


*The Library is Open*  
Special Issue 09  
Piet Zwart institute

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Marginal Conversations  
Blurry Boundaries  
Knowledge in Action



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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, geopolitical 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, Library Genesis, aaaaarg, 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.

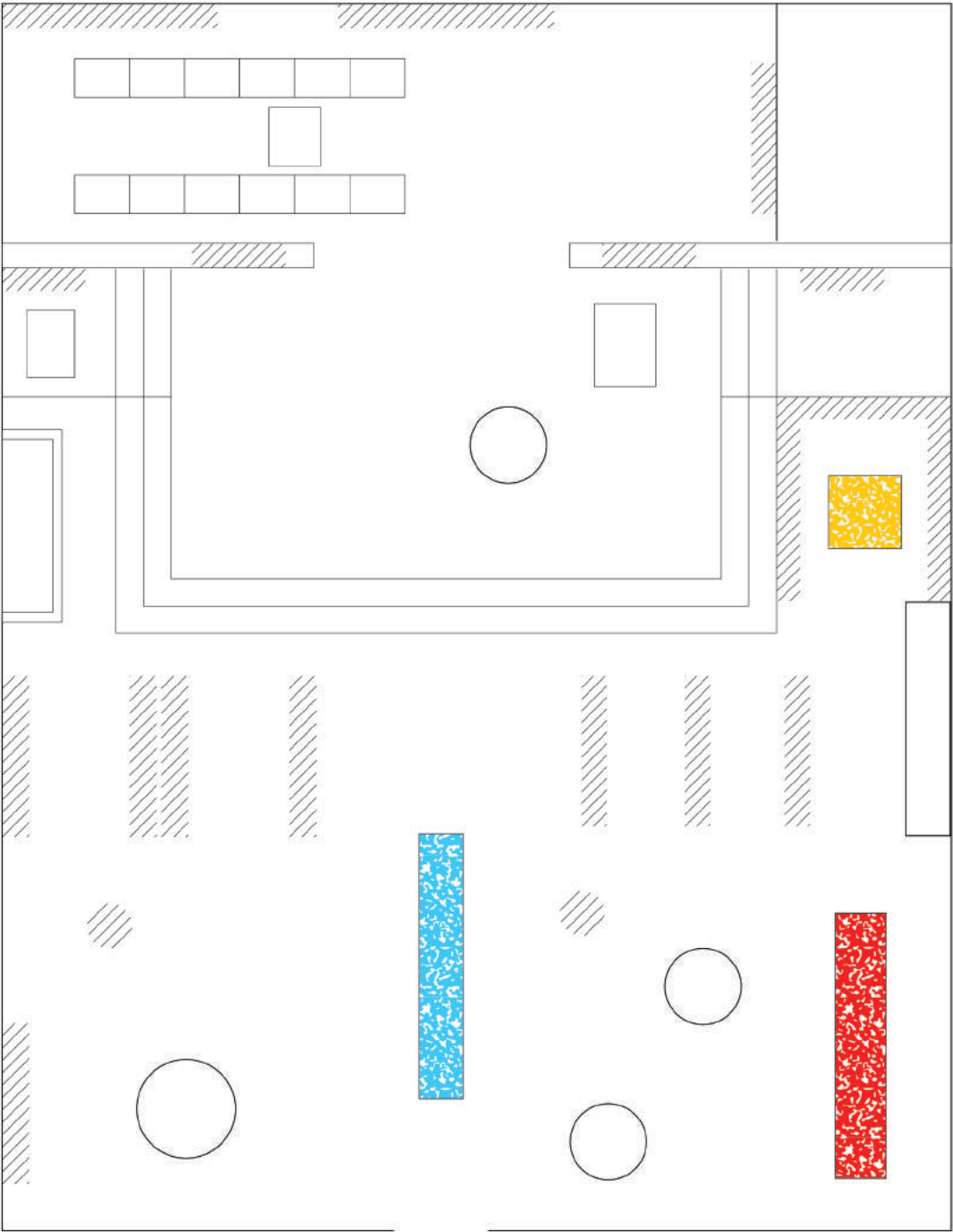
Blurry Boundaries reveals the hidden processes and labour between the publishing and distribution of physical and digital books. Interview with: Dušan Barok.

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

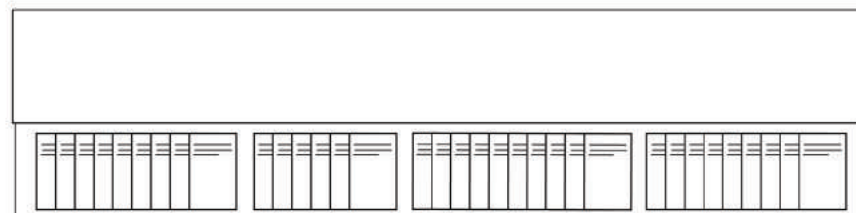


↑FIGURE 01 Workshops selection setup  
→FIGURE 02 Diagram of workshop location in Leeszaal



## 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.

## 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 &amp; 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, Ukrainian)

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” &amp; 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 &amp; recording

Organisations: All together

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

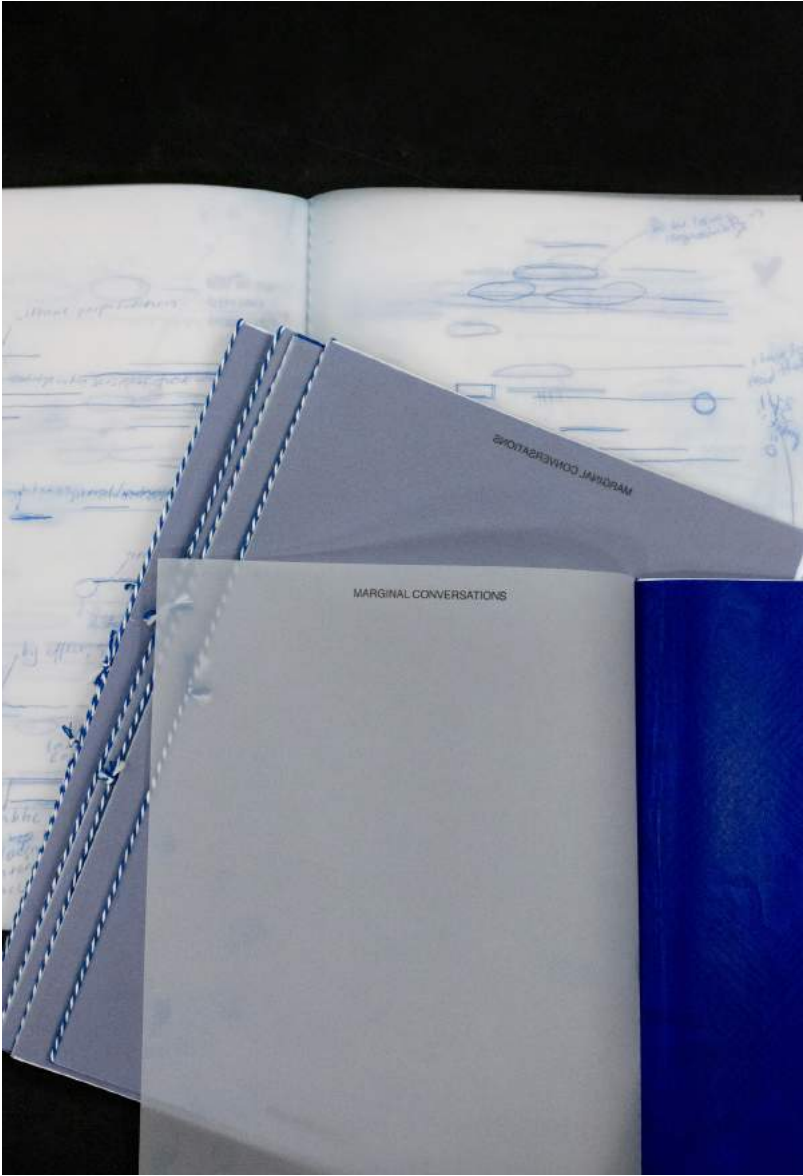
Steps:

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.

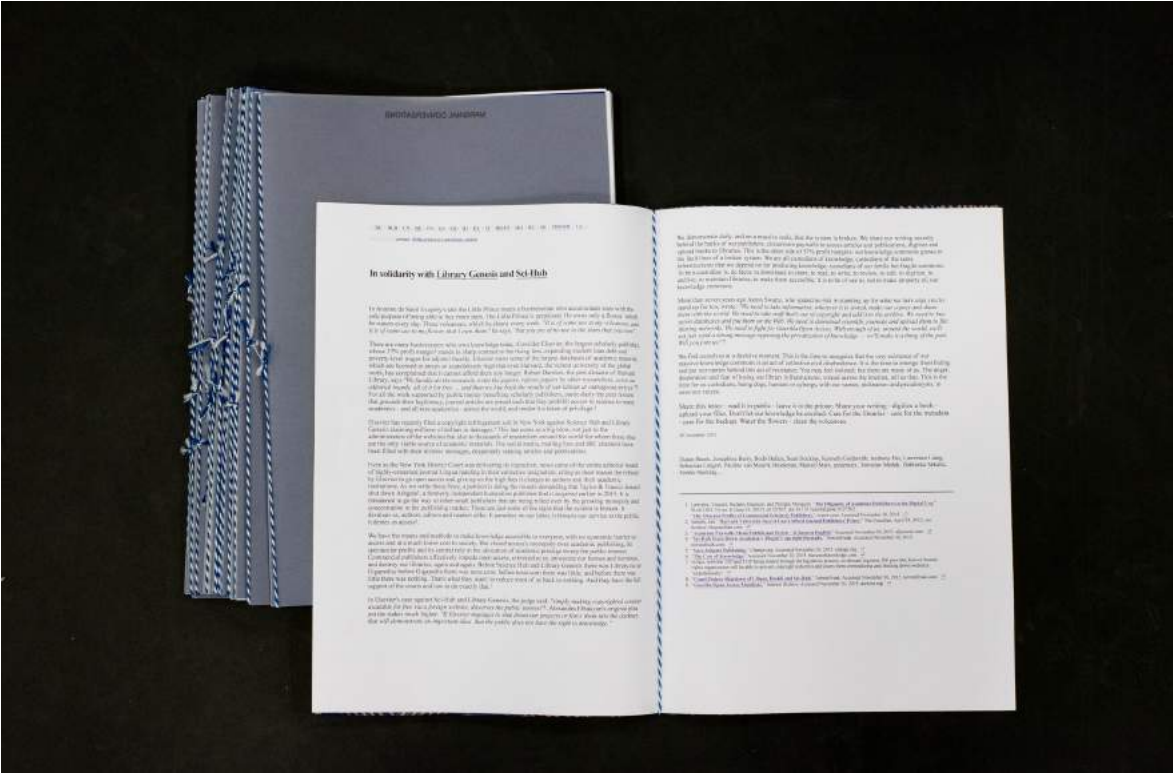
*Why record our performed annotations?*

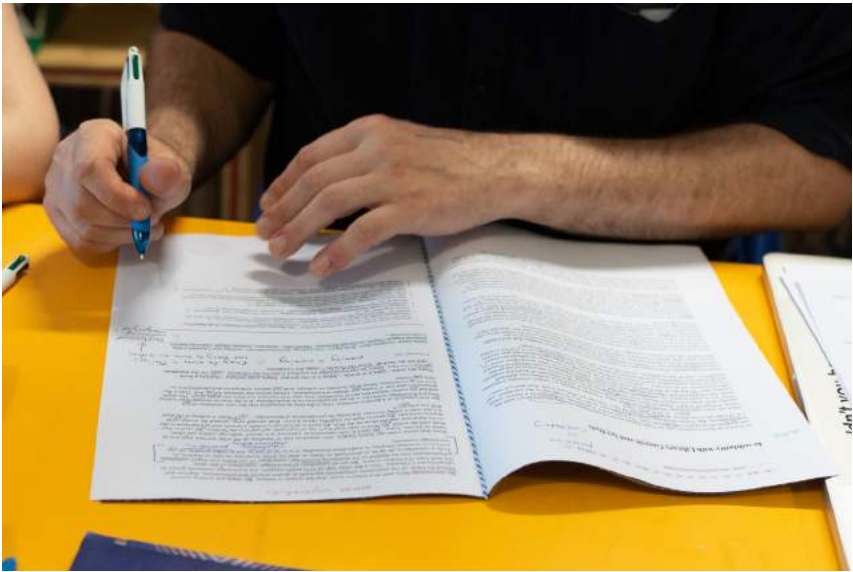
We perform the text and our annotations in ways that show our positions and understandings. When we have an annotation, we do or say something (e.g. interrupt, raise our hands, make a noise, use an accent, use intonation to convey emotion etc.

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.



↑FIGURE 01 Marginal Conversations annotation pack  
→FIGURE 02 “In Solidarity with Library Genesis and Sci-Hub” letter  
→FIGURE 03 Carbon paper layer





↑FIGURE 04 Part 1: Reading & annotating  
↑FIGURE 05 Part 2: Creating “heatmaps”  
→FIGURE 06 Part 2: Discussion through annotations

