

The Library is Open
Special Issue 09
Piet Zwart institute

Marginal Conversations
Blurry Boundaries
Knowledge in Action

THE LIBRARY IS OPEN

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Dear readers,

In the spring and summer of 2019 we developed *The Library Is Open*, a publication which focuses on the operations, actions, and roles of legal and extra-legal libraries. Central to this project is the community that forms around a collection of texts – the custodians of the collection and the readers.

The Library Is Open is the result of the third iteration of *Interfacing the Law*, an ongoing research project between XPUB and Constant (BE), which explores issues around extra-legal libraries, software and legal interfaces and intellectual property. Led by our guest editor Femke Snelting, we participated in many activities which were organised by invited guests:

With Bodó Balázs, an economist and researcher on shadow libraries, we analysed the gargantuan dataset of Library Genesis, to determine trends which indicate access to texts and the social, geo-political and economic aspects at play.

With Anita Burato and Martino Morandi at the Rietveld Library in Amsterdam, we discovered the subjectivity of subjects and thorny issues of classification and representation.

With other readers, we deepened our understandings of texts through collective annotations.

With artist and researcher Eva Weinmayr, who introduced us to *The Piracy Project*, we examined the possible motivations and differences between pirated books and their “source”.

With open-source software such as Tesseract, pdftk, and LibreOffice (and many others) we explored the technical processes used during the creation of pirate libraries, and the hidden labour involved in this.

With fellow pirates, we considered the multiplicity of roles and activities involved in maintaining various libraries, such as Monoskop, Libgen, Aaaaaarg, Sci-Hub, Memory of the World, Project Gutenberg, +++.

With Dušan Barok, the administrator of Monoskop and an alumnus of the Piet Zwart Institute, we discovered how Monoskop was initiated and how it has changed over time.

The variety of our collective sessions, and the practical exercises we performed led us to organise an afternoon of three workshops that directly address the active role of piracy, rather than simply talking about it. Encouraging small, informal, collective actions, we wanted to challenge the ordinary, hierarchical presentation of research projects in the academic context, and individual notions of authorship.

When choosing a suitable venue for our event, we decided to ask Leeszaal (in Dutch “Reading Hall”) to host our workshops. Situated in a busy, multicultural area of Rotterdam, Leeszaal exemplifies many values we sympathise with, particularly open access to knowledge, and a focus on the community that uses the space, not just for reading but for many other social purposes. These values we recognise (somewhat nostalgically) as reminiscent of public libraries of yesteryear. However, the landscape today is quite different, with huge online commercial repositories of texts (e.g. JSTOR), protected by paywalls which limit access to them, and in response the emergence of “shadow libraries”.

In the following pages we invite you to wander through the dilemmas, outcomes and reflections that came out of our three different workshops, and interviews with people whose work is at the centre of the issues that each workshop uncovers.

Knowledge In Action explores the roles and activities within libraries, such as selection and inclusion of books. Interviews with: Dubravka Sekulić & Ronny and Laura, two Leeszaal staff.

Blurry Boundaries reveals the hidden processes and labour between the publishing and distribution of physical and digital books. Interview with: Dušan Barok.

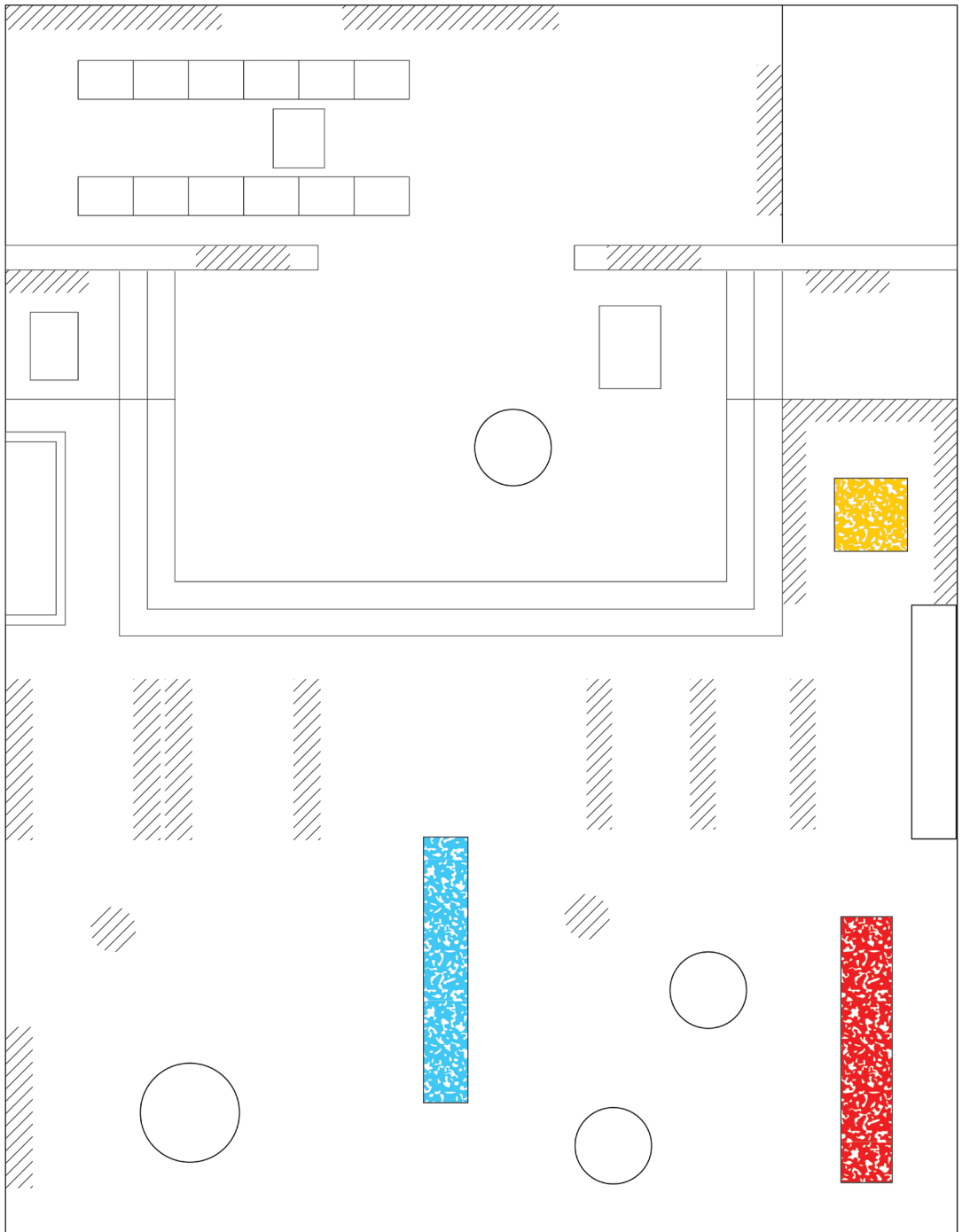
Marginal Conversations highlights the sociality of texts, and how they can become conversations through collective reading, annotation and performance. Interview with: Marcell Mars.

