Writing for Publics, Designing for Platforms: Complexity and Fluency in Service of Accessibility

Kimon Keramidas
New York University

Abstract

Background: Academic work continues to be dominated by the design schema of codex-based forms of scholarly communication, the academic monograph, journal, and research paper.

Analysis: This article argues that the rise of the digital medium provides us with a chance to defamiliarize these traditional modes to develop more accessible publications through new uses of both digital and non-digital platforms. The appropriate integration of digital platforms in concert with physical displays and traditional texts is exemplified by work done on two exhibitions at the Bard Graduate Center.

Conclusion and implications: Applying a sense of design acuity that thoughtfully develops engaging interactions across a number of different media platforms allows for the creative development of projects that integrate accessible knowledge production with intellectual rigour.

Keywords: Design; Digital platforms; Public intellectual; Interface; Exhibition; Digital humanities; Scholarly communication

Kimon Keramidas is Associate Director and Clinical Assistant Professor of Digital Humanities in the John W. Draper Interdisciplinary Master's Program in Humanities and Social Thought at New York University, 14 University Place, New York, NY 10003. Email: kimon .keramidas@nyu.edu .

Beginning with defamiliarization

In his 1917 essay "Art as Technique," literary critic Viktor Shklovsky (1965) wrote, "after we see an object several times, we begin to recognize it. The object is in front of us and we know about it, but we do not see it – hence we cannot say anything significant about it" (p. 779). Such a sense of familiarity developed what Shklovsky called an "automatism of perception," and he described how Leo Tolstoy for one was able to place a reader outside of this sphere. "Tolstoy makes the familiar seem strange by not naming the familiar object. He describes an object as if he were seeing it for the first time, an event as if it were happening for the first time" (p. 779). Shklovsky's essay gave rise to the term "defamiliarization," which for Shklovsky was the core experience of art, allowing us to separate ourselves from the automatism of daily life and see things as different and in clearer detail.

Defamiliarization is a powerful tool in the digital age in that it allows us to identify the stagnant qualities of older media and discern which features of those media are due to their specific affordances, and which are accretions of practice made to seem inherent due to time and behavioural inertia. Through the process of time and formalistic stagnation, we have developed the kind of "automatism of perception" that Shklovsky warns of when it comes to modes of intellectual work. This automatism has led to an implicit sacralization of books and book design practice in the production and assessment of scholarship. As a result, a small set of information delivery formats have come to shape the process of academic work, often stifling the possible range of discourse.

Such automatism is concerning as it has a wide range of impacts on academic experience, beginning with the earliest stages of teaching and learning and reaching all the way to determining tenure and promotion for junior and senior faculty. In the case of student work, the traditional printed research paper, with preferred parameters for margins, font size, page length, and image embedding, constricts creativity and prevents students from finding alternative formats to express intellectual narrative. The format of the traditional academic journal provides even less possibility for an author to provide input on how one's scholarship is designed and experienced. Submissions are most often made electronically as Microsoft Word documents, and journal editors then process that information into a predetermined print format that the author has little to no control over. Depending on the publisher, monographs may provide some small amount of creative input from the author, but if one does even a quick survey of scholarly works there is clearly an orthodoxy of design practice. Presses are usually unwilling to take on the risk and expense of designing reading experiences outside of traditional paradigms, as they add to the cost of an already economically unsustainable publishing process. In this way the dominance of the codex has familiarized stylistic, formal, and economic practices. These practices have fed back into our profession, as scholars are both implicitly and explicitly discouraged from innovative practices of expression by an academic field that generally devalues creative work, considering it a distraction from serious scholarship.

Furthermore, this rigidification of publishing has funnelled scholarly work into isolated formats that feel impenetrable to broader publics, and have contributed to the distancing of the academic intellectual from public discourse. This distancing may not

have been as noticeable when books and magazines were the major publishing formats, because during that time the likeness of scholarly work to more widespread materials at least shared shape and structure. The digital age, however, has defamiliarized the design impact of traditional print media on our work, as non-academic publishing endeavours have been forced to move online rapidly and change their design to match the new reading practices of their audiences. The end result of these changes has been a gap between the manner in which public audiences consume knowledge through media, and the publication and knowledge production practices of the majority of the academic world.

