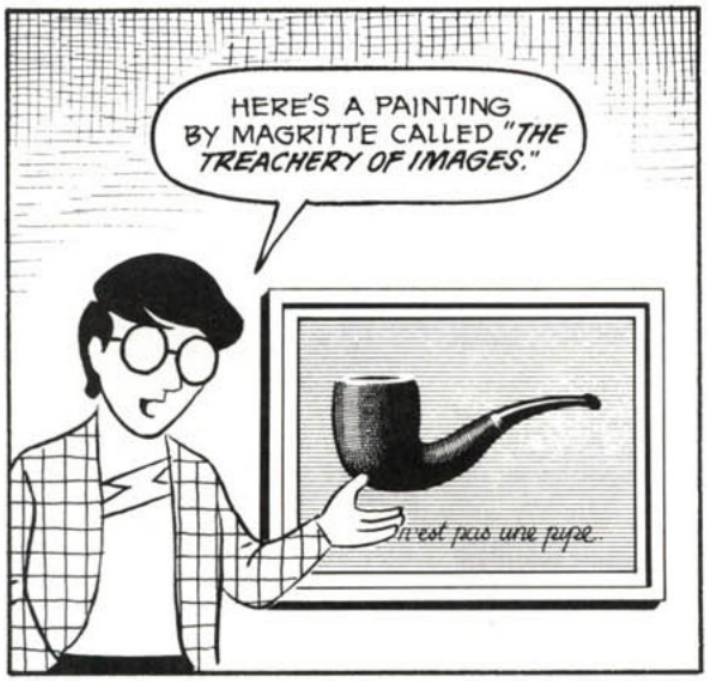
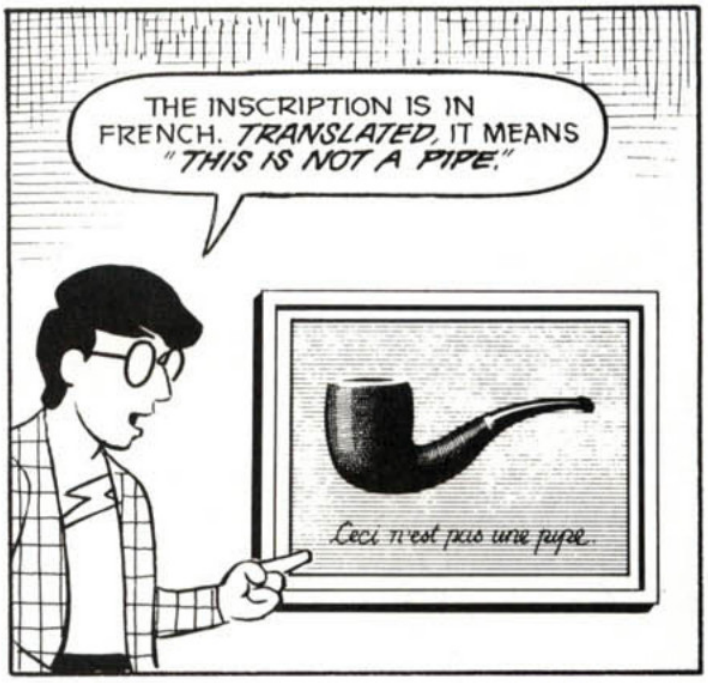
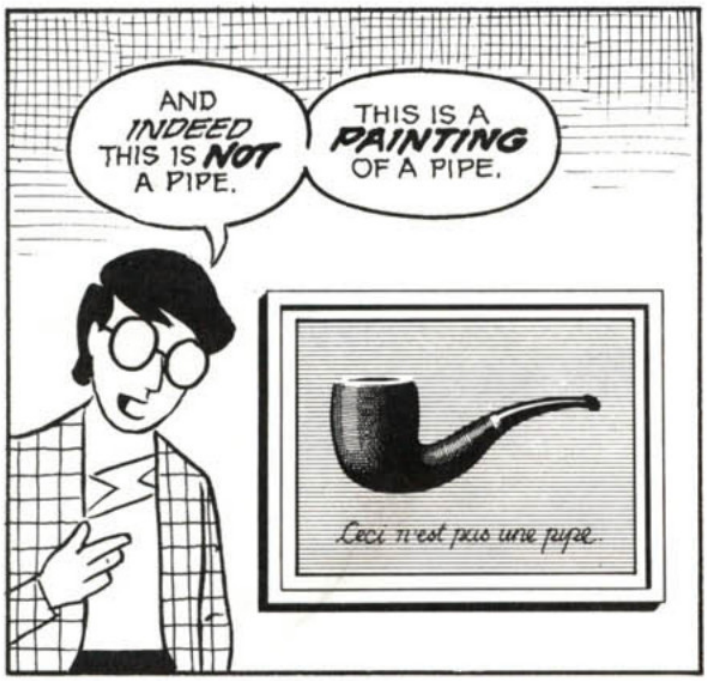
CHAPTER TWO

