, Latin, Greek and Hebrew have a longer track record, but these three languages were closely linked to the Dutch cultural and religious heritage. Arabic, on the other hand, was the language of an alien and—more often than not—hostile territory and religion. Nevertheless, in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century there were several good reasons for learning Arabic. Typically for a mercantile state such as the Dutch Republic, trade was one of the more important considerations. In 1599, only four years after the first Dutch expedition to Muslim Southeast Asia, the governors of Leiden University appointed Philippus Ferdinandus, a Jewish convert from Poland, as the first official lecturer of Arabic, expressing the opinion that ‘the Arabic language is much used in those parts’. Since the man in question died before he could take up his position, however, this came to nothing.² In 1612 sultan Ahmed I of the Ottoman Empire granted extensive privileges to the Dutch Republic, the so-called Capitulations, which opened up much of the Middle East up for commerce. A similar treaty had been concluded with Morocco two years earlier. Other important reasons for learning Arabic were the ambition to refute Islam by the force of arguments (‘know thine enemy’), or to foster relations with Christian minorities in the Middle East. Furthermore, Arabic was presumed to be useful for grasping the deeper meaning of Biblical Hebrew, a cognate language. And indeed, until the late nineteenth century it was perfectly normal for ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church to have a smattering of Arabic. Finally, there was a lively interest in the scientific literature of the Arabic-speaking world in disciplines such as geography, history, mathematics, astronomy and medicine.





Naturally, the study of Arabic required the production of grammars, dictionaries and textbooks, but the Arabic script could only be printed with a proper typeface.³ This could not be realised, however, without first solving two basic problems. The first is that Arabic runs from right to left, but this posed no major obstacle to printers who were already used to printing Hebrew. The second is that Arabic is a cursive script. This means that the letters cannot be printed separately with spaces in between like the Latin alphabet; instead, they have to be linked together in the manner of Latin-script handwriting. Since printing was formerly based on the principle of movable metal type, however, this was impossible to achieve before the era of computer typesetting. In early printed Arabic books there are clearly discernible gaps between letters that are supposed to be joined smoothly. In addition, Western typeface designers have invariably failed, and still generally fail, to meet the high standards of Arabic calligraphy, one of the best-developed and most respected artistic traditions in the Islamic world. This was one of the main reasons why the art of printing was slow to penetrate the Muslim world: printed books were not only regarded as un-Islamic, but also as un-aesthetic. Likewise, they were regarded as a potential threat to the vested interests of the professional scribes, usually members of the lower clergy, whose livelihood depended on copying manuscripts.

Curiously, the first printed Arabic alphabet in a Western book survives in a woodcut by the Dutch artist, engraver and publisher Erhard Reuwich or Rewijc from Utrecht, who established a press in Mainz, Germany. In 1483-1484 Rewijc accompanied the canon Bernhard von Breydenbach

from Mainz on his pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Von Breydenbach's travel account, *Peregrinatio in terram sanctam*, was printed and illustrated by Rewijc in 1486. The book was also translated into Dutch, most probably by Rewijc himself, under the title *Die heylighe beuarden tot dat heylighe grafft in Iherusalem* (1488, see the Arabic woodcut on fol. 84b).⁴

The modest beginnings of Arabic printing with movable type, however, lie in Italy. In 1514, some sixty years after Gutenberg's Bible, Pope Julius II ordered the Venetian printer Gregorio de' Gregorii to print an Arabic *Horologion* or book of daily prayers for the Greek Orthodox Christians of the Levant, a religious minority among whom the Roman Catholic Church sought to increase its influence. It is the first full-text Arabic book ever to be printed with movable type, the design of which is generally regarded as clumsy and ill-balanced.⁵ Before 1531 Guillaume Postel, a pioneer of Arabic studies in France, printed the first Arabic grammar in Europe, *Grammatica Arabica*, which fared even worse in terms of typographical design. After such isolated attempts, however, things were quick to improve. In 1584 Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici arranged for the establishment of a professionally equipped Arabic printing press in Rome which was superior to all earlier attempts, the *Typographia Medicea*. The press, the first of its kind, engaged the services of the best printer of his day, the Frenchman Robert Granjon, who designed supremely elegant Arabic typefaces which even now do not fail to impress. The press published a plethora of religious and secular scientific works destined for Arabic-speaking Christians in the Middle East, some of them illuminated with exquisite engravings.⁶





Raphelengius

This first success, backed by the power and wealth of the Catholic Church, was of course difficult to emulate in the Protestant North. The first who tried and succeeded was the Fleming Franciscus Raphelengius or Frans van Ravelingen, born in 1539 in Lannoye in present-day French Flanders.⁷ This son-in-law of the famous Antwerp printer Christophe Plantin came to Leiden in 1585 to take over the Leiden branch of Plantin's printing office. A year later he was appointed professor of Hebrew at Leiden University, and on an informal basis he also taught Arabic. In 1595 he presented his own Arabic type specimen, admittedly based on the example of its Roman precursor. This *Specimen characterum Arabicorum Officinae Plantinanae Franc[isci] Raphelengij*, printed in Leiden, forms the beginning of a long tradition of Arabic typesetting and printing in the Netherlands which continues until this day.⁸ (see Fig. 1)

Raphelengius's printing establishment was based in his own home on the current site of 'Sociëteit Minerva' at Breestraat 50, Leiden, on the corner of the Vrouwensteeg. A commemorative plaque from 1965 marks the site.⁹ Raphelengius shared his premises with the typefounder Thomas de Vechter, and it must be assumed that he also cast types for Raphelengius. The cutting of the types has been attributed to the engraver and cartographer Jodocus Hondius (1563-1612), but there is no material evidence for this.¹⁰ Raphelengius's type, which was extremely large and therefore un-economical in its use, was to remain a white elephant. Its first practical application was in an influential study on the calendar systems of the world by

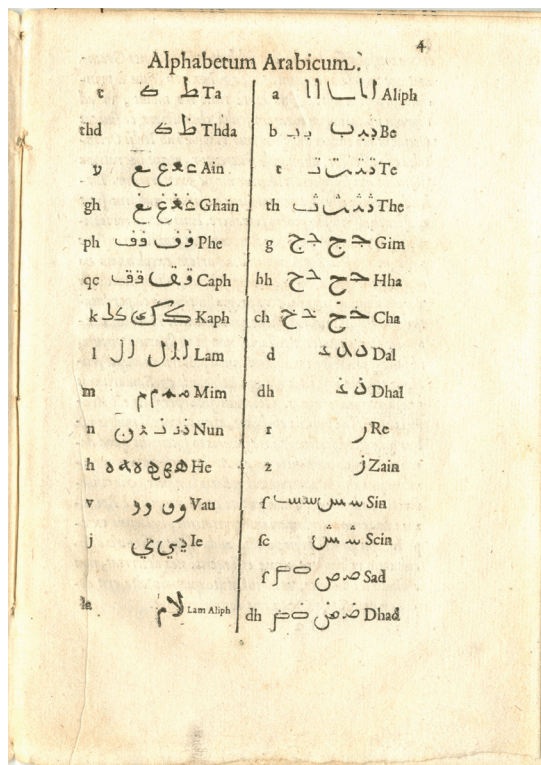


Fig. 1. Franciscus Raphelengius's Arabic type specimen, *Specimen characterum Arabicorum* (Leiden, 1595), p. 4. Leiden UB, 21521 F.

Joseph Justus Scaliger (1540-1609), *De emendatione temporum* (1598), which was finished only after Raphelengius's death in 1597. The Leiden Plantinian printing office was continued by Raphelengius's sons, who produced a few more books in Arabic, most notably the *Grammatica Arabica* of Thomas Erpenius (see below) and an Arabic-Latin dictionary prepared by their father (1613).

Erpenius

Thomas Erpenius (1586-1624) finished his liberal arts study at Leiden University in 1608 and subsequently departed on a European tour to study Arabic, first to England and afterwards to Paris, then the most important centre of Arabic studies in



Fig. 2. *Novum D.N. Jesu Christi Testamentum Arabice* by Thomas Erpenius, typeset at his own 'Typographia Erpeniana' (Leiden, 1616), pp. 232-233. Leiden UB, 842 D 36.

Western Europe. Staying there until late in 1611, he travelled onwards to Venice and Germany, returning to Leiden in the spring of 1612.¹¹ In May 1613 Erpenius was the first to occupy the newly-founded chair of Arabic, an event that has been widely commemorated at Leiden in 2013. Erpenius's profound knowledge of Arabic, gathered mainly in France with some assistance from a native speaker of Arabic, found its fruition in his most important work, *Grammatica Arabica*, printed by the Raphelengius brothers (1613). Based on the grammatical models of Latin, the language that students and scholars were most familiar with, this grammar would become a bestseller that survived well into the nineteenth century. In 1614 Erpenius published his last book with the Raphelengius press, a collection of two-hundred Arabic proverbs.¹² In the spring of that

year the Arabic typesetter of the Plantinian office died and the Raphelengius brothers gave up printing in Arabic. The press shut down in 1619.

This sudden absence of printing facilities in Arabic greatly interfered with Erpenius's ambitious publishing programme of Arabic text editions and learning aids. Driven by necessity he designed his own Arabic typeface, which was probably cut and cast by Bartholomeus and Arent Cornelisz. van Hogenacker, who owned a typefoundry in the Haarlemmerstraat.¹³ Punches and matrices survive in the collection of Museum Enschedé, Haarlem.¹⁴ Erpenius did his typesetting from home in the Breestraat (currently no. 21), most likely with the help of trained compositors, and his publications proudly bear his own imprint 'In Typographia Erpeniana



Linguarum Orientalium'. But the actual printing and distribution of his books was left to professional Leiden printers/book-sellers such as the Raphelengius brothers and after 1619 Joannes Maire. After 1625 Erpenius's publications were also offered by the well-known firm of Elzevier, the official academy printer, who owned a printing press and bookshop next door to the Academy building on Rapenburg.¹⁵ With his elegant and economical typeface Erpenius published, among others, a re-edition of his own grammar (*Rudimenta linguae Arabicae*, 1620), an Arabic edition of the New Testament (*Novum D.N. Jesu Christi Testamentum Arabice*, 1616) and a history of the Islamic world by a medieval Christian Arab author, which was finished by his most gifted student Jacobus Golius (*Historia Saracenica*, 1625). (See Fig. 2)

The Elzeviers

Erpenius's career came to an untimely end in 1624, when he succumbed to the plague at the age of forty. During his last days he was nursed by his favourite student Jacobus Golius (1596-1667), who in 1625 succeeded him in the chair of Arabic at Leiden.¹⁶ Erpenius's collection of Oriental

manuscripts was sold to the Duke of Buckingham, whose widow donated them to the University of Cambridge. His printing materials, however, could be

preserved for the academic community in Leiden: they were sold to Isaac Elzevier, the academy printer, for the staggering amount of 8,000 Dutch guilders.¹⁷

Unlike his predecessors, Golius was to take full advantage of the diplomatic network of the young Dutch Republic and he travelled widely in the Islamic world. In 1622-1624 he was attached to a diplomatic mission to Morocco and not long afterwards, in 1625-1629, he travelled in the

company of a Dutch consul to Aleppo and later to Istanbul. During his travels Golius acquired Middle Eastern manuscripts wherever he could, both for the University of Leiden and for his private library.¹⁸ His collection provided him with the necessary source materials to compose his *magnum opus*, the *Lexicon Arabico-Latinum*. This impressive folio edition was finally published in 1653 by the Leiden firm of Elzevier. The title page bears the names of Bonaventura and Abraham Elzevier, both of whom died in 1652, but the printing was only finished under the short-lived

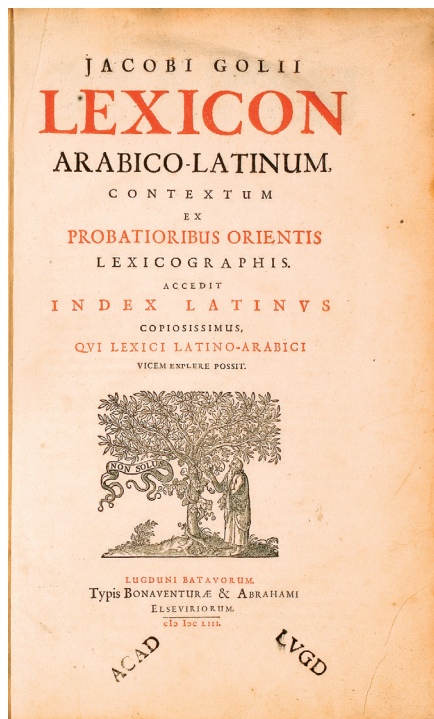


Fig. 3. Jacobus Golius's *Lexicon Arabico-Latinum*, printed in Leiden by Elzevier (1653), title page. Leiden UB, 842 A 1.



