

**Architectures of the Book:
Connecting Exemplars, Models, and Prototypes
in the Development of New Reading Environments**

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Abstract

Why should designers of digital reading environments study the history of the book? What can the continuities and discontinuities—the successes *and* failures—of new developments in the book’s long history teach us about its possible futures? Questions such as these often go unasked in commercial e-book design and other domains which emphasize technical innovation as their main criterion for evaluating the past. However, new reading environments challenge us to understand the role of material forms in meaning-making, and to situate e-books and digital reading devices within the continually changing history of books and reading. That rationale is central to the Implementing New Knowledge Environments (INKE.ca) project, a large-scale, long-term, interdisciplinary project on the future of books and reading, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. INKE differs from other projects of its scope in its focus on strategic prototyping rather than the building of a single large resource, and in its incorporation of book history as a structuring discipline (the project comprises four research teams: Textual Studies; Interface Design; User Experience; and Information Management). This paper will give a brief overview of INKE, but its focus will be a more general rationale for the involvement of book historians and textual scholars in digital interface design.

Specifically, this paper will argue that the study and design of new reading environments should bring together three distinct forms of research: 1) *exemplars*, or typical instances of textual features such as annotations or collated variants, with appropriate historical context; 2) *models*, or abstract representations of those features which can be manipulated in different ways with digital tools; 3) and *prototypes*, or interface components which implement those models in useful ways, but are also strategically scoped to be finishable and sharable on a timeline of months rather than years. These three connected forms of inquiry are often carried out by separate projects, and even by separate communities. For example, the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) Guidelines offer a wealth of XML-encoded models of annotations, but little in the way of deeply contextualized exemplars drawn from the rich history of annotation practices that book historians study. This paper will describe how INKE plans to integrate its research on exemplars, models, and prototypes through the creation of a resource called *Architectures of the Book*, an online, open-access compendium of exemplars from the history of the book. This sub-project within INKE is designed to support modelling and prototyping, but by emphasizing particular instances and case-studies rather than abstract, idealized forms. Drawing examples from our team’s current focus on exemplars for annotation and citation, this paper will suggest ways that the materialist orientation of book history, with its attention to historical specificity and reading practices, can be a healthy influence on the design of e-books and digital interfaces generally.

Bio

Alan Galey is Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Information at the University of Toronto, where he also teaches in the collaborative program in Book History and Print Culture. His research focuses on intersections between textual scholarship and digital technologies, especially in the context of theories of the archive and the history of scholarly editing. He is co-leader of the Textual Studies team on the Implementing New Knowledge Environments (INKE) project.

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