THE VOCABULARY OF COMICS.







SEE PAGE 216 FOR MORE INFORMATION.


WELL, ACTUALLY, THAT'S WRONG. THIS IS NOT A PAINTING OF A PIPE, THIS IS A DRAWING OF A PAINTING OF A PIPE.
Ceci n'est pas une pipe.
N'EST-CE PAS?
NOPE. WRONG AGAIN. IT'S A PRINTED COPY OF A DRAWING OF A PAINTING OF A PIPE.
Ceci n'est pas une pipe.
TEN COPIES, ACTUALLY.
SIX, IF YOU FOLD THE PAGES BACK.
Ceci n'est pas une pipe.
Ceci n'est pas une pipe.
DO YOU HEAR WHAT I'M SAYING?
Ceci n'est pas une pipe.
IF YOU DO, HAVE YOUR EARS CHECKED, BECAUSE NO ONE SAID A WORD.
Ceci n'est pas une pipe.

Lawrence Liang

Shadow Libraries

Over the last few monsoons I lived with the dread that the rain would eventually find its ways through my leaky terrace roof and destroy my books. Last August my fears came true when I woke up in the middle of the night to see my room flooded and water leaking from the roof and through the walls. Much of the night was spent rescuing the books and shifting them to a dry room. While timing and speed were essential to the task at hand they were also the key hazards navigating a slippery floor with books perched till one's neck. At the end of the rescue mission, I sat alone, exhausted amongst a mountain of books assessing the damage that had been done, but also having found books I had forgotten or had not seen in years; books which I had thought had been permanently borrowed by others or misplaced found their way back as I set many aside in a kind of ritual of renewed commitment.

Sorting the badly damaged from the mildly wet, I could not help but think about the fragile histories of books from the library of Alexandria to the great Florence flood of 1966. It may have seemed presumptuous to move from the precarity of one's small library and collection to these larger events, but is there any other way in which one experiences earth-shattering events if not via a microcosmic filtering through one's own experiences? I sent a distressed email to a friend Sandeep a committed bibliophile and book collector with a fantastic personal library, who had also been responsible for many of my new acquisitions. He wrote back on August 17, and I quote an extract of the email:

> Dear Lawrence
>
> I hope your books are fine. I feel for you very deeply, since my nightmares about the future all contain as a key image my books rotting away under a steady drip of grey water. Where was this leak, in the old house or in the new? I spent some time looking at the books themselves: many of them I greeted like old friends. I see you have Lewis Hyde's *Trickster Makes the World* and Edward Rice's *Captain Sir Richard Francis Burton* in the pile: both top-class books. (Burton is a bit of an obsession with me. The man did and saw everything there was to do and see, and thought about it all, and wrote it all down in a massive pile of notes and manuscripts. He squirrelled a fraction of his scholarship into the tremendous footnotes to the Thousand and One Nights, but most of it he could not publish without scandalising the Victorians, and then he died, and his widow made a bonfire in the backyard, and burnt everything because she disapproved of these products of a lifetime's labors, and of a lifetime such as few have ever had, and no one can ever have again. I almost hope there is a special hell for Isabel Burton to burn in.)