However, we are in a cultural moment where affordances to close this gap are at our disposal. The digital medium[1] provides us with seemingly infinite design and interaction possibilities by which to reconceive the way we produce scholarship and participate in public discourse and scholarly communication. Working within these new frameworks, our work can retain its rigour, complexity, and deep intellectual thought, while becoming more accessible to a public increasingly acclimated to shorter segments of prose, non-linear reading practices, networked texts, and cross-platform experiences.

This article discusses two projects developed at the Bard Graduate Center (BGC) that integrated student coursework and faculty research with professional design and curation practice to develop texts, digital interactives, and physical exhibitions that engaged public audiences while maintaining a high level of intellectual rigour. This comprehensive approach enhanced traditional processes of scholarship by combining academic work with a sense of design acuity and fluency of how different platforms – both digital and not – can be deployed to entice non-scholarly audiences to enjoy rich intellectual projects.

Back to publishing as making public

To think about how best to take advantage of the affordances of the digital medium, it is important to think about what the original intentions were behind creating the monograph, journal, and research paper, and what it really should mean to publish something. The *Oxford English Dictionary's* (2015) primary definition for the word "publish" is simply "to make public." The first two subsections of the definition are about general or specific (such as wedding) announcements and declarations, and it is not until the third subsection that the definition includes, "To prepare and issue copies of (a book, newspaper, piece of music, etc.) for distribution or sale to the public." Despite this definition and the history of the word, it would be hard to argue that people use the word publish in the sense of making public in general parlance. In academic circles when we say, "to publish," we usually mean the preparation and issuance of copies, particularly within a "publish or perish"[2] system that weighs more heavily on the daily fortunes of academics than the potential rewards of reaching out to any kind of public.[3]

Nevertheless, we have an opportunity to recapture this grander sensibility of publishing, which predates both the academy and printing press, and use it as a motivator to consider the real and imagined limitations in the production and

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dissemination of scholarship. Political economist of media Nicholas Garnham (1979) has noted that informational goods, such as academic scholarship, are not consumed or destroyed by their use and are therefore very difficult to ascribe exchange value to. Artificial barriers, such as copyright, box office mechanisms, and planned obsolescence, have been developed by creators of information goods to counter this feature of cultural consumption. These barriers allow for the limitation of access to and collection of rents on material instances of information goods, in the process commodifying them and entering them into the flow of cultural and economic capital in a more controlled way.

While these approaches to the commodification of information goods have long been a part of academic publishing, there has recently been an escalation of these limitations into unsustainable economic models in the form of journal subscriptions fees that are prohibitive to even large research libraries and increasingly high-priced monographs. These conditions have led to a developing sense of crisis in scholarly publishing as texts begin to reach smaller audiences, are printed in smaller batches, and are available in libraries inaccessible to most (Fitzpatrick, 2009). So, while we may have come to value the academic journal and scholarly monograph for their traditional physical format, their very codex-ness and the attendant barriers to access that their materiality generates have become inherently problematic.

Furthermore, the codex's role as the delimiter of the exchange of scholarship as an information good has reified the academic system of prestige and meritocracy into a material format and design structure. Tenure and promotion remain tied closely to the production of these types of information goods, both implicitly and explicitly prioritizing communication with small scholarly audiences with access to these materials over contribution to broader public conversations. This process has placed artificial limitations on the spectrum of potential scholarly output and created a false dichotomy between the public consumption of knowledge and acceptable scholarly publication. We can see a counter-reaction to this trend in the creation of programs in the public humanities and public history, which have been specifically designed to counter traditional disciplinary behaviours that are inherently, and often proudly, not public.

It is therefore not surprising that these public humanities and history departments tend to be more active in the digital front. Digital platforms provide us with an opportunity to rethink the motivation and limitations behind the structures of academic publishing and prestige and consider how those structures limit the openness and potential audiences for our work. Because the digital medium allows us to share our work more easily, develop interactivity, and create more social experiences, it not only shows the experiential limitations of the codex as a medium but actively defamiliarizes the artificial structures that have been reified by the codex. For instance, Tim Berners-Lee (2010), in an article restating the importance of the World Wide Web to contemporary society, reiterated the fundamental importance of universality, decentralization, and openness in the design of the Web. In contrast, most scholarly work has too often been aimed insularly and ascribed value in part due to its adherence to restrictive formal specificities, effectively closing it off for the sole benefit of small communities of readers.

This is far from the mandate laid forth by Berners-Lee in engineering the World Wide Web, and against prevailing trends in contemporary information transaction.