Yours in piracy, XPUB

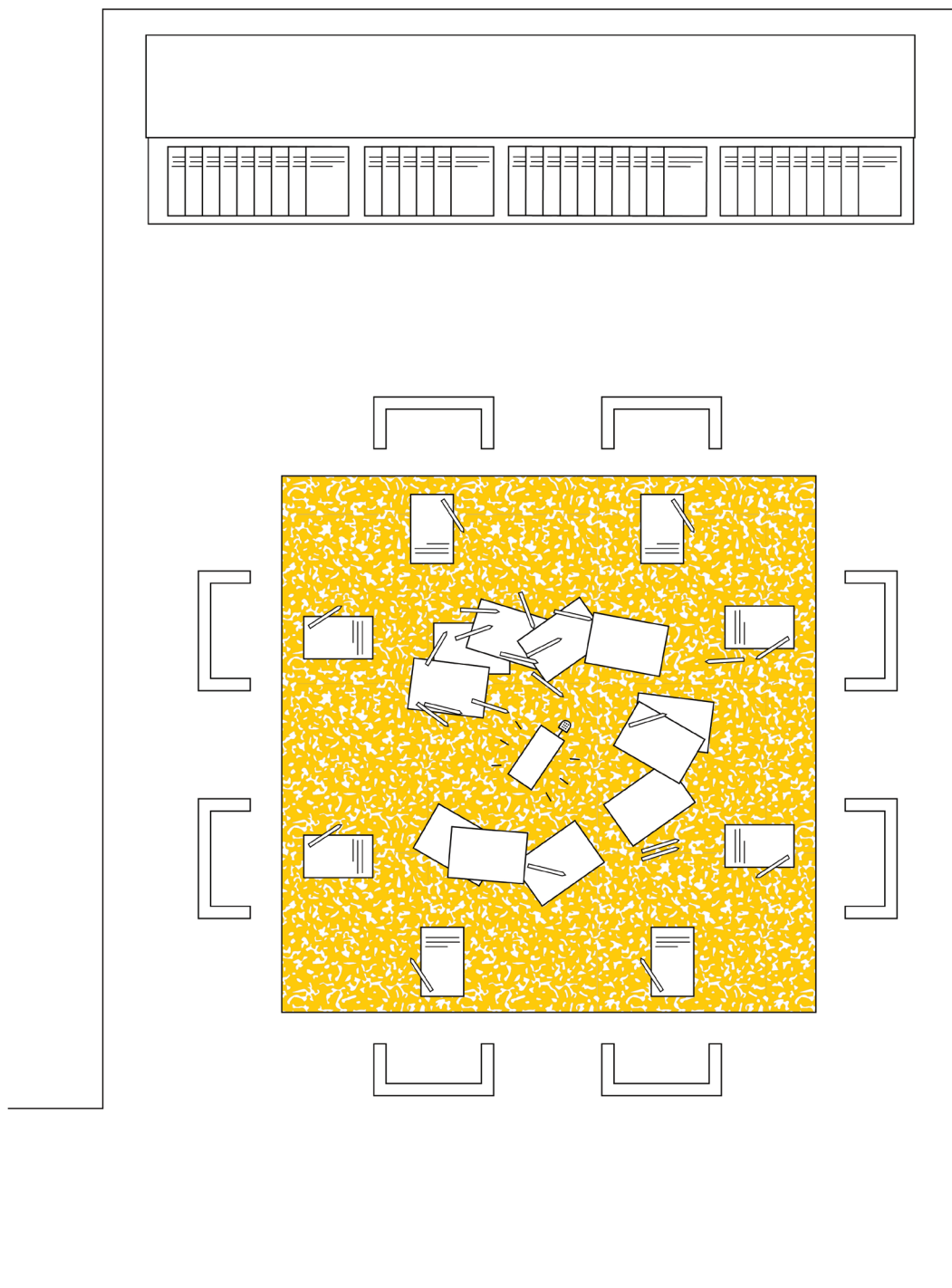


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THE LIBRARY IS OPEN



Workshop: Marginal Conversations
by Simon Browne, Paloma García, Artemis Gryllaki



Marginal Conversations is a workshop which explores collective reading, annotating and performing texts. We read, and write notes in the margins; usually in private, isolated from other readers. We come across texts with others' notes on them; the author unknown, their thoughts obscure. What happens when we share our notes, vocalise and perform them?

In this workshop, participants read, annotate and discuss the open letter "In Solidarity with Library Genesis and Sci-Hub", which asks for pirate library practices to come out from the shadows. This letter was selected for many reasons; it was an introduction for us to the thematic "Interfacing the Law", it's available in many languages, and presents an argument that generates interesting conversations. We compare annotations to detect common areas of interest and to also explore different methods, where readers can develop codes and techniques to extend the content of the source and express their personal understanding of it. The goal is not only to find areas of agreement, but also to discover tensions, disagreements etc. with the letter, which can also develop into fruitful conversations.

We leave traces of our reading, enriched by our doubts, sympathies, tensions and diverse understandings. We personalise the text, opening it up for collective conversations. Our voices occupy the space and leave traces on the text and in the library.

WORKSHOP STRUCTURE

Introduction

First of all, we have a quick round to introduce ourselves and share some thoughts around pirate/shadow libraries.

This workshop is divided in 3 parts:

Part 1: Reading && annotating

Part 2: Creating “heatmaps” && discussing through annotations.

Part 3: Performative reading and recording

Why annotate together?

We see annotations as a way to express our understandings, questions, comments, disagreements, tensions and positions about what we read.

We aim to form collective understandings of this text and open up conversations about its theme; shadow libraries and piracy practices.

We explore ways in which texts can become conversations through collectively reading aloud and performing our annotations.

Part 1: Reading && annotating

Organisation: Individual

Materials: Annotation packs, containing

- a) an A3 printout of the open letter “In Solidarity with Library Genesis and Sci-Hub” in English
- b) an A3 sheet of carbon paper
- c) an A3 sheet of tracing paper, and four-colour ballpoint pens

Supplementary Materials:

A4 printouts of the open letter “In Solidarity with Library Genesis and Sci-Hub”, in languages other than English (Bulgarian, Belarusian, Dutch, German, Spanish, French, Hindi, Hungarian, Italian, Mandarin, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Slovakian, Croatian, Ukranian)

Steps:

1. Provide the annotation packs.
2. If needed, provide the text in languages other than English to support our reading.
3. Each participant reads the text individually.
4. Each participant annotates the text on their annotation pack.

How can texts be extended?

The provided tools provide possibilities for participants to create diverse codes and levels of expression.

We don't see this text as a sacred document. Our aim is to extend its content and enrich it with our collective questions, doubts, agreements, disagreements, points for conversations.

Part 2: Creating “heatmaps” & discussing through annotations

Organisation: Groups of 2-3

Materials: Same as Part 1

Steps:

1. Divide in groups of 2-3 people.
2. In our groups, compare our annotations and discuss the text. What was interesting? Did we make sense? Are there specific parts we want to discuss?
3. Create a “heatmap” of the text by placing tracing papers with annotations on top of each other, comparing which areas are annotated, how and why.
4. Each group selects parts of the text to read aloud and perform in Part 3.