Moving from one's personal pile to the burning of the work of one of the greatest autodidacts of the nineteenth century and back it was strangely comforting to be reminded that libraries—the greatest of time machines invented—were testimonies to both the grandeur and the fragility of civilizations. Whenever I enter huge libraries it is with a tingling sense of excitement normally reserved for horror movies, but at the same time this same sense of awe is often accompanied by an almost debilitating sense of what it means to encounter finitude as it is dwarfed by centuries of words and scholarship. Yet strangely when I think of libraries it is rarely the New York public library that comes to mind even as I wish that we could have similar institutions in India. I think instead of much smaller collections—sometimes of institutions but often just those of friends and acquaintances. I enjoy browsing through people's bookshelves, not just to discern their reading preferences or to discover for myself unknown treasures, but also to take delight in the local logic of their library, their spatial preferences and to understand the order of things not as a global knowledge project but as a personal, often quirky rationale.

Like romantic love, bibliophilia is perhaps shaped by one's first love. The first library that I knew intimately was a little six by eight foot shop hidden in a by-lane off one of the busiest roads in Bangalore, Commercial street. From its name to what it contained, Mecca stores could well have been transported out of an Arabian nights tale. One side of the store was lined with plastic ware and kitchen utensils of every shape and size while the other wall was piled with books, comics, and magazines. From my eight-year-old perspective it seemed large enough to contain all the knowledge of the world. I earned a weekly stipend packing noodles for an hour every day after school in the home shop that my parents ran, which I used to either borrow or buy second hand books from the store. I was usually done with them by Sunday and would have them reread by Wednesday. The real anguish came in waiting from Wednesday to Friday for the next set. After finally acquiring a small collection of books and comics myself I decided—spurred on by a fatal combination of entrepreneurial enthusiasm and a pedantic desire to educate others—to start a small library myself. Packing my books into a small aluminum case and armed with a makeshift ledger, I went from house to house convincing children in the neighborhood to forgo twenty-five paisa in exchange for a book or comic with an additional caveat that they were not to share them with any of their friends. While the enterprise got off to a reasonable start it soon met its end when I realized that despite my instructions, my friends were generously sharing the comics after they were done with them, which thereby ended my biblioempire ambitions.