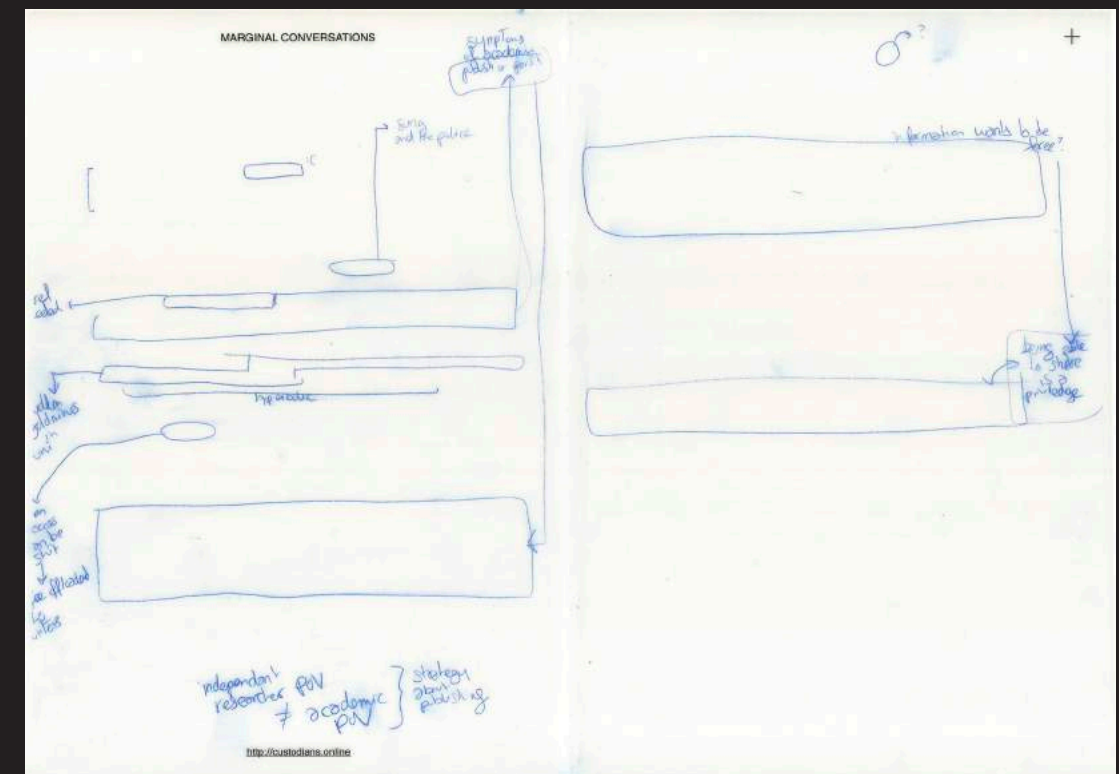
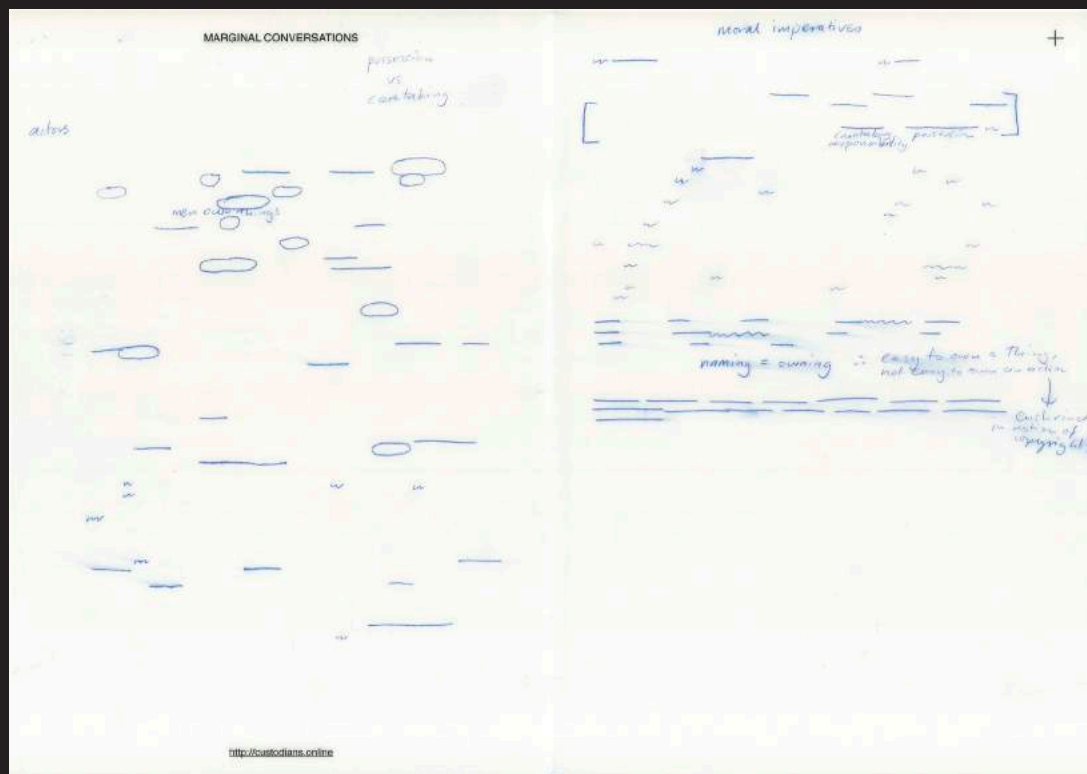
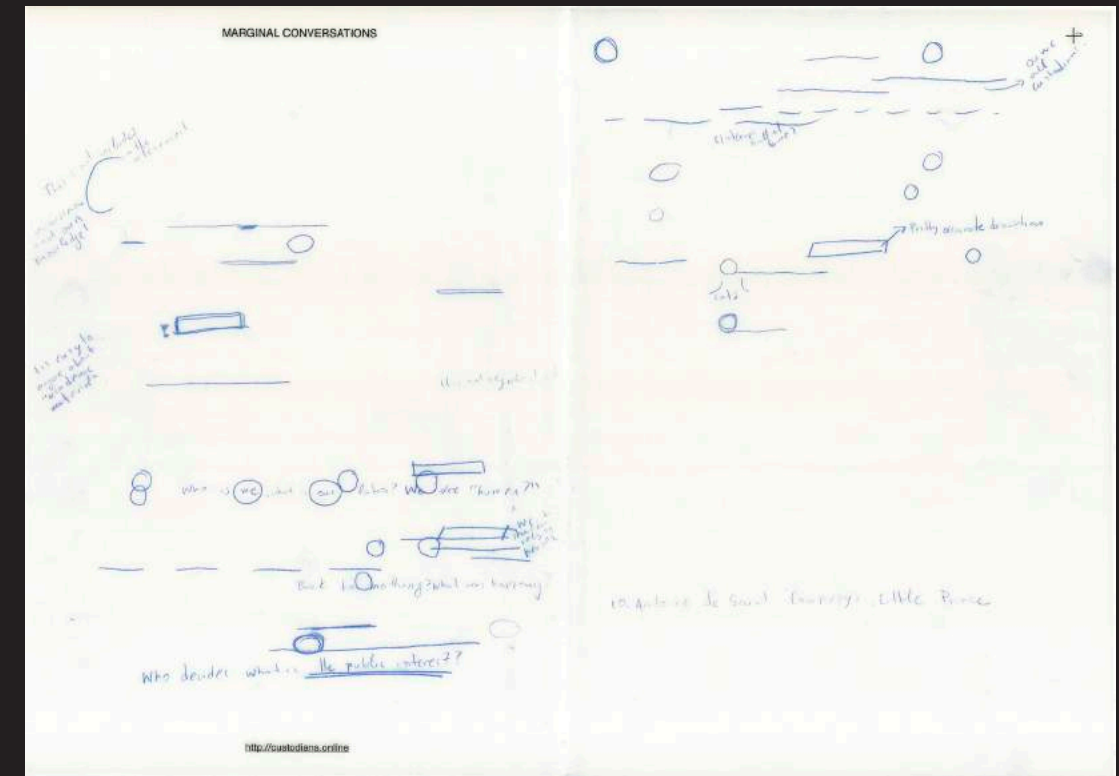
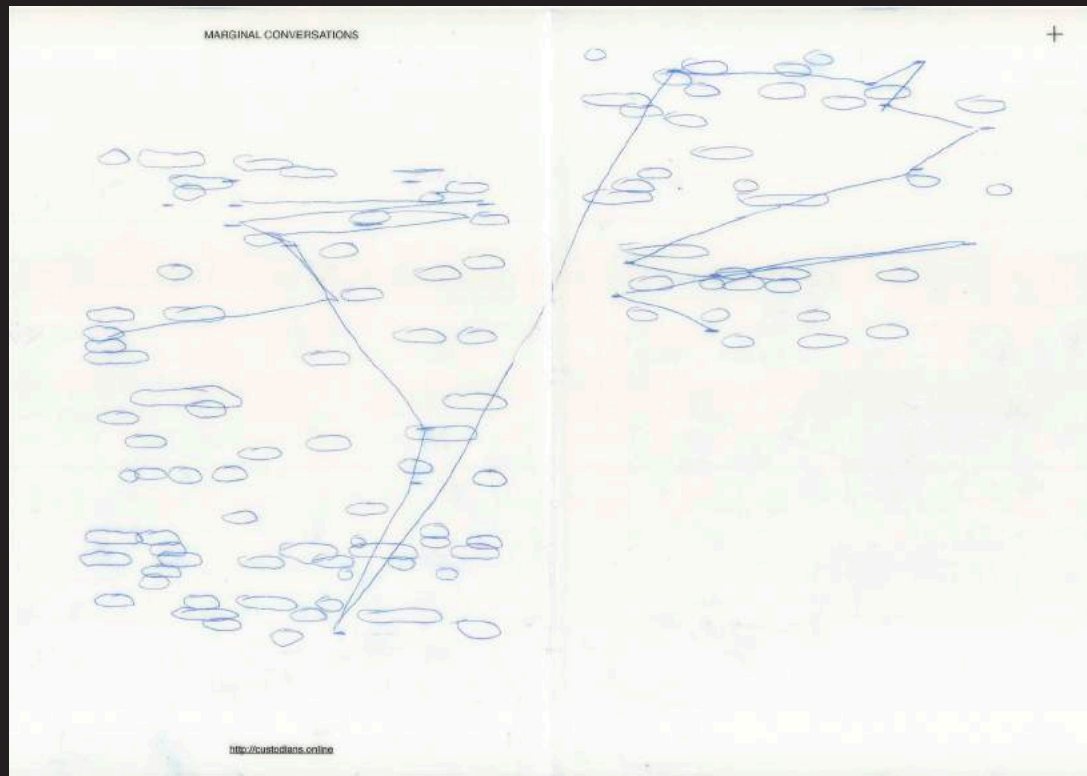




↑FIGURE 07 Workshop materials  
→FIGURE 08 Part 3: Performative reading & recording







# A Letter Performance (PART 1)

We have the means and methods to make knowledge accessible to everyone,  
with no economic barrier to access, and at a much lower cost to society.  
economic barrier, is this an economic barrier?  
to download

But closed access's monopoly  
monopoly to share  
over academic publishing,  
to read  
its spectacular profits and its central role  
it's central role  
in the allocation  
to write  
of academic prestige trump the public interest.  
//////////  
the public interest  
the public interest  
the public interest  
to reveal  
the public! interest  
to edit

Commercial publishers effectively impede open access,  
//////////  
open access OPEN ACCESS!  
to digitize  
\*\*\*\*\*

criminalize us, prosecute our heroes and heroines,  
is this a crime?  
to archive?

and destroy our libraries, again and again.  
to maintain  
\*\*\*

general info  
to make accessible

Before Science Hub and Library Genesis  
Science Hub and Library Genesis

there was Library.nu  
Library.nu  
Library.nu  
or Gigapedia;  
knowledge common  
Gigapedia  
Gigapedia  
Gigapedia  
add it to the archive

before Gigapedia  
Gigapedia  
there was textz.com;  
before Gigapedia  
care for the library  
textz.com

before textz.com  
textz.com  
textz.com  
textz.com

there was little;  
little  
care for the metadata  
and before there was little there was nothing.  
there was nothing  
at all  
care for the backup

That's what they want: to reduce most of us back to nothing.  
/ / / //

us!  
And they have the full support of the courts and law to do exactly that.  
the full support of the courts and law to do exactly that  
////

but who owns knowledge today?  
In Elsevier's case against Sci-Hub and Library Genesis, the judge said:  
/ / / / / / / /  
"simply making copyrighted content available for free via a foreign website, disserves the public interest".  
simply making copyrighted content available for free via a foreign website,  
disserves the public interest  
simply making copyrighted content available for free via a foreign website,  
disserves the public interest  
simply making copyrighted content available for free via a foreign website,  
disserves the public interest

deserves disserves or deserves? what makes public?  
the public! Interest!  
How can open access disserve the public interest?  
the platform?

what is the public interest?  
the infrastructure? The interface? why is the darknet not public?  
the system is broken  
darknet

Alexandra Elbakyan's original plea put the stakes much higher:  
"If Elsevier manages to shut down our projects or force them into the darknet,  
the darknet  
the darknet  
the darknet  
the darknet  
is the darknet a shadow?  
that will demonstrate an important idea: that the public does not have the right to knowledge."  
that the public does not have the right to knowledge  
that the public does not have the right to knowledge  
that the public does not have the right to knowledge  
that the public does not have the right to knowledge  
that the public does not have the right to knowledge

We demonstrate daily, and on a massive scale,

we

we, yes

that the system is broken.

the system is broken

the system is broken

the system is broken

the system is broken!

the system is broken

Well, it works for some...

We share our writing secretly behind the backs of our publishers,

we

we

our publishers

publishers

circumvent paywalls to access articles and publications, digitize and upload books to libraries.

paywalls

digitize and upload books to libraries

This is the other side of 37%

37

37%

37%! IT'S CRAZY!

yes, the 37% profit margins

profit margins: our knowledge commons grows

grows

in the fault lines

in the fault lines

of a broken system.

of a broken system

of a broken system

of a broken system

We are all custodians

we

custodians

of knowledge,

\*\*\*\*\*

custodians of knowledge

custodians of knowledge

custodians of knowledge

custodians of the same infrastructures

custodians of the same infrastructures

custodians of the same infrastructures

do we have a responsibility as users?

that we depend on for producing knowledge, custodians of our fertile but fragile commons.

/ / / / / /

commons

ecological idea

To be a custodian

custodian

is, de facto, to download,

to download

to download

to download

to share,

to share

to share

to share

to share

to read,

to read

to read

to read

to read

to write,

to write

to write

to write

to write

to write

to review,

to review

to review

to review

to review

to edit,

to edit

to edit

to edit

to edit

to edit

to digitize,

to digitize

to digitize

to digitize

to digitize

to digitize

to archive,

\*\*\*\*\*

to archive

to archive

to archive

to archive

to maintain libraries,

\*\*\*\*\*

to maintain libraries

to maintain libraries

to maintain libraries

to make them accessible.

to make them accessible

to make them accessible

to make them accessible

to make them accessible

It is to be of use to, not to make property of, our knowledge commons.

not to make property of, our knowledge commons

not to make property of, our knowledge commons

not to make property of, our knowledge commons

not to make property of, our knowledge commons

our?

## A Letter Performance (PART 2)

There are many businessmen  
 who own  
 who own  
 own knowledge  
 knowledge today.  
 today  
 are they custodians of knowledge?  
 Consider Elsevier,  
 Elsevier  
 the largest scholarly publisher, whose 37% profit margin  
 profit margin  
 37%  
 37%!  
 THAT'S CRAZY  
 \* \* \* \*  
 stands in sharp contrast to the rising fees, expanding student loan debt and poverty-level wages for adjunct faculty.  
 adjunct faculty  
 Elsevier owns  
 owns  
 owns  
 some of the largest databases of academic material,  
 academic material  
 academic material  
 academic material  
 which are licensed  
 licensed!  
 at prices so scandalously high  
 scandalously high  
 scandalously high  
 scandalously high  
 scandalously high  
 that even Harvard,  
 that even Harvard  
 Harvard  
 really high...  
 \*\*\* \*\*\* \*\*\* \*\*\*  
 even Harvard  
 even Harvard  
 the richest university of the global north,  
 -richest  
 university of the global NORTH!!!  
 global north  
 global north  
 north!  
 north!  
 yes... But what about the other universities?  
 has complained that it cannot afford  
 cannot afford  
 them any longer. Robert Darnton,  
 Robert Darnton  
 the past director of Harvard Library.  
 Toxic. Academic. Culture.  
 TOXIC!!!

says "We faculty do the research, write the papers, referee papers by other researchers, serve on editorial boards,  
all of it for free  
free  
freeeeeeee  
all of it for free  
all of it for free  
ALL OF IT FOR FREE!!!  
and then we buy back the results of our labour at outrageous prices."  
outrageous  
outrageous prices  
outrageous prices  
outrageous prices  
-----  
-Sorry... we buy back, the results of our labour??  
outrageous prices, but how much?  
how is this possible?  
Oh my god...  
For all the work supported by public money  
public money  
benefiting scholarly publishers, particularly the peer review  
peer review  
that grounds their legitimacy,  
legitimacy  
legitimacy  
legitimacy  
legitimacy  
journal articles are priced  
toxic  
toxic  
toxic  
toxic  
such that they prohibit access to science  
prohibit  
prohibit access? Is it moral?  
toxic  
toxic  
to many academics and all non-academics  
and all non-academics  
all non-academics  
all non-academics  
across the world,  
across the world  
across the world!  
calling all non-academics (loud)  
across the world!  
ACROSS THE WORLD  
and render it a token of privilege  
of privilege  
privilege  
privilege  
privilege  
Is knowledge a privilege?  
What's a privilege?  
-----  
It is my privilege.  
Is privilege a knowledge?

## Interview with Marcell Mars

Marcell Mars is a research associate at the Centre for Postdigital Cultures. Mars is one of the founders of Multimedia Institute/MAMA in Zagreb. His research Ruling Class Studies, started at the Jan van Eyck Academy (2011), examines state-of-the-art digital innovation, adaptation, and intelligence created by corporations such as Google, Amazon, Facebook, and eBay. He is a doctoral student at Digital Cultures Research Lab at Leuphana University, writing a thesis on Foreshadowed Libraries. Together with Tomislav Medak he founded Memory of the World/Public Library, for which he develops and maintains software infrastructure.

**XPUB** The open letter “In Solidarity with Library Genesis and Sci-Hub” was the first text that we read as an introduction to shadow libraries. To begin with, we were interested in the people involved in writing this letter.

**MARCELL** The writing was a truly collective process. Maybe, all together there were six of us and then the rest signed it. We were using textb.org. A project by Jan Gerber, a programmer and thinker, who is a comrade and partner in crime with Sebastian Lütgert in many projects. We used that, instead of a regular etherpad. You don’t see who’s there, and there is no history. It’s very hard to say who wrote what. It was also the time when Laurence Liang was in Lüneburg, where he was a fellow and I was a PhD student, just after we did “Terms of Media” at Brown University. Academic topics have a certain kind of attention, and when it peaks, people just move to another one, like a fashion. At the time of the custodians.online letter, that topic was in its peak, and we learned about the court case sometime during the summer. We decided to start with some actions against, even if the court case was not finished. In the end, the decision was that Science Hub and Library Genesis should pay around 15 million. At the time of this letter, they started to track the name registrars of the hosting websites. That’s when we realized what was happening. There was also a time when Sean Dockray, (the founder of aaaaarg) and I got sued. I tried to help by taking the domain under my name, so that Sean could get out of the project, because he was

chased and harassed by a publisher in Montreal. We started thinking about collectivizing aaaaarg, whatever that means. We didn’t know how to do that, but we were thinking of a letter or something, where people can join. There was coordination, there were threats, and a lot of attention around shadow libraries. And then we published the letter.

**XPUB** So, you felt the need to speak in public about this topic, as a reaction to what was happening in that period?

**MARCELL** Yeah, we discussed a lot what we should do. Should we go into hiding and try to circumvent it in a technological way? Some people were thinking, let’s do some dark web, let’s do distributed web, let’s do peer to peer... Quite a few of us are technologists, so we try things out, see what works. But what works for us wouldn’t necessarily work for all publics. We would also disagree. Most of the projects have different approaches. For example with aaaaarg, there is a login, which I think was introduced when Verso was giving aaaaarg a hard time. When we started with Memory of the World, we had a different idea. We thought, yes, this is risky, but that’s how you can politicize things more quickly, as it’s obviously possible without enormous investment, and it’s useful. For us, it fits the vision of what the public library could be, and then build on that. So, there was a range of approaches. Should we go fully public with our names and claim that we will continue to do things which we feel are OK, and try to politicise that? A few

people said “Let’s try to build a technology which will then secure us for a longer period of time”. So then our role is to get people to install our complex software and maintain this infrastructure. That’s always very tricky. If you are into any kind of software development, commercial or not, it’s really hard to convince people to do what you feel should be done. We can stand in solidarity and we can invite people to participate in civil disobedience. All of the people who signed the letter were thinking, “That’s the least we can do”. But then, maybe there will be differences in how far into civil disobedience everyone would go. That letter was in many ways a common denominator of what kind of political interventions should happen.