This is not to say that there have not been important digital initiatives in academia. The journals *Kairos* (1996-2016) and *Vectors* (2005-2013) (before it stopped publication) set the standard for the publishing of digital academic works, regularly publishing bespoke projects that use a variety of technologies despite the often infuriating cycle of innovation and obsolescence that makes it difficult to keep digital work functioning. The City University of New York (CUNY) Academic Commons (2009-2016) has shown that it is possible to create large-scale institutional platforms that facilitate online community building and creative digital expression for academics while using readily available open source software (Wordpress). The Public Knowledge Project (PKP) (1998-2016) has developed open source software packages for the development and management of digital journals, monograph, and conferences, lowering the barrier of entry to digital publication and hastening the transition from the paper and glue of the codex to the bits and electrons of the digital medium. Perhaps just as important as these initiatives have been the efforts to highlight and rectify the bias against digital scholarship. A growing number of academic associations, including the Modern Language Association (MLA) and American Historical Association (AHA), have responded to the call of a growing chorus of authors documenting, critiquing, and questioning problems in the standards of evaluation of digital scholarship (e.g., Cheverie, 2009; Cohen, 2010; Cross, 2008; Odell, 2016; Richardson, 2013; Takats 2013) by publishing guidelines for the evaluation of digital publication. These guidelines will hopefully begin to expand the notion of what does and does not qualify as scholarship in disciplines and departments that remain wedded to codex-based scholarship as the sole determiner of academic merit.

Nevertheless, many digital academic projects remain within the scope of more traditional scholarly communication. *Kairos*, *Vectors*, and PKP's platforms champion digital work, but still operate within the historical framework and value hierarchy that have been shaped by the physical monograph or journal, and accordingly are focused on scholarly audiences. The CUNY Academic Commons and MLA (2012) and AHA (2015) guidelines reshape the notion of academic communities and standards, but nevertheless are focused specifically on refining scholars' experience of the digital. It is time to reconsider what it is we wish to achieve with our scholarship. We must think about how both new and old media can play a role in broadening our sense of what it means to publish, and create intellectual structures and designed experiences that engage larger audiences. Digital media are not the answer to all the problems of contemporary publication (for instance they still require significant labour and costs), but their newness and flexibility, their unfamiliarity, can help us to think more deeply about our process and product.

Multiple literacies, multiple platforms, larger audiences

The following two projects respond to the defamiliarizing impulse of digital media and exemplify ways to reach out to the public with academic work. Each project is a creative and intellectual experiment that departs from traditional formats, utilizing the interactive, non-linearity of digital media along with creative uses of physical space,

and even thoughtful uses of the codex, to inspire challenges to expected modes of academic presentation. The two projects, *Visualizing 19th-Century New York* (Bard Graduate Center, 2014) and *The Interface Experience: Forty Years of Personal Computing* (Bard Graduate Center, 2015), were both part of the Bard Graduate Center's (BGC) Focus Gallery Project, an experimental program that allows faculty to consider space as a viable platform for academic work and encourages literacy in exhibition creation alongside traditional written expression. Focus Gallery projects are tied into the BGC's graduate student curriculum and along with involving students heavily in the process, utilize the institute's professional design and curatorial staff.

Exhibition space accessible to the general public quickly expands the audience for Focus Gallery projects and raises a host of new challenges for academics. While space provides a bountiful set of affordances for new forms of narrative and creative expression, it also poses challenging limitations, such as the word length of wall chats and item labels. These force academics used to the long formats of academic publishing to think in new ways about the way they write and how different people may read different kinds of writing. These are valuable lessons that defamiliarize and inform the way we write in more traditional formats.

The Focus Gallery format and the introduction of space into the process of research and scholarship also provide a platform for developing creative ways of integrating digital media. Much in the manner that the physical space defamiliarized and altered approaches to text, the experientiality of exhibitions raises questions as to how to best incorporate those interfaces we have become familiar with in our desktop and mobile worlds into a space rich with material and textual accompaniments that is designed to be navigated non-linearly. Both of the projects took that challenge head on with the hope of utilizing the awareness of design principles and the affordances of the three different platforms for discourse on hand – space, texts, and digital interactives – to increase the accessibility of the academic work on display.