What positions can be accommodated?

We collectively develop strategies to “amplify” specific parts of the text that we want to comment on, for diverse reasons, not only agreement.

We invite a plurality of positions and strategies; doubts, queries, tensions, suggestions, additions, experimentations, +++

Part 3: Performative reading & recording

Organisations: All together

Materials: Annotated “In Support of Library Genesis & Sci-Hub” letter, audio recording device, speakers

Steps:

1. Work with the paragraphs selected in the previous part.
2. Read aloud the text in turns (changing at every sentence).
3. Record!
4. Play the recordings from small speakers in the space of the library.

Why record our performed annotations?

We perform the text and our annotations in ways that show our positions and understandings. When we have an annotation, we do or say something (e.g. interrupt, raise our hands, make a noise, use an accent, use intonation to convey emotion etc.

The text becomes a “play”, a performance. We want to activate the text, by transforming it into a conversation through spoken annotation. The recording exists as a trace of our voices and bodies, with their expressive qualities, movements and sounds.

Interview with

Dubravka Sekulić

The different reactions from our workshop in Leeszaal leads to new questions and discussions. New input came from ourselves while preparing the activities, from our colleagues and from the participants of the workshop. When we had the opportunity to interview Dubravka Sekulić, we knew it would be valuable to understand her perspective on the topics we have been discussing. Dubravka had been involved closely with the past editions of *Interfacing the Law* in 2017 and 2018, with contributions in workshop and presentations on topic of extra-legal libraries.

Dubravka Sekulić is an architect, writer and researcher focusing on the topics of transformation of contemporary cities, at the nexus between production of space, laws and economy. She is an assistant professor at the IZK Institute for Contemporary Art, TU Graz (since September 2016), after spending three years as a PhD fellow at the Institute for History and Theory of Architecture, ETH Zürich, Switzerland. She is an amateur-librarian in Public library/Memory of the World, a realtime catalog of shared libraries through Calibre.

XPUB In the article “On Knowledge and ‘Stealing’”, you described yourself as “amateur librarian” at Public Library/Memory of the World. We are curious about what you do there, and what you share there.

DUBRAVKA My ability to access to content contributed to my formation as a person. I started studying architecture in Belgrade in 1999, 20 years ago, just after the wars of the 90s were finishing. The internet was in its beginning and it was not necessarily a place where you could find all the books. It was really difficult to access files through the library too. For example, the library in the faculty of architecture could get the information that there was this really important book called *S, M, L, XL* published in 1995, but the school only bought it for the library in 2008.

At this time I was interested in research and theory, so spontaneously I started trying to gather as much literature as possible. If I was interested in this, other people could also be interested, so I started acquiring books and photocopying

them, constantly sharing them with people. When I wanted to research issues around architecture and feminism, there was nothing I could find in the academia. The only way to get books was to ask a friend to bring some from another friend in London, so I could photocopy them in Belgrade. Then I would photocopy them for my friends and eventually digitise everything with a flatbed scanner. However, I still needed a device to share, it wasn't yet the time when you could easily attach a PDF and share it online. In 2005 or 2006 when I saw Aaaaarg for the first time, the online shadow library, I remember how happy I was, thinking that finally I had a place to upload and share. But this was never something I was thinking about as a practice in itself.

During this process, I realized that the issue of accessing knowledge was not necessarily just problematic for me as I come from the periphery, but also present in affluent societies. Besides having access, bringing knowledge from the shadow into light is essential. I often now digitise books which are related to critical space and feminism,

because this knowledge has been systematically produced outside, or from the outskirts of academia; it has never been integrated properly as a core. I consciously started to find books which are difficult to reach, and I make them accessible as an intervention. You can call it a feminist intervention in the field of knowledge production in architecture. In this way, Memory of the World becomes really useful to share this content.

XPUB How did you discover Memory of the World?

DUBRAVKA There is a network of several situations that led to Memory of the World. The founder of Memory of the World is Marcell Mars, mostly together with Tomislav Madek. Marcell and I were at the Jan van Eyck Academie in Maastricht as researchers at the time of the first official outing of Public Library/Memory of the World. This is the moment when Gigapedia, which is something like pre-LibraryGenesis, disappeared and everyone at Jan van Eyck was horrified.

During this time I had spent over a year sitting with my hard drive containing 15 years of articles published by the New Left Review. It is an important new left organization and intellectual production from the UK after the 2nd World War. These files were generically named, I was constantly struggling to organize folders and trying to make this content operational. Then I discovered Calibre, a free software program for cataloging books. Slowly my saved content went from a bunch of folders with a lot of interesting articles, but that was too difficult to manage, to a structured format. While I was organizing I was also emailing people who could be interested in the articles, especially people at the Jan van Eyck knowing the people's areas of research.

While I was doing that, Marcell was thinking about how to infrastructurally support the processes of exchange as a programmer. He was thinking about how the infrastructure could work, to supplement platforms like Aaaaarg and Monoskop which already existed. It is important to have more than one entity because they are fragile and might disappear. In 2012, Public Library was initiated

when Marcell was invited by Luka Prinčič to curate a HAIP Festival in what used to be Kiberpipa in Ljubljana. The space was transformed into a public library and people interested in this kind of projects were also invited: Aaaaarg, Monoskop, Oxdb.org, and textz.com, which Sebastian Lütgert created and was taken down under the request of Theodore Adorno Foundation.

Memory of the World, in my opinion, has a triple role. First, it is developed as an infrastructure that allows people to share. Second, through a series of events, is bringing together "shadow librarians", and establishing a framework of thinking together to articulate certain positions. "In Solidarity with Library Genesis and Sci-Hub" is one of such articulations. Thirdly, is doing what I like to call tacticalization. That is to gather together as much as possible and think targetly which content is excluded and how to bring it back and give it a spotlight. This is considered as an activation. There are several projects that were done, either as a Public Library/ Memory of the World project or as off initiatives. Tactical digitization is not only to digitize analog books and make them digitally available, process them inside a curatorial framework, in which certain content is put in relation to another, and you deliberately make certain content available. For me, the curatorial framework is really important while focusing on issues about gender, class, and race. Mostly, issues of feminism and race in relation to space.