**XPUB** There was something quite striking about the letter in terms of the language. In our workshops, it was interesting that many people were remarking on the use of “we”.

**MARCELL** There is a quite clear story on that. When we started to talk about the letter, we thought there is “we”, but who is “we”? It’s not just a group of individuals. At some point I remember that I suggested “custodians”. And Laurence, who is a native English speaker, was not sure about it. For him it had connotations which I didn’t know of, because I’m not a native speaker.

**XPUB** What type of connotations do you remember?

**MARCELL** Like a janitor, a cleaner. In that sense, it’s like saying “janitors of knowledge”. But the idea was to make this “we” as inclusive as possible, and at the same time, not inclusive as in anyone, ever. Then the angle became “care”, because we started to use “custodians”. I also found out that the domain “custodians.online” was free. That would be “we”, our identity. “We” is anyone who demonstrates daily on a massive scale, that the system is broken. “We” are all custodians of knowledge, custodians of the same infrastructures, that we depend on for producing knowledge, custodians of our fertile but fragile commons. What does that mean? That means to download, to share, to read, to write, to review, to edit, to digitize, to archive, to maintain libraries, to make them accessible. In a way, it could be that it’s only to download.

You know, it’s impossible to do anything without downloading. You can say that is about everyone on the Internet. But in some way, we were also trying to say it’s not really just anyone. It’s most of us who care to save a file, and then to share it. More than just downloading. That’s why we would include Aaron Swartz and Alexandra Elbakyan. People who signed the letter are people who already did more than just download.

**XPUB** When we asked people to amplify parts of the letter, a lot of them chose the verbs: to download, to digitize, etc. It seemed very important to repeat them out loud, because they reveal the actions that a custodian would do.

**MARCELL** I would say that these verbs come from the dropdown menus of all of the software we use. I am using this as a metaphor, because that’s what we do on our screens and our computers. When you click, it usually goes into the background, into a function of some programming language. These functions are usually verbs. For me, there is no surprise that if something happens online, it happens through software mediation. Software is very much about verbs. The user runs verbs, but there is a structure which organises data structures, models etc. The developer is trying to create the ontology where these verbs will go and that’s usually not transparent. In many ways this is in the control of the software developers. And when you start to theorize it’s also very problematic, the fact that it’s not transparent, but also the way it is structured. You have verbs, which are prepared for users to click or to type, and you have maps where there is data, and that’s another layer which you deal with. With Memory of the World we try to also deal with that. What is a minimum of catalogues, classification etc, which is needed for the infrastructure. At the same time we are not naive, we don’t think that any of these classifications would ever be enough, or that they would ever be without problems.

**XPUB** It was brought up quite a lot, the problem that there is no perfect system, it’s impossible to have a standard that’s perfect for everybody and works for everybody in classification.

MARCELL Yeah, and then at the same time those who decided to go with one system, they have one decision in advance of the ones who didn't. If they build their infrastructures like Google and Amazon, and we don't make any decisions, we'd be too behind. With Memory of The World we don't say that we should forget about problems coming from classification. We're just saying "If we want to build the infrastructure, we have to make some decisions". What we are politically saying in the letter, is a big NO. A big NO to the system that is broken. That's civil disobedience. You disobey knowingly, because you want to change the legal system, because the system is broken. You know you're doing something right, it's not legal, and you're happy to live with the consequences. Because that's part of the political struggle.

XPUB When we build our infrastructures, the decisions we make are connected with our political decisions?

MARCELL That's usually part of the process, like iterative processes, where you do a little, and then you have a diverse group of people who join. If you let programmers make one of the decisions, that probably wouldn't be as good as having as part of the process, non-programmers. But it's very hard to build infrastructure without any programmers. I mean, when I say infrastructure, this is a network, digital or whatever. So you need a lot of software development, in order to build something, but that doesn't mean because of that, the process of development should be solely and exclusively run by the ones who are developing that. That's how I see that should be run, and that's always slower in some way. In Memory of the World we made some decisions, and we know that there are limits to these decisions, so we limited our vision. By saying there is a librarian, we also composed some division of labour, no? It's amateur librarians, anyone who cares can become a librarian. But then, we have some demands, it's not like Joseph Beuys' "Everyone is an artist". That could be a great gesture, but has its problems, because if you want to build something after that, it's really just like a religion. Like everyone is, a god or something. We know that when we say "Amateur librarians should maintain a good catalogue", we have some de-

mands. There are a couple of us who, if someone came with lousy metadata, we'd say "Hey, fix your metadata". We want to have a certain quality.

But there are already given metadata fields, like author, title, publisher etc, and of course you can do seven PhDs on the idea of authorship. At the moment, we don't have a good replacement. We have a lot of questions, but we just don't see how we can build the infrastructure with metadata and replace the author, because it's everywhere else, and that's how people search. Many things should be changed to get rid of the author. It's a very long process. It involves the institutional, cultural, social, and political landscape to take care of that, to replace it. There is a decision, yes we are ready to discuss that, we know that some of our decisions limit some of our attempts, but that's how we do that. And we are happy that there are others. Aaaaarg would have a little bit less of the catalogue, the metadata, it would go more into the forum, into open processes, more like reading lists, a collective, use-based grouping or clustering, and it adds another aspect to that landscape. Library Genesis is totally like a repository. It's about making the easiest way to upload, and then download things. The flow, of uploading and downloading should be the biggest concern. So you can search, download one book, or through torrents, you can download everything at once. But that's like, 20 terabytes of data. In order to do that, it's a substantial cost for an individual. Try to download 20 terabytes and you will see, you can easily also get a flag raised by your ISP if your usage is at 100%, all of the time. So what you are trying to do is to keep that network of projects in loose connections, in loose comradeship. That's how most of the political problems are addressed, but none of that is resolved, you just have different visions of how the world of knowledge distribution and production should look.

XPUB It seems that there is solidarity between the projects, even when they have different visions.

MARCELL Yes, I would say that at least we made it look like that. And there is no conflict. But, most of the projects just do their own thing. And then there are a number of invitations. I would say

that through Memory of the World we did most of that networking, because we were able with our background in cultural organising and all of that, we were just able to make it into cultural and art projects, so then that's how we shaped them. Monoskop, ubu, and aaaaarg together with us, that made its core. Especially with Sebastian (Lütgert) and Jan who now are not running a book sharing site, but Sebastian did textz.com, 10 years before everyone else, and got in trouble legally. That's the crowd, and then there's a level of tech-solidarity and coordination, because we started to write, and to invite each other to reflect. So, from some moment, we can say we achieved solidarity. But there was no institutional way to collaborate. Not that it wouldn't happen, if given the chance. It's just that we haven't had that chance so far.

XPUB Another thing that was remarked upon, in quite a few of these sessions was this notion of public interest. Questions such as "What makes the public?" or "What are the publics that are being described?". In Elbakyan's letter, she talks about the public interest and then also in the court ruling there's a mention of the two different public interests, which seem to not fit together. We're wondering how shadow librarians see their publics, especially when they are forced to act in a clandestine way.

MARCELL You can theorise, and counter, for example historically, what's public, or what constitutes a public... For me, the public is part of a vision, a fantasy, part of that utopian idea of a society. What is supporting that idea, is sharing. For anyone who uses digital network technologies, it seems totally plausible, no? The protection against sharing has a very high price. It never solves one problem, and it always goes much wider. So if you want to protect music, you get into much wider aspects of surveillance, etc. The only people who really believe in the vision where everything is commodified through surveillance and encryption are people who got in trouble with their revenue. So they now desperately need a promise that the old world will be back. But that will never happen. There are many disruptive projects, activities and practices on the Internet and I would say that shadow libraries took it to books. Which is different than the

ones who do that with music, or videos. Alexandra Elbakyan and Memory of the World are most vocal about saying "We are communists", and we believe that it's communism, or barbarism. She would say, "Knowledge was always about peace". Whenever you share knowledge with the ones who are not the ruling class, someone from the ruling class responds with "Oh, that's theft". And then she would use a historical narrative about how these things happened, and explain that the academic scientific methods were following that emancipatory trajectory. When it comes to Memory of the World, we don't address the university that much. But we over-identified with the emancipatory potential and vision of the public library from the 19th century. That was our device, our tactical use of that imaginary in order to prove that the world forgot that. If the liberal imaginary forgot about this basis, then we have a chance to say "Hey guys you are out of this game. There is nothing there anymore if you cannot actually call for any of the emancipatory ideas in society. There is something deeply wrong and it should be demolished."

XPUB There was a question during our workshops of "What constitutes knowledge?". Elbakyan's argument is mostly about scientific research that should have open access. But what else can be regarded as knowledge? What about fiction, films, or music?

MARCELL There are disciplines which try really hard, for not hundreds, but thousands of years to address that problem. What's language, what's knowledge, and all of that in philosophy. I would say that there are certain kinds of insights which come from the experience of understanding the screen and the network behind that. You are now listening to me. But you're probably also looking at a screen, and we are looking at the same email which you sent to me. We have knowledge about how we read what is on our screen. Also you're at Piet Zwart, I accept that you know much more about text and email and how it got on your screen, and my screen and what is in between. So, people who are able to read and understand the screen and network infrastructures are much more capable to imagine that there is no difference in between film, text, images, music, and books, and

then the difference between a digital and a printed book. So yes, it's it's easy to convince you guys that it's the same. But there are a lot of people who are completely confused. If you say, "What, a film? It's a file on my hard drive, it has different software algorithms, by which I can analyze that the same way I can analyze text". You can just say that everything is a text, or everything is a sequence of digital discrete units with its own patterns. You can say there is no substantial difference in between a digital film file, and digital music file, and all things digital. So I'm pretty sure that I can convince you easily that there is a common denominator between all of these. But there are also a lot of people who, when they sit in front of their screens, only see the world from before. They can only follow what was tangible before the screen, and then they deal with that as as a literal reading of a metaphor. That whole process of convincing someone of what is knowledge, is very political. And then there are tactics behind that. I address different, if you want, publics, or audiences. With Memory of the World we do books, because we are very aware what the affects behind the book are. They're completely different than the affects behind film, because film is entertainment, even if it's totally theoretical, or experimental. The book, even if it's pulp fiction, it has that affect that it is knowledge. And I would doubt this very much. We should pick one, tactically, and then try to make it into a political intervention. That's what we were doing with this letter.

XPUB The question is prefaced by an observation somebody made about the reference list at the end of the letter. We were wondering where The Little Prince fits in this idea of knowledge, and how it is referenced. Somebody thought, "Well maybe it's in the public domain because it's been published more than 70 years ago."

MARCELL That is a great question. It just slipped for us. No one noticed that! When I saw it I was like, wow. Totally, yeah. It's a great question. It's just like we were sloppy. There is no other answer to that. I think that Laurence brought it. The Little Prince got in at the beginning and at the end, because it made that poetic moment. And also it's very inclusive, and it's so well known. Laurence is from India, from Bangalore, and he's the scholar for which any

colonial, imperial British fucker would say, "Wow, this is what you want". He knows everything, from Shakespeare to artificial intelligence. He's so knowledgeable. He's a great intellectual and scholar. Whereas I'm super sloppy, if I read a tenth of what he did I would be happy. And I remember thinking, "Wow, this is a great reference", but I would never do it because it's so obvious, it's so common that I'd be afraid because I could be easily embarrassed by people thinking "Yeah, that's the only book you've ever read." And that couldn't happen for Laurence, for him, the Little Prince is so embedded in complex references for him. Yeah, I would add that and put it as a zero reference!

XPUB It's not actually in the public domain. The 70 years after the death of the author was extended by another 30 years by the French government.

MARCELL We don't even look at that, it doesn't help in any way. 70 years or 90, that's just fully inappropriate. We should come up with something else. We shouldn't use property as a metaphor. That is common property and appears in many different domains. Intellectual property is an oxymoron. The public domain when it comes to intellectual property, in my opinion is just totally wrong. It should be the basis for something new. There is a significant historical trace but no one should try to reform that.

XPUB One of the reasons why we chose the letter for our workshop is that it is available in many languages. We were curious about the motivations for these. How did they come to be?

MARCELL We got four in the first 24 hours. We've heard from some people that most of them are quite bad translations. But we are also fine with that. They grew quickly after publishing the letter. I think that's the translation of resonance, not from relevance. This is not a theoretical text which should be very precisely translated. We also got quite a few e-mails of solidarity to the email account littleprince@custodians.online. A lot of people thought that this is Library Genesis and Science-Hub, so they would say "Thank you Library Genesis!" and we were like "It's not Library Genesis!" Also about four or five emails from a

university press, not that many, but they were repeatedly saying, "Oh we are poor, we don't have money and you share our books. Can you remove the books of our publisher?". I didn't reply but I thought; you didn't even notice that this not Library Genesis. It's sad. No one will remove your books even if you've got the copyright. Everyone will just really share all your books all the time.

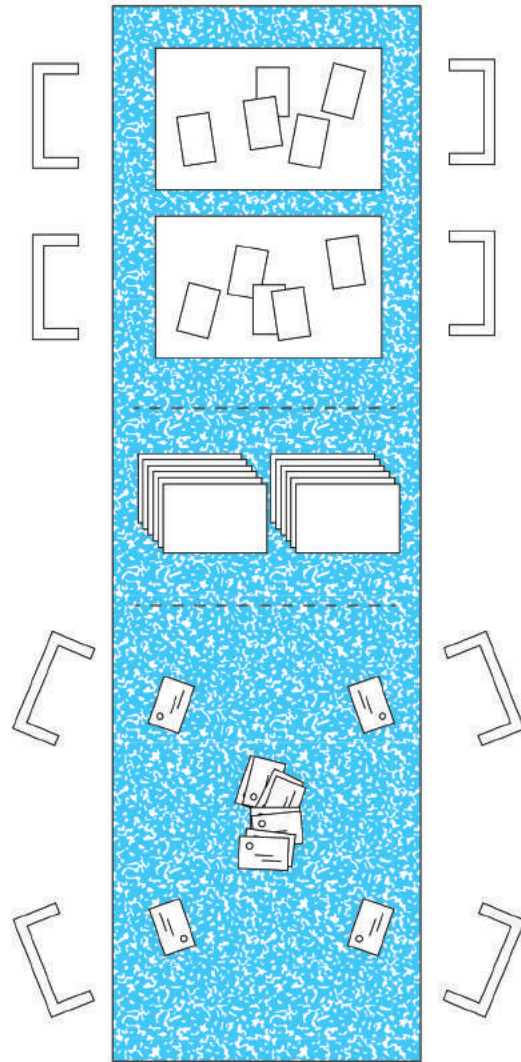
XPUB It is quite clear that commercial publishers like Elsevier limit open access to their advantage. During a conversation in our workshops, however, it was pointed out that the problem is also systemic. For example, university professors encourage students to publish in certain journals, for the sake of the student's academic career. It was suggested that change has to take place within this culture. Do you see any potential for change within academia, to reverse this situation?

MARCELL There are different disciplines and projects which try to do that. We joined Coventry University, where they founded the Center for Postdigital Cultures, and where Janneke Adema and Gary Hall run (with others) a radical open access initiative. So a number of publishers are dedicated to open access. Many of these reformistic proposals are happening in time. So if it happens fast enough, a potential to really change the system is big, if it's faster than the adaptation of the ones that are already part of the problem. Open access was introduced, and then for a while probably you didn't need radical open access. But then, as time went, open access was appropriated and Elsevier's just fine with that. They found a way to profit, and provide control through different means of distribution and reduction. Meanwhile, it just grew to the level that they control the whole stack, the whole workflow. Everything you ever do in academia is getting into these workflows of Elsevier. Radical open access is a small part of the open access movement and they try to keep some of these ideas in a state of disruption. But after a year in academia, even in the center, which is totally dedicated to great things and we have great colleagues, I feel that academia is doomed. It's like any other corporate environment. The managers control, and try to impose the metrics everywhere. It's just report, report, report. That's killing aca-

demia, and publishing is its significant outcome in metrics. But even if that changes and the metrics discourse, the metrics paradigm isn't taken over, nothing will really change.