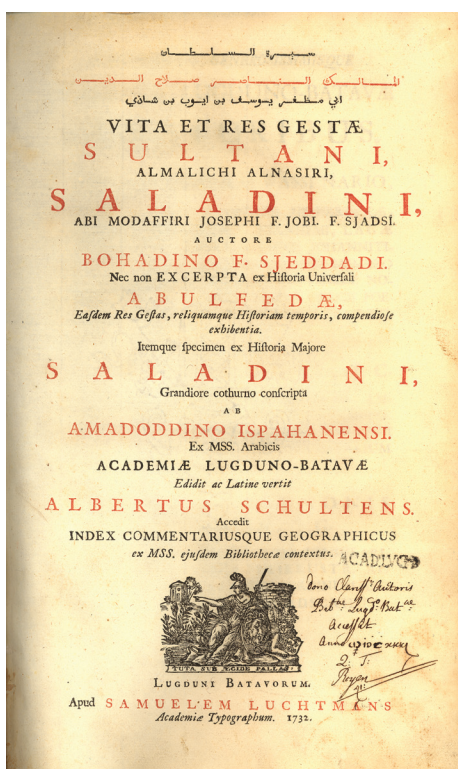


Fig. 4. Albert Schultens, *Vita et res gestae Sultani ... Saladini*, printed in Leiden by Luchtman (1732), title page. Leiden UB, 855 A 8.

partnership of Jan and Daniel Elzevier.¹⁹ (see Fig. 3)

Needless to say, the types used were those of Thomas Erpenius. The general lay-out and the systematic arrangement of the lexicographical material set the standard for all subsequent dictionaries of its kind. Even today, modern bilingual Arabic dictionaries do not look much different from the 1653 Golius edition. In the long run, however, the dictionary grew scarce and at a certain point prodigious amounts were paid for copies, especially if they were annotated by well-known Arabists. Only in 1830-1837 a modernised version of Golius's Arabic-Latin dictionary was published under the same title

in Germany by Georg Wilhelm Freytag (1788-1861). Not long after, Latin gave way to the modern vernaculars of Europe in Arabic lexicography.²⁰

The Elzeviers, however, were not the only Leiden printers of Arabic in their time. In 1646 Johann Georg Nissel (Johannes Georgius Nisselius) came from the Palatinate to study Oriental languages at Leiden under Jacobus Golius. He tried in vain to obtain a position at a Dutch university; instead, he started his own Oriental printing office in 1654 with types bought from Elzevier. When he died in 1662 his printing materials were taken over by his friend, the Danish Orientalist Theodorus Petraeus from Flensburg (c. 1630-1672), who also tried his luck in Leiden and afterwards in Amsterdam. In 1663 he printed his own work *Clavis linguae Arabicae, Persicae, et Turcicae* in Leiden. A curiosity is his one-leaf proof of an Ottoman Turkish Bible translation made in Istanbul by Ali Ufki Bey alias Albertus Bobovius.²¹

Stubborn survivor

In the eighteenth century the Erpenius typeface remained popular in the academic world, perhaps out of necessity. In 1713 the Elzevier press with the bulk of its equipment, including the Arabic typeface of Thomas Erpenius, was taken over by the Leiden printer and bookseller Pieter van der Aa (1659-1733), who became university printer in 1715.²² However, he was never very active as a printer of Oriental publications. In Leiden the Erpenius typeface was used to more advantage by the firm of Luchtman ('S. et J. Luchtman'). Jordaen Luchtman (1652-1708) established a printing shop in 1683, and his son Samuel (1685-1757) secured an appoint-





ment as printer to the University in 1730 as a successor to Van der Aa.²³ Meanwhile, Arabic studies at Leiden had gone into rapid decline after Golius's death in 1667, only to be revived in 1729 at the arrival of Albert Schultens (1683-1750), who had previously taught in Franeker. In 1732, for instance, Samuel Luchtmans used the Erpenius typeface in Schultens's edition of a biography of sultan Saladin, *Vita et res gestae Sultani almalichi alnasiri Saladini* [...]. (see Fig. 4) Albert Schultens's fame, however, rests mainly on his publications in which he expounded his favourite theory that Arabic is the twin sister of Biblical Hebrew, and that Arabic, the 'Handmaiden of Theology', was of invaluable assistance in the exegesis of the Old Testament. Three successive generations of Schultenses held the chair of Arabic at Leiden, the last of them, Hendrik Albert, dying in 1793.²⁴ The contribution of Luchtmans in the field of Oriental studies should, however, not be overrated, as their production of Oriental titles never rose above ten percent of the total output.²⁵

In other eighteenth-century university cities in the Netherlands such as Utrecht, Harderwijk, Franeker and Groningen, Arabic studies held their own, albeit on a more modest level, thus creating a certain demand for Arabic printing. The Erpenius typeface proved a stubborn survivor in the provinces. In Utrecht the printer Willem Broedelet (active 1692-1719) used the Erpenius typeface for publications by the well-known Islam scholar Adriaan Reland (1676-1718), who is most famous for

his enlightened study of Islam, *De religione Mohammedica* (1705, 2nd ed. 1717). The best example of an Arabic book published by Broedelet is Reland's edition of a text by Burhan al-Din al-Zarnuji (d. 1223), *Ta'lim al-muta'allim*, which appeared in 1709 under the title *Enchiridion studiosi* ('The student's handbook').²⁶ Around 1770 Everard Scheidius (1742-1794), professor of Oriental languages at the now defunct university of Harderwijk, purchased Erpenius types from a certain

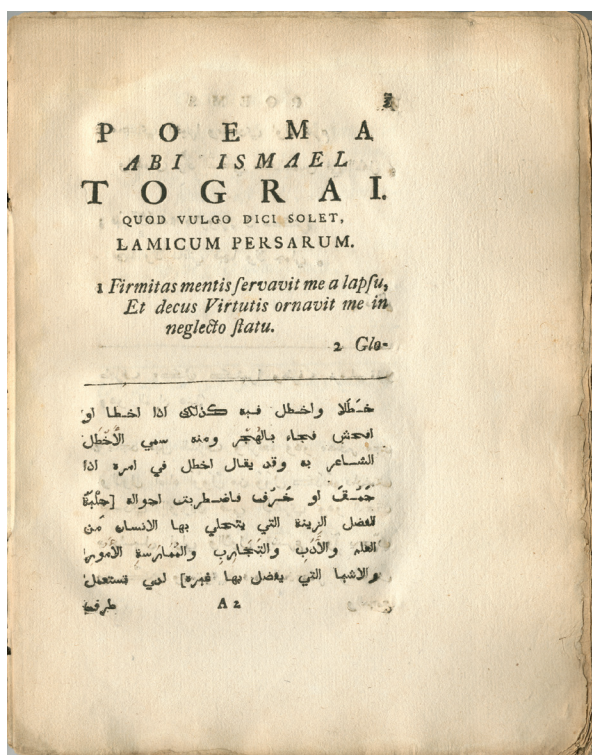


Fig. 5. H. van der Sloot, *Poëma Tograi*, printed in Franeker by Willem Coulon (1769), p. 3. Private collection.

Abraham Elzevier (not to be confused with the two earlier Leiden printers of that name).²⁷ He set up his own Arabic typesetting workshop, but had his books





printed by local Harderwijk printers such as Jan Moojen or Mooien (active 1737-1795). Scheidius became professor of Oriental languages at Leiden after the death of the last Schultens in 1793, but died the following year. Farther to the north, the Erpenius typeface was used in the Friesland university town of Franeker by printers such as Wibius Bleck (active 1695-1739) and after him Willem Coulon (active 1727-1782). How worn and shabby the types could become in the hands of printers who apparently had no access to the matrices is shown by Henricus van der Sloot's *Poëma Tograi ex versione Latina Jacobi Golii, cum scholiis et notis*, printed by Coulon in Franeker in 1769 (see Fig. 5). In Groningen the German-born Nicolaus Wilhem Schroeder (1721-1798) taught Oriental languages from 1748 to his death. Although he published mainly on Hebrew subjects, his ideas on the affinity between Hebrew and Arabic, a popular topic at the time, ensured that Arabic made a frequent appearance in his books. The best example is perhaps *Observationes selectae ad origines Hebraeas* (1762), printed in Groningen with the Erpenius types by Jacobus Bolt (active 1744-1796).²⁸ Of course these are merely preliminary observations. So far, the tale of Arabic printing outside Leiden remains largely untold.

All ways lead to Enschedé

Next to the Erpenius typeface, however, there were other serious efforts in the Netherlands to create new printing materials for Arabic, predominantly in Amsterdam. Some of these efforts were undertaken by famous publishers such as Joan Blaeu (d. 1673), of *Atlas Maior* fame, who had an Arabic typeface made, alleg-

edly by the French engraver Nicolas Briot (d. 1646). This typeface passed to the Amsterdam firm of Ploos van Amstel in 1780.²⁹ Besides the Blaeu typeface, Ploos van Amstel also carried a second Arabic hailing from a predecessor.³⁰ In 1742 the German punch cutter Johan(n) Michael Fleischman(n) (1707-1768), based in Amsterdam, cut an Arabic typeface for the firm of Wetstein.³¹ In The Hague, the De Groot/Van Staden Company also carried their own Arabic typeface. In 1798 this establishment was taken over by the Amsterdam firm of Harmsen & Co.³² With some adaptations, the eighteenth-century Arabic typefaces were frequently, or perhaps even predominantly, used for Malay-language printing in, or destined for, the Netherlands East Indies.

In the course of time all these type foundries or printing offices were gradually absorbed by the Haarlem firm of Enschedé, established in 1703. In the first decades of the nineteenth century this progressive takeover left them without any serious competition in the field: Wetstein was bought up in 1743, Ploos van Amstel followed suit in 1799, Harmsen & Co. in 1818.³³ Moreover, in about 1770-1773 Johannes Enschedé had also obtained the antiquated Erpenius typeface, apparently from the heirs of Pieter van der Aa, but he added it to his typographical collection rather than using it for commercial purposes.³⁴ As a result, Enschedé carried an impressive assortment of more or less antiquated Arabic typefaces until the early twentieth century, as is shown by their Oriental type specimen (*Letterproef van Oostersche schriften*) from 1907.³⁵

Yet Enschedé was not wholly dependent on the work of their forerunners in the Netherlands. In 1816 the recently-



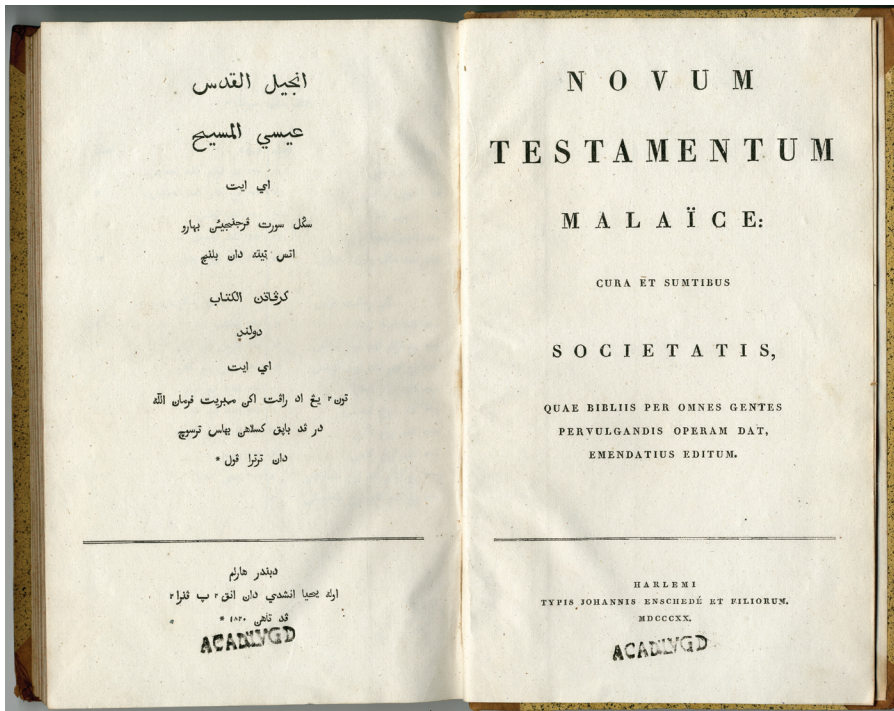


Fig. 6. Malay Bible translation of the Nederlandsch Bijbelgenootschap, printed in 1820-1824 by Enschedé, Haarlem. Title pages in Latin and Malay of vol. 3, New Testament. Leiden UB, 859 C 20.

founded Nederlandsch Bijbelgenootschap (Dutch Bible Society, NBG), also based in Haarlem, requested Enschedé to develop a new Arabic typeface for a new edition of the seventeenth-century Malay Bible translation by Melchior Leijdecker (1645-1701). Apparently Enschedé turned to an English engraver named J. Colwell (further details unknown), who provided a set of matrices three years later.³⁶ The translation, *Biblia, id est Vetus et Novum Testamentum Malaïce*, appeared in 1820-1824 under the editorship of the Amsterdam Orientalist Joannes Willmet (1750-1835)³⁷ (see Fig. 6). The same typeface occurs in a type specimen from the typefoundry Lettergieterij “Amsterdam” voorheen N. Tetterode, who obtained it in 1851 from the foundry of Broese & Comp. in Breda. In this specimen it is ascribed to the Amsterdam professor Taco Roorda (1801-1874), who would have

designed it in 1845.³⁸ Actually, the typeface in question was designed by the printer and typefounder Richard Watts (d. 1844) for the sister organisation of the Nederlandsch Bijbelgenootschap, the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS), founded in London in 1804. An early example of Watt’s use of this typeface is an Arabic edition of the New Testament, *Kitab al-‘ahd al-jadid ya’ni Injil al-muqaddas* (London, 1821).³⁹