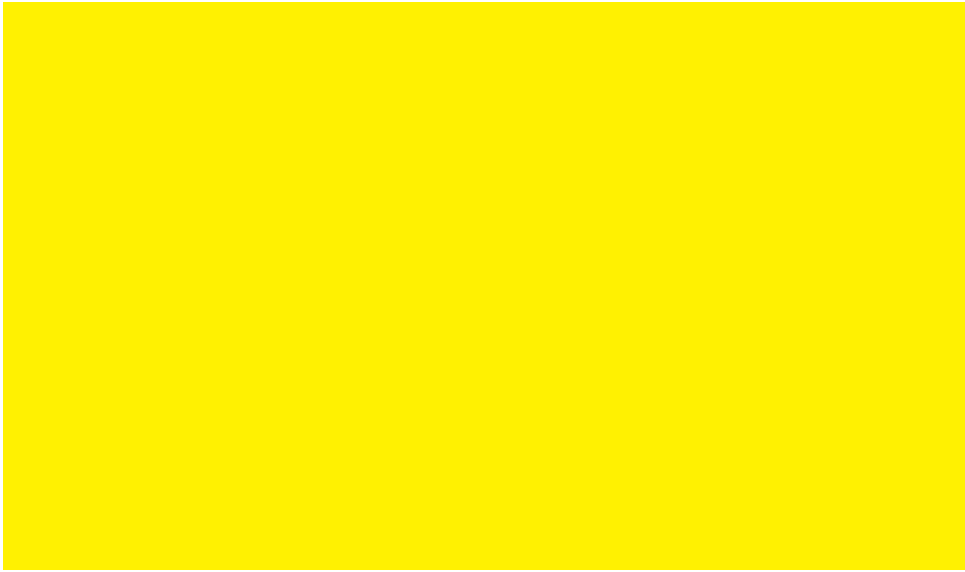
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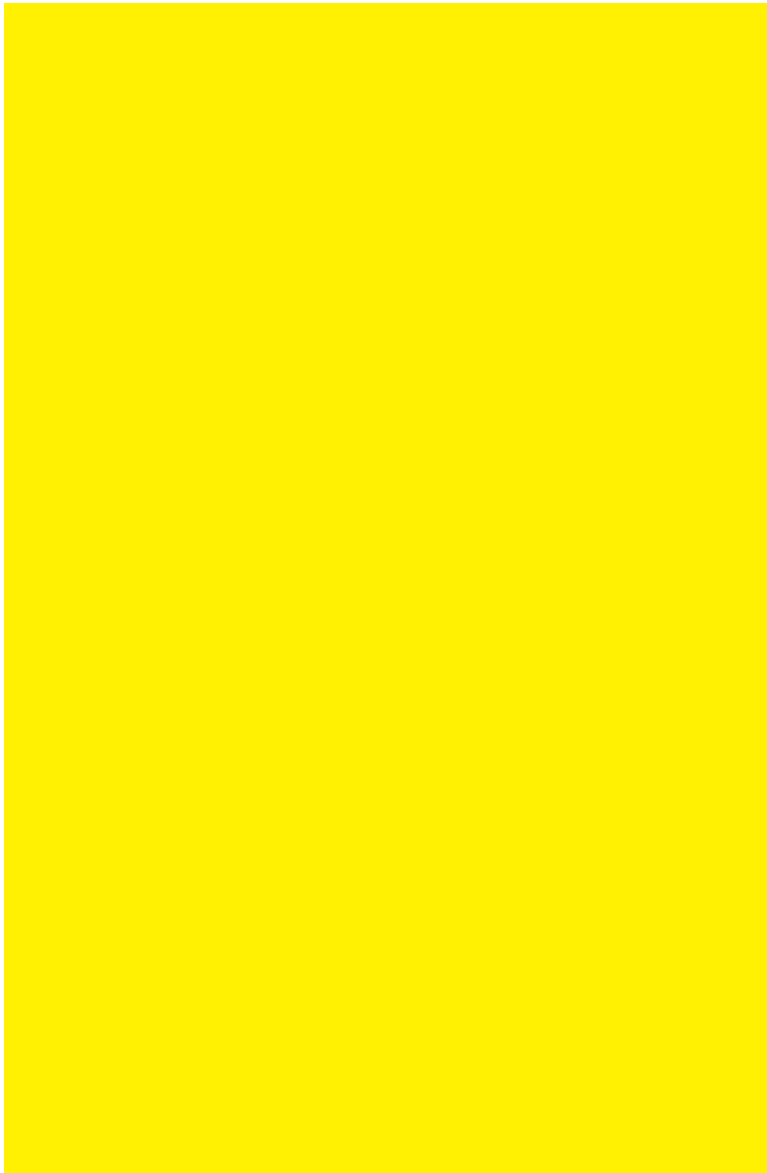
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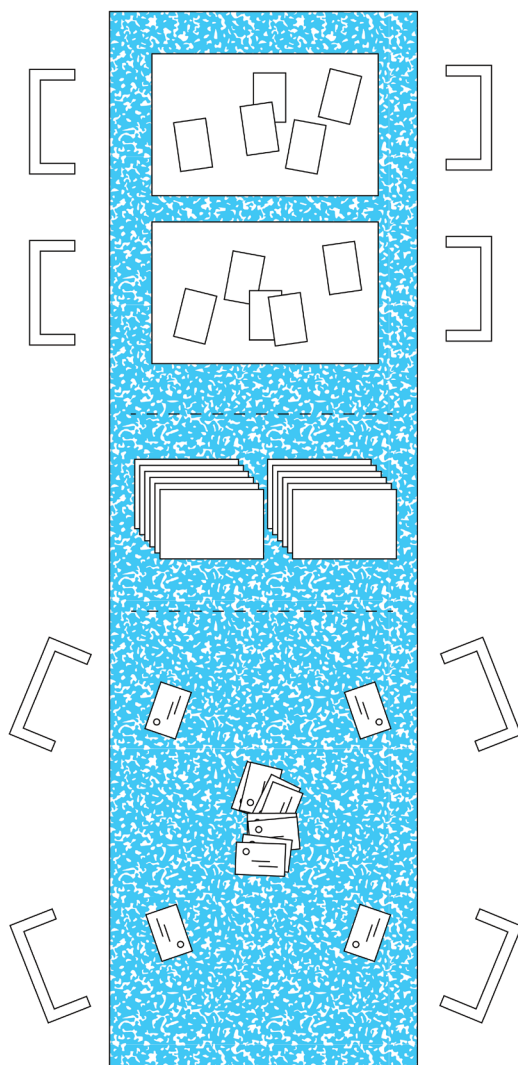


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Workshop: Marginal Conversations
by Biyi Wen and Rita Graça



We looked for different ways that knowledge can be maintained and preserved. We visited different libraries of different scales. We investigated their operations and their levels of legality. We interviewed people who adopted the role of librarians in their unique ways. From these experiences, we started outlining our workshop.

The workshop Knowledge in Action invites participants to act the roles and perform the activities crucial to the sustenance of libraries. They interpret and re-imagine the actors that take part in knowledge production and distribution, playing the parts of the librarian, the researcher, the pirate, the publisher, the reader, the writer, the student, the copyist, the printer. The activities embed the participants in different scenarios to shift their accustomed perspective and to start common dialogues.

We propose for the workshop 3 different activities.

ONE – Librarian's Choice

A librarian is challenged with the task of choosing books from the large amounts that come to the library regularly. Before any categorization, the destiny of the book is determined: to keep, or to throw away.

In this activity we ask you to represent the librarian and make choices like one. When we perform these processes of selection we understand how one's understanding of what should be displayed influences knowledge circulation.

1. In this first activity, you are assigned to the role of the librarian, please walk around bookshelves in Leeszaal and select a book.
2. Now, we will ask you to decide in a group which half of the books to keep, which to throw away.
Remember that you are a librarian, try to think outside your personal preference.
3. We will give you a scenario:
Decide on what books to keep/throw away for a shadow library.
Decide on what books to keep/throw away for a research university.