I can see in which way Science-Hub already did a great job. Even the ministries of Germany say "Hey you know, make it work with us or we'll go to Science-Hub". So they can benefit from Science-Hub, but they would never help Science-Hub. "They're some criminals, so we'll just use them, when we can for a while". It's short sighted. I'm disappointed, but of course we go further with that. You spend time in promoting, fighting and doing things which you know will fail. But we know why we have to do what we do. The why is not about the chance of succeeding, which is small. It's about feeling it is the right thing to do. In this area it is really still possible. A few of us, in terms of infrastructures, by making software, back-end system administration, pay the bills for that. I can financially support my work on my own. It's a matter of a couple hundred euros per year. So that's good news. That a few of us can share hundreds of thousands of books, 24/7. It's like if you want to occupy a factory. It is just the level of resources and organization, different kind of risks. For even the smallest factory anywhere, it needs so much more. It feels that this is still an area where you can play the game, without being immediately wiped out. There are micro SD cards that are already on the market which hold a terabyte. That's 100,000 books, and with 5G you can theoretically download that terabyte in about six hours. So yeah, let's wait for that! I think we have a hundred fifty thousand books of Memory of the World. They're very well selected, there is a good catalog, with good metadata, there is a searchable interface through the metadata. So for around 400 bucks, you get a hundred thousand books. It's a lot. You can't read them in your lifetime. A group of people cannot read them in a lifetime. That's when I feel like maybe it's the reverse of the situation in academia you asked about. Maybe we'll have islands of education which will happen completely differently. Getting one micro SD card on your phone.

Workshop: Knowledge in Action  
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 reimagine 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 categorisation, 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 authorisation 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 organise 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 organisation 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 reorganising 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 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



↑FIGURE 01 Workshop environment



↑ FIGURE 02 Activity one, books in selection  
↓ FIGURE 03 Activity one, categories in selection



Interview with  
Ronny and Laura, Leeszaal librarians

We were interested in the hidden processes that libraries go through, such as the selection of books, their categorisation, the organisation of the shelves. With these questions in mind, we interviewed Ronny and Laura, who are volunteer librarians at Leeszaal. They generously introduced to us the basics of how Leeszaal operates. Leeszaal is a particular reading room here in Rotterdam West as it stands between a community center and library.

We were surprised by the amount of books that travel in and out of this place, the flexibility of not having to catalogue incoming books to the fullest detail. For example, a looser notion of category is used here, compared to research libraries. The meaning of what a library is, who does it serve, became clearer and broader to us. From illegal libraries that try to offer everything they can put their hands on, to particular curated content, or personal reading lists, the circulation of knowledge can occur in different forms.

XPUB      Could you introduce yourselves and tell us what you do in Leeszaal?

RONNY    My name is Ronny, I am 32 years old. I've been volunteering here for almost three and a half years. I am part of the books team, which receives books on weekly basis. We receive books that are donated in boxes. They come in, sometimes thirty boxes per week, sometimes ten boxes. They need to be sorted into categories afterwards. I studied in Haifa University in Israel and I worked a bit in the library there but now I work in Rotterdam School of Management. Although it's not related to libraries it is related to education, so I like the combination. My father is Dutch and it was our dream to come back to the Netherlands, so when it was economically possible, we came.

LAURA I work in a library but I didn't study library science. I studied classical languages, Greek and Latin, but I've been working in a library for 15 years now.

XPUB      Is Leeszaal a reading room, or do you call it a library?

LAURA    It's a volunteer library, but there are differences with normal libraries. It's kind of a unique concept. It's unique because the books are free, you don't have to be a member of Leeszaal. You can just walk in, take a book and walk out. We don't ask your name, we don't ask you to show us which books you are going to take.

RONNY    And you don't have to bring them back. You can choose to bring them back, or bring something else.

XPUB      Do people bring the books back?

RONNY    Not usually. But sometimes they do.

XPUB      Where do the books in Leeszaal come from?

LAURA    Most books come from normal people, people from Rotterdam. Sometimes, when someone dies, his or her books come here.

Most of the time the books are just from people who are not going to read them anymore and they don't like the idea of throwing away books as garbage.

RONNY    For example if the kids are grown, the parents give away books that are no longer suitable for them.

LAURA    We have to sort everything that comes in here.

XPUB      What would be the normal path for a book after arriving in Leeszaal?

RONNY    Laura comes in three times per week to sort the books that arrive into categories.

LAURA    The first step is to decide if will we keep the book or not. Stastistically, we filter out half of the donation. This happens because they are too old, too dirty, or because it's a title that we have ten times already. So there are lot of reasons to throw a book away. For the books we don't want, we have containers back here, and there's a company that comes to recycle them. Sometimes twice a week, sometimes once a week. It's really a lot of books!

XPUB      Do you see annotations often? Would that be a reason to not keep a book?

LAURA    Yeah, for me that can be a problem. If there are all kind of colors on the page, or everything is written... I don't think I will keep it.

XPUB      Do you often receive repetitive titles; such as *Harry Potter* books? What do you do with them?

LAURA    Yes, in case of *Harry Potter* we will keep because they will also be picked up quickly. Some books are less popular, and are brought here really often. For example the gift books, which you get for free when you buy a book during the Book Week. Look, for example we have here one that from the yearly book fair, and comes for free when you purchase a book. Lots of people have such books. And they don't even read them. We can't keep all of these books.

RONNY    Or those that are popular during the 90s, 80s, some of them we still keep, but if we get like ten copies of the same one, then it's not necessary. They are not popular anymore.

XPUB      Do you usually see people wanting certain books from a certain category? Is there high demand for particular categories?

LAURA    Philosophy, everyone seems to like philosophy! And psychology and art, religion sometimes.

XPUB      Is there the case where these books have more donations as well?

LAURA    No. Sometimes people keep asking for a book and we don't have anything left on the shelves.

XPUB      What can you tell us about the organization of the shelves?

LAURA    The novels are in alphabetical order.

RONNY    The English novels as well, but not the rest. This such a small collection, that you can see within 10 minutes if we have something you want. The time that we would invest in alphabetisation it is not worth it. We also don't have a catalog, it would take us so much time it becomes impossible. In some weeks we receive over a thousand books. It takes out all the fun if you have to worry about cataloging.

XPUB      What are the visitors like? Who comes here?

RONNY    Everybody. It's young families, old people, middle-aged people, adults, Dutch and foreigners, if they know about this place. Sometimes groups come here from other cities in the Netherlands, sometimes teachers with students.

LAURA And homeless people. They don't come here for the books but to have a place to sit, that's also ok. If they behave alright.

XPUB      What is allowed in this space? Is it possible to copy the books?

RONNY    We don't have photocopy machines, only computers at the aisle for public use.

LAURA    We have rules like no alcohol, and people should behave themselves. For each category we have rules for how many books you can take per day. So nobody will come with a container and take

50 books. Because that is not the intention. Just respect each other and listen to the volunteers, and don't make too much noise.

XPUB      What is the role of Leeszaal, does it go beyond the books? We saw that you have a full agenda of workshops and other activities.

RONNY      It's something between a community center and library, maybe, you could say. Because of all the activities. And there is also a Dutch lesson.

LAURA      Yes, Cafe NL.

RONNY      There are language-related events on a weekly basis, also in the evenings there are some music events, or cultural events. Each time it's something else. Every Thursday evening there is something with a dinner. The intention is to attract people from different backgrounds, to be wide.

XPUB      Is it very often that people approach Leeszaal with a project?

RONNY      There are some projects sometimes, it is possible. If people are interested they talk to the volunteers, usually it's possible. The room where we are now stores books, but is also used for other projects. Sometimes we want to make a full space with books about cats. So we collect the books for a few months, we put them in boxes and we think about a day when we can display them, and then we do it. So this room is also for these projects. The projects happen at least once a month.

LAURA      As often as we want to.

RONNY      When we have a good idea to begin to pay more attention to cat books, or books about Dante, we start to put them aside. We put the books on a shelf where they can see it more easily, to attract attention, to show that we try our best.

XPUB      The cat books, did it happen?

LAURA      Yes! Twice. People really like it.

XPUB      How do you think of librarians being a gendered role?

BIYI      I'm really curious because my grand-mother studied biology and then, because of life circumstances, 5 or 10 years before her retirement, she became a librarian and I started to become more aware of this gendered role of the female librarian.

RONNY      In Haifa University most of the students were women but also some men.

XPUB      More of the people who chose to study library sciences?

RONNY      Yes, it's more a feminine profession.

XPUB      Do you have many volunteers working here?

LAURA      We have over 100 volunteers now.

*This interview has been edited for content.*

## Interview with Dubravka Sekulić

The different reactions from our workshop in Leeszaal lead 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 was closely involved with the past editions of *Interfacing the Law* in 2017 and 2018, with contributions in workshops and presentations on the 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 and 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 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 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 shadows 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 into the 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 the project 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 Medak. 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-Library Genesis, 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 organise 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 organising I was also emailing people who could be interested in the articles, especially people at the Jan van Eyck, knowing their 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 these kinds 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 strategically which content is excluded and how to bring it back and give it a spotlight. This is considered an activation. There are several projects that were done, either as a Public Library/Memory of the World project or as off initiatives. Tactical digitisation is not only to digitise 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.

Another project I find worth mentioning is the Archive of Humanistic Textual Production in Yugoslavia, which is a response to the genocide of books that happened when the war with Croatia started. A lot of books related to Yugoslavia's anti-fascist struggle and socialist self-management printed in Serbia and the non-Croatian part of Yugoslavia were purged from libraries. We worked with the curatorial collective WHW from Zagreb in the space Galerija Nova. There was an event called The Written Notes where people salvaged these books from dumps and digitised them to Memory of the World. This is a tactical way of using Memory of the World, to make certain issues visible - incarceration and right-wing nationalistic turns.

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, how we can change these dynamics, and how we can recognise these dynamics. Because I am part of a lot of conversations which are dealing with these issues, 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 underrepresented 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 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 radicalises and subjectivises 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 digitise books. Soon it became obvious that Herman’s library had to be digitised and not to be only accessible when you were visiting

Stuttgart or when Jackie was doing exhibitions and traveling with the books. Having Herman’s library digitised 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 digitise 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, organising 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, it 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 organise 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 contextualisation. This is the reason why I’m interested in taking part in conversations about building alternative syllabi 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 diversly 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, a few of them are really personal. Mine is also personal, as it 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 At the beginning, you were talking about getting books from different parts of the world. Was it obvious the various degrees of access?

DUBRAVKA The 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 difficult the struggle actually is 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 JSTOR. 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.

*This interview has been edited for content.*



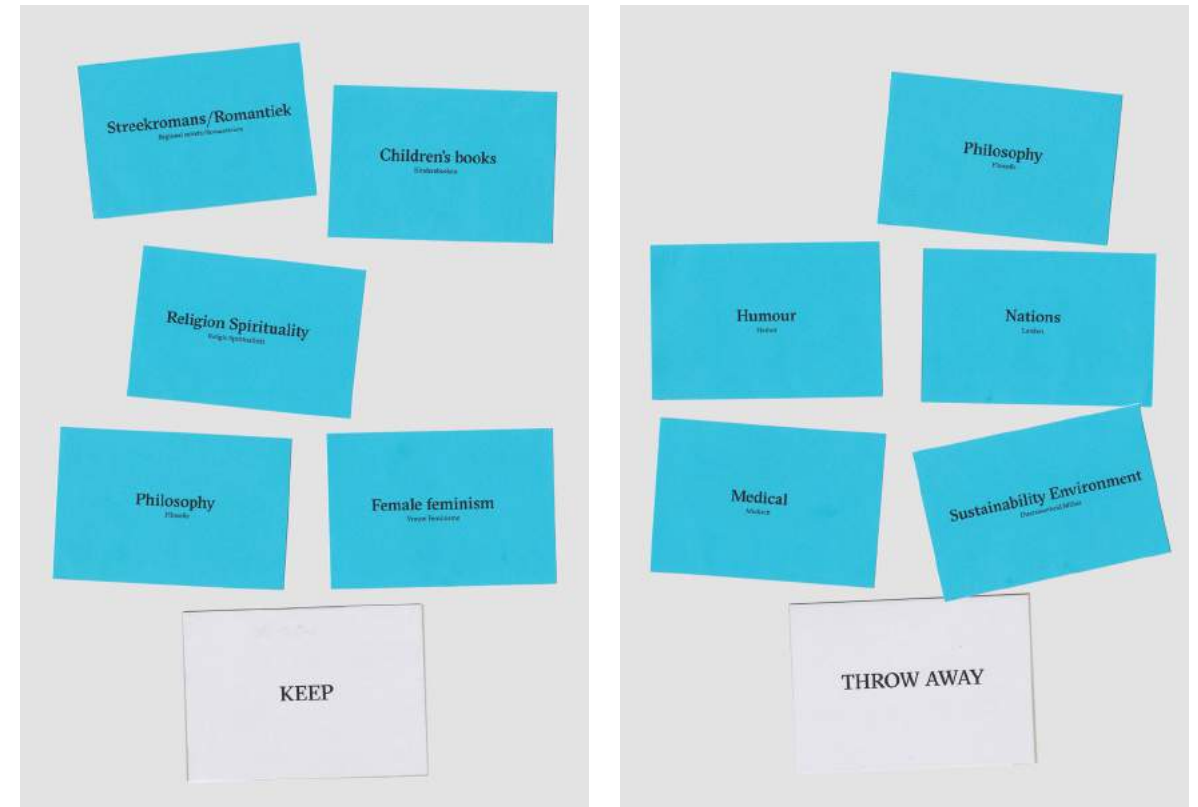
↑FIGURE 04 Book selection



↑ FIGURE 05 First group performing the Activity One  
→ FIGURE 06 Result

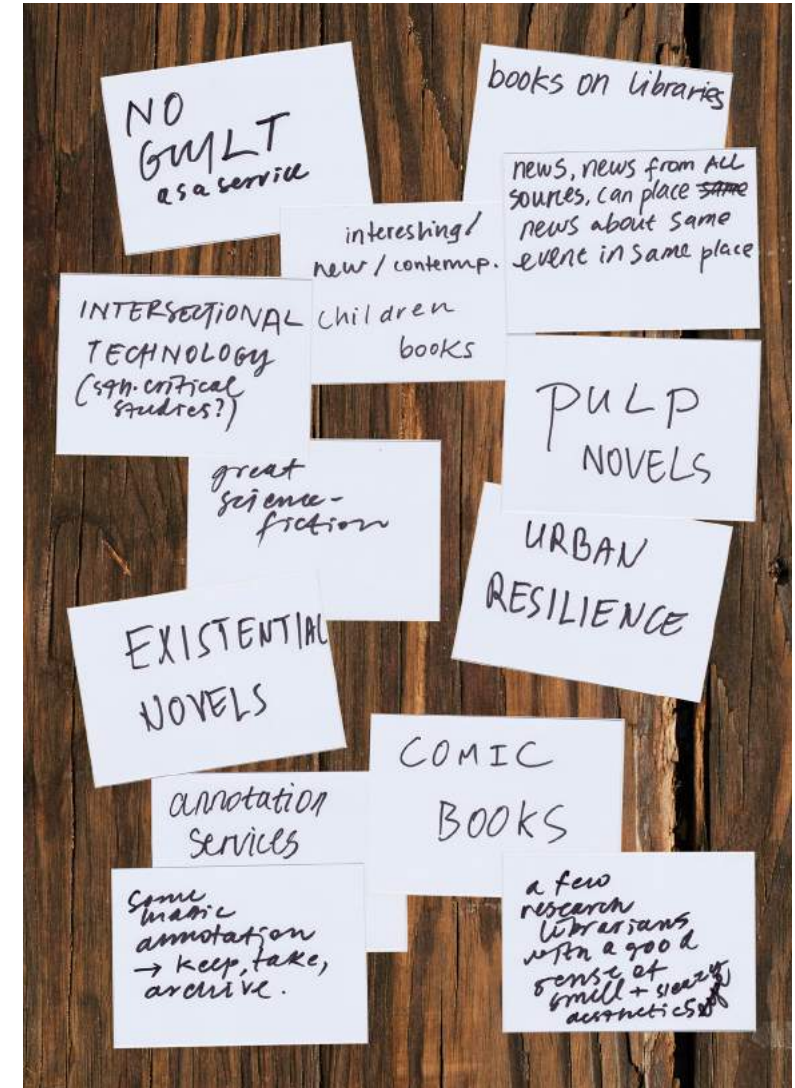
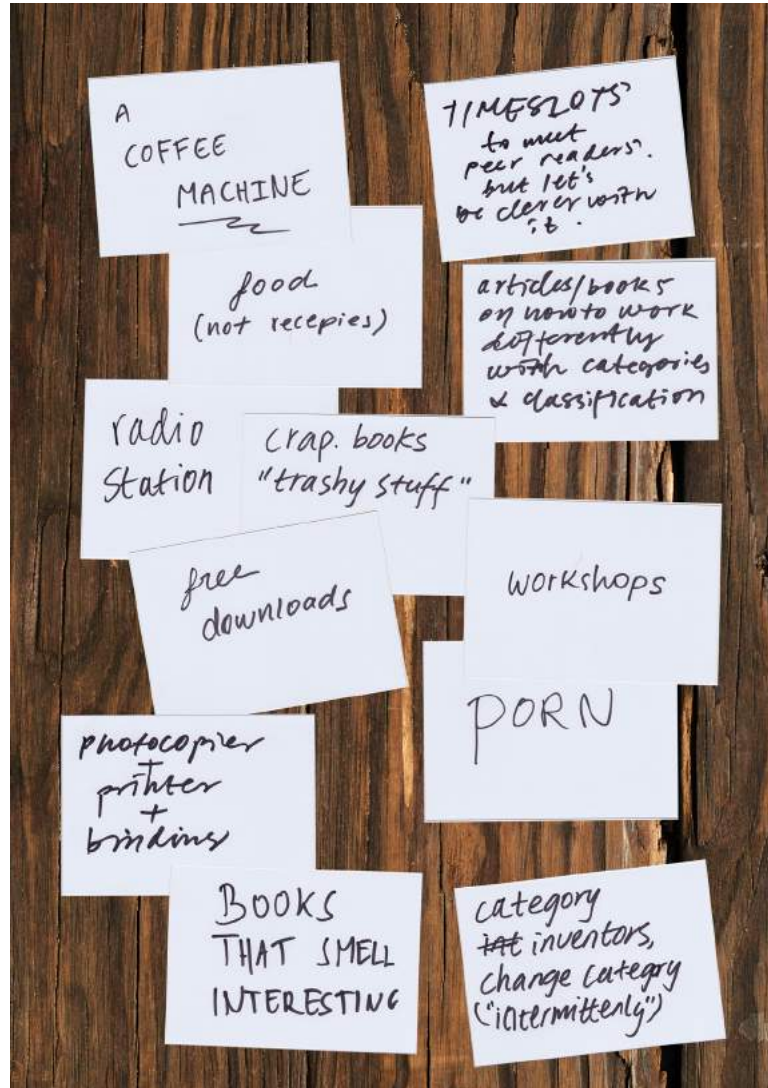


↓ FIGURE 07 Second group performing Activity One  
 → FIGURE 08 Result





↑FIGURE 09 Activity Two process  
→FIGURE 10—11 Result



## DOCUMENTATION

**Shadow Library**

I am an infrastructure that accumulates and distributes files illegally. My motivation is to make knowledge open access. Since the past few years there have been lawsuits from academic journal database against shadow libraries.