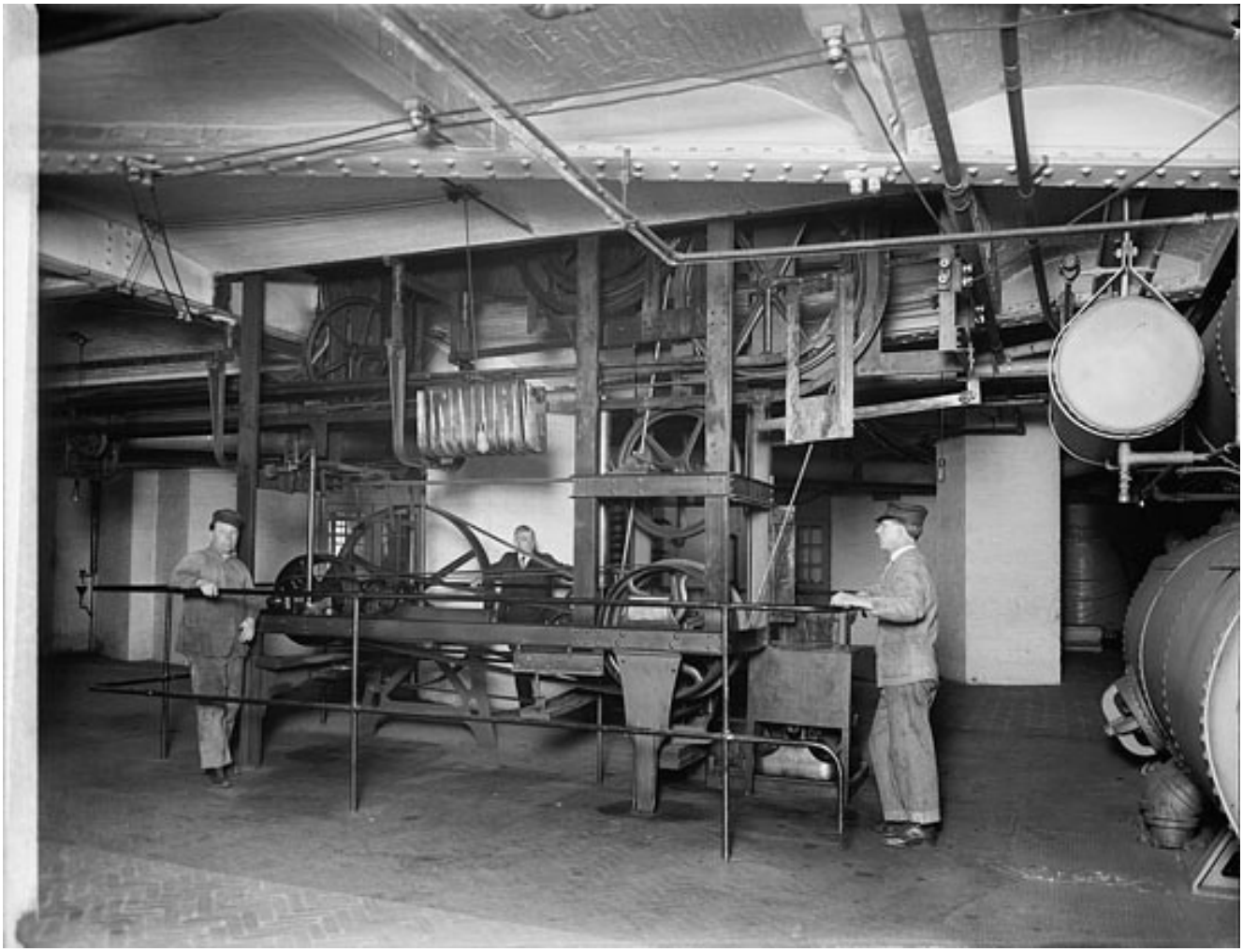
Over the past few years the explosion of ebook readers and consequent rise in the availability of pirated books have opened new worlds to my booklust. Library.nu, which began as gigapedia, suddenly made the idea of the universal library seem like reality. By the time it shut down in February 2012 the library had close to a million books and over half a million active users. Bibliophiles across the world were distraught when the site was shut down and if it were ever possible to experience what the burning of the library of Alexandria must have felt it was that collective ache of seeing the closure of library.nu.

What brings together something as monumental as the New York public library, a collective enterprise like library.nu and Mecca stores if not the word library? As spaces they may have little in common but as virtual spaces they speak as equals even if the scale of their imagination may differ. All of them partake of their share in the world of logotopias. In an exhibition designed to celebrate the place of the library in art, architecture and imagination the curator Sascha Hastings coined the term logotopia to designate "word places"—a happy coincidence of architecture and language.

There is however a risk of flattening the differences between these spaces by classifying them all under a single utopian ideal of the library. Imagination after all has a geography and physiology and requires our alertness to these distinctions. Lets think instead of an entire pantheon (both of spaces as well as practices) that we can designate as shadow libraries (or shadow logotopias if you like) which exist in the shadows cast by the long history of monumental libraries. While they are often dwarfed by the idea of the library, like the shadows cast by our bodies, sometimes these shadows surge ahead of the body.

At the heart of all libraries lies a myth—that of the burning of the library of Alexandria. No one knows what the library of Alexandria looked like or possesses an accurate list of its contents. What we have long known though is a sense of loss. But a loss of what? Of all the forms of knowledge in the world in a particular time. Because that was precisely what the library of Alexandria sought to collect under its roofs. It is believed that in order to succeed in assembling a universal library, King Ptolemy I wrote "to all the sovereigns and governors on earth" begging them to send to him every kind of book by every kind of author, "poets and prose-writers, rhetoricians and sophists, doctors and soothsayers, historians, and all others too." The king's scholars had calculated that five hundred thousand scrolls would be required if they were to collect in Alexandria "all the books of all the peoples of the world."[1]

What was special about the Library of Alexandria was the fact that until then the libraries of the ancient world were either private collections of an individual or government storehouses where legal and literary documents were kept for official reference. By imagining a space where the public could have access to all the knowledge of the world, the library also expressed a new idea of the human itself. While the library of Alexandria is rightfully celebrated, what is often forgotten in the mourning of its demise is another library—one that existed in the shadows



Machine room for book transportation at the Library of Congress, early 20th century.

of the grand library but whose whereabouts ensured that it survived Caesar's papyrus destroying flames.