Did anything change?

3. As a third action, you decide now over book categories. We provide some categories from Leeszaal shelves, the group should decide on half to keep, half to take away from Leeszaal Library.

Sustainability Environment
Religion Spirituality
Rights
Medical
Humour
Female feminism
Regional novels / Romanticism
Nations
Philosophy
Children's books

TWO — Ideal Library

When we use libraries we usually desire a certain service and expect specific behaviours. However, the creation of shadow libraries has changed a lot of predefined ideas: you don't need authorization to read, you don't need to be in a quiet room, maybe you don't need a librarian. In this activity the participants are asked to imagine new places and to eradicate preconceived ideas about these places. By doing so, we can conceptualize a future for libraries, where books, digital files, and other spaces come together and stay relevant for us.

1. Think now as a user, the reader, the library goer. The goal is to create our collective ideal library. We provide cards and ask you to:
2. Write three categories of books/files you would like to have.
3. Think about spaces. (space for yourself, space for collective reading, space in transit...)
4. Imagine a scope of audiences (do you want to make it a safe space? invitation only? membership? radical openness?)
5. Redesign the services (how does the library provide books? does it allow scanning? do you want a librarian? or a robot to organize the shelves? e.g. in Leeszaal people can have the books forever, and in traditional libraries you need to return them in due time)

You should all think about the organization of the categories and organization of the space. What books/spaces are near what?

THREE – Discussion in the Library

During the previous two activities, we became familiar with the operations of current libraries, and how may we imagine ideal libraries. The following activity takes you to a discussion that revolves the current phenomenon of the shadow libraries and open access, as a site for reorganizing of knowledge distribution. In this activity, you'll be assigned to roles that play a part in academic resources circulation. The discussion aim to map out relationships between these players, acknowledge friction and seek collaboration.

1. Choose a role/character.
2. We give quotes sourced from real characters. Take some time to read them and familiarize with your role.
3. We provide a case.
4. Start the discussion with a round of introductions: who are you, what do you defend?
5. You should defend your character's best interests. Make use of the quotes if you want, but feel free to improvise.

Examples of cases:

CASE 1: Ming recently graduated from a Chinese University, so she lost access to her university resources. Should she make a way to pay the expensive academic journal database or use shadow libraries instead?

Speak from the best interest of the roles you have selected and interpret the scenario.

CASE 2: A researcher just made significant discoveries in a particular field and would like to make the work available to as many people as possible.

Speak from the best interest of the roles you have selected and interpret the scenario.

Roles:

Academic Publishing Business

Pirate

Researcher

Research Librarian

Shadow Library



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Interview with Dubravka Sekulić

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Memory of the World helps me to to articulate the topic of knowledge production when I teach in the architecture school, to address these issues of whose knowledge space is considered as outside of the norm what is considered as canonical and what is not canonical, and how we can change these dynamics and how we can recognize these dynamics. Because I am part of a lot of conversations which are dealing with the issue, trying to rethink curriculum and syllabus in architecture field, I was able to use the fact that I am an amateur librarian to not only be a part of these initiatives but also use Memory of the World as a proper library where you actually have access to under-represented knowledge.

XPUB How do librarianships and partnerships happen? How did the project “Herman’s Library” start?

DUBRAVKA Certain projects happened as exhibitions and gatherings. For example, the project Public Library, its conferences and exhibitions are a reunion of people trying to articulate the discourse around what we are doing and how we are addressing and positioning of our practices.

For Herman’s Library in Memory of the World, Jackie Sammel had a project called The house that Herman built. She asked Herman Wallace, a prisoner in solitary confinement and the founder Black Panther Chapter in Angola Prison, what would be his ideal house. Part of that was also about the books that shaped his life. Herman’s Library is not only a collection of books or an intellectual portrait but also points to what radicalizes and subjectivizes a prisoner of solitary confinement in one of the harshest penitentiaries. The library was actually acquired when Jackie was a fellow at Akademie Schloss Solitude (Stuttgart, Germany) and you could visit Herman’s library there.

Marcell Mars and Tomislav Medak were also fellows at the Akademie Schloss Solitude. When Tomislav was there, he built The Public Library scanner to digitize books. Soon it became obvious that Herman’s library had to be digitized and not to be only accessible when you were visiting Stutt-

gart or when Jackie was doing exhibitions and traveling with the books. Having Herman’s library digitized also opens up the discussion about the gatekeepers of knowledge and access to certain information.

This project also helped me think on how to offer people tools that allow them to interpret the position in which they are, I know this sounds super ambitious. I really like the proposal of James Bridle’s “The New Dark Age” that we are moving to a new dark age. A long time ago people didn’t have interpretative tools to understand what was happening, they would see “thunder” and think “god”. There was no physics to explain the phenomenon. Nowadays the computational logic is influencing a lot of our everyday lives but is too difficult to understand how that logic really works. We are moving to what he calls the new dark age.

In this way, I’m really interested in using Memory of the World, or Aaaaarg, or any of these digital archives, to address this issue: what is useful knowledge for people to understand what surrounds them? Or for example, what can help to understand the politics of knowledge distribution.

XPUB We have been talking a lot about digital libraries. What are your thoughts on physical libraries?

DUBRAVKA I think digital libraries should never be seen as a replacement for physical libraries. Physical libraries as spacial infrastructures in the city are incredibly valuable and they should be understood as public libraries and never just as containers for books.

Take for example the Carnegie library in the US: through the philanthropic work of Andrew Carnegie, thousands of public libraries in the US and around the world were developed. Carnegie libraries were built in neoclassical style and then reworked to fit into a certain location. If you look into that project, you will see that there was always a room for reading stories to children. It’s interesting because it was never just about books. As Fred Moten and Stefano Harney say: text is a social space, we can meet in text together.

For me, the XPUB program reflects this way of thinking. Coming here year after year has been really important because much more than discussing how do you digitize and how do you make accessible certain texts, this program is also about thinking about what happens when this becomes a practice. The question of annotating, reading together, organizing and structuring becomes as important as having a bunch of files.

XPUB Will there ever be a time when we don't need shadow libraries?

DUBRAVKA I don't think so. In a way, every process of archiving and building a certain collection is also a process of exclusion. Even in my case, with my library in Memory of the World, I have a kind of structure in power. When I tag texts as "race", "space", "gender" I'm making a personal decision. For example, I don't want to have in my collection a Garrett Hardin's *Tragedy of the Commons*. I don't want to have a text which is pseudo-science that has caused so much harm and which was written by person who was classified as a white supremacist, no matter how much this is still considered the text that we need to address. Of course, you can say that politically my decision to not have this article is close to some ethos around his own project but this process is how every archive works. Every shadow library also creates a shadow, there will always be some content that is left out, and that content needs to find its place. For me is really important to create a situation where people using shadow libraries are not doing this just as consumers. Users don't necessarily need to digitize books, upload or organize content, but they should be aware that using shadow libraries is not just a convenience.