Visualizing 19th-Century New York

The *Visualizing 19th-Century New York* project argued that as New York City flourished in the nineteenth century, swelling in population and becoming increasingly urbanized, cultural entrepreneurs were able to both profit from and shape the perception of the growing city through the use of different visual media technologies. The resulting imagery not only shaped national and international perception of the city but also became regular features in bourgeois households that defined the styles of the time. The exhibition put a wide variety of prints and print technologies on display in order to show the connections between the visual media and the material processes that were behind the work of entrepreneurs such as Nathaniel Currier and James Merritt Ives, Matthew Brady, Edward Anthony, and the Harper Brothers (Bard Graduate Center, 2014).

Because most of these entrepreneurs operated along Broadway, it quickly became clear that the publication of the project research was best served by spatial interactivity and non-linear navigation, two methods particularly well suited to digital media. The decision was made to forgo the traditional catalogue that would typically accompany such an exhibition and develop a fully digital publication that would function both
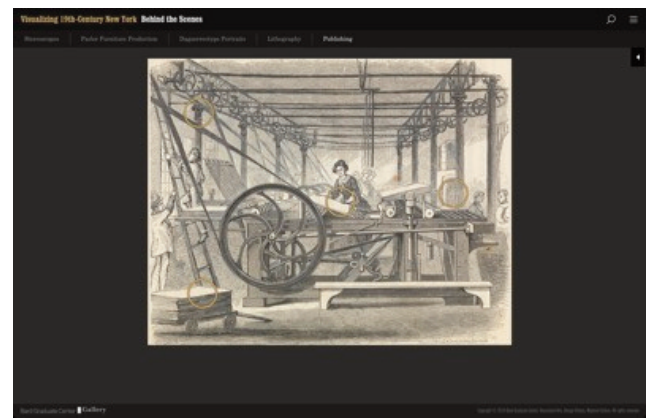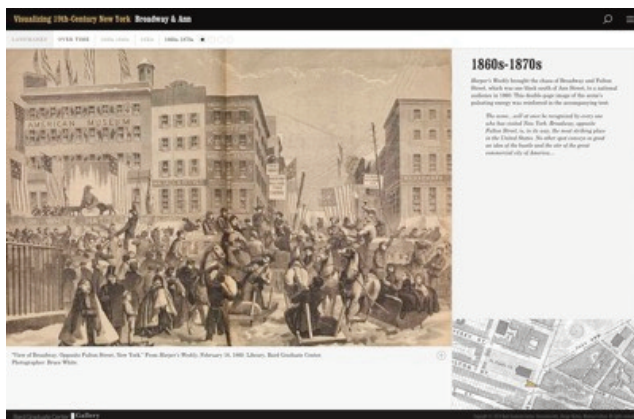
online and in the exhibition space in the form of custom-designed interactive experiences. The main portion of the publication consisted of a period map of Manhattan that used different markers to signify links to essays and objects as well as important landmarks (see Figure 1 and Figure 2). Essays, which were written by students and curated and edited by Professor David Jaffee, could be sorted by time and theme and emphasized historical information alongside significant visual elements. In a nod toward traditional accessibility of texts, each essay was also available as a PDF in a state that would be more familiar to readers of traditional academic texts.

Figures 1 and 2: Screenshots of the map and essay portions of the *Visualizing 19th-Century New York* digital publication.
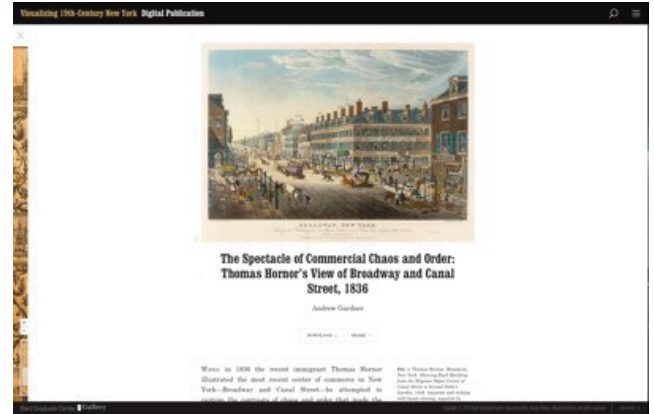
To accompany this map and collection of essays, two subsections were developed that expanded on the story. The first was a section that used images made of the intersection of Broadway and Ann streets as exemplars of the variety of types of images that were produced in 19th-century New York by the entrepreneurs in question (see Figure 3 and Figure 4). This section used the geolocation of the place the image would have been created from, descriptive captions and texts, and hotspots to tell the story of the intersection both via important landmarks and over time. The second subsection considered what happened behind the scenes in order to make different types of visualizations of New York, such as stereoscopes, lithographs, and daguerreotypes.