According to the Sicilian historian Diodorus Siculus, writing in the first century BC, Alexandria boasted a second library, the so-called daughter library, intended for the use of scholars not affiliated with the Museion. It was situated in the south-western neighborhood of Alexandria, close to the temple of Serapis, and was stocked with duplicate copies of the Museion library's holdings. This shadow library survived the fire that destroyed the primary library of Alexandria but has since been eclipsed by the latter's myth.

Alberto Manguel says that if the library of Alexandria stood tall as an expression of universal ambitions, there is another structure that haunts our imagination: the tower of Babel. If the library attempted to conquer time, the tower sought to vanquish space. He says "The Tower of Babel in space and the Library of Alexandria in time are the twin symbols of these ambitions. In their shadow, my small library is a reminder of both impossible yearnings—the desire to contain all the tongues of Babel and the longing to possess all the volumes of Alexandria."[2] Writing about the two failed projects Manguel adds that when seen within the limiting frame of the real, the one exists only as nebulous reality and the other as an unsuccessful if ambitious real estate enterprise. But seen as myths, and in the imagination at night, the solidity of both buildings for him is unimpeachable.[3]

The utopian ideal of the universal library was more than a question of built up form or space or even the possibility of storing all of the knowledge of the world; its real aspiration was in the illusion of order that it could impose on a chaotic world where the lines drawn by a fine hairbrush distinguished the world of animals from men, fairies from ghosts, science from magic, and Europe from Japan. In some cases even after the physical structure that housed the books had crumbled and the books had been reduced

The London Library after the Blitz, c. 1940.

to dust the ideal remained in the form of the order imagined for the library. One such residual evidence comes to us by way of the *Pandectae*—a comprehensive bibliography created by Conrad Gesner in 1545 when he feared that the Ottoman conquerors would destroy all the books in Europe. He created a bibliography from which the library could be built again—an all embracing index which contained a systematic organization of twenty principal groups with a matrix like structure that contained 30,000 concepts.[4]

It is not surprising that Alberto Manguel would attempt write a literary, historical and personal history of the library. As a seventeen-year-old man in Buenos Aries, Manguel read for the blind seer Jorge Luis Borges who once imagined in his appropriately named story—The Tower of Babel—paradise as a kind of library. Modifying his mentor's statement in what can be understood as a gesture to the inevitable demands of the real and yet acknowledging the possible pleasures of living in shadows, Manguel asserts that sometimes paradise must adapt itself to suit circumstantial requirements. Similarly Jacques Rancière writing about the libraries of the working class in the eighteenth century tells us about Gauny a joiner and a boy in love with vagrancy and botany who decides to build a library for himself. For the sons of the poor proletarians living in Saint Marcel district, libraries were built only a page at a time. He learnt to read by tracing the pages on which his mother bought her lentils and would be disappointed whenever he came to the end of a page and the next page was not available, even though he urged his mother to buy her lentils from the same grocer. [5]

Is the utopian ideal of the universal library as exemplified by the library of Alexandria or modernist pedagogic institutions of the twentieth century adequate to the task of describing the space of the shadow library, or do we need a different account of these other spaces? In an era of the ebook reader where the line between a book and a library is blurred, the very idea of a library is up for grabs. It has taken me well over two decades to build a collection of a few thousand books while around two hundred thousand books exist as bits and bytes on my computer. Admittedly hard drives crash and data is lost, but is that the same threat as those of rain or fire? Which then is my library and which its shadow? Or in the spirit of logotopias would it be more appropriate to ask the spatial question:

Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Chronotopes & Dioramas, 2009. Diorama installation at The Hispanic Society of America, New York.

where is the library?