Finally, in the years 1885-1886 Enschedé’s punchcutter G. Schlegelmilch made a large Arabic font for title pages under the supervision of the Leiden professor of Arabic Michael Jan de Goeje (1836-1909, see also below), perhaps the last creative contribution of the Dutch to Arabic typography in the lead-type era. For this design De Goeje reportedly used the Leiden manuscript Or. 1217, a large-



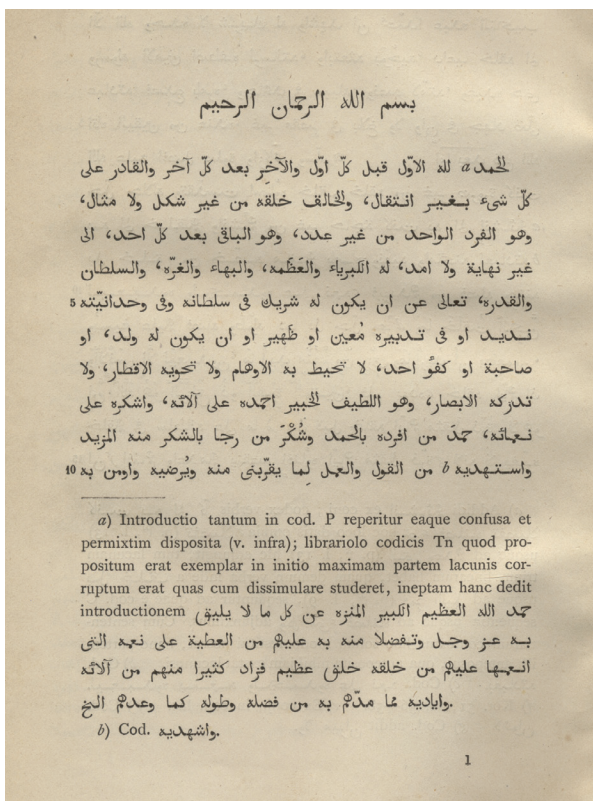


Fig. 7. Al-Tabari's *Annales*, published by Brill, Leiden, in 1879-1901. Opening page, vol. 1, p. 1. Leiden UB, OOSHSS 813 C 1.

format Qur'an from Persia.⁴⁰ The firm of Koninklijke Enschedé still survives today as a highly sophisticated printer of security documents, post stamps and banknotes. Their private museum is a magnificent repository of the firm's long history in typography and printing.⁴¹

The 'Brill types'

Until the turn of the nineteenth century Luchtmans carried on its business much as usual, but in 1802 they appointed the Leiden printer Johannes Brill (1767-1859) as their general manager. When the last direct male descendant of the Luchtmans family died in 1812 the business was left

almost entirely in his hands, although Johannes Tiberius Bodel Nijenhuis, whose mother was a Luchtmans, was appointed director in 1821.⁴²

Johannes Brill, who also continued to print under his own name, most probably started out with the Arabic typefaces supplied by Enschedé. This is evident from an 1825 Arabic edition by Hendrik Arent Hamaker, professor of Oriental languages at Leiden from 1822 to his early death in 1835. The Arabic part of the book is set in a font that bears a strong resemblance to the typeface cut by Fleischman for Wetstein in 1742, while the Arabic passages in the Latin commentary are in the BFB font created in England by Richard Watts and used by Enschedé for the publications

of the Dutch Bible Society.⁴³

Around 1830, however, Johannes Brill suddenly veered away from the time-honoured fonts of Enschedé and opted for a modern typeface of German origin, which had been introduced a decade or so earlier by the Prussian Government printing office in Berlin, the Deckersche Geheime Ober-Hofbuchdruckerei ('Decker's Secret Supreme Royal Court Printing Office').⁴⁴ The typeface was not only more economical, but also appealed more to the tastes of the time. The Decker archives were largely destroyed in the Second World War, so its origin cannot wholly be established, but it appears that the 'Royal types' (Typi Regii),





as they were called, made their first appearance in Germany in the early 1820s. A very early, or perhaps the earliest, instance of Johannes Brill's use of this new typeface is a thesis by the Leiden Orientalist Hendrik Engelinus Weijers (1805-1844), published in 1831. No one knows who suggested the use of the German typeface to Johannes Brill, but it could have been Weijers's professor Hamaker, who had not only published with Luchtmans before, but who as an expert Orientalist must have been aware of recent developments in neighbouring Germany.⁴⁵

In 1848 the Luchtmans firm was acquired by Johannes Brill's son Evert Jan (1812-1871), who continued the business under his own name, E.J. Brill. After his death the firm was taken over in 1872 by the theologian Frans van Oordt (1840-1903) and the secondary school teacher Frans de Stoppelaar (1841-1906), who retained the name of E.J. Brill.⁴⁶ It was only under the partnership of these two that the company acquired its international reputation as a major publisher of Oriental editions. This could never have happened without the support of the indefatigable philologist Michael Jan de Goeje (1836-1909), professor of Arabic at Leiden and the most prolific text editor of his time. Under his editorship a team of Arabic scholars from all over Europe reconstructed the *Annales* or world history of the early-tenth-century scholar Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari and published the text at Brill's (1879-1901). (Fig. 7) With nearly 10,000 pages in print and set in the Berlin types, it is the largest Arabic text edition ever to have been produced in the Western world. Eventually, and doubtless under the influence of Brill's domination in Oriental publishing, the Berlin typeface became

generally known as the 'Brill types' or 'Leiden types', and its true provenance was all but forgotten.

In the late nineteenth century Brill also adopted other foreign typefaces, such as the one developed by the Leipzig firm of Carl Tauchnitz for the stereotyped Qur'an edition of Gustav Leberecht Fluegel, *Corani textus Arabicus*, first published in 1834 and republished several times in the nineteenth century. Another case in point is the typeface designed by the American missionary Eli Smith (1801-1857) and cut by Homan Hallock (1803-1894) for the press of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) in Beirut, Lebanon. These types, also cast by Tauchnitz and first introduced in Beirut in 1841, found their most prominent use in the translation of the Bible by the same Eli Smith and Cornelius Van Dyck, which was published for the first time in Beirut between 1860 and 1865 and reprinted innumerable times. With its eight or nine hundred different letters and ligatures the typeface initially proved to be beyond the technical capacity of the Brill typesetters, but eventually they mastered it and in later years used it quite frequently, for instance in the monographs printed for the E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Series, co-published with Luzac in England. Rather incongruously, Brill's most prominent use of this Bible typeface was A.J. Wensinck's massive *Concordance et indices de la tradition musulmane* (1936-1988), a concordance to the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (Hadith), the most sacred source of Islamic doctrine after the Qur'an.⁴⁸

However, for those who are familiar with the impeccably designed *Catalogue de caractères étrangers* or *Specimens of type faces* published by Brill at regular



intervals, and who know that Brill took genuine pride in their Oriental typesetting, it may come as a surprise that Brill never actually created their own fonts. This misunderstanding is partly of Brill's own making, since they never indicated the sources of their Oriental typefaces. In 1989 Brill gave up printing altogether and continued exclusively as a publisher.⁴⁹

Epilogue

Johannes Brill's adoption of foreign typefaces from c. 1830 onwards all but ended the independent role of the Dutch in mainstream Arabic typography. In the course of the twentieth century almost all printers of Arabic texts in the Netherlands, including Brill, switched to the hot metal typography of the Linotype, Monotype and Intertype companies and subsequently to photosetting.⁵⁰ Those who could not afford a professional typesetter, mainly those toiling away in Academe, often took recourse to photographic reproductions of hand-typed texts. Many Arabists of the older generation still remember the

popular Erika typewriter from the former German Democratic Republic and the IBM Selectric typewriter with its ball-shaped font element.

The age of digital typesetting is beyond the scope of this contribution, but one name deserves to be mentioned: Thomas Milo. A Dutch Arabist and a veteran army officer, he has spent most of his career designing Arabic fonts for computer typesetting that are Unicode compatible and, more importantly, reflect both the rigid requirements of classical Islamic calligraphy and the indigenous tradition of Arabic typesetting in the Middle East during its heyday in the late-nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire. His company Decotype was founded in 1985.⁵¹ A prototype from his company was acquired by the Microsoft Corporation and still comes with the MS Word program. Although his approach has been criticised in some circles as historicising, his new package Tasmeeem has been met with great approval in the Arab world. So after all, Arabic typography in the Netherlands is not dead, it liveth. ■

Notes

1. On the general history of Arabic studies in the Netherlands now see A. Vrolijk and R. v. Leeuwen, *Arabic studies in the Netherlands: A short history in portraits, 1580-1950*, (Leiden etc.: Brill, 2014). For the beginnings of Arabic studies in the sixteenth and seventeenth century see W.M.C. Juynboll, *Zeventiende-eeuwsche beoefenaars van het Arabisch in Nederland* (Utrecht: Kemink, 1931). The eighteenth century is well covered in J. Nat, *De studie van de Oostersche talen in Nederland in de 18e en de 19e eeuw* (Purmerend: Muusses, 1929).
2. Juynboll, *Zeventiende-eeuwsche beoefenaars*, pp. 47, 52; Vrolijk and Van Leeuwen, *Arabic studies*, p. 30.
3. On the history of printing and typesetting in Middle Eastern languages in Europe see E. Hanebutt-Benz, D. Glass, G. Roper et al. (eds), *Sprachen des Nahen Ostens und die Druckrevolution: Eine interkulturelle Begegnung = Middle Eastern languages and the print revolution: a cross-cultural encounter* (Westhofen: WVA Verlag Skulima, 2002). For Oriental type specimens from the Low Countries see E. Hanebutt-Benz, 'Schriftproben orientalischer Schriften aus Europäischen Giessereien = Type specimens of Oriental scripts from European type foundries', *ibid.*, pp. 20-22. On early Arabic printing in Europe see G. Roper, 'Early Arabic printing in Europe = Arabischer Frühdruck in Europa', *ibid.*, pp. 129-150.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 129-130; Vrolijk and Van Leeuwen, *Arabic studies*, pp. 13-14.
5. *Kitâb salât al-sawâ'î* ([Fano (i.e. Venice): Gregorio de' Gregorii, 1514]); G. Roper, 'Early Arabic printing in Europe', in E. Hanebutt-Benz et al. (eds), *Sprachen des Nahen Ostens und die Druckrevolution*, p. 131; A. Vrolijk, 'The oldest printed





