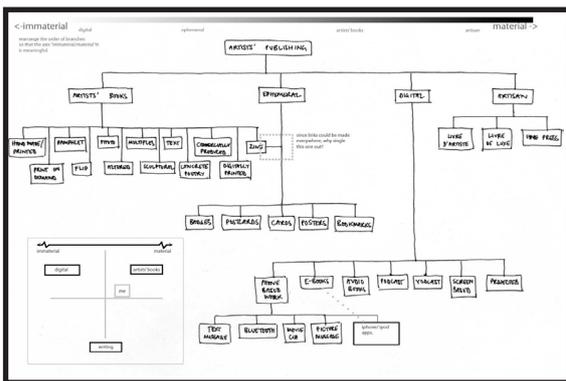


Andrew Eason, Artist, United Kingdom
 www.andreweason.com

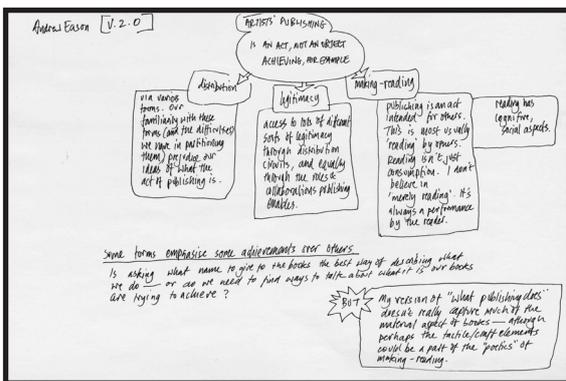
Creative Practice

Methods of Production for artists' books include: Inkjet, Laser printed, Print-on-demand, Screen based/ Internet, Linocut, Woodcut, Lithography, Photocopy, Rubber stamp, Hand-drawn, iPod App.

ABTREE



With reference to the ABTREE, I've set out a proposal for an immaterial/material axis that uses the diagram as a "graph space". I've tried to indicate the place I think I usually occupy in my simplified version (in the bottom left of the [above] altered diagram I have attached).



Do you think anything should be added or removed from this diagram? If so, why?

I've suggested a rearrangement of the order of the main branches so that a continuum is implied between work that is more materially based and work where the material aspect is less important. The juxtaposition of branches important, I think, because a great contrast between branches side-by-side unduly emphasises their difference rather than the overarching similarities they share. I also think that if one wishes to form a web of relationships

between different nodes it's probably better to have some sort of likely axis as an organising principle: it's probable that most links will be closer to their neighbours this way.

Technology and Tradition

My work has become more digitally-based. Partly this is through preference (I don't much enjoy the repetitive aspects of printmaking) & partly through reduced access to workshop technology as I make a living elsewhere.

The computer has helped in the production of my artists' books as it renders my 'studio' virtual; offers a vast range of tools for my use & abuse; allows me to easily incorporate materials and work on my books without necessarily getting too involved with printmaking. It's become germane to my practice. It (the computer) is the primary 'place' of production for me. There's a translation going on, since I'm working *for* print, *for* book, but *in* digital. Compare this statement to Helen Douglas' assertion of the book as the 'place of her making'. I'm still working 'in-book', but I'm able to model and manipulate the space digitally rather than through paper. That said, there are too many times when I've made mistakes because I didn't make a good enough mock up, or didn't really get to see the pages side by side in reality, rather than on-screen!

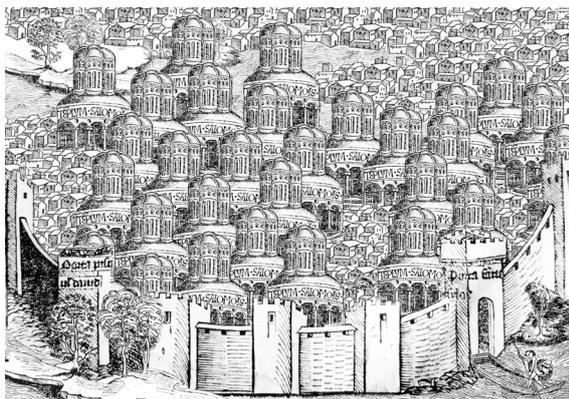
There are difficulties to be surmounted in 'seeing' the book in the computer, but as I say, there are many offsetting plusses in the form of tools, possibilities of combining/ translating media in digital form, etc.

I think self-produced digital print (ie inkjet) has so far been most successful means for me in most ways. I've used Blurb, the print-on-demand service, but I'm still finding out how best to use it. There's an extra layer of translation involved in 'outside' services like Blurb, which I would have had more opportunity to work out in the 'inside' context of my own production.

Yes, new technologies influence my creative process. Computers' powers of collage and repetition have profoundly helped me establish my narrative language. They allow expressive work to be used iconographically: I can repeat certain signs in changing contexts so that they emerge as a language, not a picture. Of course this has always been a possibility in print, or through skilful repetition of drawing, but computers make this very easy and encourage me to further visual poetics. I'm sure others with a good grasp of their *own* preferred technologies feel similarly, and I would be surprised if there weren't good and bad points to all our preferred methods and tools.

I don't really enjoy the strictly-defined *production* process. I'm much more interested in the 'creative bit' that precedes it. I draw a line between creating/discovering/assembling the book that will be produced, and the production itself. It's a chore to me. That's why I'm interested in print-on-demand services. But I would still like to have more control than is currently available with print-on-demand, so I am still largely self-producing work.