Although I don't think online repositories will ever disappear, this doesn't mean Memory of the World will exist forever. Certain projects will change in relation to what are the geopolitical forces shaping knowledge production. The tendency within academic publishing, and some countries, of supporting open access publishing means that shadow libraries won't necessarily be as important in ten years. Kenneth Goldsmith, founder of the UbuWeb says "If you like it, download it". Making

the physical copy of things that tend to disappear from the internet is essential.

It is also interesting to think of thresholds. Is Memory of the World already too big as a repository in order to work? The functionality to allow creating collections, reading lists and discussions is something I feel Memory of the World as an infrastructural project lacks. Besides just giving plain access, it is also valuable to allow contextualization. This is the reason why I'm interested in taking part in conversations about building alternative syllabus and reading lists within and outside academia, which allows people to know where to find things. If you go to the "commons" tag in Memory of the World you still don't know where to start. The different levels of activations transform these bodies of texts in a library. A library always has a librarian, where you can ask "I'm interested in this, what can I read?" or "I'm going on holidays, what can I read that won't make me depressed or feeling like the world is burning?".

XPUB Can different libraries provide different levels of activation?

DUBRAVKA Yes, for example, the diverse named libraries of Memory of the World are rather different. Some of them like Herman's library really have a face and an origin, some are more cumulative libraries that are growing a lot and create the largest volume, few of them are really personal. Mine is also personal, as is mirroring what I have on my computer. People don't need to have a digital library to be a little bit of a librarian. People have always been doing this, recommending books to their friends, passing around hard-drives, books, etc.

Accessibility is less and less of a problem, even on twitter people are sharing institutional access with each other. The next step is to figure out the different activations as a collective process. When databases go over a certain threshold, then filters, readers, recommendations become really important to make them legible.

XPUB In the beginning, you were talking about getting books from different parts of the world.

Was it obvious the various degrees of access?

DUBRAVKA West is much more accustomed to having access to everything but of course there are asymmetries also inside Western countries, with some universities being much bigger and more powerful.

Sometimes this fake feeling of accessibility can prevent people from understanding how actually difficult is the struggle for other people. If you are working in a big university you really don't notice how much each article is costing because you are using a subscription like JSTORE. There is a huge asymmetry of who has access, but there's also an asymmetry on who understands where is the access and why this is happening.

Part of me being a teacher is also about creating a setup where students can subjectivate themselves in relation to the process of studying, their future professions, the process of knowledge production, to get out of this idea that things exist because they exist. To address the issues is really important.

XPUB Thank you!

This interview has been edited for content.

THE LIBRARY IS OPEN

ACTIVITY ONE



↑ FIGURE 01 Here goes with text

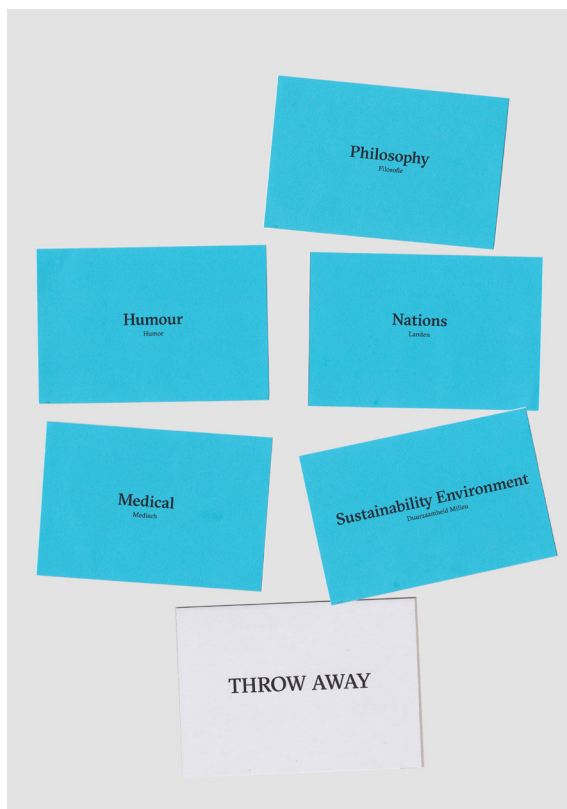
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LIBRARIAN'S CHOICE



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↓ FIGURE 02 Here goes with text.