- book in Arabic: The 1514 Melkite Horologion in the Scaliger collection', *Omslag: Bulletin van de Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden en het Scaliger Instituut* (2009) 3, pp. 3-4.
6. H.D.L. Vervliet, *Cyrillic & Oriental typography in Rome at the end of the sixteenth century: An inquiry into the later work of Robert Granjon, 1578-90* (Berkeley CA: Poltroon Press, 1981); A. Tinto, *La Tipografia Medicea Orientale* (Lucca: Pacini Fazzi, 1987).
 7. On Raphelengius see Juynboll, *Zeventiende-eeuwsche beoefenaars*, pp. 36-45; Vrolijk and Van Leeuwen, *Arabic studies*, pp. 17-20.
 8. John A. Lane, R. Breugelmans and J.J. Witkam, *The Arabic type specimen of Franciscus Raphelengius's Plantinian Printing Office* (Leiden: University Library, 1997). (Small publication of the University Library). For a general overview of printing in 17th and 18th-century Leiden see P. Hoftijzer, 'Veilig achter Minerva's schild: Het Leidse boek in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw', in A. Bouwman, B. Dongelmans, P. Hoftijzer, E. van der Vlist and C. Vogelaar (eds), *Stad van boeken: Handschrift en druk in Leiden, 1260-2000* (Leiden: Primavera Pers and Uitgeverij Ginkgo, 2008), pp. 155-265. For Dutch printers and their periods of activity I consulted the register of printers maintained by the University of Utrecht at drukkers.library.uu.nl.
 9. E. v. Gulik and H.D.L. Vervliet, *Een gedenksteen voor Plantijn en Van Raphelingen te Leiden, waarin opgenomen de Catalogvs Librorvm residorvm Tabernae Raphelengianae* (Leiden: Brill, 1965).
 10. R.M.Th.E. Oomes, *Thomas de Vechter: A type-founder around 1600* (Haarlem: De Priegelpers, 1990), pp. 8-9; Lane et al., *The Arabic type specimen*, p. xix.
 11. On Erpenius see Juynboll, *Zeventiende-eeuwsche beoefenaars*, pp. 59-118; Vrolijk and Van Leeuwen, *Arabic studies*, pp. 31-40.
 12. A. Vrolijk, 'The Prince of Arabists and his many errors: Thomas Erpenius's image of Joseph Scaliger and the edition of the Proverbia Arabica, 1614', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 73 (2010), pp. 297-325.
 13. Juynboll, *Zeventiende-eeuwsche beoefenaars*, pp. 78-81; Ch. Enschedé, *Typefoundries in the Netherlands from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century*, transl. H. Carter and N. Hoeflake, ed. L. Hellings (Haarlem: Stichting Museum Enschedé, 1978), pp. 68-75.
 14. Museum Enschedé, Haarlem, Inv. No. HBA 5839 - MTR 15. See Vrolijk and Van Leeuwen, *Arabic studies*, pp. 36, 38, with special thanks to the Museum's curator Johan de Zoete.
 15. R. Breugelmans, *Fac et spera: Joannes Maire, publisher, printer and bookseller in Leiden, 1603-1657* (Leiden: [s.n.], 2003), pp. 14-16.
 16. On Golius see Juynboll, *Zeventiende-eeuwsche beoefenaars*, pp. 119-183; Vrolijk and Van Leeuwen, *Arabic studies*, pp. 41-48.
 17. A. Willems, *Les Elzevier: Histoire et annales typographiques*, repr. (Nieuwkoop: B. de Graaf, 1974), pp. xlvii-xlviii; Juynboll, *Zeventiende-eeuwsche beoefenaars*, pp. 116-118; Enschedé, *Typefoundries in the Netherlands*, pp. 70-71. On the firm of Elzevier and their typefaces now see P. Hoftijzer (intr.), *A tale of fonts, 1658-1713: Exploring the heritage of the Elzeviers* [With facsimiles of Elzevier type specimens from 1658 and 1713] (Amsterdam, Leiden: Elsevier, 2013).
 18. J.J. Witkam, *Jacobus Golius (1596-1667) en zijn handschriften* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980). (Oosters Genootschap in Nederland).
 19. Willems, *Les Elzevier*, p. 179 No. 723: 'Par un louable sentiment de piété filiale, les éditeurs ont tenu à ce que cet ouvrage, véritable monument typographique, dont l'impression avait duré des années et avait offert des difficultés extraordinaires, parût sous le nom de leurs parents décédés.'
 20. A. Vrolijk, 'Hoeveel geluk kun je hebben? Jacobus Golius en zijn Lexicon Arabico-Latinum', in J. Bos and E. Geleijns (eds), *Boekenwijsheid: Drie eeuwen kennis en cultuur in 30 bijzondere boeken. Opstellen bij de voltooiing van de Short-Title Catalogue, Netherlands* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2009), pp. 121-136.
 21. On Nisselius and Petraeus see Juynboll, *Zeventiende-eeuwsche beoefenaars*, pp. 211-215; A. Vrolijk, J. Schmidt and K. Schepers, *Turksche boucken: The Oriental collection of Levinus Warner, Dutch diplomat in seventeenth-century Istanbul* (Eindhoven: Lectoris, 2012), pp. 84-88.
 22. On Pieter van der Aa see P.G. Hoftijzer, *Pieter van der Aa (1659-1733): Leids drukker en boekverkoper* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1999). On the sale of the Elzevier press and its equipment see p. 27, and more recently Hoftijzer, *A tale of fonts*, pp. 25-27.
 23. On the Oriental imprints of the Luchtmans family see J.J. Witkam, 'De Leidse uitgeverij Luchtmans en de oriëntalistiek', *Omslag: Bulletin van de Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden en het Scaliger Instituut* (2008) 1, pp. 2-4.
 24. On the three Orientalists of the Schultens family see J. Nat, *De studie van de Oostersche talen*, pp. 37-103; Vrolijk and Van Leeuwen, *Arabic studies*, pp. 73-89.
 25. Witkam, 'De Leidse uitgeverij Luchtmans', p. 3. 26. On Reland see Nat, *De studie van de Oostersche talen*, pp. 12-21; Vrolijk and Van Leeuwen, *Arabic studies*, pp. 65-72, see p. 70 for an illustration of *Enchiridion studiosi*.



27. Personal communication from Mr Johan de Zoete, curator of Museum Enschedé, Haarlem. The museum preserves documents concerning the purchase under Inv.nr: HBA 05839 (Archiefdoos 180/05). On Scheidius's activities as an Orientalist and a publisher see also A. Vrolijk, "Entirely free from the urge to publish": H.A. Schultens, J.J. Reiske, E. Scheidius and the 18th-century attempts at an edition of the proverbs of al-Maydani', in S. Brinkmann and B. Wiesmüller (eds), *From codicology to technology: Islamic manuscripts and their place in scholarship* (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2009), pp. 59-80.
28. On N.W. Schroeder see Nat, *De studie van de Oostersche talen*, pp. 74-79.
29. *Letterproef van Oostersche schriften uit de Lettergieterij van Joh. Enschedé & Zonen te Haarlem* ([Haarlem: Joh. Enschedé & Zonen, 1907]), p. viii. See also the type specimen, p. 5; Enschedé, *Typefoundries in the Netherlands*, pp. 117-119. There is no mention of either Joan Blaeu or Briot in J.A. Lane, M. Lommen and J. de Zoete, *Dutch typefounders' specimens from the library of the KVB and other collections in the Amsterdam University Library with histories of the firms represented* (Nieuwkoop: De Graaf Publishers; Amsterdam: De Buitenkant, 1998). For Enschedé's *Letterproef* of 1907 see *ibid.*, p. 100 No 196.
30. *Letterproef van Oostersche schriften*, p. viii, see the type specimen, p. 10; Enschedé, *Typefoundries in the Netherlands*, pp. 380, 384-385; Lane et al., *Dutch typefounders' specimens*, pp. 55-57.
31. *Letterproef van Oostersche schriften*, p. viii, see the type specimen, p. 6; Enschedé, *Typefoundries in the Netherlands*, pp. 216-217; Lane et al., *Dutch typefounders' specimens*, pp. 61-68.
32. *Letterproef van Oostersche schriften*, p. viii, see the type specimen, p. 11; Lane et al., *Dutch typefounders' specimens*, pp. 117-119.
33. Lane et al., *Dutch typefounders' specimens*, pp. 62, 64.
34. *Letterproef van Oostersche schriften*, p. vii; Enschedé, *Typefoundries in the Netherlands*, p. 73 (where the source is regarded as unknown); Hoftijzer, *Pieter van der Aa*, p. 32 n. 87.
35. *Letterproef van Oostersche schriften*, pp. vii-ix, 1-11.
36. *Ibid.*, p. viii (where the name is spelled 'Collwel'), see the type specimen, p. 8.
37. J.L. Swellengrebel, In *Leijdeckers voetspoor: Anderhalve eeuw Bijbelvertaling en taalkunde in de Indonesische talen*, 2 vols. ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974-1978), vol. 1, pp. 23, 27. Swellengrebel mentions this re-edition of Leijdecker's translation, but ignores the typographical history. With special thanks to my colleague Dr Marie-Odette Scalliet, who drew my attention to this publication.
38. *Proeven van Oostersche schriften, Lettergieterij "Amsterdam" voorheen N. Tetterode* (Amsterdam, [1910]), pp. 37, 39, 41; Lane et al., *Dutch typefounders' specimens*, pp. 123-125, 217 (No. 1285).
39. N. Green, 'The development of Arabic-script typography in Georgian Britain', *Printing history* (2010), pp. 15-30, via www.academia.edu/1268414/ (19 May 2014).
40. *Letterproef van Oostersche schriften*, pp. viii-ix, 4.
41. See the museum's website <http://www.museum-schiede.nl/> (19 May 2014).
42. On the history of Luchtmans and Brill see S. van der Veen, Brill: *325 years of scholarly publishing* (Leiden: Brill, 2008). For the transition between Luchtmans and Brill and its aftermath under E.J. Brill see pp. 33-55.
43. H.A. Hamaker, *Incerti auctoris liber de expugnatione Memphidis et Alexandriae* ..., by pseudo-Waqidi (Leiden: S. et J. Luchtmans, 1825).
44. On Brill's typography and its foreign origins see A. Vrolijk, "The usual Leiden types": A compositor's personal account of Brill's Arabic printing in the late 19th and early 20th century', to appear in R. Gleave (ed.), *Books and bibliophiles: Bio-bibliography in the Muslim World. Studies in honour of Paul Auchterlonie* (Oxford: E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust, *forthc.*). The first to identify the Berlin origin of the typeface was Rijk Smitskamp, a former employee of Brill, who in 1992 took over Brill's antiquarian bookshop in Leiden and continued it until 2006 under the name 'Het Oosters Antiquarium'. On Rijk Smitskamp see L. Buskens, 'Vanishing Orientalism in Leiden', *ISIM Review* 18 (2006), pp. 44-45.
45. H.E. Weijers (ed.), *Specimen criticum: Exhibens locos Ibn Khacanis de Ibn Zeidouno, ex mss. Codicibus Bibliothecae Lugd. Bat. et Gothanae editos* (Leiden: S. et J. Luchtmans, 1831).
46. On E.J. Brill, Van Oordt and De Stoppelaar see Van der Veen, *Brill*, pp. 37-74.
47. On De Goeje see Vrolijk and Van Leeuwen, *Arabic studies*, pp. 103-113.
48. Vrolijk, 'The usual Leiden types'.
49. Van der Veen, *Brill*, pp. 144-145.
50. T. Nemeth, 'Arabic type-making in the machine age: The influence of technology on the form of Arabic type, 1908-1993' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Reading, 2013). See pp. 287-299 for the groundbreaking ideas of the Dutchman Dr Edward Bernard Plooi, which were, however, never applied commercially.
51. www.decotype.com. (19 May 2014).





Social Developments and Reading

A Comparison with the Twelfth-Century Renaissance

*Verlicht maar weinig zicht
Mijn God wat ik u schreeuw
Geef ons voor extra licht zo'n donkere
Middeleeuw.
– Herman Finkers, Men fietst niet meer*

By Linda Vermaas

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In the research project 'Turning over a new leaf: Manuscripts innovation in the twelfth-century renaissance', Erik Kwakkel and his team of researchers examine the influence of social developments on the physical characteristics of manuscripts.¹ Their findings can also help us gain more insights into the current developments in reading with regard to technological innovations and the advent of digital reading.² In this essay, a number of similarities between the Middle Ages after 1100 and modern times with regards to social developments concerning reading and book production will be discussed.

A first similarity is the opposition between a *lingua franca* and many different 'vernacular' languages. In the Middle

Ages, Latin was the language used in the monasteries and the universities, and books were almost exclusively written in Latin. Later on, after 1100, the national languages, or the vernaculars, were rising, and more and more books were produced in Italian, French, German, Dutch and other national tongues.³ Today, we can observe a similar phenomenon; as Latin was before, English is now the new *lingua franca*. English is the primary language in scientific publications and in online communication English is also dominant.⁴ The same goes for literature; English books are read all over the world, whereas books in other languages require translation, which, as prof. van der Weel argued during one of his lectures, has led to a dominating





influence on the part of Anglo-American literature. Interestingly, many 'vernaculars' have also arisen due to the rise of new technologies; think of SMS language and internet slang.⁵ Interestingly, as the vernaculars of the Middle Ages, these languages have slowly gathered fame and recognition, and dictionaries and grammars have started to appear for these vernaculars, which was also the first step towards acquiring official status for the medieval regional tongues.

Another interesting similarity between twelfth-century renaissance and modern-day reading and book production is the development from reading extensive texts and entire books to a preference for shorter texts and a more selective style of reading. After 1100, deep reading, which was characteristic of monastic practice, made way for more selective reading and a reading style that was aimed more at the gathering of information from multiple sources than at intensive studying of a single book. In the monasteries, monks received a book each year to study until they received a new one the next year. This type of studying was known as *lectio divina*.⁶ When during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries universities gained more and more influence, reading habits changed. Instead of deep reading, studying now took the form of acquiring and analysing information from a greater variety of texts. This also resulted in a different presentation of the text; in order to find the desired information quickly, indexing, running titles and referencing systems were introduced. As Parkes writes:

Many of these readers required easier access to details of the information contained in a text, in

order to apply them to immediate problems. (...) Some of these features first appeared in copies produced for scholars or specialist readers, but subsequently in copies of other texts (including vernacular texts) intended for a wider spectrum of readers, both male and female, to enable them to read more quickly.⁷

A similar development has taken place due to the rise of the internet. This technology has intensified the focus on finding information in a greater variety of texts as opposed to the deep reading of few texts.⁸ For years on end now, people are reading less and less longer texts; book sales have dropped and surveys have demonstrated that people are reading less books.⁹ On the other hand, people spend more time online, where they come into contact with a great variety of (shorter) texts. A large amount of time is moreover specifically spent on finding information. As in the Middle Ages, this new focus on information retrieval has brought about several changes in the presentation of text. To aid the search for information, search engines have been developed. In online texts, one also finds hyperlinks and other tools to facilitate and speed up the process of information retrieval. Thus, both in twelfth-century renaissance and today a development can be detected from deep reading of longer texts to a focus on gathering information from multiple sources. In both cases, this development goes hand in hand with changes in presentation of the text as well.

A final social development is the decentralisation of book production. Before 1200, monasteries, with their monastic





scribes, were the main centres of book production. In the monastic scriptoria, which were usually located near the monastery's library, monks would spend a great number of hours a day working on the copying of biblical, theological, and classical texts.¹⁰ With the rise of cathedral schools, and the support for non-monastic *scriptoria* from the orders of the Franciscans and the Dominicans, who did not have their own *scriptoria*, book production became less centralised. Moreover, with the advent of universities, a larger demand for books also meant that university towns themselves took up the copying of texts. In order to meet the demand, the *pecia* system was introduced; books were divided up into parts, known as *pecia*, which were then handed over to students or professional scribes for copying.