Example: Library Genesis, Sci-Hub, Annarbor, Mendeley

Researchers from developed countries use our shadow library more often than other resources, in addition to the legal resources they already have.

Shadow libraries aim to provide free access. If a mirror site is operating for profit, the main community has the right to discontinue the mirror site from open access community.

Researchers from both developed and less developed countries use shadow libraries.

Shadow libraries accumulate journals by accessing accounts in universities with subscription to databases. It is a way to share knowledge from the more privileged to the less privileged.

Shadow libraries operate outside of U.S. and European jurisdiction area since the servers are hosted elsewhere, such as in Russia.

**Pirate**

I am the person stealing, scanning, uploading files but also downloading. I do it because I believe knowledge should be accessible for all, because I don't have the means to pay for the original files, or just because I don't want to.

Examples: a student, Aaron Swartz, Alexandra Elbakyan, your neighbor, a teacher

We have the means and methods to make knowledge accessible to everyone, with no economic barrier to access and at a much lower cost to society.

source: In solidarity with Library Genesis and Sci-Hub

Infringing on copyright, unlike theft, does not deprive the victim of the original item.

Those with access to these resources — students, librarians, scientists — you have been given a privilege. (...) You have a duty to share it with the world.

source: Against Intellectual Property by N. Gregory Mankiw, Fox

source: Quantis/Open Access Manifesto

I provide free access to academic resources. Knowledge should be free for everybody. Underprivileged researchers have greatly benefited from my help.

We see how a free flow of information enables thoughts, cultural creation and the economy to grow.

source: The Pirate Party's 4th declaration of principles, a political party founded in 2006

**Researcher**

We are producers of knowledge, and are heavily reliant on research literature. We come from countries with different economic backgrounds, some are from higher income countries, some from lower income countries.

Example: University researcher, researcher in a pharmaceutical lab, independent researcher

To be updated on my field of research, I always have my database alert open, so I receive alerts when there are updates in the field. It's a way to be updated about what are the other researchers doing.

source: research video showing academic professor at Utrecht University titled "A Day in the Life of a Researcher"

I use a search tool developed by do chemistry research. I put in a reaction, starting material and end product, the search tool will come up with papers that have the reactions.

To bypass closed access, expensive journal databases, we will put papers in open access places.

source: research video showing academic professor at Utrecht University titled "A Day in the Life of a Researcher"

source: research video showing academic professor at Eindhoven University of Technology titled "A Day in the Life of a Researcher"

Academic research platforms is a social space that allow me to be connected to other researchers. I'm always willing to meet them and collaborate!

As researchers our project is funded by research grants. We don't receive compensation from academic journal database.

source: research video showing academic professor at Eindhoven University of Technology titled "A Day in the Life of a Researcher"

Submitting papers to academic journal publishers was considered necessary to advance in academic career.

**Academic Publishing Business**

We were a company that provides access to academic research. To access the material there is a fee, charged to individuals or research institutions.

Example: Elsevier, Springer, JSTOR

By organizing knowledge in adequate systems, we are making knowledge more accessible, enhance system performance, therefore benefiting humanity.

One of the advantages includes support of full-text keyword searching across all content, making it easier for researchers to look up content.

We digitize and make available books online, that otherwise couldn't have online access. We help publishers reach new audiences.

We lower costs for academic libraries and increase their space.

Academic Journal Database makes research easier for researchers. Our advanced information system makes the researcher's life much easier.

## KNOWLEDGE IN ACTION

**Researcher Librarian**

I deal with all the information and operations inside a library. I follow the copyright laws, acquire books through legal channels and use traditional forms of cataloging.

Examples: librarian in a university, librarian of a research institute, librarian of a public library

Libraries are obligated to shut down the hackers and if we don't do it, the publishers can cut off key research material for professors and students.

source: Edward Sanchez, head of library information technology at Marquette University

At the Institute of Mathematical Sciences in Chennai (IMSc), for example, the total annual budget is around \$2 million, of which \$400,000 is spent on subscriptions to academic journals, more than the entire budget for faculty salaries.

More than 60 scientific institutions had already terminated their contracts with Elsevier, in forms of boycotts for the expensive fees and support for open access information.

source: Karaganis, Joe(Ed), "Shadow Libraries", MIT Press 2018

As a librarian I should archive all meaningful electronic files, but they are behind paywalls at no accessible costs.

I want a poor student to have the same means as the richest man in the kingdom, as far as books go.

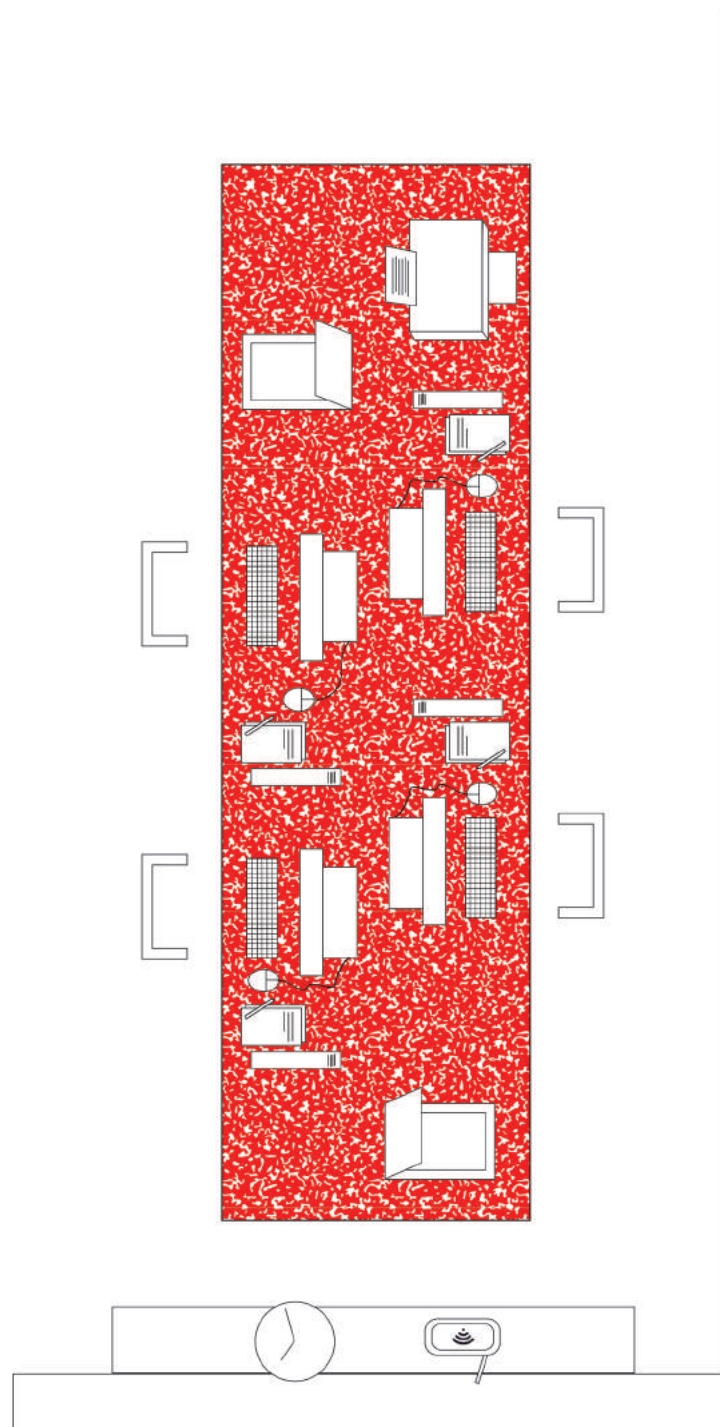
source: Anthony Panizzi, British librarian in 1836

My biggest concern about piracy is how it obtains access to library databases when they enter our system to download files.

↑ FIGURE 12—16 Quotes from character in Activity Three

## Workshop: Blurry Boundaries

by Tancredi Di Giovanni, Pedro Sá Couto and Bohye Woo



Select, annotate, analyze, scan, correct, digitise, 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 digitising 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 labour 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 choose 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.

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 three different papers:

1. A purple sheet [figure 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.
2. A form to be filled in during each step [figure 02], with the requested information, such as notes and the starting time of each process, meant to document the duration of each task.
3. A chart [figure 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 over 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 [figure 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 book's physical condition. There is a scale to check the weight of the book that in the end can be compared with the size of the final digital file. Follow the specifications of the provided chart 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 in your book. Such as watermarks, marginalia, underlining, highlighting, strikethroughs, circles, lines, doodles, added contents, damages, folded corners, water damage, stains, squiggles, and more...

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 digitisation 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 folder named "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. Rotate them to their original orientation, crop them, resize them or delete unwanted marks that might come with the previously digitized file.

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 is different OCR (optical character recognition) software 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 that were corrected before.

A digital library is built with different formats and approaches. Different types of outputs may live together, as PDFs, EPUBs, 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 with its original source. How is the text different from each other?

Save the text from the OCR output in pdf.

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 describing and giving information about other data.

Use the provided scanner to produce a PDF from your form and add it to the workshop folder in your desktop.

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 labour's form

Run the “merge\_files.sh” in your folder and automatically it will merge them in a single PDF. Rename it and go to the last step.

#### 9. Upload to the digital library

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

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

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 consists of 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 labour behind the digitisation of physical books.

### Schedule of Workshop: Blurry Boundaries

by Tancredi Di Giovanni, Pedro Sà Couto and Bohye Woo

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

#### Introduction

How do we reveal the hidden labour involved in these processes? What libraries become possible when you transform physical books into digital files, and vice versa?

In this workshop you will be a librarian converting books into machine readable files, a process involving tools, time and choices.

#### Follow this step

##### 1. Choose a book

Choose a book from the Leeszaal collection and write down the basic informations. (The book has to fit the scanner.)

##### 2. Condition Report

Write down the physical book characteristics, the condition of the book and the visible traces that may be found on it, such as: *watermark, marginalia, underline, highlight, strikethrough, circle, line, doodle, added contents, damages, folded corners, water wrinkling, stain, squiggle, and more..*

##### 3. Scan

Choose one specific part of the book and scan it. It can be one page or one chapter, depending on the available time.

##### 4. Page Correction

Use *Pinta* or *Gimp* to turn the pages into their original direction. If you want, you can remove unwanted traces that might be left and crop the image. Rename the file without spacing.

##### 5. OCR-ing

Create a searchable pdf with 'ocr.sh' from the corrected images created. This process is called *OCR* (optical character recognition) and is done through a software called *Tesseract*.

##### 6. Proof-reading

Open the searchable pdf with the browser and *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.

##### 7. Put your metadata

The filling form is meant to be scanned and appended to the final pdf. In this way we are able to make the hidden labour behind digital books visible.

##### 8. Compile the pdf

At this point, you'll have three pdfs in your folder. To complete your digital book, merge all the pdfs in one file with 'merge\_files.sh'.

##### 9. Upload to the digital library

Finally upload your digital book on our digital library following the bookmark on the browser. Congratulations! You have done a great (hidden) job!!!

←FIGURE 01 Workshop schedule

NAME —

PLACE —

DATE —

PROCESSES	NOTES	TIME
1. CHOOSE BOOK		1.
TITLE		
AUTHOR		
2. CONDITION REPORT		2.
BOOK WEIGHT		
TOTAL PAGE NUMBER		
CONDITION		
VISIBLE MARKS		
3. SCAN		3.
4. PAGE CORRECTION		4.
5. OCR-ING		5.
6. PROOF-READING		6.
7. METADATA		7.
8. COMPIL THE PDF		8.
9. UPLOAD		

Very Fine (VF) — Without faults or defects, in the same condition as when it was published. (Note: very few new books qualify for this grade, as there will often be nubs/scuffs to the dustjacket from shipping, or bumped lower spine ends/corners from shelving.)

Fine (F) — Approaches the above, but not crisp. May show signs of having been carefully read, but no real defects or flaws.

Near Fine (NF) — Approaching Fine but with a couple of defects which should be noted.

Very Good — Used book showing some small signs of wear on either the binding or dustjacket. Defects and faults should be noted.

Good — Average used book that has all pages present. All defects must be noted.

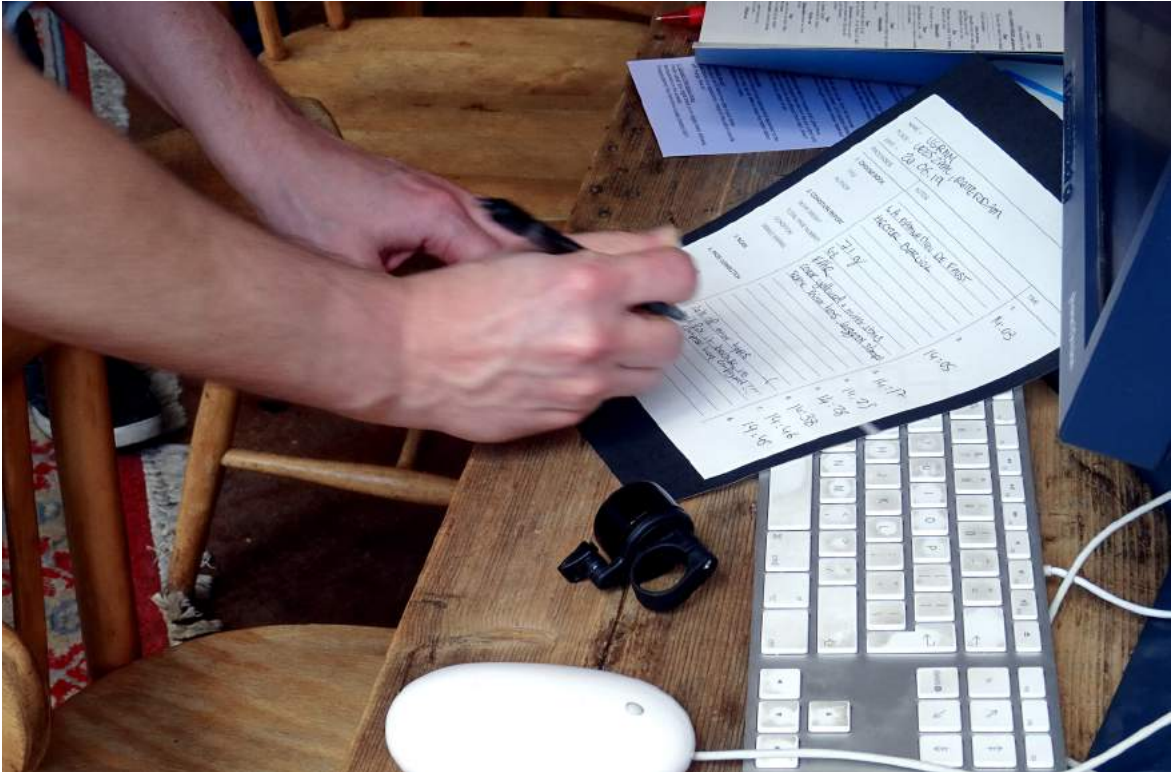
Fair — Used book that has complete text but may be missing end papers, half-title page, etc. Dustjacket may have noticeable signs of wear such as crimping, small tears, or curling on the edges. All defects should be noted.