Figures 3 and 4: Screenshots of the "Broadway and Ann" and "Behind the Scenes" portions of the *Visualizing 19th-Century New York* digital publication.

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Using hotspots, text, and supporting images, this section complicated the valorized stories of production told by many entrepreneurs with discussions of difficult working conditions and toxic materials.

Along with being available online in responsive designs, these two subsections became important parts of the exhibition display as digital interactives. A special version of each section was designed to function on 27-inch touchscreen monitors installed in the gallery within close proximity of the actual prints that were being digitally represented. In addition, a separate computer was available to gallery visitors on which they could navigate the map and essay portion of the digital publication. While the presence of actual materials close to the interactives and publication helped build connections between the objects in the exhibition and the digital materials, the publication was designed to exist on its own. In this way the exhibition in a sense acted as an enhancement to the digital publication rather than a necessity for the experience.

The positive end results of the digital-spatial-textual approach of this project were numerous. First of all, combining the restrictions of word length and readability in a gallery space with the specific challenges of word lengths in the digital medium forced the students, staff, and Professor Jaffee to think carefully about how to be precise in crafting all the different language that was being knit together across a variety of different media. Secondly, bringing the digital into conversation with the BGC's long history of exemplary exhibition design elevated the design discussions that occurred with regard to the digital publication and interactives. Rather than relying on ready-made platforms or themes and plugging the content in, students made prototypes of the digital portions of the project based on their time researching the materials.

These prototypes were then made available to the professional designers and developers who were brought in to work with the Focus Gallery team, students, and Professor Jaffee to ensure that the website and interactive designs matched the academic aspirations of the project. The Focus Gallery projects have always used professional developers and designers rather than students to create the final publications/interactives to emphasize the value of having highly skilled and specialized partners throughout a collaborative project of this scope. While the Focus Gallery projects encourage students and faculty to think of design and interactivity as an important part of their comprehensive understanding of the project, their skills lie in historical understanding and research. Therefore, professional designers and developers are brought in to communicate with the Focus Gallery team and then actualize the complex visual and technical execution of the project at a high level. The important final pedagogical move is to work with developers who are able to create superior digital experiences while keeping the DNA of the student and faculty work. A successful working relationship then has the dual result of both creating a harmony between intellectual and design concepts and keeping student and faculty morale and interest high as they see their work executed at a much higher level than they could have imagined.

One additional ancillary benefit to developing the publication digitally rather than as a codex is its expandability. The site was designed using a flexible Wordpress installation, so that more essays and subsections can be added as Professor Jaffee expands his

research and teaches more classes related to the topic. To that end, another Focus Gallery project related to the digital publication is already underway, and when it opens in the spring of 2017 a section on the short-lived Crystal Palace, which stood in New York from 1853-1858, will be added to the site.

But by far the most important benefit of doing this kind of work is being able to expand the reach of this kind of academic project. Because the digital publication is available on the Internet, free for all to view, it is much easier to find and access. The result is that a much larger audience has been able to come in contact with the work. The number of visitors who come to a Focus Gallery exhibition is usually limited, numbering in the hundreds over a four or five-month exhibition. This is due to the small space, limited advertising budget, and out-of-the way location of the BGC relative to other New York City cultural attractions. However, between the opening of the exhibition in September of 2014 and the closing in January of 2015, over 2,500 unique visitors looked at the digital publication, far exceeding the audience that visited the physical exhibition. Furthermore, because the BGC only publishes approximately four hundred copies of a typical Focus Gallery catalogue, there are limited durable artefacts after the exhibition. The digital publication however remains visible, continuing to expand its reach after closing. Through July of 2016 the website had served over 18,000 unique visitors, which is in all likelihood a larger number of viewers than would have ever viewed a small batch of printed catalogues.

The interface experience: Forty years of personal computing

Although it shared a similar approach to *Visualizing 19th-Century New York, The Interface Experience* displayed its objects and content across a very different array of analog and digital platforms. This exhibition included a collection of fully touchable objects, custom interactive digital experiences, and a media-rich Web application to present the history of personal computing as a platform from which people could critically consider their own use of computing devices. The exhibition aimed to put not just the objects of computing history, but the actual ephemeral experience of interface on display. The impetus behind this particular approach was to highlight the rapid ascendancy of new technologies in daily life and argue for a consideration of the experience of computing technologies that more carefully historicizes personal computer use, with the ultimate goal of engendering more self-awareness in our use of ubiquitous computing technology.