Nowadays, a similar decentralisation of text production can be observed: a book may be written by an American author, published by an British publishing house, printed in India and sold online to a person in the Netherlands. Again, internet has played a major role in this development. The text of a book can easily be sent all over the world via e-mail, and websites like Amazon and Bol.com are making sure that books from all over the world are being sold and delivered to the

inhabitants of many (European) countries. It is even the case now that you no longer need a publisher to produce a book; with the advent of self-publishing everyone can produce and publish his own book.

Thus, as we have seen, there are indeed similarities between the developments in the twelfth-century renaissance

and current developments regarding reading and book production. Dr. Kwakkel's research program may thus be illuminating with regards to the relation between social change and changes in reading and textual developments in our own time. From the above comparison, two specific questions arise that merit further research: 1) The developments in medieval book production seem to have instigated a period of major growth in terms of book production, whereas

Another interesting similarity between twelfth-century renaissance and modern-day reading and book production is the development from reading extensive texts and entire books to a preference for shorter texts

currently, the book industry is suffering from a strong decline in book sales. What causes these divergent effects? 2) The rise of the internet and digital reading are perhaps more revolutionary changes with regards to reading than the technical developments from the period after 1100. Are its effects also more revolutionary, and have we perhaps come to the point where the end of the 'Order of the Book' is in sight?¹¹ ■



Notes

1. See the university website for a summary of the project: <http://www.hum.leiden.edu/lucas/turning-over-a-new-leaf/project-manuscript-innovation/manuscript-innovation.html> (22-11-2013).
2. Ibid.
3. M.B. Parkes, 'Layout and presentation of the text', in N.J. Morgan and R.M. Thomson (eds.) *The Cambridge history of the book in Britain: vol. II: 1100-1400* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 55-74.
4. 54.9% of websites are in English. The other 45.1% is divided up by many smaller language (the second biggest language is Russian with 6.1%), http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Languages_used_on_the_Internet (19-11-2013).
5. Both even have their own Wikipedia-page: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMS_language and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_slang (19-11-2013).
6. D.D. Knowles and C.N.L. Brooke (eds), *The monastic constitutions of Lanfranc* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002).
7. Parkes, 'Layout and presentation', p. 55.
8. For the relation between the different levels of comfort regarding reading print and reading from screen, see e.g. B.W. Cull, 'Reading revolutions: Online digital text and implications for reading in academe', *First Monday*, 16.6 (6 June 2011), n.pag. <http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/3340/2985> (26-11-2013).
9. For the levels of book reading in the Netherlands, see <http://www.scp.nl/content.jsp?objectid=default:24432> (26-11-2013).
10. R.W. Clement, 'Medieval and Renaissance book production', *Library faculty & staff publications* (Utah State University, 1997), n.pag. http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1010&context=lib_pubs (27-11-2013).
11. The term Order of the Book was coined by A. van der Weel in his book *Changing our textual minds: towards a digital order of knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011).



Using Listening to Encourage Reading in Thailand

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Introduction

In 2013, Bangkok was chosen to be the World's book capital of the year. The announcement amazed many people because, at the same time, there was a shocking statistic released by UNESCO on the latest International Literacy Day stating that: 'Thais only read eight lines per year'.¹ This statement caused an uproar among Thai book lovers, since it was a flawed calculation based on the ratio of the total Thai population and the number of books sold 'legally' per year. Nonetheless, during the past few years there has been a wide concern that there is a reading crisis in Thailand and something needs to be done to solve the problem before Thailand becomes a member of the ASEAN Community in 2015.

According to the National Statistical Office of Thailand,² in 2011 68.6% of Thai people who are over five years old read. The problem seems fairly severe because only 5% of them read daily, while approximately 51% of Thais only read occasionally. Another problem is the lack of reliable studies on reading levels up to the present day. For most Thais reading is not

a habit. There have been many efforts to encourage reading in Thailand for a long time, but most attempts have proven to be ineffective and little progress has been made. Every year, the funds for promoting reading are wasted on temporary superficial events such as the Thai national book fairs which take place twice per year and merely last two weeks. It would be no exaggeration to say that these book fairs are the only substantial form of reading promotion that takes place. The Thai government has never spent funding on sustainable projects which could benefit the country's reading in the long term. All things considered, it might be time to try approaching the problem from a new perspective, with a new method such as using listening to encourage reading. This essay is written with the purpose to explore the possibility of using listening to encourage reading. It will cover some background knowledge about reading culture in Thailand, reasons why the method could work and finally how to put the theory into practice.



A brief history of reading and printing in Thailand

The first change to reading in Thailand was caused by the introduction of Western printing and book culture. Printing in Thailand is believed to have started in the late Ayutthaya Era (1351 -1767) during the reign of King Narai (Somdet Phra Narai Maharat), in its most prosperous period. At that time, Ayutthaya, the former capital city of Thailand, opened its gates and welcomed foreigners who came in peace.

In 1662 Bishop Louis Laneau came to Siam³ with French missionaries. He was active in propagating the Christian faith in Thailand by translating and publishing bibles, Thai grammar books and Thai-English dictionaries. Laneau made use of existing Roman types and originally printed

his books in Europe before shipping them to Thailand. Later, in 1670, there was a request from the missionaries for making Thai types and setting up a printing house directly in Thailand as Thai laborers were cheap. Also there were a growing number of Thai scholars interested in learning about printing.

Printing machines were sent from France to Thailand and were used to produce teaching materials. King Narai granted the missionaries the freedom to teach Siamese people Christianity and Western knowledge such as science, law and other subjects, so long as they did

not contradict Siam's government or law. Because textbooks were important for teaching, a large number of books were printed in order to meet the needs of these new learners. Unfortunately, before they received Thai types, printing in Thailand was interrupted by a change of reign in 1688. None of the books from this period survived because they were either confiscated by King Phetracha in Siam or they were burned by the Burmese when they took over the city.

There were later attempts to reestablish printing culture in Siam, but it was

not successful as the country was at war. Then came the man who is considered by many to be 'the Father of printing in Thailand', Dr. Dan Beach Bradley M.D., an American missionary who arrived in Thailand in 1835. He brought Thai types

and a wooden printing press along with him and started his own printing house in Siam. Although Dr. Bradley's first intention was to propagate Christianity, he became more interested in the art of printing and started several printing-related businesses. In 1839, the first Thai official document, the proclamation against opium, was published. This was shortly followed by the first Thai newspaper: the *Bangkok Reader*. Driven by success and with support from the government, Dr. Bradley published more books by writing them himself and buying copyrights from other authors, which was the starting point of copyright

In 1839,
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was published



in Thailand. It could be said that the printing business was mostly run by foreigners until the reign of King Vajiravudh (or Rama VI) who ruled the country from 1910 to 1925. Vajiravudh was fond of literature and had a keen Western mind. He wrote countless novels in a Western manner and rapidly improved printing techniques during his reign.

Western printing culture transformed both books and reading in Thailand. The shape of books suddenly changed when Dr. Bradley introduced a codex form. Formerly, books in Thailand were made by 'Lan's or 'Koi's leaves called "Samut Koi" (notebook made from Koi leaves) or "Samut Thai" (Thai's notebook).⁴ These traditional books were written on a long piece of paper which was then folded back and forth to form a folded scroll shape. These 'books' were so sacred and delicate that they were forbidden to be carried by any commoners and only monks and aristocrats had direct access to these books. The only way commoners could access such text was by listening to recitations. In their modern form, books became more durable and portable. This allowed books to reach a wider group of readers.

On the basis of this brief history, it is obvious that reading culture in Thailand was not originally developed within the country by Thai people but was brought in by Westerners. To illustrate this point, consider reading culture as a plant: reading culture did not grow its roots in Thailand but was brought in later by the "grafting method". Without roots, Thai reading culture could not be as strong as it is in the Western world. Perhaps the Western method may not fit into the Thai context. It is important to let the development

process run its full course without interruption in order to finally come to the most suitable solution for one's culture. However, we cannot change the past, so the wise thing to do now is to find out what was missing in that transition.

To fill the gaps between Thai and the foreign reading culture, we have to consider where the Thai culture lifted off. Modern printing was established in Thailand during the first half of Rattanakosin Era (1782-1851), which was around the same time as the Golden Age of Thai literature. At that time, all important traditional Thai literature were written in poetic prose, consisting of dazzling internal and external rhythms which are pleasant to listen to. In other words, they were written for the sake of being read out loud. According to history, Thais preferred to listen to literature more than read it. People with high social status such as royalty and aristocrats, listened to the literature during royal plays in the courts, while literature intended for commoners was used in public plays.

A good example of this practice is 'Phra Aphai Mani', an adventure-fantasy story written by the most famous Thai poet of all time, Sunthorn Phu. It is considered to be the greatest poetry and literature of the early Rattanakosin era. One of the foreign printers made use of its popularity and published golden quotes from 'Phra Aphai Mani' in a small 'Samut Thai' form and sold them for only 1 Salueng (about half a euro cent) each. Despite the extremely low price, the profit was so large that he could afford to establish a printing house. Readers bought these books to recite the lines they liked over and over or to read them to their wives,



children and slaves.⁵ Consequently the literature became a popular phenomenon in no time.

Reading was a shared experience and public reading was the norm at this time. This made sense as Thai poetry has a special rhythm. It may be read normally, but a specific form of reading out loud called 'Sepha' will make the poems sound like music to the ear. Sepha singers, like troubadours or Jaglars⁶ in the western culture, were public readers and entertainers who recited stories from books for a living. While reciting poems, Sepha singers use two small sticks of wood called 'Krab' to give rhythm and emphasis combined with the use of expression, tones, and body language to make the stories more interesting. This kind of performance became the most popular form of entertainment for local people at that time.

Even today we can still see the appreciation of being read to in Thai everyday life. It has been evolving and is now taking a new form of media by using a combination of publishing and television. During these past five years, there has been a steep increase in the popularity and number of news television programmes. In 2008, there were twenty-nine television programmes running, which took about 11,260 minutes per

week.⁷ The programme were usually run by two or three moderators who skim-read newspapers or scripts laid out before them, retelling the simplified stories to the audience in a casual manner, as if they were having a face-to-face conversation with the audience. Unlike ordinary news announcers, they shared their personal opinions and often spoke ad-lib. The announcers' personalities also played an important part in attracting ratings and,

in a way, they became celebrities themselves.

This type of television programmes has gained incredible popularity among Thais for a number of reasons. In general, Thais prefer watching television over reading. According to the survey on reading conducted in 2011 by the National Statistical Office of Thailand, the main reasons for not reading are: a preference for television viewing, not having enough time and a negative attitude

towards reading and literacy.⁸ People who work in big cities prefer watching these casual news television programmes instead of reading newspaper, because it fits in with their fast-paced metropolitan life. While people in the countryside find these programmes entertaining because they still prefer oral communication and they like to pass on stories by word-of-mouth.

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Without a doubt, Thais have proven to be good listeners. But if listening has a strong link to reading, could this quality turn Thais into good readers too?

The relations between listening and reading

There have been many recent attempts to investigate the relationship between the process of reading and listening. There is no definitive conclusion, but a large number of studies seem to suggest that listening and reading are closely interrelated activities.

In the early days of studying this topic, the focus was placed on the similarities of the reading and listening process. There were two widely accepted theories. One suggests⁹ that the reading process is similar to, and parallels the listening process but there are no direct connections between them (Fig.1). According to this theory, one hears a word and compares the word to one's personal vocabulary; in the same way one perceives a written word.

Unlike the first theory, the second one indicated that the reading process relies on the listening process. Many see listening as a crucial part of the reading process, while some even believe that reading develops from listening.¹¹ The general understanding is that reading begins when readers see the text, transform it into sounds in their heads and compare the sound to words they know (Fig. 2).

Recently there is more research supporting the latter theory that listening plays an important part in the reading process. This even extends to the case of silent reading. Today the act of 'silent reading' has become the norm. This kind

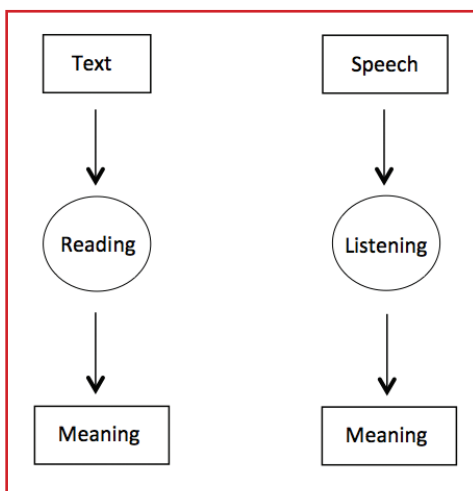


Fig. 1. Reading and listening processes as separate processes¹⁰

of reading was first recorded in AD 383, when Saint Augustine arrived in Milan and met Bishop Ambrose. Augustine was so amazed by the way Ambrose read he gives a detailed description of this act:

When he read, his eyes scanned the page and his heart sought out the meaning, but his voice was silent and his tongue was still. Anyone could approach him freely and guests were not commonly announced, so that often, when we came to visit him, we found him reading like this in silence, for he never read aloud.¹²

Modern readers would not find this act extraordinary, as it is their usual way of reading. Although silent reading has a long history and it did not become a common practice in the West until the tenth century. When reading was first invented, people read texts out loud and it stayed that way until people became experienced enough in reading. But does this mean readers do not make any sound at all



while reading?