Poor/Reading Copy — Sufficiently worn that its only merit is that it has the complete text. May be solid, scuffed, stained or spotted and may have loose joints, hinges, pages, etc. All defects should be noted.

↑FIGURE 02 Blank form to fill

↗FIGURE 03 eBay's condition chart

PROVIDED MATERIAL



↑FIGURE 04 Participant filling in form and celebration bell  
→FIGURE 05 Workshop setup

BLURRY BOUNDARIES



## Interview with Dušan Barok

Dušan Barok is a researcher, artist, and cultural activist involved in critical practice in the fields of software, art, and theory. Graduated in information technologies from the University of Economics of Bratislava, he then moved to the Netherlands to complete the Networked Media masters course at the Piet Zwart Institute in Rotterdam, to finally land in a doctorate in the preservation of contemporary art in Amsterdam. He is best known for Monoskop (monoskop.org), a wiki for collaborative studies of the arts, media, and humanities, started in 2004 as a project to document and map media art and culture in the eastern part of Europe. It expanded toward arts and humanities to take its final form of a media library in 2012, as Dušan Barok's graduation project at the Piet Zwart Institute.

The wiki provides an indexed collection of information, materials, and links around those fields, focusing on less-known phenomena, while the parallel project called “Monoskop Log”, releases digital publications to create an exhaustive archive of resources directly linked to the wiki entries. Books are available in different formats and their digitisation is done by Monoskop but also users can contribute or one can find the link to the original file, usually coming from other digital libraries.

**XPUB** As the librarian of Monoskop, do you feel the responsibility to regularly share new files and improve how they are organised?

**DUŠAN** I use Monoskop almost on a daily basis, keeping track of my focused or less-focused browsing, reading and live encounters. A wiki, as a read-write website, really is a cool medium in McLuhan's sense. Its pages are never complete, they demand continuous updates, and being linked to one another, often it is a chain reaction, an idiosyncratic process of rereading and rewriting and following what others edited and contributed to the site. It is a messy process, by now a habit perhaps, with no end in sight, a compendium of temporary interests, passions and exchanges.

At the same time there certainly is a responsibility. The website has been part of Google and other search indexes and it does have a share in bringing people, ideas and things in focus, into attention. The responsibility here is to unveil, unearth what is not established, prominent, what is urgent, bring about new relations and contexts,

burst bubbles. Our language and communication will always be narrative, a succession of signs, but we've come a long way from the primacy of a book as the basic unit of knowledge. Imagine you are not running a library but a search engine, operating in a field governed by the logic of an index and the mechanics of bots. Or that you are running a content farm, in the world where the only content that matters is either a massive dataset or a viral titbit of information.

**XPUB** Digitising books involves decisions on how to manage human and non-human traces present in the physical book. When you select a book, do you follow any rules to manage those traces?

**DUŠAN** When scanning a book I try to enter at least basic metadata into the file, including title, author, producer, date of scanning and source of the volume. Many books I've scanned contain marginalia and highlights. I like to preserve them, which is part of the reason to scan in full color, albeit I am also aware that for some they can be dis-

tracting. They are usually personal, notes to self, rarely intended for a wider audience. Still I prefer to stay true to the original copy and its materiality.

I like to use old-school scanners for results have their own, perhaps by now vintage aesthetics. I say old-school because of course today it is more apt to use overhead scanners with digital cameras. Currently I am collaborating with artist Ilan Manouach, building a collection of conceptual comics (monoskop.org/Conceptual\_comics), consisting mostly of works published in the past ten years. Ilan has built his own overhead scanner and photographs books with pages open, which opens up for a special physical experience. Rather than creating ready-to-print digital copies, these PDFs may be experienced on tablets and digital frames, emphasising the “visuality” of these works.

**XPUB** In the Monoskop catalog, we have found books such as “Umenie dnes” by Tomáš Štraus (for example, page 3, 158, and 172) where the digital copy contains marks from the physical source. When did this preoccupation start and what does it mean for you to explore the processes in the margins of readable sources?

**DUŠAN** This scan [figure 07–08] was made as part of our *Unlimited Edition* series of digital editions of rare but important works from art history. The PDF file has coins, Czechoslovak crowns, placed on some of the pages, totaling the original price of a copy of the book. I think it was an attempt to address the relations between value, historicity and distribution. One thing is the virtue of bringing an out-of-print volume back into distribution, another is the radically different context in which this happens. The act of digitisation is often viewed as automated and neutral, but of course, as you said, there are many decisions involved along the line. One can clearly see it when comparing digital reproductions of a single volume made by different individuals and institutions. Our part is to question the logic of the assembly line so tightly attached to the digitisation of art, knowledge and heritage.

**XPUB** Archives such as the Archiv der Avant-garden (AdA) in Dresden where you were involved,

are starting to implement digital archives for their collections. However, the historical memory of the physical item with its time frame within a specific archive and its spatial position in it are not represented, showing a loss of criticism in the relation between materials, institutions, and people involved in its fruition. Do you think is it important to keep this historical information in the digital implementation of a collection?

**DUŠAN** It is by now well acknowledged that a printed document and its digital copy is not the same thing, their properties are different. But besides the politics of file formats and optical character recognition, there is a whole range of other issues which are subject to different affordances and interests in the digital domain. What struck me in researching the Archiv der Avant-garden (AdA) in Dresden was the palpability of contextual framework imposed by the institution of a collection upon included items, and the (however unintentional) role of the digital version of the collection to obfuscate this imposition.

The archive follows, rather strictly, a certain structural logic, invented and applied to it by its original owner before the archive has been transformed into a public institution. The order has been inspired by and expands upon the book ‘Kunstismen’ by El Lissitzky and Hans Arp (<https://monoskop.org/log/?p=11956>) in which they represented some of the avant-garde movements of the era by various “isms”. The collector had been active mainly from the 1960s through the 1980s, this era obviously left its marks on the structure. You have to spend some time in the archive before the logic and structure really comes forth and gets revealed to you in full. It is very hard, if not impossible to let this happen in the digital realm. But this is where most people will access and experience it after the archive gets published online. There it won't be so obvious to notice that it almost solely represents male artists from the Western world and equally hard it will be to understand why, as this logic has also played a role in acquisitions. What kept on resurfacing during our research (there were about 60 researchers involved in the project) was the will of the AdA team to “fill the gaps”. Here, a digital archive comes to help cover

the traces as well. Once new acquisitions enter the archive, they will merge with the rest of the collection, as if they have always been there.

A website seemingly erases the past and presents the current state of the collection as the ever-lasting one. The takeaway here is that a digital archive provides access to cultural memory but it tends to lack memory of itself; and while it provides access to the world's memory, it tends to do so out of nowhere. What do we do about it?

XPUB Some of the books in Monoskop Log are linked to the digital library of origin; what is your intention in providing this kind of historical path to the file? Do you keep track of the viability of these links?

DUŠAN It is often about finding a right balance between acknowledging and protecting sources. When I am unsure I try to ask, although I am more happy when Monoskop serves really as one point in the path of a file so that one can trace it back to where it came from. Perhaps we can think of distribution along the lines of citation practises. As we said earlier, there is work and decisions involved in digitisation, and linking sources adds to both credit and accountability.

XPUB In your 2013 interview for *Neural Magazine* you say that takedown notices are often a reality for Monoskop. Do you keep records of which books you were asked to remove, and by whom you were asked to do it? Do you think this kind of practice could reveal valuable information on how free access to texts is tracked by publishers and how to escape systematic control?

DUŠAN Yes we do keep records and try to be very open about it. As a rule, the entries on Monoskop Log are preserved even after the actual files are removed. I usually leave a note about the date and the subject who asked for deletion. This marks a part of the path of the book, even if it reaches a dead end in this case.

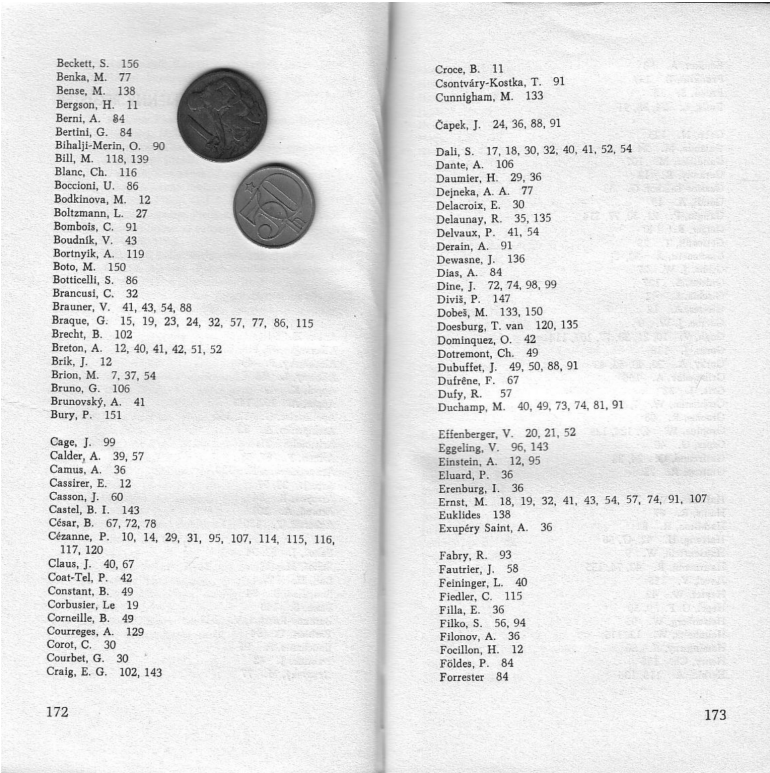
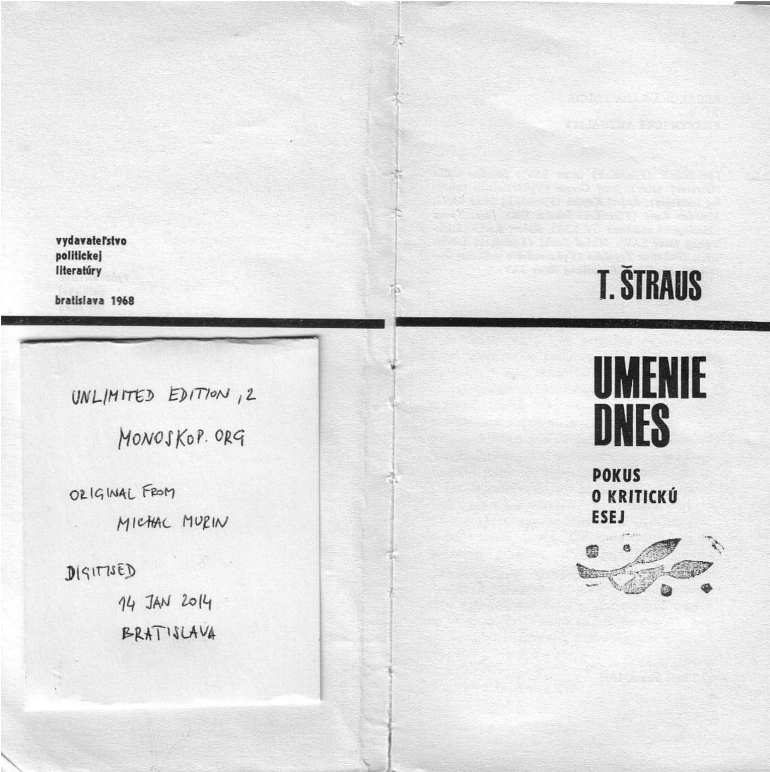
XPUB Monoskop explores the condition of digital books but it is a project also related to the evolution of art in its most contemporary and

digital forms. In terms of your doctoral studies in the preservation of contemporary art, what is the relation between digital artworks and digital books? Should their processes of conservation and reproduction be addressed in the same way?

DUŠAN That's a good question, I haven't thought about it that way yet. As it happens, it is more straightforward to archive and preserve single files such as digital books in PDF and EPUB. This has been a crucial part of our work on Monoskop. However, many publications and other works are websites and similar assemblages of code and data, written in multiple programming languages with various software dependencies and consisting of many files and pages, oftentimes running on top of relational databases. Here we rely on the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine. When an online work comes down, one can almost always find its archived version on the Wayback Machine and this is what I usually do myself when I want to update a dead link to a website. I am aware there is too much at stake, and fields such as the preservation of software-based art do have much to offer here. Libraries where crawling and scraping meets emulation and virtualisation? Yes please!



↑ FIGURE 06 *Negros Rojos*



↓ FIGURE 07–08 *Unlimited Editions*

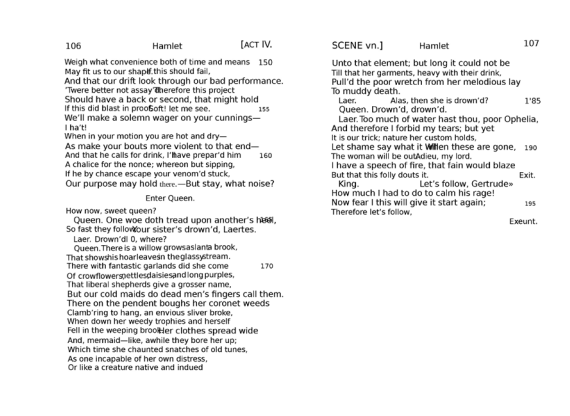
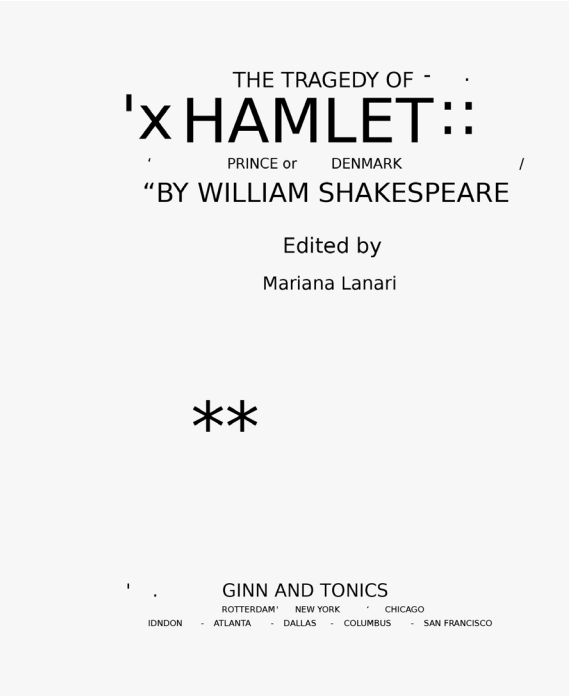
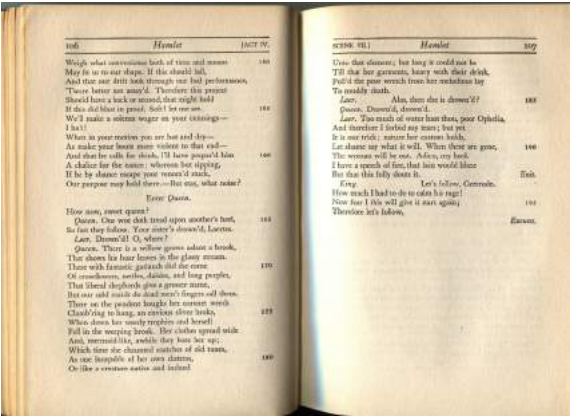
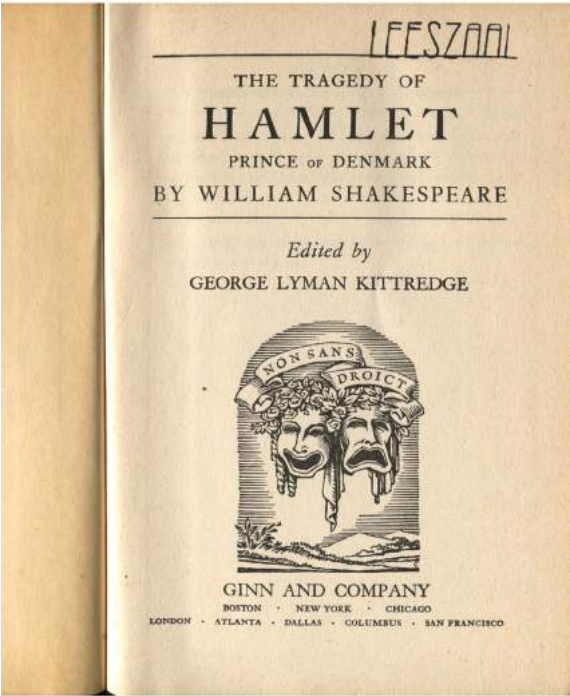
NAME — Mariana Lanari