If the possibility of having 200,000 books on one's computer feels staggering here is an even more startling statistic. The Library of Congress which is the largest library in the world with holdings of approximately thirty million books, which would—if they were piled on the floor—cover 364 kilometers could potentially fit into an SD card. It is estimated that by 2030 an ordinary SD card will have the capacity of storing up to 64 TB and assuming each book were digitized at an average size of 1MB it would technically be possible to fit two Libraries of Congress in one's pocket.

It sounds like science fiction, but isn't it the case that much of the science fiction of a decade ago finds itself comfortably within the weaves of everyday life. How do we make sense of the future of the library? While it may be tempting to throw our hands up in boggled perplexity about what it means to be able to have thirty million books lets face it: the point of libraries have never been that you will finish what's there. Anyone with even a modest book collection will testify to the impossibility of ever finishing their library and if anything at all the library stands precisely at the cusp of our finitude and our infinity. Perhaps that is what Borges—the consummate mixer of time and space—meant when he described paradise as a library, not as a spatial idea but a temporal one: that it was only within the confines of infinity that one imagine finishing reading one's library. It would therefore be more interesting to think of the shadow library as a way of thinking about what it means to dwell in knowledge. While all our aspirations for a habitat should have a utopian element to them, lets face it, utopias have always been difficult spaces to live in.

In contrast to the idea of utopia is heterotopia—a term with its origins in medicine (referring to an organ of the body that had been dislodged from its usual space) and popularized by Michel Foucault both in terms of language as well as a spatial metaphor. If utopia exists as a nowhere or imaginary space with no connection to any existing social spaces, then heterotopias in contrast are realities that exist and are even foundational, but in which all other spaces are potentially inverted and contested. A mirror for instance is simultaneously a utopia (placeless place) even as it exists in reality. But from the standpoint of the mirror you discover your absence as well. Foucault remarks, "The mirror functions as a heterotopia in this respect: it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there."[6]

In *The Order of Things* Foucault sought to investigate the conceptual space which makes the order of knowledge possible; in his famed reading of Borges's Chinese encyclopedia he argues that the impossibility involved in the encyclopedia consists less in the fantastical status of the animals and their coexistence with real animals such as (d) sucking pigs and (e) sirens, but in where they coexist and what "transgresses the boundaries of all imagination, of all possible thought, is simply that alphabetical series (a, b, c, d) which links each of those categories to all the others." [7] Heterotopias destabilize the ground from which we build order and in doing so reframe the very epistemic basis of how we know.

Foucault later developed a greater spatial understanding of heterotopias in which he uses specific examples such as the cemetery (at once the space of the familiar since everyone has someone in the cemetery and at the heart of the city but also over a period of time the other city, where each family possesses its dark resting place).[8] Indeed, the paradox of heterotopias is that they are both separate from yet connected to all other spaces. This connectedness is precisely what builds contestation into heterotopias. Imaginary spaces such as utopias exist completely outside of order. Heteretopias by virtue of their connectedness become sites in which epistemes collide and overlap. They bring together heterogeneous collections of unusual things without allowing them a unity or order established through resemblance. Instead, their ordering is derived from a process of similitude that produces, in an almost magical, uncertain space, monstrous combinations that unsettle the flow of discourse.

If the utopian ideal of the library was to bring together everything that we know of the world then the length of its bookshelves was coterminous with the breadth of the world. But like its predecessors in Alexandria and Babel the project is destined to be incomplete haunted by what it necessarily leaves out and misses. The library as heterotopia reveals itself only through the interstices and lays bare the fiction of any possibility of a coherent ground on which a knowledge project can be built. Finally there is the question of where we stand once the grounds that we stand on itself has been dislodged. The answer from my first foray into the tiny six by eight foot Mecca store to the innumerable hours spent on library.nu remains the same: the heterotopic pleasure of our finite selves in infinity.

X

This essay is a part of a work I am doing for an exhibition curated by Raqs Media Collective, Sarai Reader 09. The show began on August 19, 2012, with a deceptively empty space containing only the proposal, with ideas for the artworks to come over a period of nine months. See **https://sarai.net/sarai-reader-09-projections/**.

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Alternative Law Forum, Bangalore. His work lies at the intersection of law and cultural politics, and has in recent years been looking at question of media piracy. He is currently finish a book on law and justice in Hindi cinema.