One study shows that silent reading is not as silent as it seems.¹³ In 2012 a team of neuroscientists conducted an experiment to compare the brain activity of a person reading to that of a person listening. The participants who have electroencephalographic electrodes implanted in their brain were asked to listen to

sounds and read selected texts. The results show that when the participants read texts there is high-frequency electrical activity in the same region of their brain as when the participants hear speech. The scientists also measured higher levels of brain activity when the participants were asked to read the texts carefully. In other word, they read 'out loud' to themselves while reading silently with their inner voice. The researchers believed that this inner voice is not be triggered automatically but it might be enhanced by attention.

Another study conducted in 2013 provides further support for this theory.¹⁴ The assumption of this study was that the human brain registers both external speech and an internal voice in the same manner. However, the researchers found out that the brain reacts to external speech and an internal reading voice differently. The inner voice is triggered when readers parse ordinary texts such as descriptive passages, but the brain process speeches

or quotations from fictional characters in the same manner as external speech.

A third notable study of the relationship between listening and reading¹⁵ conducted by David J. Townsend suggests that listening and reading proficiency are usually at the same level. That is to say people who are good at listening tend to be good at reading as well and

vice versa. This result leads to the strong possibility that listening and reading can be used to mutually improve each other.

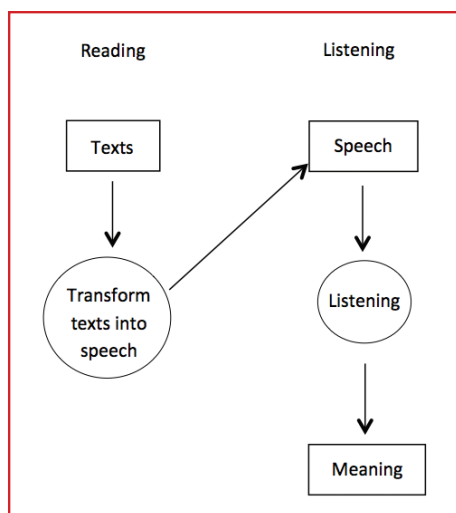


Fig. 2. Reading and listening as connected processes

Ways to use listening to encourage reading in Thailand

As listening is an important component of reading it could be used to diminish the reading crisis in Thailand in various ways.

In 2013, the Thailand literacy rate was 93.5%.¹⁶ However, there is no detailed survey on the literacy level in Thailand today, so the overall situation remains unclear. But most people are concerned with the reading level of the new generation, which seems to have dropped noticeably over these past years. The big problem we are facing now is an 'illiteracy relapse'. It is difficult for people with a working class background to maintain their literacy skills after completing a basic education. The lack of reading materials (the number of books available can be extremely small



and sometimes nonexistent) and poverty drives them to enter the labor market almost immediately after high school. Not to mention a large number of young people in rural areas who quit schools before getting a diploma.

To understand the situation precisely, we should identify the definition of literacy on different levels in order to help readers according to their reading ability. For example UNESCO¹⁷ divided literacy into the following four levels:

Basic level refers to abilities in reading and writing in any single language.

Second level refers to abilities in reading, writing and numeracy in any single language.

Third level refers to abilities in reading, writing and numeracy in any single language and ability to use information technology as a tool for day-to-day communication.

Fourth level refers to high abilities in listening, speaking, reading and writing any single language as well as abilities in numeracy and information technology as a tool for everyday communication. Being a learned citizen and having the ability to promote learning in the community, society and the nation.

If we use this UNESCO model to categorise people by their reading performance, the first two groups could benefit from using listening to maintain their literacy after school while the third and the fourth groups might be targeted in a different way. Even though it is universally known that reading is good, the act of reading itself is still a bitter pill for some. (The reasons for the negative attitude some Thai people hold towards reading will be discussed later). It surely takes

time and effort to change someone's opinion towards something, especially when the first impression is negative. Therefore it should be done in a smooth and tactful method by making use of something that disaffected people feel comfortable with such as listening. Hearing the texts read aloud could work as a bridge for illiterate people and beginners to leave their comfort zone and cross the bridge from listening to reading.

On a basic level, being read to has the potential to ignite the interest of the listener in literature. It also has an effect on the listeners' attitude towards books. It is not only suitable for children but also was proven to work on adults too. A good example of this is the tradition of cigar factories in Cuba.¹⁸ In most cigar factories, there is a person who works as a 'lector' who would read out loud for the other workers while they roll cigars. The books range from historical texts to great poetries and are chosen in advance by the majority of the cigar-rollers according to their interests. The purpose of this activity when it was first invented, was to convey information to the illiterate people as they could not read journals. Not long after this activity began the workers gradually became more familiar with books and developed a positive feeling towards them. It was true that most of them could not gain full literacy from just listening to texts being read but a number of the workers began showing interest in reading and that was a good start. This tradition began in 1866 and it still continues in modern day Cuba. Despite the fact that there are new technologies that could replace lectors, the cigar-rollers still prefer being read to by their lector because the reader is 'a living



person who walks, who converses, and this cannot be replaced by anything or anybody.¹⁹

In Thailand, the practice of being read to can also be found in people's everyday life. Take radio drama for example: even with the flourishing of new kinds of entertainment, there are still a large number of Thai people, from the working classes to the rich, who are still fond of listening to Radio drama on CDs or mp3 players. It blends in with the lifestyle of people in the capital perfectly because it is almost the only entertainment that can be found during the infamous traffic jams of Bangkok. From time to time, one encounters taxi drivers who listen to a simplified version of great literature on a CD while driving. There is a relatively high chance that these listeners would buy a book of the same title or look for it in the library.²⁰ After all, books contain more details which might be omitted from the oral version. In this regard introducing audio books can be an interesting experiment. However, audio books are not available in the Thai language and very few people have the required proficiency to listen to English ones.

Like being read to, reading aloud is an effective way to improve the reading skills of people of all ages. Unfortunately, it is considered to be an act suitable for children and people who read out loud to themselves are sometimes perceived as amateur readers. As a matter of fact, reading out loud, even to one's self, is un-

expectedly beneficial. Smith Frank stated in his book that the human brain needs some time to process and record the texts that we read. Reading without making a sound will be too fast for the brain to take the data in, leading to partial oblivion.²¹ In other words, reading out loud could enhance memory while reading.

The first critical step in promoting reading out loud is to change people's negative attitude towards it. In Thai primary school classrooms, the class is usually asked to read the text out loud. It is quite surprising that when the children read, they read it out loud in the most unnatural way. It sounds like nothing you would hear in everyday life and maybe this is the only situation in which this kind of reading seems normal. The students would all together drawl the words by extending and prolonging syllables, making their speech sound monotonous and boring. Actually,

the way they read harms their understanding, because it is not natural speech.

Sadly, some people subconsciously grew up connecting reading to boredom since they were forced to read books they had no interest in for school. While in fact, reading can be enjoyed for leisure or as a hobby as it is called 'reading for pleasure'. If Thais only ever read for educational success, they may read until they finish school, but if they read for the sake of reading, they will read for life. Additionally a study conducted by the Institute of Education shows that children ages between 10 to 16 years old who read for fun make more progress in their study than those who rarely read.²²

reading aloud
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people
of all ages



Last but not least the promotion of reading out loud could lead to a resurrection of public reading. A significant factor that holds back the reading levels in Thailand nowadays is book prices. The prices are so high that even the middle classes still have to think carefully before buying books. Since being read to does not require a possession of books and can be done in groups, people could have more access to texts. Reading should not be confined as just an activity for individuals. It rather should be a shared experience which allows people to help one another. Experienced readers could help beginners to achieve the same goal for the sake of society as a whole.

Conclusion

In summary, there is a high possibility that listening could be used to reduce the reading problems in Thailand because the two skills are closely interrelated and can effect each other according to several scientific studies. From the beginning, Thai reading culture has been relying on oral literature. There is still an evident fondness for being read to, despite Thailand's westernised through European printing culture. Researchers should understand that Thais can improve their reading levels by using listening as a connecting point between the two skills, using listening to spark an interest in books and by attending public readings. Though these methods may seem untraditional, they could possibly be the solution for Thailand's reading crisis. ■

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How Traditional Literature Adapted Itself to Modern Media

Kanshibun in 19th Century Japan

By Rintaro Goyama

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Japan's modern age is considered to start from 1868, the year in which the Meiji restoration had taken place and the newly established Meiji government had become a political entity in place of the Tokugawa regime.

Many great changes had occurred in various aspects of Japanese society since then, and media was no exception. The first Japanese modern newspaper and magazine were published in 1867. Purchasing and reading these periodicals quickly became a part of people's everyday lives.

On the other hand, things that belong to culture do not change as rapidly as those concerned with politics. In the field of literature, for example, many genres that had been well received in the pre-modern age still hold a significant position until the end of the 19th century. Traditional literature in some ways harmonizing and in some ways clashing with modern media, strives to survive in the new era.

There are many traditional literary genres, one of which is Kanshibun (漢詩文). Kanshibun is a Japanese word meaning "Classic Chinese prose and poetry". Kanshi (漢詩) means "Classical Chinese poetry" and Kanbun (漢文) in most cases refers to Classical Chinese prose.

The purpose of this article is to analyse the meaning of this change of media and its relationship with literature, focusing on one of the significant literary genres in 19th century Japan: Kanshibun, Prose and Poetry in Classical Chinese.

Kanshibun in Japan before the Modern Age

In pre-19th century East Asia, where China had a strong influence upon its neighbor countries, Classical Chinese was a common language among intellectuals. Not only in China, but also in countries like Korea, Japan, and Vietnam, books on various fields such as morals and ethics, history, geography, and science are written in Classical



Chinese. Chinese prose and poetry were written and shared across the border. For example, diplomats from the Chosun Dynasty and scholars in Japan communicated with each other using written classical Chinese.

The similarity between the role of Kanshibun in East Asia and that of Latin in the Western world is frequently pointed out.¹ This similarity is largely true, though it does require a deeper analysis. Kanshibun and Latin share common characteristics in that both functioned as academic and international literary languages, and both were used as written languages (rather than spoken languages). However, one difference between the two is that Classical Chinese originates from Chinese and has a different grammar than many other East Asian native languages, thus creates an imbalance between countries in its relative ease (or difficulty) of use.

Classical Chinese was known and used by the Japanese people since around the 7th century and its popularity was at its height in the early modern period (Edo period). The infatuation with Chinese culture, as well as the unique procedure called Kundoku used to translate Chinese written literature into Japanese, can be considered as a contributing factor to the popularity of Kanshibun. This situation continued until the latter half of the 19th century, when the modernization of Japan began.

The Decline of Kanshibun in Modern Japan

Similar to the spread of the vernacular and the decline in the usage of Latin in 18th century Europe, Kanshibun lost its popularity in Japan after the Meiji restoration. Newly created modern prose and poetry forms, which were free from archaisms, gradually gained popularity among ordinary people.

The point at which modern poetry overtook Kanshi in popularity could be placed somewhere around 1900. Mori Ogai (森鷗外 1862-1922), one of the most renowned literary people at the time, said in an interview held in 1897 that Kanshi was going to collapse soon, which can be considered as evidence of Kanshi's dismissal from its position as a major literary genre.²

Composing Kanshibun as a hobby continued until the mid-20th century. We know that around 40 Kanshibun books were published per year on average even as late as the 1930's by investigating a Kanshibun book collection curated by Ichikawa Jinzo.³ The popularity of Kanshibun decreased in the modern era, but it was not completely extinguished.

One may recall the remarks on Mori Shunto (森春濤 1819-1889) and Mori Kainan (森槐南 1863-1911), the most influential Kanshi poets in the late 19th century, made by Donald Keene; 'These poets enjoyed fame and even adulation, but the course of Japanese literature moved inexorably in the direction opposite to theirs,'⁴ and it must be noted that while these Kanshi poets had strongly influenced Haiku reformists such as Masaoka Shiki (正岡子規 1867-1902), high-quality, refined Kanshi became less influential for the younger generation.

Though it has ceased to be a part of modern culture, trends in the use of Kanshibun bring us new insights into the relationship between new media and traditional literature.



Kanshibun in Modern Japanese Magazines

Kanshibun still kept a significant position within the society in the late 19th century, with several Kanshibun magazines being published. 1877 saw the first modern Kanshi magazine called Shinbunshi (新文詩), and more than 30 other magazines were published until around 1910.

The Kanshibun featured in these magazines focused on newly introduced ideas and concepts, such as modern culture in an urban environment, rather than traditional themes. This tendency could be understood to be related to the fact that the word Shinbunshi is a homophone of both 'new Kanshibun' and 'newspaper' in Japanese.

Works in these magazines were sent in not only by Japanese people, but also by Chinese scholars and journalists, which was quite natural considering the international nature of the genre.