PLACE — Rotterdam

DATE — 20/6/19

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AUTHOR	SHAKESPEARE	
2. CONDITION REPORT	NE	2. 15.47
BOOK WEIGHT	324 g/s	
TOTAL PAGE NUMBER	334 pgs	
CONDITION	NE	
VISIBLE MARKS	Spot in the cover	
3. SCAN		3. 15:52
4. PAGE CORRECTION		4. 16.07
5. OCR-ING		5. 16.10
6. PROOF-READING		6. 16.10
7. METADATA		7. 16.21
8. COMPILE THE PDF		8.
9. UPLOAD		

↑FIGURE 09 Uploaded form  
→FIGURE 10 Workshop output reader (excerpt)



NAME – Remco v. Bladel

PLACE – Rotterdam

DATE – 20-66-2019

PROCESSES	NOTES	TIME
1. CHOOSE BOOK		1. 2min
TITLE	The P78 Anthology	
AUTHOR	Harry Hoogstraten & Jos Kuipscher	
2. CONDITION REPORT		2. 3min
BOOK WEIGHT	759 gram	
TOTAL PAGE NUMBER	224 pages	
CONDITION	asset, very good,	
VISIBLE MARKS	some folds on pages corners. slight usage on sides of cover + index 1 + II	
3. SCAN		3. 2min.
4. PAGE CORRECTION	1	4. 2min.
5. OCR-ING		5. 1min.
6. PROOF-READING		6. 3min
7. METADATA		7. 2min
8. COMPILE THE PDF		8.
9. UPLOAD		

↑FIGURE 11 Uploaded form

→FIGURE 12 Workshop output reader (excerpt)

Index I

5 Soyo Benn How it started

14 Tom Raworth For the Sake of Argument

22 Harry Hoogstraten from Come Again

24 Milly Graffi La parola invisibile

26 Julien Blaine A mon repertoire: 'The Longest Walk'

36 Lorenzo Thomas A Train to Haarlem

40 Ricardo Sanchez P-78: One World Energetics

43 (Ricardo Sanchez: part of an article in 'Rayas')

57 James Koller For Peter & Marilyn/For Jedediah (from 'Andiamo', Great Raven Press, 1978)

58 Piero Heliczer L'underground c'est moi/The Case of the Sainte Therèse

63 Peter Nijmeijer Ontbijt op de horizon

64 Erika Dedinszky Litanie voor de vrouw/Epileerloog/Vlakland

66 Harold Norse Get Your Big Fat Wings out of My Face, Billy/ Transcendental Meditation

70 Ken Mangroelal Zwaar en zonder einde

83 Franco Beltrametti Sette Poesie-Seven Poems

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87 Bill Berkson/Joanne Kyger Amsterdam Memoirs or The Sex Life of Lewis MacAdams

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102 Simon Vinkenoog News from the Hourglass

108 Harris Schiff poem /Whales and Acorns/Cowboy Love Poem/ P78 Amsterdam was the biggest turn on ...

121 Anne Waldman Adventure

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128 Vernie February text

130 Wim van Binsbergen Heart of Darkness/Ouder geworden

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145 Hans Plomp The Gentle Art of Losing/ Evil Roots

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162 Bird Marks Things that happen now

163 Lewis MacAdams Dear G.

174 Patti Smith Live at the Paradise! (full moon) (H.M. /Neo Boy) (Babel/G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1978)

180 Bert Schierbeek from The Shape of the Voice

184 Steel Davidson Ben is altijd de mooiste/Punk Rules, OK?

186 Jules Desider Python Place (uit 'Moderne geschiedenis', Bezige Bij, 1978)

189 Robert Paul Figue uit het epos van Kruatorus I

190'n Cohen a Bruchsal for Herman Brood

192 Jules Desider Python Place (uit 'Moderne geschiedenis', Bezige Bij, 1978)

194 Hans Weidinger Tent

196 Shusaku Takeuchi poem

197 Spent Kuiper Haar kuster (w/De dichter zingt', C.J. Aarts, 1978)

198 Alex Hout het kindervuurtje Shakti

199Barret Wallen from Notebooks (in Big Sky, 6/1973)

200 Herman Brood brief

201 Eddie Woods Poetry & The Parks: An Apocalyptic Con-templation

209 Harold Norse/Joanne Kyger/ Ted Berrigan/Franco Beltra-metti: Notes on Harry Gput

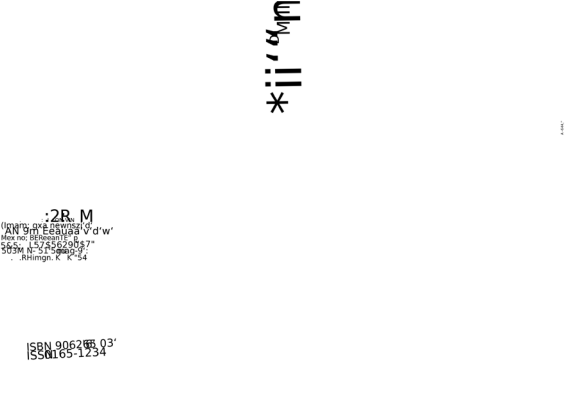
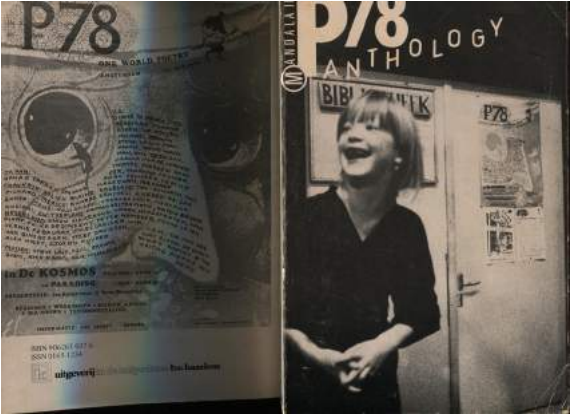
212 Simon Vinkenoog 'artikel in'Vakeland', 25/1078

214 (Moldovan Dorothea: twee pagina's uit 'Moggy' Vilag', 2/ 1 9 79)

Photo credits

Pietro Gagli 6/7/8/9/11/12/20/31/34/45/46/47/48/49/50/52/53/54/ 55/56/100/111/112/113/114/115/116/117/118/119/120/140/ 167/168/169/170/171/172/173/174/175/176/177/178/179/180/181/ 182/183/184/185/186/187/188/189/190/191/192/193/194/195/196/197/198/199/200/201/202/203/204/205/206/207/208/209/210/211/212/213/214/215/216/217/218/219/220/221/222/223/224/225/226/227/228/229/230/231/232/233/234/235/236/237/238/239/240/241/242/243/244/245/246/247/248/249/250/251/252/253/254/255/256/257/258/259/260/261/262/263/264/265/266/267/268/269/270/271/272/273/274/275/276/277/278/279/280/281/282/283/284/285/286/287/288/289/290/291/292/293/294/295/296/297/298/299/300/301/302/303/304/305/306/307/308/309/310/311/312/313/314/315/316/317/318/319/320/321/322/323/324/325/326/327/328/329/330/331/332/333/334/335/336/337/338/339/340/341/342/343/344/345/346/347/348/349/350/351/352/353/354/355/356/357/358/359/360/361/362/363/364/365/366/367/368/369/370/371/372/373/374/375/376/377/378/379/380/381/382/383/384/385/386/387/388/389/390/391/392/393/394/395/396/397/398/399/400/401/402/403/404/405/406/407/408/409/410/411/412/413/414/415/416/417/418/419/420/421/422/423/424/425/426/427/428/429/430/431/432/433/434/435/436/437/438/439/440/441/442/443/444/445/446/447/448/449/450/451/452/453/454/455/456/457/458/459/460/461/462/463/464/465/466/467/468/469/470/471/472/473/474/475/476/477/478/479/480/481/482/483/484/485/486/487/488/489/490/491/492/493/494/495/496/497/498/499/500/501/502/503/504/505/506/507/508/509/510/511/512/513/514/515/516/517/518/519/520/521/522/523/524/525/526/527/528/529/530/531/532/533/534/535/536/537/538/539/540/541/542/543/544/545/546/547/548/549/550/551/552/553/554/555/556/557/558/559/560/561/562/563/564/565/566/567/568/569/570/571/572/573/574/575/576/577/578/579/580/581/582/583/584/585/586/587/588/589/590/591/592/593/594/595/596/597/598/599/600/601/602/603/604/605/606/607/608/609/610/611/612/613/614/615/616/617/618/619/620/621/622/623/624/625/626/627/628/629/630/631/632/633/634/635/636/637/638/639/640/641/642/643/644/645/646/647/648/649/650/651/652/653/654/655/656/657/658/659/660/661/662/663/664/665/666/667/668/669/670/671/672/673/674/675/676/677/678/679/680/681/682/683/684/685/686/687/688/689/690/691/692/693/694/695/696/697/698/699/700/701/702/703/704/705/706/707/708/709/710/711/712/713/714/715/716/717/718/719/720/721/722/723/724/725/726/727/728/729/730/731/732/733/734/735/736/737/738/739/740/741/742/743/744/745/746/747/748/749/750/751/752/753/754/755/756/757/758/759/760/761/762/763/764/765/766/767/768/769/770/771/772/773/774/775/776/777/778/779/780/781/782/783/784/785/786/787/788/789/790/791/792/793/794/795/796/797/798/799/800/801/802/803/804/805/806/807/808/809/810/811/812/813/814/815/816/817/818/819/820/821/822/823/824/825/826/827/828/829/830/831/832/833/834/835/836/837/838/839/840/841/842/843/844/845/846/847/848/849/850/851/852/853/854/855/856/857/858/859/860/861/862/863/864/865/866/867/868/869/870/871/872/873/874/875/876/877/878/879/880/881/882/883/884/885/886/887/888/889/890/891/892/893/894/895/896/897/898/899/900/901/902/903/904/905/906/907/908/909/910/911/912/913/914/915/916/917/918/919/920/921/922/923/924/925/926/927/928/929/930/931/932/933/934/935/936/937/938/939/940/941/942/943/944/945/946/947/948/949/950/951/952/953/954/955/956/957/958/959/960/961/962/963/964/965/966/967/968/969/970/971/972/973/974/975/976/977/978/979/980/981/982/983/984/985/986/987/988/989/990/991/992/993/994/995/996/997/998/999/1000

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NAME — *Laiy*

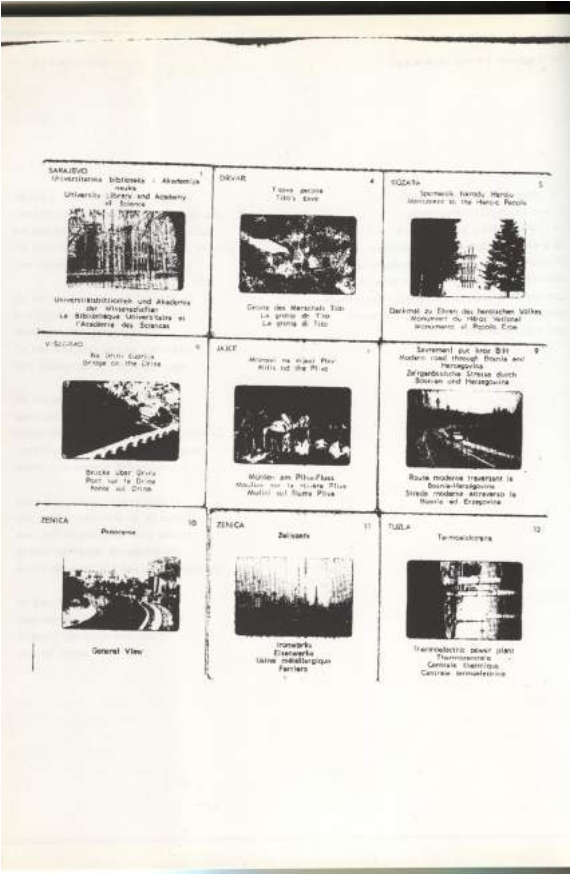
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DATE — *2116*

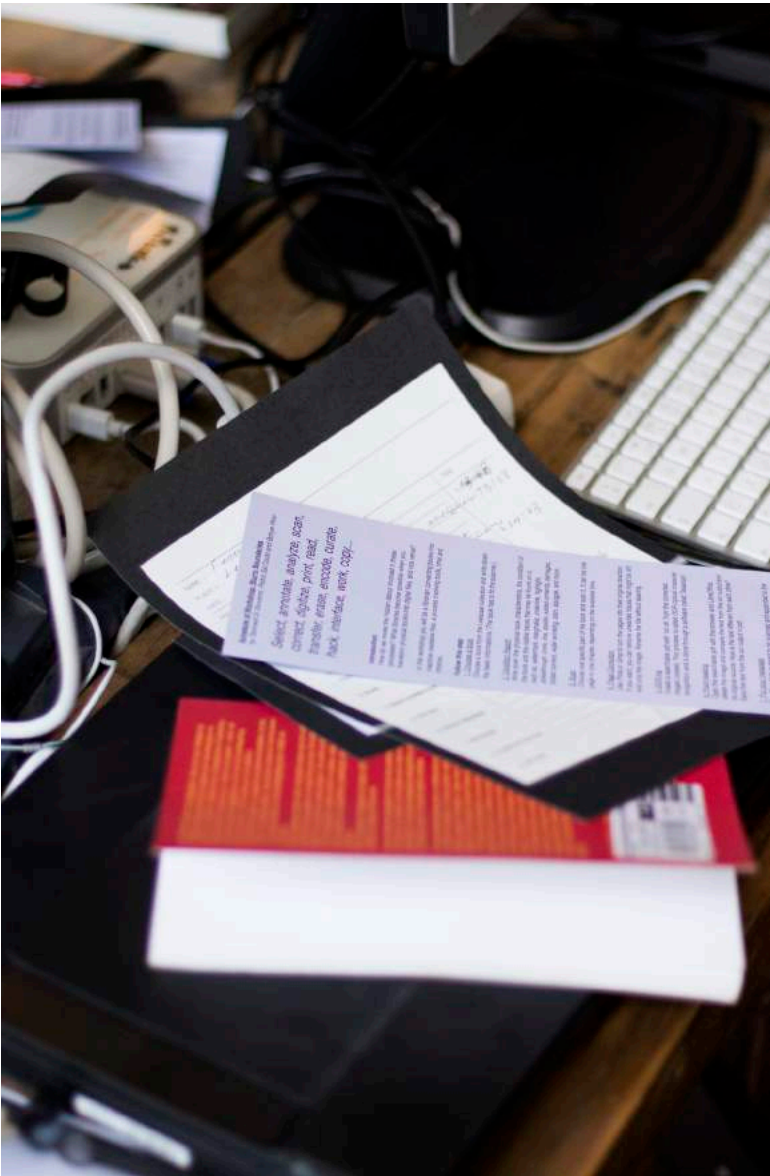
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CONDITION	<i>NF</i>	
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6. PROOF-READING		6. <i>14:22</i>
7. METADATA		7.
8. COMPILE THE PDF		8.
9. UPLOAD		

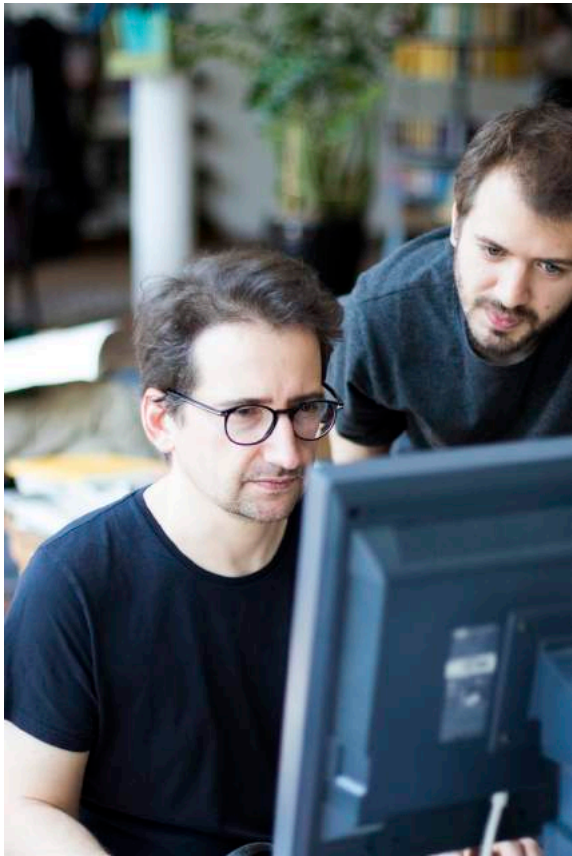
↑FIGURE 13 Uploaded form

→FIGURE 14 Workshop output reader (excerpt)