An important feature of the design of the exhibition was the general interactive nature of everything in the space. In order to counter the sacralization that is usually such an important part of museum experiences and allow visitors to relate more directly to the exhibition, all the devices on display were able to be touched. Visitors were provided an opportunity to not only think about the history of experiencing interfaces, but also tactilely engage with that history. This made the exhibition about sensual connections as much as historical and intellectual ones, and allowed the audience to engage with the resistance of an Atari 2600 joystick, the action on an IBM 5150 computer keyboard, the heft of an early Kindle, and the shape of a Motorola Star-Tac cellphone.

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To enhance this tactile aspect one step further, five devices – the Commodore 64, Macintosh Plus, Palm Pilot Professional, iPad 2, and Microsoft Kinect – ran custom software designed specifically for the exhibition. This software, scripted by students in Focus Gallery classes, created a short experience for museum visitors that encapsulated what was significant about each device as a marker in the development of personal computing interfaces. Typing on a Commodore or using a Macintosh's mouse or gesturing in front of a Kinect therefore became an experiential connection with the concepts and arguments of the project (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Exhibition layout of *The Interface Experience: Forty Years of Personal Experience* with a working Commodore 64 in foreground.

Photo: Bruce White

Figure 6: The landing page of *The Interface Experience's* Web application when visited outside of the gallery.
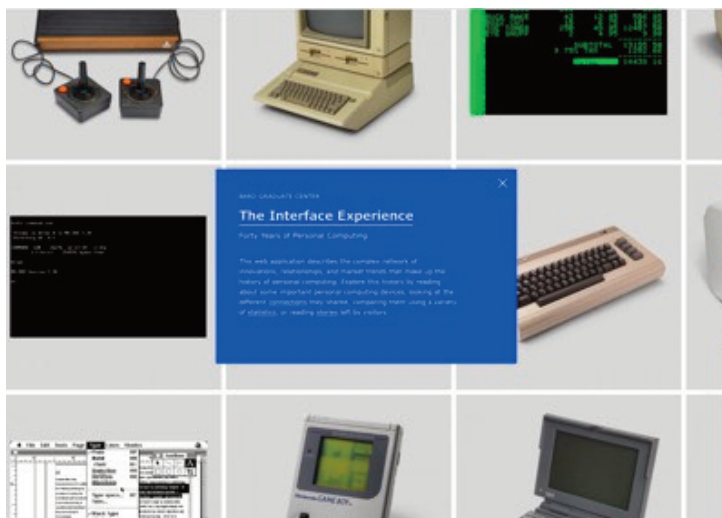
While the objects in the exhibition were accompanied by text in the form of wall labels and chats, these short panels could not fully convey the depth and complexity of information collected over the course of the project. In order to make available longer histories of each object, and make connections between objects through visuals, statistical data, and chronology, a Web application was developed as a companion to the physical experiences in the gallery. This application was developed both as a stand-alone site for perusal away from the exhibition and as a mobile accompaniment to the in-gallery experience. The site was able to respond to the user's location and provided a different experience if one was in the gallery. While navigation of the site outside of the gallery was accomplished through a grid of object images (as seen in Figure 6), in the gallery a numeric pad appeared on which visitors could enter numbers that corresponded to each object. The numeric pad allowed people to go to an object in the space, look up its information on their mobile device, link to another object through their mobile device, and then move across the room to see and interact with that object.

When using the Web application (Keramidas, 2015b), a visitor could view textual, image, and video materials that expanded the story for each object (see Figure 7). The responsive nature of the site to both location and device size made the Web application easy to navigate and the design of the interface allowed for a user-driven experience. There were many links made between the 37 objects and a wide variety of materials provided that enabled a myriad assortment of juxtapositions and connections. In addition, guests who visited the site either in the gallery or elsewhere were able

to leave their own stories about the objects in the exhibition or any other relevant objects they may have had strong personal connections to. This feature allowed the content on the site to expand even after opening and launch, and made the project more accessible by allowing people to participate in the very personal nature of the exhibit.

Along with the spatial and digital experiences developed for the exhibition, a printed catalogue, *The Interface Experience: A User's Guide* (Keramidas, 2015a), was published to provide historiographical, historical, and theoretical essays that support the intellectual argument behind the exhibition's curation and design. Designed to be part of a singular transmedia experience that included the exhibit and application, the book was considered to be an integral part of the experience of the exhibition, rather than outside it. In light of this relationship, the relatively restrictive design templates of a typical academic monograph or exhibition catalogue seemed ill fitting.