It must be noted that a strong relationship can be observed between the earlier modern Kanshibun magazines with commercial publications of Kanshibun anthologies since the first half of the 19th century. One anthology published in 1848 named Kaei Nijugoka Zekku (嘉永二十五家絶句), was reported to have sold 2,000 copies, bringing a great amount of profit to its publisher.⁵ This example of a traditional genre selling so well indicates that it is not possible to explain the full picture of the development of modern



Fig. 1

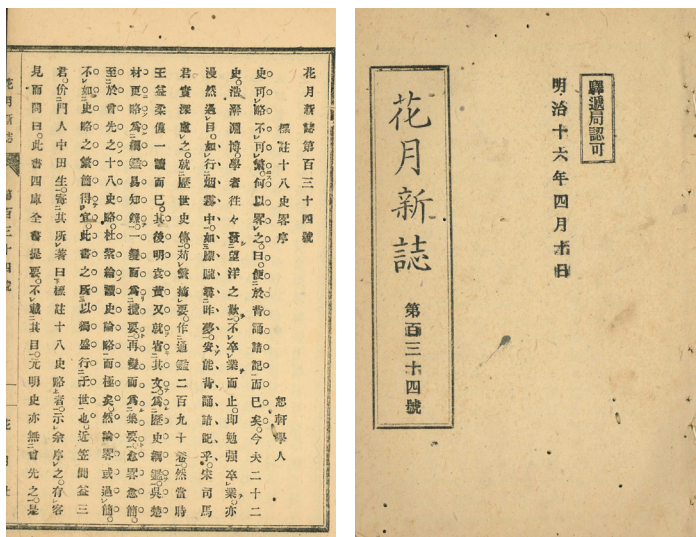


Fig. 2





media solely from the viewpoint of Western influence.

The trend in the popularity of Kanshibun magazines can be seen from the statistical data. For example, magazines focused on education had become more popular than those consisting of reader submissions. According to Teruo Inui (乾照夫)'s study,⁶ Kokon Shibun Shokai (古今詩文詳解, Fig.1), which holds more pages for opinion articles and anecdotes, published a far greater number of copies than Kagetsu Shinshi, (花月新誌, Fig.2), a magazine edited by the famous journalist Narushima Ryuhoku featuring works by contemporary poets and scholars. The decline of the publication of Kagetsu Shinshi over time can also be observed (Fig.3).

	Kagetsu shinshi	Kokon shibun shokai
	28,714	120,896
	17,819	118,740
	14,708	61,302
	11,277	124,402

Fig. 3

Another research⁷ shows that Kanshibun magazines remained in print despite a small number of readers. Shin-Shinbunshi (新新文詩, the successor of the first Kanshibun magazine Shinbunshi), and Omu shinshi (鷗夢新誌, a major magazine for the genre in the 1890's), had fewer readers compared with the magazines mentioned above (Fig.4). Both magazines were published monthly, and each volume of these magazines had a readership of about 200 to 450 people; one would imagine that with such a readership, these magazines were not likely to be commercially successful.

	Shin-Shinbunshi	Omu Shinshi
	2,572	N/A
	5,396	4,079
	5,439	3,054
	N/A	2,877
	N/A	2,459

Fig. 4

Kanshibun Columns in Modern Newspapers

Apart from dedicated magazines, regular newspapers also had a close relationship with Kanshibun. Some of the major early newspapers such as Choya-Shimbun (朝野新聞) and Yubinchochi-Shimbun (郵便報知新聞) in the 1880's, Mainichi-shimbun (毎日新聞, Fig.5), the Kanshi column is marked with a circle), Nippon (日本) in the 1890's, featured Kanshibun columns. In most cases, professional Kanshi poets edited





these columns and made their works public. These columns (featuring Kanshi on a variety of themes) are thought to have been well received to a certain degree by people at that time.

However, the most popular poems were those that illustrated the daily news, which were somewhat different from the normal Kanshi columns. These Kanshi columns dedicated to themes of social events and daily news can be seen in newspapers in the 1890's to 1900's. The poems, which were slightly different from normal Kanshi in that

they used many plain words, appeared in the newspaper several times a week, if not daily, allowing readers to enjoy the poems immediately after the actual event had been reported.⁸

Hyorin (評林, Fig.6) in Nippon was the most well-known column of this kind. Poems in Hyorin were written by Kokubu Seigai (国分青厓 1857-1944), a young prominent Kanshi poet. Seigai criticized Japanese government for its misadministration, attacked politicians' scandals through satire, lamented over natural disasters, and showed compassion to people suffering from them.

Various reasons can be considered for this relationship between Kanshi and current affairs. The satirical effect produced from the juxtaposition of the authority of Kanshi as a traditional literary form with the mundaneness of day-to-day



Fig. 5: *Mainichi Shimbun*, November 19th 1889, page1. This image is reproduced from reprints by the Fuji Shuppan Publisher (不二出版).

events may be one reason for the popularity of Kanshi of this kind.

Japanese native poetry forms are also used for satire, though Kanshi, which could hold more information in one poem, and which had the wide variety of the Chinese vocabulary to choose from when composing, was more suitable for illustrating aspects of a complex modern society.

Kanshibun works written by high-ranking politicians sometimes appeared in the newspapers. For example, Ito Hirobumi (伊藤博文 1841-1909), four times Prime Minister of Japan, was a dedicated amateur Kanshi poet and his poems were often featured in newspapers.



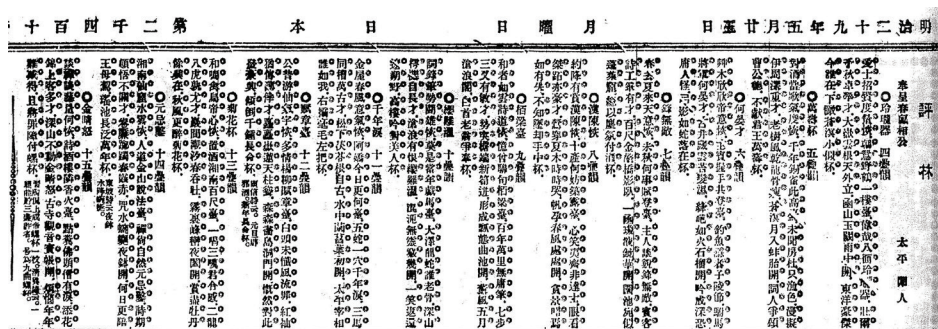


Fig. 6: *Nippon*, May 25th 1896, page 5. This image is reproduced from reprints by Yumani Shobou, Publisher Inc (ゆまに書房).

It is interesting to know that Ito's Kanshi were often met with satirical poems in reply, written by Kanshi poets and readers. For example, poems that matched the rhyme of Ito's Kanshi criticizing his immoral private life appeared in newspapers after Ito composed a textbook-perfect poem celebrating the progress of the country.⁹ There is a tradition in Kanshi to produce a poem that matches the rhyme of another poem as a form of greeting or conversation; such a tradition forms a background for such an example.

It might be said that Kanshibun adapted itself to the modern media and attained a sophisticated style, though this flourish of Kanshi on daily news only lasted for a mere¹⁰ to 20 years, because of the general decline of the popularity of Kanshibun, as I explained above.

Conclusion

Though Kanshibun did not take a dominant position in literature as a whole, it did manage to go along with the wave of new media, showing an interesting change in relation to media in the modern age. The historical evidence of these changes may give us some suggestions concerning the rapidly changing relationship between literature and media in the present day. ■



Notes:

Names of historical Japanese figures are written family name first, while names of contemporary figures are written given name first by custom.

Special thanks to Daniel Kobayashi-Better, Mohammad Moinuddin, Thom van Dam, who helped me with English expressions and collecting information. I am also thankful to Tomoko Okuda, who gave me an opportunity to post to TXT.

1. This kind of opinion can often be seen in previous literature on the subject. The following essay provides a profound analysis on this theme. Richard A.Kunst 'Literary Chinese Viewed in the Light of Literary Latin', <http://www.humancomp.org/ftp/yijing/litchinese_in_light_of_litlatin.html> (30 May, 2014).
2. *Ogai Zenshu* (鷗外全集) vol.38, Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1975, p149.
3. *Daito Bunka Daigaku Toshokan Shozo Ichikawa Jinzo Sensei Kizo Toshu Mokuroku* (大東文化大学図書館所蔵市川任三先生寄贈図書目録—明治以来漢詩文集) or *The Catalogue of donated books from Prof. Ichikawa Jinzo to Daito Bunka University Library: The Kanshibun Books since Meiji Period*, Tokyo : Daito Bunka Daigaku Toshokan, 1992). Ichikawa Jinzo's collection is one of the largest specific collections of Kanshibun books published after the Meiji restoration. Though data from this collection might not be entirely accurate due to possible omissions or imbalances in the collection, it does give us a glimpse into the general tendency of the publication of Kanshibun poetry books. The numbers of Kanshibun publications in the 1930's in the collection are as follows (numbers in parentheses indicate the number of publications for each year): 1930 (49), 1931 (51), 1932 (44), 1933 (60), 1934 (50), 1935 (69), 1936 (50), 1937 (42), 1938 (26), 1939 (35).
4. Donald Keene, *Dawn to the West: Japanese Literature of the Modern Era*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1998, p50.
5. *Oita-ken Sentetsu Sosho* (大分県先哲叢書), Oita-ken Kyoiku linkai, 2014, p424.
6. Teruo Inui, *Narushima Ryuhoku Kenkyu* (成島柳北研究), Tokyo: Perikansha, 2003, p229.
7. An investigation was conducted by the author using the following historical documents referred to in Inui's study above. *Tokyo-fu Tokei-hyo* from 1885 to 1889 (東京府統計書 明治18年-同22年) or *Statistics of Tokyo Prefecture in 1886 and 1887* stored at the National Diet Library.
8. Rintaro Goyama, *Bakumatsu, Meiji ni okeru Nihon Kanshibun no kenkyu* (幕末明治期における日本漢詩文の研究), Osaka: Izumi Shoin, 2014, pp69-79.
9. Ito's poem "My newly-built villa was completed in 29th year of Meiji, and I wrote in calligraphy the three letters "So-ro-kaku" given by Li Shaoquan on its wall. On May 13th, I celebrated the completion of the construction with famous literary men in Tokyo and composed poems. (二十九年大磯別業成, 仍掲李少荃題贈滄閣三字. 其五月十三日, 招邀東京名流, 落之. 有詩)" and the Kanshi in response with matched rhyme found in Nippon and Mainichi-Shimbun in May 1896 is a good example of this. Sorokaku is the name of Ito's villa. Li Shaoquan is the famous Qing dynasty politician Li Hongzhang (李鴻章 1823-1901).





The End of...

TV/Typesetting/Print/Books/Publishing

Witnessing Industry Change and Technology in Transitions

By Suzanne Griffin Natalicchio

Student of Books and Digital Media Studies at Leiden University

It's the end of the world as we know it.

It's the end of the world as we know it.

It's the end of the world as we know it and I feel fine.

— R.E.M. 1987

Blasting that song on the radios in our TV station offices in 1987, I had little clue of the foreshadowing in those words. Only a year into my career as a broadcast graphic designer, I was still enthusiastically learning what is now considered 'old technologies'. I was fully aware I had a cool job: we worked with cool technology; we created images that millions of people saw every day which went out over invisible airwaves; we designed a magazine that enjoyed a higher circulation than *Time magazine* in our city; we wore jeans to work. It was cool and cutting edge; yet how archaic, old-fashioned or obsolete it is today. In hindsight, I see we were at the crossroads of industry change.

Change was a distant rumbling train speeding faster, closer and eventually tore through the foundations of several industries in succession. Threatening our industry with annihilation as it sped through us and towards the digital era on the horizon, the changes would become exciting, and create new professions. I would eventually witness several industries in the midst of change from analogue production to digital production, simultaneously or closely on the heels of each other.

Only a few years earlier my wedding was videotaped indoors with no lights—an unheard-of capability at that time—using a prototype video camera employing a CCD¹ chip, developed by my father and engineers he worked with at RCA (Radio Corporation of America). This small technological chip advancement would have an impact on camera technology a couple of decades and generations (chips and human) later with its



ubiquitous daily use in cell phone cameras for social sharing, ‘selfies’ and video chatting.

In the mid-80s, VHS tapes were popular to rent and watch at home. The movie industry, alarmed at what would happen to their product, feared no one would ever go to theatres again, and they would lose their livelihoods. Cable television was making inroads into television market share, frightening the TV industry as it lost local viewers to cable companies who would not carry local broadcast signals. This resulted in a ‘must carry’ law being instituted, forcing cable companies to offer local channels to viewers.

As a graphic designer, I observed technological changes effecting all my vendors. It began with photographic images. I was privileged to art direct a photographic digital retouching in the mid-1980s, a rare event as the \$2400 hourly rate of utilising this new million-dollar system was over most photography budgets. My client, a large supermarket chain, wanted the fat removed from their holiday ham photograph for a magazine cover. I had a budget to cover 15 minutes of computer time, but it turned out to be just enough time to edit the image. I was amazed to watch the fat miraculously disappear by cloning sections of the scanned photograph of the ham. No airbrush artist, who traditionally did photo retouching, could do it so fast or so well. This program was a predecessor of Photoshop, which took the photographic industry by storm in the 1990s. Photographers, skeptical at the time, were not interested at first in the new technology. The one or two megapixel images were of lower quality than film images, and the investment in equipment was enormous. But photographers soon embraced the technology as it evolved.

While typesetting had seen technological changes through the centuries, it had settled into phototypesetting for a few decades. The first fonts printed from computers were strangely shaped dot-matrix and OCR letterforms. Designers viewed these typographical efforts with disdain; this was no rival to ‘real’ typography. In the early years of the Apple MacIntosh computer, we designers had no use for the jagged-edged computer-generated typography. The dirty, digitised type was unusable until anti-aliasing, vector-generated fonts and the black and white Laserwriter² printer arrived on the scene. This clean-looking type could then rival phototypesetting. However, graphic designers continued to produce artwork and photomechanical paste-ups by hand. Laser paper could not be waxed and pasted on a board to create camera-ready art, so we still followed our traditional method of sending out for type.