1
Esther Shipman and Sascha Hastings eds., *Logotopia: The Library in Architecture Art and the Imagination,* (Cambridge Galleries: Abc Art Books Canada, 2008).

2
Alberto Manguel, "My Library" in Hastings and Shipman eds. *Logotopia, The Library in Art and Architecture and the Imagination, (Cambridge Galleries: ABC Art Books Canada, 2008).*

3
Alberto Manguel, *The Library at Night* , (Yale University Press 2009).

4
Ray Hastings and Esther Shipman, eds. *Logotopia: The Library in Architecture Art and the Imagination* . Cambridge Galleries / ABC Art Books Canada, 2008.

5
Jacques Rancière, *The Nights of Labour: The Workers' Dream in Nineteenth Century France,* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991).

6
Michel Foucault, "Different Spaces," in *Aesthetics, Method, Epistemology* , ed. James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 1998), 179; For Foucault on language and heterotopias see *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences,* (New York: Pantheon, 1970).

7
Ibid, xv.

8
In Foucault, "Different Spaces," which was presented as a lecture to the *Architecture Studies Circle* in 1967, a few years after the writing of *The Order of Things*.

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A public library is:

free access to books
for every member of society

library catalog

librarian

With books ready to be shared,
meticulously cataloged,
everyone is a librarian.

When everyone is librarian,
library is everywhere.

http://www.memoryoftheworld.org

Public Library

Marcell Mars

In *What Was Revolutionary about the French Revolution?*[01] **Robert Darnton** wonders how a complete collapse of the social order (when absolutely everything is turned upside down) would look. Such trauma happens often in the life of individuals but only rarely on the level of an entire society.

> In 1789 the French had to confront the collapse of a whole social order—the world that they defined retrospectively as the Ancien Régime—and to find some new order in the chaos surrounding them. They experienced reality as something that could be destroyed and reconstructed, and they faced seemingly limitless possibilities, both for good and evil, for raising a utopia and for falling back into tyranny.[02]

The revolution bootstraps itself.

In the dictionaries of the time, the word *revolution* was said to derive from the verb *to revolve* and was defined as "the return of the planet or a star to the same point from which it parted."[03] French political vocabulary spread no further than the narrow circle of the feudal elite in Versailles. The citizens, revolutionaries, had to invent new words, concepts ... an entire new language in order to describe the revolution that had happened (to them).

They started with the vocabulary of time and space. In the French revolutionary calendar used from 1793 until 1805, time started on 1 Vendémiaire,

01 Robert H. Darnton, *What Was Revolutionary about the French Revolution?* (WACO, TX: BAYLOR UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1996), 6.

02 Ibid.

03 Ibid.

Year 1, a date equivalent to the abolition of the old monarchy on 22 September 1792. With a decree in 1795, the metric system was adopted. As with the adoption of the new calendar, this was an attempt to organize space in a rational and natural way. *Gram* became a unit of mass.

In Paris, 1,400 streets were given new names. Every reminder of the tyranny of the monarchy was erased. The revolutionaries even changed their names and surnames. Le Roy or Leveque, commonly used until then, were changed to Le Loi or Liberté. To address someone, out of respect, with *vous* was forbidden by a resolution passed on 24 Brumaire, Year 2. *Vous* was replaced with *tu*. People are equal.

Liberté, égalité, fraternité (freedom, equality, fraternity)[04] were built by literacy, new epistemologies, classifications, declarations, standards, reason, and rationality. What first comes to mind about the revolution will never again be the return of a planet or a star to the same point from which it departed. Revolution bootstrapped, revolved, and hermeneutically circularized itself.

Melvil Dewey was born in the state of New York in 1851.[05] His thirst for knowledge was satisfied in libraries. His knowledge about how to gain knowledge was gained and developed by studying libraries. Grouping books on library shelves according to the color of the covers, the size and thickness of the ridge, or by title or author's name did not satisfy **Dewey**'s definition of the production of knowledge on knowledge. At the age of twenty-four, he had already published the first of nineteen editions of *A Classification and Subject Index for Cataloguing and Arranging the Books and Pamphlets of a Library*,[06] the classification system that still bears its author's name: the Dewey Decimal System. **Dewey** had a dream: for his twenty-first birthday he had announced, "My World Work [will be] Free Schools and Free Libraries for every soul."[07]

04 "Slogan of the French Republic," France.fr, n.d., http://www.france.fr/en/institutions-and-values/slogan-french-republic.html.