Since this catalogue was meant to guide users through the exhibition's concepts, we decided that it would be better to parallel the often oddly designed paper user guides that accompanied the devices in the exhibition and were themselves an important part of personal computing history. As Figure 8 shows, the book was spiral-bound, had tabs for easy navigation from section to section, and utilized idiosyncratic typography, underlining, and line drawings, all to capture the unusual quality of these texts. These ideas were motivated by the defamiliarizing experience of spending time looking at many different kinds of screens and graphical user interfaces that were represented in the exhibition. This experience made it clear that the typographical and design standards that usually define scholarly monographs and even exhibition catalogues were too restrictive for this project. Instead we made a choice to make a unique book that told a historical story in its design in a way that complemented and buttressed the arguments made within the text. Furthermore, the design was meant to be an attractor, something that would draw people to the book visually, and hopefully open up interest in the intellectual theories and histories within to larger audiences looking for enjoyable, compelling, and accessible texts.

Figure 7: An example of the top of an object page from *The Interface Experience's* Web application when visited outside of the gallery.

Figure 8: Title page of *The Interface Experience: A User's Guide* showing serial binding, tabs, and typography choices.

Photo: Bruce White

In the end, the goal of *The Interface Experience* was to highlight both how much these new technologies have changed the way we access and think about information and emphasize

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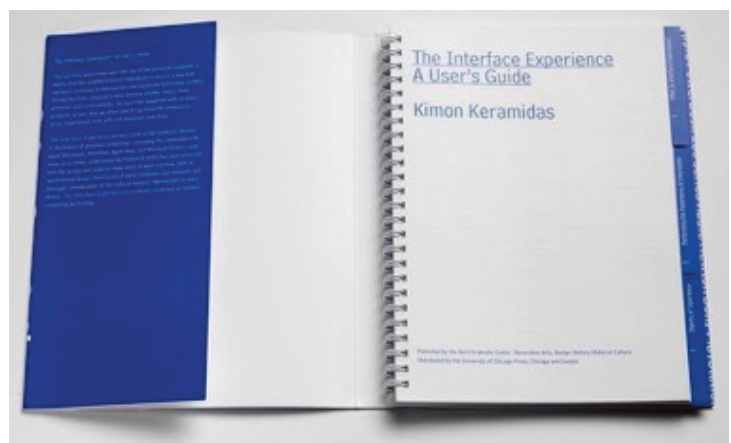
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how little we think about that fact in our daily use of those technologies. Although the topic of the project was not as visible as some that are currently at the centre of public conversation, such as social justice and income equality, it did engage with the means by which we have become accustomed to participating with those debates and consuming culture more generally. It is for this reason that making the project more accessible to a broader public by defamiliarizing the gallery experience, engaging with the open platform of the World Wide Web, and creating a text that was welcoming, familiar, and idiosyncratic, rather than cold and distant, was so important. As the project was developed to bring a historical and intellectual argument to the public through a variety of media, it was done in a way that allowed visitors, users, and readers to control their experience of the materials and perhaps even contribute to the project in some small way.

Although the BGC does not do detailed surveys of visitor experience, anecdotal reflection on attendance by docents and gallery attendants revealed that the exhibition brought a younger audience and families who were drawn to the subject matter and appeal of the interactivity of the exhibition. Visitation of the digital features of *The Interface Experience* were initially higher than *Visualizing 19th-Century New York*, as there were over 4,300 unique visitors to the Web application while the exhibition was open between April and July of 2015. But visitation has not stayed as consistently high, with just over 9,200 total visitors by July of 2016. While capturing the comprehensive success of a project such as this is difficult to do with Web metrics and gallery visitation statistics, the public appeal of the exhibition was apparent in the press coverage that *The Interface Experience* received. Popular technology websites *CNET*, *Ars Technica*, and *Engadget* all did reviews of the exhibition, with *Engadget* (2015) showing particular interest in the exhibition by running a total of three separate articles, and producing a four-minute video and forty-image gallery solely about the show. The creative customization work put into the development of *The Interface Experience: A User's Guide* also gained recognition when the book received an Innovation in Print Design award in the American Alliance of Museums annual Museum Publications Design Competition (2016).