The possibility of producing books is circumscribed by how much I can afford to lose on them. This isn't a production-plan, though. It isn't necessarily the case for me that the cost to me is necessarily reflected in the price to the reader. I try to make books that are 'right' without costing me too much, but I do have some concern about how much my books realistically cost me. There is a sense in which I am happy for them to be, to an extent, a gift to my readers. It's important to understand that books are, for me, where I feel I have most to give. I understand that they are not the best way to make money, but they *are* the best way for me to give whatever it is I have to give through my artwork.



The Nuremberg Chronicles, Andrew Eason, 2009

If your work falls mainly into the digital category, how do you think your work will adapt as technology develops? For example, if software or hardware become obsolete.

So far, so good. I'm hoping that I haven't used particularly exotic programmes to create and archive material (which is anyway largely destined for print). It should be possible to transcribe to new platforms when necessary. Some echoes here of scribes copying information?

In my library work I've become aware that standards for digital information are being more scrupulously attended to in the last decade or so. This means a greater chance of recovering information using 'outside' systems. Most imaging formats now allow at least basic interoperability with other platforms. There's no single solution.

I would consider publishing an artist's book on electronic paper, if I could expect results that approached the quality of an 80's photocopy. I don't think we're quite there yet. I think that we need to be able to reproduce drawings reasonably well in order for e-paper to work for me. It's too coarse a medium for me as yet, but I have no dogmatic reasons for not wanting to use it. There would be challenges involved in producing work that played to its strengths: my own might do alright, since I emphasise visual narrative in a codex form. While the tactile aspects of my own work aren't completely negligible, there are many other more 'material' practitioners for whom the losses might prove too great to countenance translation into a different for.

Let's see what happens. Maybe a mature version of e-paper will provide facets of interest for the reader as yet undreamt of!

Marketing and Distribution

I have used the Internet to sell my work via my own website and Print-on-demand websites.

I sell the majority of my artists' books through appointments made with collecting institutions. Who are readers? I'm not targeting an audience in a businesslike way- rather I am 'making-reading'. I am making books for others, like me, who are moved by reading, who experience contact with a shred world of reading through books. My audience isn't, in my mind, a 'target' audience, but one that shares with me the defining characteristic of connecting with society through books. It is an audience of empathy.

Is this disingenuous? Who are they? People who enjoy books, certainly, but if I see them in my minds' eye, they are also people for whom books matter in a way that is to do with how we see and feel about others. This isn't the hardest-headed business-model, clearly, but if I think of the person who buys a book, I think this is the part of them that impels them to do so.

The Future of the Book

I would see producing books using purely digital media as a chance to distribute more widely for free. This is partly because of similar desires to share that one feels with 'real' books, and partly because so much of the web is free. The web currently represents a vast common resource, many parts of which are free. It's good, one feels, to contribute to this as well as benefit from it.

I've not given books away as such, but it would be possible to construct a reasonable facsimile of most of my work from the files in my galleries. Some of

these are also available through Flickr under creative commons licenses. I have also made most of my teaching materials freely available.

There are desires to share and disseminate at play in publishing and in the web. Digital media make it possible to give the gift at little material outlay to oneself. Is a physical book a more valuable gift? Probably. But there are other factors: one might be more reluctant to part with it, and it can only be given away until the edition runs out or one prints more. Bandwidth allowing, digital material is more easily given to a bigger audience.

How do you think bookshops/galleries/specialist shops will adapt to distribute books produced using just digital media?

I assume that this will become quite an important question in years to come. Record stores already feel some of the bite of it, since their medium is very widely available digitally. How will bookshops survive?

I've had several goes at answering this question, and none of my ideas really pan out. I don't know. The common thread seems to be that catering to social networks will become more important than just providing a basic level of product. I see the success of future venues being based more, not less around *communities*, and less around the products they sell. I can't see how this would work financially though.

As we source more and more of our materials online, I think we'll look to the physical experience to provide us with something that the online shop or gallery can't. Clearly the physical materials being provided are really there: there's that relationship with books again and what we lose if we lose the tactile, etc. This extends to the social entity of galleries and bookshops too. Although there are wonderful new ways to interact and create social networks, I think we'll hunger for something that isn't in a virtual gallery or bookshop. Perhaps they will become places we go to share experiences and not simply purchase them?

I think collecting digital media will follow the same pattern as with music. The ubiquity and portability of digital music far outweighs its downside for most listeners. Audiophiles are correct when they say it's not as good in the sense they mean; but that sense isn't the only basis on which the mass of people base their choices. As with music, so with books. For most people, (and most books), there will be a technology that makes digital reading quite acceptable. Perhaps with books we may lose somewhat more than with music, but who is to say that digital media will not become pretty much indistinguishable (at a passing glance, at least) from their analogue counterparts?

(Digital cameras do a pretty good job these days, though we miss the alchemy of processing film, which is a creative loss.)

Will libraries and museums be interested in collecting digital artworks? I think they have to be, if they are to fulfill their remit, and if they not to ignore a growing corpus of work. There are problems involved in storing and accessing digital media, yes, but storage for print isn't cheap either. I think that to ignore such work because of its medium would be as absurd as to ignore it based on the type of paper used to print it on. If it's good, collect it. If it's not, smile and say "no".

This case study forms part of the Centre for Fine Print Research's AHRC funded project 2008 - 2010: *What will be the canon for the artist's book in the 21st Century (In an arena that now includes both digital and traditionally produced artists' books, what will constitute the concepts of artists' publishing in the future?)* <http://www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/canon.htm>