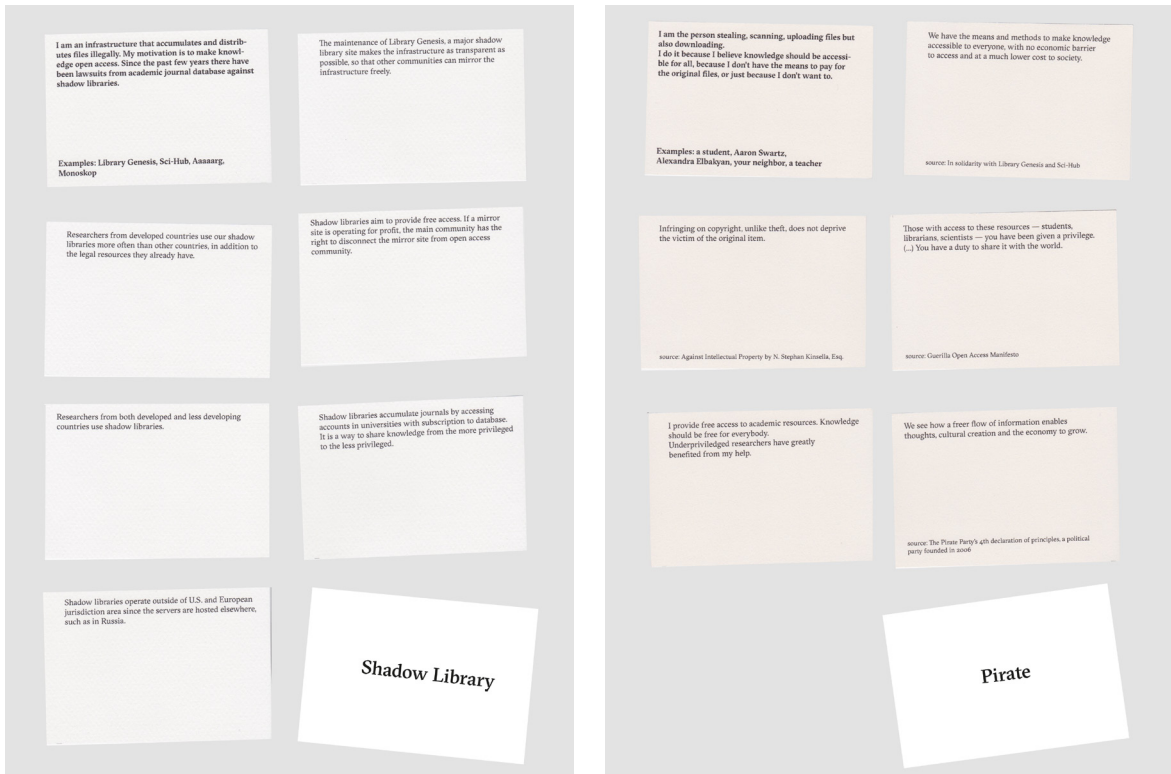
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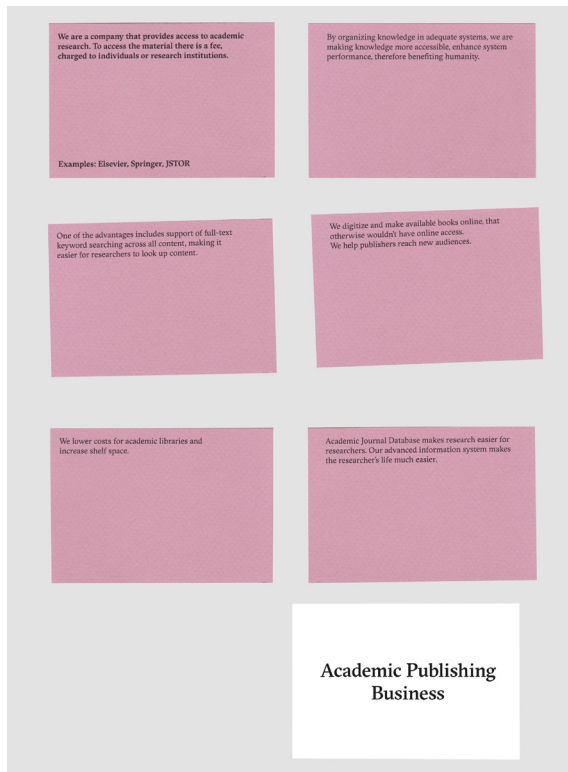
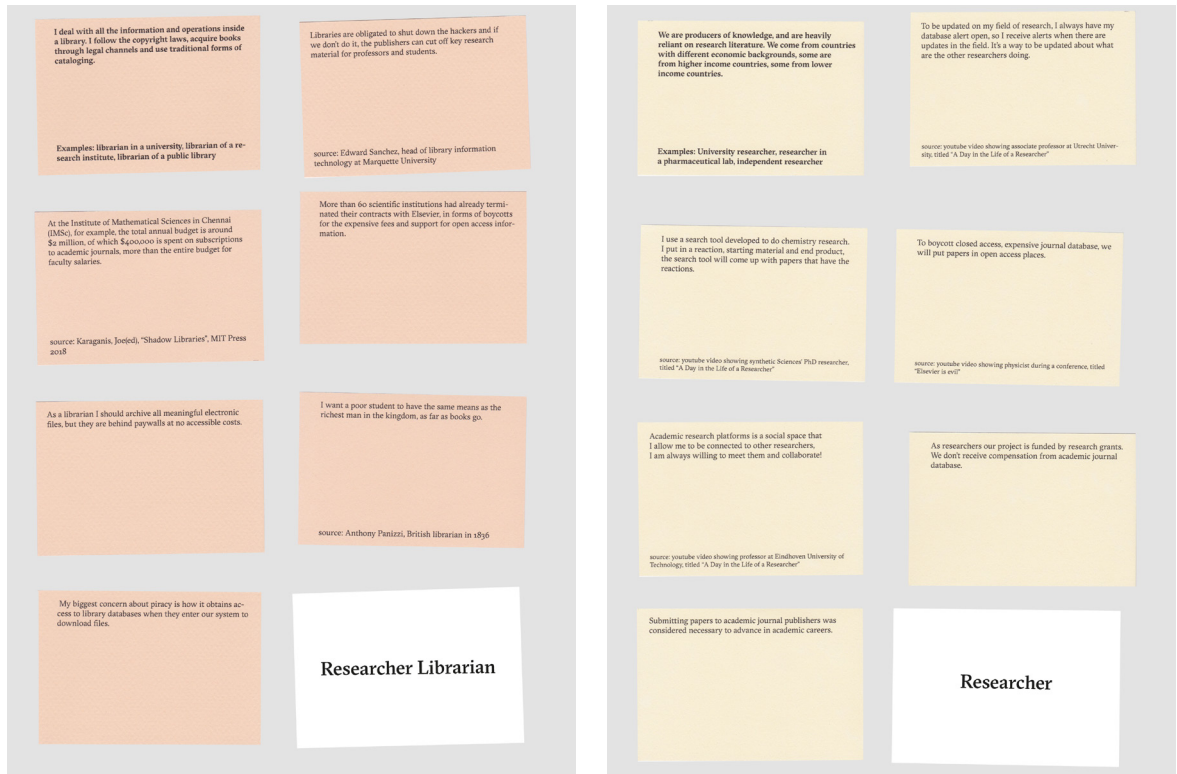


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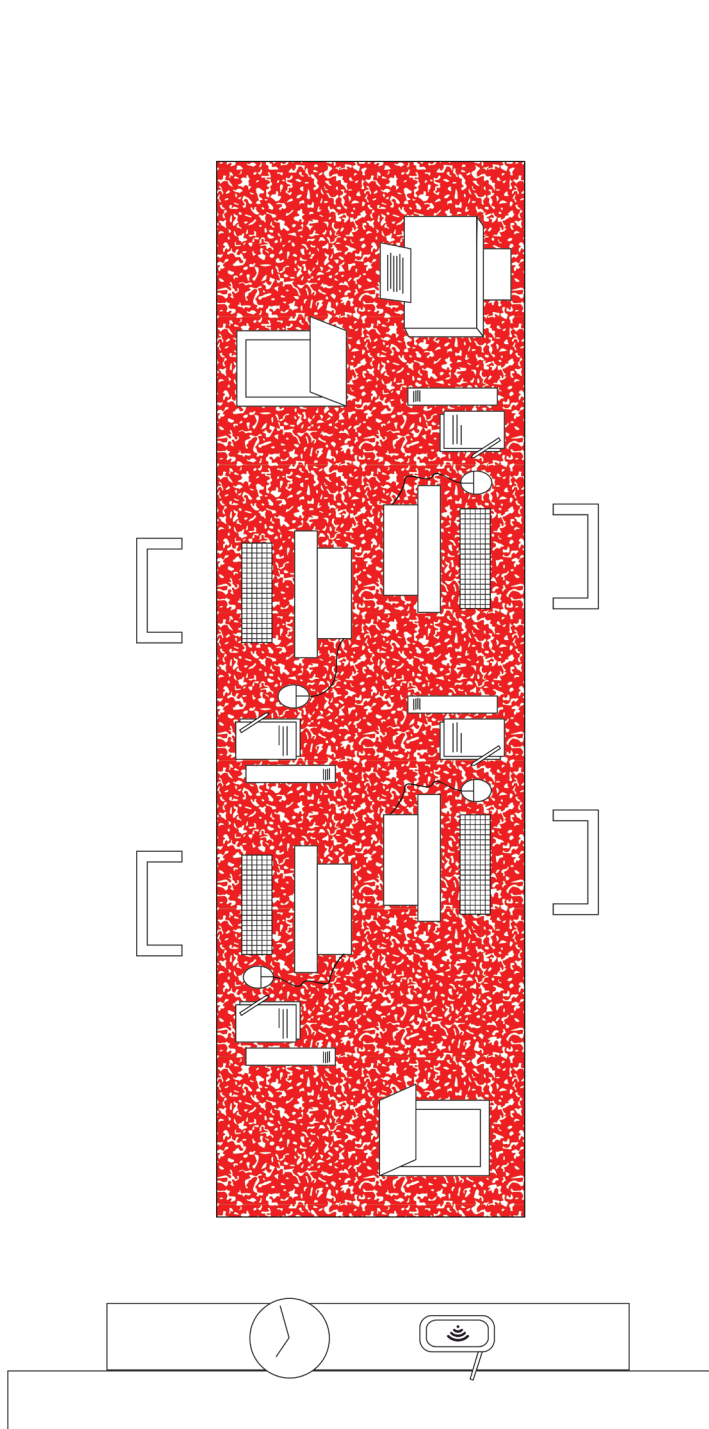
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THE LIBRARY IS OPEN