↓FIGURE 15 Workshop workspace  
→FIGURE 16 Countdown clock  
√FIGURE 17 LAN setup with a Raspberry Pi and a router

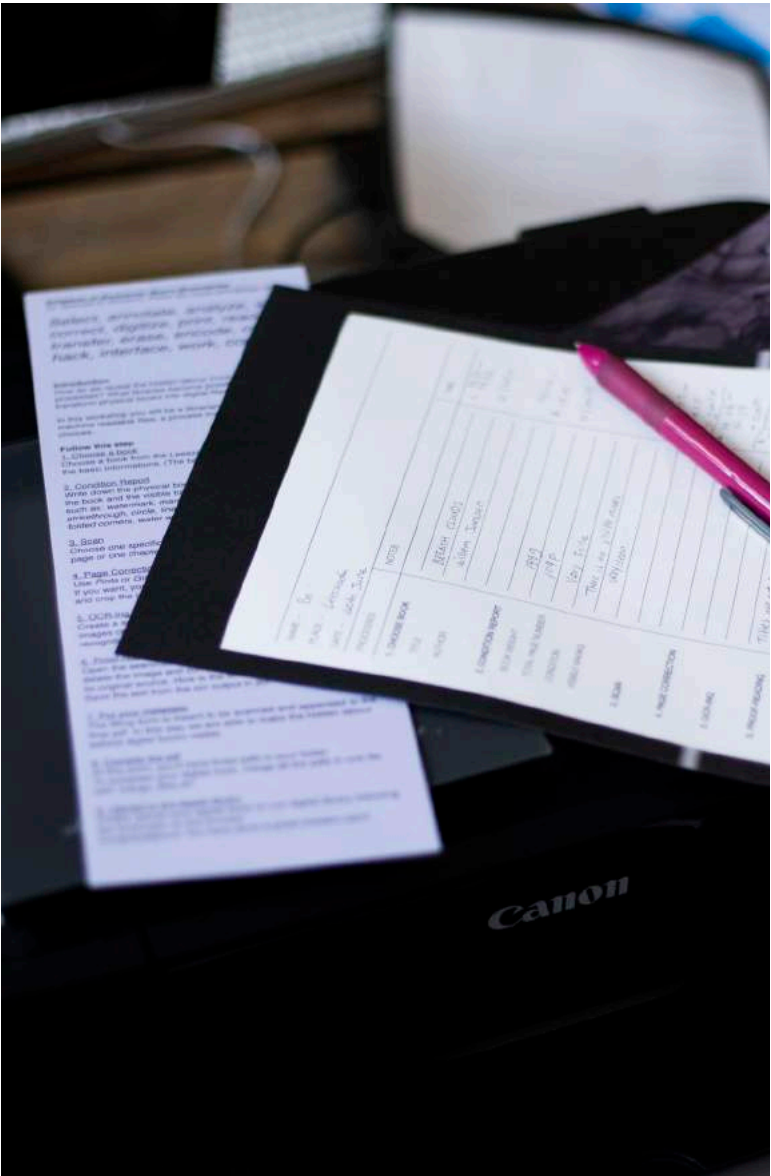




↑FIGURE 18 Workshop participants  
↗FIGURE 19 Workshop workspace



↑FIGURE 20 Workshop workspace  
→FIGURE 21 Filled in forms



Appendix: Open Letters

*Letter from Femke Snelting, “Dear Participants in Interfacing the Law”*

*Letter on Library Genesis, “In Solidarity with Library Genesis and Sci-Hub”*

*Letter from Alexandra Elbakyan to Judge Robert W. Sweet*

Brussels, 7 April 2019

Dear participants in *Interfacing the law*!

The Special Issue that we are about to begin next week, starts with two letters (or three, if you include the one you are reading). The first was an Open Letter written by a group of people brought together by Memory of the world in 2015. It is titled '[In solidarity with Library Genesis and Sci-Hub](#)'. It was widely published at the moment Elsevier launched a court case against Sci-Hub.org, Bookfi.org and Elibgen.org. The second is a [letter by Alexandra Elbakyan](#) in response to that same court case. If you have not already read these two letters, maybe you can read them before continuing?

The two letters circumscribe the context that Special Issue #9 situates itself in. Reading and publishing are increasingly turning digital, and instead of it becoming easier for anyone to have access to books from anywhere, paywalls and draconian legal measures make it hard for public- and university libraries to function as knowledge access-providers. It has made it more and more difficult for individual readers outside but also inside institutions, to read what they need.

Sci-hub (the website that Elbakyan set up), aaaaarg, monoskop, Libgen and various other initiatives operate in this grey area. These so-called 'shadowlibraries' collect and distribute electronic texts freely, and some of them also propose carefully maintained collections and selections that are quite different from what is generally available via mainstream platforms. But while these illegal infrastructures have become critical resources for academic and independent researchers like me, we still hardly speak out for them publicly. "*It is time to emerge from hiding and put our names behind this act of resistance*" the Open Letter states, and so I did.

Signing as Constant, the association for arts and media that I work with, might have made more sense. After all, everything I know and think about author rights has been developed with this Brussels' based collective. But as a publicly funded association, committed to Free Culture since the early 2000s, it was not obvious to publicly support piracy and so I signed the Open Letter under my own name. I am writing you this to show how the current landscape of intellectual property produces paradoxical positions that we all take on a daily basis: what (not) to download, share and distribute; what to consider normal, brave, necessary or too risky.

The Free Culture and Open Access movement propose a legal way out of the current impasse of intellectual property by deploying the little space available in the law. For Constant, the potential of this proposal relates to feminist positions on knowledge production and distribution and the need to rethink the conditions of authorship. But over the years, we have become frustrated by the way that legal alternatives have stayed within the classical discourse of representation, thereby making it hard to question what kinds of access should be available to whom, how individual authorship is framing social and cultural conditions, and how knowledge and property are being conflated in the current legal regime. These questions regain importance in times of austerity and the privatisation of education, but also when we attempt to confront the colonial patterns that resurface in the age of the digital library.

Both Elbakyan's frank response to the court case, and the Open Letter, critically take on issues with (intellectual) property, but otherwise make a double move. They call for civil disobedience to forge a way out of the broken system of knowledge access, while at the same time asking us to be

"custodians", keepers of knowledge. How to rethink a broken system without rethinking what it is keeping and how?

It seems there is enormous potential in shadow libraries to re-imagine the categories of knowledge beyond the fault lines than the ones drawn by the privileged universities of the West. As Bodo Balasz, one of our guests, proposes: '*Pirate libraries (...) operate in a zone where there is little to no obstacle to the development of the "ideal" library. As such, pirate libraries can teach important lessons on what is expected of a library, how book consumption habits evolve, and how knowledge flows around the globe.*' And also Eva Weinmayr, who will join us in May, explains that her collection of pirated books is '*creating a platform to innovatively explore the spectrum of copying / re-editing / translating / paraphrasing / imitating / re-organising / manipulating of already existing works.*'

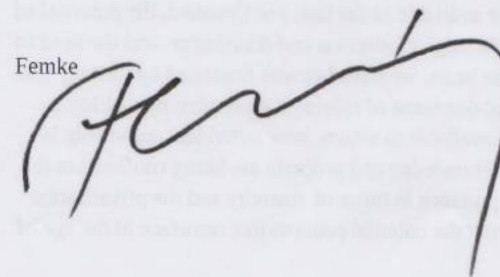
The disobedient stance of piracy can obscure the way it keeps categories of knowledge in place, either by calling upon universalist sentiments for the right to access, by relying on conventional modes of care or by avoiding the complicated subject of the law altogether. If we want to find ways to make the public debate on shadow libraries transcend the juridical binary of illegal versus legal, and claim political legitimacy for acting out their potential, we need to experiment with how these libraries are a form of publishing, how they rethink the social contracts that link libraries, librarians, readers and books. And that is what we'll try to do in *Interfacing the law*.

Extra-legal publishing, bibliothèques sauvage, piratical text collections, popular resource sharing methods, peer-acy, amateur digital libraries, bibliogifting, uneasy sharing, peer produced libraries ... the growing collection of euphemisms for pirate libraries points at the vibrancy of these practice that are literally unbound from institutional, legal and even conventional material constraints. Always paradoxical or even incoherent, they interface each in their own way with legal and political frameworks. How can these practices get us closer to the kind of libraries we require?

I leave you with this question for now, knowing Aymeric will open up the conversation with you next Monday 15 April. Wishing you a good week in the mean time and looking very much forward to be with you all on Tuesday.

All the best,

Femke



## In solidarity with Library Genesis and Sci-Hub

In Antoine de Saint Exupéry's tale the Little Prince meets a businessman who accumulates stars with the sole purpose of being able to buy more stars. The Little Prince is perplexed. He owns only a flower, which he waters every day. Three volcanoes, which he cleans every week. *"It is of some use to my volcanoes, and it is of some use to my flower, that I own them,"* he says, *"but you are of no use to the stars that you own"*.

There are many businessmen who own knowledge today. Consider Elsevier, the largest scholarly publisher, whose 37% profit margin<sup>1</sup> stands in sharp contrast to the rising fees, expanding student loan debt and poverty-level wages for adjunct faculty. Elsevier owns some of the largest databases of academic material, which are licensed at prices so scandalously high that even Harvard, the richest university of the global north, has complained that it cannot afford them any longer. Robert Darnton, the past director of Harvard Library, says *"We faculty do the research, write the papers, referee papers by other researchers, serve on editorial boards, all of it for free ... and then we buy back the results of our labour at outrageous prices."*<sup>2</sup> For all the work supported by public money benefiting scholarly publishers, particularly the peer review that grounds their legitimacy, journal articles are priced such that they prohibit access to science to many academics - and all non-academics - across the world, and render it a token of privilege.<sup>3</sup>

Elsevier has recently filed a copyright infringement suit in New York against Science Hub and Library Genesis claiming millions of dollars in damages.<sup>4</sup> This has come as a big blow, not just to the administrators of the websites but also to thousands of researchers around the world for whom these sites are the only viable source of academic materials. The social media, mailing lists and IRC channels have been filled with their distress messages, desperately seeking articles and publications.

Even as the New York District Court was delivering its injunction, news came of the entire editorial board of highly-esteemed journal *Lingua* handing in their collective resignation, citing as their reason the refusal by Elsevier to go open access and give up on the high fees it charges to authors and their academic institutions. As we write these lines, a petition is doing the rounds demanding that Taylor & Francis doesn't shut down Ashgate<sup>5</sup>, a formerly independent humanities publisher that it acquired earlier in 2015. It is threatened to go the way of other small publishers that are being rolled over by the growing monopoly and concentration in the publishing market. These are just some of the signs that the system is broken. It devalues us, authors, editors and readers alike. It parasites on our labor, it thwarts our service to the public, it denies us access<sup>6</sup>.

We have the means and methods to make knowledge accessible to everyone, with no economic barrier to access and at a much lower cost to society. But closed access's monopoly over academic publishing, its spectacular profits and its central role in the allocation of academic prestige trump the public interest. Commercial publishers effectively impede open access, criminalize us, prosecute our heroes and heroines, and destroy our libraries, again and again. Before Science Hub and Library Genesis there was Library.nu or Gigapedia; before Gigapedia there was textz.com; before textz.com there was little; and before there was little there was nothing. That's what they want: to reduce most of us back to nothing. And they have the full support of the courts and law to do exactly that.<sup>7</sup>

In Elsevier's case against Sci-Hub and Library Genesis, the judge said: *"simply making copyrighted content available for free via a foreign website, disserves the public interest"*<sup>8</sup>. Alexandra Elbakyan's original plea put the stakes much higher: *"If Elsevier manages to shut down our projects or force them into the darknet, that will demonstrate an important idea: that the public does not have the right to knowledge."*

We demonstrate daily, and on a massive scale, that the system is broken. We share our writing secretly behind the backs of our publishers, circumvent paywalls to access articles and publications, digitize and upload books to libraries. This is the other side of 37% profit margins: our knowledge commons grows in the fault lines of a broken system. We are all custodians of knowledge, custodians of the same infrastructures that we depend on for producing knowledge, custodians of our fertile but fragile commons. To be a custodian is, de facto, to download, to share, to read, to write, to review, to edit, to digitize, to archive, to maintain libraries, to make them accessible. It is to be of use to, not to make property of, our knowledge commons.

More than seven years ago Aaron Swartz, who spared no risk in standing up for what we here urge you to stand up for too, wrote: *"We need to take information, wherever it is stored, make our copies and share them with the world. We need to take stuff that's out of copyright and add it to the archive. We need to buy secret databases and put them on the Web. We need to download scientific journals and upload them to file sharing networks. We need to fight for Guerilla Open Access. With enough of us, around the world, we'll not just send a strong message opposing the privatization of knowledge — we'll make it a thing of the past. Will you join us?"*<sup>9</sup>

We find ourselves at a decisive moment. This is the time to recognize that the very existence of our massive knowledge commons is an act of collective civil disobedience. It is the time to emerge from hiding and put our names behind this act of resistance. You may feel isolated, but there are many of us. The anger, desperation and fear of losing our library infrastructures, voiced across the internet, tell us that. This is the time for us custodians, being dogs, humans or cyborgs, with our names, nicknames and pseudonyms, to raise our voices.

Share this letter - read it in public - leave it in the printer. Share your writing - digitize a book - upload your files. Don't let our knowledge be crushed. Care for the libraries - care for the metadata - care for the backup. Water the flowers - clean the volcanoes.

30 November 2015

Dušan Barok, Josephine Berry, Bodó Balázs, Sean Dockray, Kenneth Goldsmith, Anthony Iles, Lawrence Liang, Sebastian Lütgert, Pauline van Mourik Broekman, Marcell Mars, spideralex, Tomislav Medak, Dubravka Sekulić, Femke Snelting...

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6. *"The Cost of Knowledge."* Accessed November 30, 2015. [thecostofknowledge.com](#). [↗](#)
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Dear Mr. Robert W. Sweet,

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DATE FILED 9/15/15

SEP 15 2015  
JUDGE SWEET CHAMBERS

I am writing to clarify some details on Elsevier v. Sci-Hub, Case # 15-cv-4282.

I am the main operator of sci-hub.org website mentioned in the case. That is true that via sci-hub.org website anyone can download, absolutely for free, a copy of research paper published by Elsevier (Elsevier asks for 32 USD for each download).

I would like to clarify the reasons behind sci-hub.org website. When I was a student in Kazakhstan university, I did not have access to any research papers. These papers I needed for my research project. Payment of 32 dollars is just insane when you need to skim or read tens or hundreds of these papers to do research. I obtained these papers by pirating them. Later I found there are lots and lots of researchers (not even students, but university researchers) just like me, especially in developing countries. They created online communities (forums) to solve this problem. I was an active participant in one of such communities in Russia. Here anyone who needs research paper, but cannot pay for it, could place a request and other members who can obtain the paper will send it for free by email. I could obtain any paper by pirating it, so I solved many requests and people always were very grateful for my help. After that, I created sci-hub.org website that simply makes this process automatic and the website immediately became popular.

That is true that website collects donations, however we do not pressure anyone to send them. Elsevier, in contrast, operates by racket: if you do not send money, you will not read any papers. On my website, any person can read as many papers as they want for free, and sending donations is their free will. Why Elsevier cannot work like this, I wonder?

I would also like to mention that Elsevier is not a creator of these papers. All papers on their website are written by researchers, and researchers do not receive money from what Elsevier collects. That is very different from music or movie industry, where creators receive money from each copy sold. But economics of research papers is very different. Authors of these papers do not receive money. Why would they send their work to Elsevier then? They feel pressured to do this, because Elsevier is an owner of so-called "high-impact"

journals. If a researcher wants to be recognized, make a career – he or she needs to have publications in such journals.

What I written here is not just my opinion – this topic is widely discussed in research community. For example, a researcher John Willinsky wrote a book named "The Access Principle: The Case for Open Access to Research and Scholarship" where he discusses this problem. The general opinion in research community is that research papers should be distributed for free (open access), not sold. And practices of such companies like Elsevier are unacceptable, because they limit distribution of knowledge. In 2012, there was an "Elsevier boycott" organized by a prominent mathematician Timothy Gowers to battle such practices:

"The Cost of Knowledge is a protest by academics against the business practices of academic journal publisher Elsevier. Among the reasons for the protests are a call for lower prices for journals and to promote increased open access to information. The main work of the project is to ask researchers to sign a statement committing not to support Elsevier journals by publishing, performing peer review, or providing editorial services for these journals."

I would like to also mention that we never received any complaints from authors or researchers, only Elsevier is complaining about free distribution of knowledge on sci-hub.org website.

Best regards,

Alexandra Elbakyan,  
the sci-hub.org operator

## Colophon

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