Perhaps the most positive measure of the success of the projects came in the form of a blog post by digital media and museums specialist Barry Joseph (2015), associate director of digital media learning at the American Museum of Natural History. In the post, Joseph took particular note of the integration of the digital, textual, and spatial features stating that:

> [T]he guide, the exhibit, and the two versions of the web site stood on their own. At the same time, each enhanced the others. Together they serve as a beautiful example of how museums can design experiences around a shared concept that leverage collections within a Hall and through digital and print media that can be explored before, during, and after a museum visit.

This post provides one of those rare instances where the goal and intention of an intellectual structure is realized, reflected upon, and recorded for posterity by someone who is not directly related to the project. That Joseph's interpretation and recollection so nearly match the explicit intention of the Focus Gallery team for *Interface Experience* validates this complex and rigorous, yet accessible and engaging approach to scholarship.

Conclusion

Projects such as *Visualizing Nineteenth-Century New York* and *The Interface Experience* necessitate a complex and collaborative structure that takes deliberate steps to coordinate exhibition, digital, and book design. Nevertheless, the end goal of making the work more accessible and understandable to a larger audience – all while retaining a high standard of intellectual rigour – makes for a valuable and compelling form of academic expression. These are elaborate examples that incorporate a wide variety of different media threaded together, but each project portion on its own shows the value of working to incorporate design and fluency in varying media platforms beyond the traditional monograph, journal article, and research paper.

Despite experimentations such as these, for the most part we remain beholden to the hegemony of the codex. The possibilities of digital publication have the potential to expose that hegemony and challenge those formats and conventions that have become very deeply ingrained in how we compose our scholarship. Although we have begun to use the digital medium for some forms of scholarly publication, we have really just begun to explore the myriad ways digital models allow for the capacity to develop argumentation visually and through interactive experiences. We should continue to push boundaries and find out how digital publication can help us to change not only how we compose scholarship but also how the hierarchies of academic institutions operate. At this moment when more students and scholars are working with digital media, we should not only accept these new modes within academic circles but also use them as a platform for reassessing our relationship to broader audiences and our engagement in important public discourse.

To this end, defamiliarization can act as powerful tool for placing our current approaches to publication and even our roles as public intellectuals within a larger sense of history. Theatre director and theorist Bertolt Brecht (1964), for one, championed defamiliarization as a way to empower audiences to become more keenly aware of their social circumstances and even rise up against oppression. Just as Brecht used the entertaining experience of theatre to frame complex arguments and argue for a new way of looking at the world, we can begin to think of how we can create new discursive experiences that not only increase the body of academic knowledge but embed our work in public discourse and engage publics looking for new forms of critical inquiry into the world around them. Henry Giroux (2006) boldly states that we are living during a time in which

> higher education faces a legitimation crisis—one that opens a political and theoretical space for educators to redefine the relationship between higher education, the public good, and democracy … It is the site where the promise of a better future emerges out of those visions and pedagogical practices that combine hope and moral responsibility as part of a broader emancipatory discourse. (p. 76)

Now is the time to rethink pedagogical and career fundamentals and create new norms of intellectual rigour, design acuity, and platform fluency that fluidly and thoughtfully incorporate a variety of media. In this way we can better equip our scholarship and profession for the important debates that are defining our twenty-first century, which

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we have a responsibility to be part of, and that demand we reach out to broader audiences as public intellectuals ready to engage with the world around us.

Notes

1. Janet Murray (2012) argues that, "all things made with electronic bits and computer code belong to a single new medium, the digital medium, with its own unique affordances" (p. 23).

2. Interestingly, definition 3e in the *OED* actually includes "to publish or perish: to publish scholarly work in order to avoid a loss of academic status, respect, or position.

3. A contrasting position to my view of publishing is that publication is more than simply the act of making public, but entails producing a public for that content (Maxwell, 2015; Stadtler, 2010). While there is value in that argument, it is in a sense the reverse view of my position, as the construction of a select community presupposes targeting toward a specific audience. This approach ultimately becomes self-limiting and in my opinion is more likely to reify traditional academic publishing structures by emphasizing small digital remediations of codex-like texts that may alter scholarly discourse but do not go beyond that. My argument is that the digital medium provides so much more complexity and potential for layered discourse, both in itself and in conjunction with other media experiences. Therefore, multiple audiences, both scholarly and not, can be attended to in the design of a publication, defamiliarizing not only the notion what a publication looks like, but also the false dichotomy of scholarly communication versus public discourse.

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