Workshop: Blurry Boundaries

by Tancredi di Giovanni, Pedro Sá Couto and Bohye Woo



Select, annotate, analyze, scan, correct, digitize, print, read, transfer, erase, encode, curate, hack, interface, work, copy...

What libraries become possible when you transform physical books into digital files, and vice versa? When a digital copy of a book is made for a digital library specific steps are followed. Each of these steps requires a decision – to use tools and to spend time. The work involved in digitizing a book is invisible and the digital version often loses its connection to the physical book and the library it came from.

We aimed to reflect upon different topics such as:

the friction between the physical and digital book, what is lost and what is gained when you pass from one format to another.

the physicality and contingency of these passages, the labor involved to produce those copies and its hidden position.

the mindset of the librarian who has to choose how to produce the digital library, which format to chose and what kind of information to reveal.

the possibility of a digital library which provides the history of the book and the people involved in its life.

annotations which reveal information and challenge the common, static idea of the book.

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Each participant is assigned to a computer with a downloaded folder for the workshop and all the tools needed already installed. During a short introduction where we will be explaining the aim of the workshop and the steps to follow when producing a digital book, the participants are provided with 3 different papers:

A purple sheet (image 01), with all the steps that she/he will be following and a detailed explanation of each. This will create a sense of independence in the participants making them follow their own workflow.

A form to be filled in during each step (image 02), with the requested information, such as notes and the starting time of each process, meant to document the duration of each task.

A chart (image 03) used by eBay to rate used books, this will work as a common ground while evaluating the physical condition of their chosen book.

After the explanation, the workshop starts and participants are encouraged to individually go through all the tasks in the available time.

In the last step, all the outcomes are collected in a common space. We have created a self-hosted website shared in LAN, allowing participants to upload their work.

At the end of the workshop, we gather again to reflect and share individual experiences.

Organization: Individual

Materials:

Individually: A computer, a mouse, a keyboard, and a screen.

For the group: two scanners, one printer, a small scale, a clock that counts back (image 04), bells, pens, a Raspberry Pi, and a Router.

Dependencies:

Mac — brew install tesseract-ocr pdfsandwich rename make pdftk git

Linux — sudo apt-get install tesseract-ocr pdfsandwich rename make pdftk git
simple-scan libsane libsane-extras sane-utils
sudo snap install pdftk

1. Choose a book

To begin the workshop we ask everyone to choose a book from the Leeszaal collection and write down its basic information. (The book size should fit the available scanner.)

2. Condition Report

The second step consists in the analysis of the physical condition of the book.

There is a scale to check the weight of the book. In the end, it can be compared with the size of the final digital file.

Use the previously provided chart follow its specifications to rate your book.

Write down the physical book characteristics, the condition of the book and the visible traces that may be found on it. On the purple sheet in this section, there is a list of particular marks that you could find on your book. Such as water-mark, marginalia, underline, highlight, strikethrough, circle, line, doodle, added contents, damages, folded corners, water wrinkling, stain, squiggle, and more...

Why? It is important to acknowledge what was the physical condition of the book before it turns into a digital file. Keeping the memory of the physical book (its condition / where it was placed / where it comes from / ...) is a way to reveal what otherwise is lost in the digital translation of a physical library.

3. Scan

Here starts the digitalization of the book. Choose one page or one chapter, depending on the available time and scan it.

This process will transform your pages into .jpg images to be saved in the workshop_folder on your desktop.

To run the scanner click on the 'scan.sh' icon in the folder.

4. Page Correction

Use Pinta or Gimp to correct your images. Turn them in their original orientation, crop them, resize them or delete unwanted marks that might come with the recently digitized file.

Why? This will help to perform our next step and maintain a good level of readability. It is important to understand how all the processes are connected, even considering how small they might look.

5. OCR-ing

This step consists in translating an image into text. This process can be done manually but actually, there are different software called OCR (optical character recognition) to perform this task programmatically. For this workshop, we will use Tesseract which recognizes the characters in the image and creates a searchable pdf where the text is selectable.

To run it use 'ocr.sh' which automatically will use the images corrected before.

Why? A digital library is built with different formats and approaches. Different types of outputs may live together, as pdfs, epub, etc.

6. Proof-reading

Open the searchable pdf with a pdf reader and with LibreOffice, delete the image and compare the text from the OCR output and its original source. How is the text different from each other?

Save the text from the OCR output in pdf.

Why? The OCR process is not perfect and usually needs to be corrected. We don't aim to complete this step by correcting all the errors but we want to raise awareness that this is done in the background and it is a very time-consuming process.

7. Append your metadata

Arrived at this step the form is complete and ready to be scanned and appended to the final pdf. Once it is inserted in the digital book, it performs the role of metadata, a set of data that describes and gives information about other data.

To complete this task use the provided scanner to produce a pdf from your form and add it to the workshop_folder in your desktop.

Why? By compiling the form you were documenting the work, usually hidden, needed to produce digital copies of physical books. The act of revealing that information is a way to maintain the historical memory of the book but also to reveal the contingency of digitization, an act made by people who spend time in performing several tasks.

8. Compile the pdf

Your final pdf is almost done, at this point, you'll have three pdfs in your folder:

the pdf produced by the OCR

the pdf with the text of the OCR output

the pdf of the hidden labor's form

Run the 'merge_files.sh' in your folder and automatically it will merge your pdfs in a single pdf. Rename it and pass to the last step.

9. Upload to the digital library

Finally, your file is ready, upload your digital book on our digital library by following the bookmark on the browser.

Congratulations! You have done a great (hidden) job!!

Why? By collecting all the individual works together, we will be able to produce a digital library specific to the workshop and a group collection that can be directly printed and made public.

Wrap-up

The wrap-up consist in saving the last minutes of the workshop as a moment to reflect on the whole experience, by sharing thoughts, printed copies, experiences, and shortcuts.

The weaknesses of some of the steps and the different strategies used to complete the tasks are discussed showing a variety of approaches and interests.

In the end, comparing the time spent on the tasks, with the final outcome in your hand, raise the understanding of the hidden labor behind the digitization of physical books as something directly experienced.

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Colophon

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