Typography and layout required the designer to mark-up typewritten manuscripts received from our writers and editors. Mark-up for typesetting was done manually; we notated the pages with editorial marks and typesetting instructions,³ then sent it to an out-of-house typesetting firm. Designers generally contracted with one or two typehouses, depending on the workload and how fast they could get the typeset galley back to the office. At the fastest ‘rush’ speed, the process took several hours; so if an editor needed to change a period, a comma, a word—anything at all—the process would have to be repeated over and over. Sometimes corrections could be phoned in to the typesetter, but before fax machines, changes required visual verification, so were sent by courier services. To reduce costs, the use of couriers was restricted to once or twice a day. A phrase commonly heard around the studio, and a good excuse for a coffee break,





was 'waiting on type'.

When our editorial staff obtained a Laserwriter printer, there were fearful rumblings from the typehouses. What would happen to their typesetting business if everyone used laser printers? However, copywriters were not typographers and laser paper could not reproduce as cleanly as photographic paper for pasting up artwork, so we still sent out for type.

In 1990, as head of Creative, I was directed by the chief operations officer to completely convert our art department to using computers, and to come up with a transition plan and a budget for equipment purchases. The first computers we utilised were Mac II and IIfx, with Quark Express software for page layout, which the staff designers and I had to be trained to use. All except one older production artist was able to make the transition; she resigned saying she was afraid of using the computer.

At first we used the computer as a sketch tool to design a layout, then marked up the text according to our design and sent out for typesetting, and pasted up our boards as usual. For those first few months, despite creating our page designs on the computer, we still had no good solution for output. Printers (the companies with presses) still could only take mechanical artwork on boards, and produce plates in the same photomechanical way. We

were likewise required to paste up the boards using waxed sheets of type and halftone images, and rubylith or amberlith⁴ overlays to make color separations. Soon however, typehouses offered to output our page files from Quark using imagesetters and photostat paper, in black and white, which we then pasted those full-page waxed printouts onto our art boards.

Color printing was extremely expensive in those days; I ordered our first color thermal wax printer, which we used for proofing our artwork, for \$10,000⁵. It was an costly piece of equipment to operate, utilising large costly blocks of colored wax, much like giant square crayons, to melt as 'ink' to create brightly colored images.

Soon our printing vendors began to transition to digital processes, in response to demand from their designers, converting their pre-press departments by adding imagesetters that accepted Quark files. This then bypassed the typesetters, as we could give the artwork files directly on disc (in formats which changed almost annually) to our printer who would generate a proof for us. In the span of six months, we had no need for our typesetting supplier. After decades, the relationship of designers to typographers was severed; designers automatically set the type while designing on the computer, and printers then produced the final proofs. Within a year, all the typehouses in our city had gone out of business or converted to digital imagesetting supply houses. The typesetting

Designers automatically
set the type while designing
on the computer,
and printers then
produced the
final proofs



jobs were literally wiped out; typesetters had to change their profession.

Simultaneously, other processes were changing. When preparing images for our final camera-ready artwork we used a photographic process and a 'stat camera'. After a year of digitally scanning our photos, I found we had not used our darkroom at all. The enormous camera was sold for a fraction of its original cost; the darkroom became a storage room. Also, out of habit, we had turned the wax machine on in the morning before getting coffee, and turned it off at night when we left. One morning I realised we had continued this process for a year without ever using the wax for our paste-ups; we turned it off for the last time in 1992. The scent of beeswax still takes me back to those times.

In the ensuing years we expanded our graphics technical capabilities. I was tasked with creating the first animation made on a desktop computer at our television station. The Mac was the only desktop computer we had with the capacity to do this at the time. I found a small start-up company, formed by a couple of graduate students in Berkley, who had created software and a digital board⁶ to plug into our Mac. It allowed me to record two fields per frame of broadcast quality 3D images onto one inch video tape for broadcasting on-air. I created the station logo and animated it flying through space. The process took several days to render and record the three-second animation, but it worked and was subsequently broadcast on-air for a decade. Today the same animation process can be done on a desktop using one of many available inexpensive software programs.⁷

While television stations freely embraced technology including HDTV, D1 (first generation digital)⁸ and subsequent digital format versions, their hackles were raised a bit when the FCC⁹ mandated that digital switchover must happen by 2009.¹⁰ The FCC would be selling off bandwidth that the broadcast stations no longer needed, and was pushing heavily for this change. The investment required was immense for each television station. For our station, the new transmitter alone would cost a little over a million dollars.¹¹ For a non-profit community-owned television station, the cost was a big hit to the budget. In early meetings, I recall top management reacting in fear at first, asking if this was the end of television? At that time, television stations were still required to broadcast in black and white signals for those viewers who had not yet converted their sets to color, a decades-old technology even then. How was the public going to afford to adopt the digital technology? It was outrageous to assume the entire viewing population would be required or could afford to buy a new television! Some TV station managers were simply unable to imagine a world where the analogue signal would no longer exist. But they had no alternative except to move forward and find a way to subsidise the digital switch over.

Conclusions

During my career I experienced several industries in the midst of change from analogue to digital production, simultaneously or closely on the heels of each other. Overall, each industry reacted in a similar fashion:

Fear and Resistance

Each industry—television, typographic, design and printing—followed similar paths of



facing a future of unknown possibilities first with fear and resistance. Fear was based in the threat of the unknown, and the fear of loss of their product or industry. New technology would require new workflow methods where no models existed on which to base these changes. Resistance to change was a reaction first based in rejecting a lower quality product: for television that was a potential loss of signal, since the digital signal was either on or off;¹² with typesetting and design, resistance was to low resolution of fonts; with typography and printing, resistance was to the loss of traditional craftsmanship. Underlying all these forms of resistance was concern about the expense of equipment and staff re-education, requiring large capital investments and more man-hours.

Education and acceptance

Once the changes were set in motion, substantial reductions in production time were realised in television editing, design and printing production that led to an increase in productivity of staff. This opened up the work day for more to be accomplished in the same amount of time, and less personnel were required for the tasks or the same personnel produced more.

Embracing and Expansion

Once the transition to digital took place, fear of loss of the product diminished. Broadcasters began to deliver more productions, both analogue (during the transition period) and digital HDTV on its digital channels. Many phototypesetting firms metamorphosed into imagesetting firms. Designers turned drafting tables into computer tables, learned to use software and to understand hardware issues, and combined multi-step, multi-person production processes into a single person's workflow. More was done in less time.¹³ Printers transitioned to direct-to-plate technology and retrained personnel (strippers and platemakers) to operate the computer software;¹⁴ and photographers converted dark-rooms to computer rooms.

The net result in these industries was an expansion of capabilities and production. The fear of loss proved to actually result in a net gain. Today there are more television programs produced than in the pre-digital era, and the viewing audience is larger than the reach of the old analogue signal's local area. In graphic design, there are a myriad of new sub-specialties, including web design and multi-media for various platforms. Typography didn't die, but instead has expanded into digital fonts with a wider audience and increased usage. Printing has improved with direct-to-plate and print-on-demand technologies, making deliverables faster and cheaper to produce.

Considering the survival of industries that have already gone through major analogue to digital transitions, publishing firms currently in the grips of fear, and thinking now is the 'end of the book', could take notes of the path these other industries followed before them. Change happens; it is difficult, if not impossible to predict exactly what the future looks like in a given industry. But change is a constant and the choice is how to deal with it: to resist it, embrace it or make it. The companies that survived the transition of analogue to digital, in my experience, were those that not only embraced the change, but actively sought to make change happen. ■



Notes

1. CCD – charged couple device allows the camera to see images in low, natural light. The same RCA engineers at that time were also developing video disc records, and the precursor technology of CDs and DVDs, for the consumer market. My father and his group in the broadcast division of RCA (merged with GE in the late 1980s) holds two technical Emmy Awards for these: one for the CCD Camera, the other for the video disc record (DVD).
2. LaserWriter, introduced by Apple in 1985, used toner and Adobe Postscript, giving a clean and clear line to the edges of fonts.
3. Words like “Head BF 24/26 cent; 10/13 pt Garamond Reg, 13 picas flush Left, ind 1p6, init cap 3 lines para 1”. The result was the manuscript typeset with a display headline centered in Garamond bold, and the text set with the opening paragraph having an initial cap three lines high, and the rest of the text set in a 13 pica wide column, with first lines of paragraphs indented one and a half picas, and all the text flush left.
4. A material tool used in the production process. Rubylith and amberlith were tacky masking films in the color of ruby or amber, which were used on acetate overlays for color separating images on page layout artwork, when photomechanical platemaking was in use.
5. Proofs – Usually done by a printing firm to show what the end product would look like and to check for corrections. With the advent of designing on a computer, color proofs were printed in-house. This saved costs, as color proofs from the (press) printers were time consuming and expensive.
6. Called a Dyquest board with Animac software, costing a few thousand dollars. I don’t know what became of that venture; I had heard they were bought by a larger company.
7. The television station eventually built some offline edit suites, using a stack of nine computers that cost about \$100,000 each. We now do the same process using iMovie, which comes free and pre-installed on Macs.
8. HDTV – high definition television, originally in analogue, but later in digital format. D1 – also known as 4:2:2 Component Digital is the first professional broadcast digital video recording standard introduced in 1986 by Sony. It had a screen resolution size of 720 lines by 486 lines in the U.S.. Component video used an uncompressed signal that used up a lot of bandwidth and later versions would come out (D2, etc) to help reduce this. D1 made high-end animation much easier and cheaper.
9. FCC – Federal Communications Commission of the United States.
10. The FCC mandated digital switchover (or analogue switchoff) required all terrestrial, cable and satellite broadcasting to be in digital signals to replace analogue signals by 2009 in the United States. Different countries transitioned at different times.
11. Initial estimated costs to KETC broadcast station, from my budget records, was estimated at that time to be \$443,000 for the transmitter; \$823,900 for encoders, modems, antenna and mounts, and miscellaneous equipment and HVAC upgrades and installation; \$117,000 for interconnection tools; \$170,000 for test tools; \$426,800 in additional high definition software, modules and equipment. The total amounted to more than \$1.25 million, which was significantly higher than the annual operating budget for the television station. The funds had to be raised from the community.
12. With a digital signal, the encoding that goes to the receiver (a television) allows the signal to be either on or off, so there is either a picture or none at all. In analogue broadcast, a viewer could still get a fuzzy picture, known as ‘snow’.
13. In the creative department I supervised, I saw a 50% reduction in the man-hours it took to produce a 56-page magazine every month. We were able to produce more pages in the same amount of time, increasing the size of the magazine for several months, until we did a spin-off magazine for children in addition to the original magazine. Also, we had reduction in staff, as we did not need to replace the production artist who could not transition to using a computer out of fear of the machine.
14. Personnel who traditionally worked in a printing company and converted artwork to plates for the press were known as strippers and platemakers.





About **TXT**



Marian Spruit

Marian Spruit is **chief editor** of this year's magazine. She studied the Dutch language and is specialised in modern Dutch literature. Further, she is interested in trade publishing and the future of the physical book. Her goal for the journal is to establish it as a yearly returning highlight for every professional working in the book industry.



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Jamila Arichi is this year's **managing editor** and **public relations/marketing coordinator**. She also deals with the marketing and financial side of the magazine. She has a bachelor in literature with a specialization in film. She is interested in the future of the academic publishing industry, with a special interest on the developments in the field of Open Access.



Suzanne Griffin

Suzanne Griffin Natalicchio is **creative director** for TXT. She received her BFA in graphic communications at Washington University, St. Louis, in the U.S.. After an extensive, successful and exhausting career as an art director in all media from television to print, she is taking a hiatus from her Houston design firm to study print materials that are older than her native country. She is interested in the evolution of print, typography and textual communication and its relationship to cultural heritage.



Ksenia Papazova

Ksenia Papazova, **content editor** of TXT, graduated from the faculty of West-European and Slavonic philology in Russia and got her MA degree in Russian Literature. After several years of teaching she decided to discover another dimension of the book: its mediation in knowledge dissemination, as well as the limitations and possibilities of book formats. She is interested in academic publishing, book design and paper & e-book mutations.



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About **TXT**



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Egemen Bozdog is a **copy editor**. After high school he worked as a web editor for four years at a news providing website. Being interested in the social media and its effects on society, he attended KOÇ University. After graduating from Sociology and English Language and Comparative Literature departments at KOÇ University he worked as a freelance translator and English teacher for two years. He is interested in the digitisation of texts and the possible changes it will bring with it.



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Jorine Theune is a **copy editor** of TXT. She studied film- and literary studies in Leiden. She is interested in alternative forms of literature and publishing. She has a great love for comics, children's literature, medieval literature and short stories. She has great interest in the future of the library and the preservation of cultural heritage.



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Jeroen van Honk

Jeroen van Honk is **webmaster** for the website of the magazine. He holds a bachelor degree in Linguistics. His interest is situated at the intersection of literature, linguistics and modern technology. He is also a published writer, his stories featuring in *The Quotable* and *Paper Tape Magazine*, among others.







TXT : Exploring the Boundaries of the Book

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