05 Richard F. Snow, "Melvil Dewey" *American Heritage* 32, no. 1 (December 1980), http://www.americanheritage.com/content/melvil-dewey.

06 Melvil Dewey, *A Classification and Subject Index for Cataloguing and Arranging the Books and Pamphlets of a Library* (1876), Project Gutenberg e-book 12513 (2004), http://www.gutenberg.org/files/12513/12513-h/12513-h.htm.

07 Snow, "Melvil Dewey."

His dream came true. "Public Library" is an entry in the catalog of History with a fantastic decimal describing a category of phenomenon that—together with free public education, a public health system, the scientific method, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights,* Wikipedia, and free software, among others—we, the people, are most proud of.

The public library is a part of these invisible structures that we start to notice only once they disappear. A utopian dream—about the place from which every human being will have access to every piece of available knowledge that can be collected—looked impossible for a long time, dependent as it was on the limited resources of rich patrons or the budgetary instability of (welfare) states.

The Internet has, as in many other situations, completely changed our expectations and imagination about what is possible. The dream of a universal approach to all available knowledge for every member of society became realizable, a question merely of the meeting of curves on a graph: the point at which the line of global distribution of personal computers meets that of the critical mass of people with access to the Internet. However, even though this moment has been accomplished and even though nobody today lacks the imagination necessary to see public libraries as part of a global infrastructure of universal access to knowledge for literally every member of society, the emergence and development of the Internet is precisely when an institutional crisis—one with inconceivable consequences—began.

Public libraries cannot get, cannot even buy digital books from the world's largest publishers,[08] those e-books that they already have in their catalogs must be destroyed after twenty-six (?!?) lendings,[09] and they are losing in every possible way the battle with a market dominated by new players such as Amazon.com, Google, and Apple.

In 2012, Canada's Conservative Party–led government cut financial support for Libraries and Archives Canada (LAC) by Can$9.6 million, which

08 "American Library Association Open Letter to Publishers on E-Book Library Lending," *Digital Book World,* 24 September 2012, http://www.digitalbookworld.com/2012/american-library-association-open-letter-to-publishers-on-e-book-library-lending/.

09 Jeremy Greenfield, "What Is Going On with Library E-Book Lending?" *Forbes,* 22 June 2012, http://www.forbes.com/sites/jeremygreenfield/2012/06/22/what-is-going-on-with-library-e-book-lending/.

resulted in the loss of 400 archivist and librarian jobs, the shutting down of some of LAC's Internet pages, and the cancellation of the further purchase of new books.[10] In only three years, from 2010 to 2012, some 10 percent of public libraries were closed in Great Britain.[11]

The combination of knowledge, education, and schooling commodification (which are the consequences of a globally harmonized, restrictive legal regime for intellectual property) with neoliberal austerity politics terminates the possibility of adapting to new sociotechnological conditions, not to mention further development, innovation, or even basic maintenance of public libraries' infrastructure.

Public libraries are an endangered institution, doomed to extinction.

Petit bourgeois pride prevents society from confronting this disturbing insight. As in many other fields, the only perceived way out is innovative market-based entrepreneurship, and some have suggested that the public library should become an open software platform on top of which creative developers will build app stores[12] or Internet cafés for the poorest, ensuring that they are only a click away from the Amazon.com catalog or the Google search bar.

Those who are well-meaning, intelligent, and full of tact will try to remind the public of all the side effects of the phenomenon that is the public library: major community center, service for the vulnerable, center of literacy and informal and lifelong learning, place where hobbyists, enthusiasts, old and young meet and share knowledge and skills.[13] Fascinating. Unfortunately, for purely tactical reasons, this reminder to the public does not always contain an explanation of how these varied effects arise out of the foundational idea of a public library: universal access to knowledge for each member of the society produces knowledge, produces knowledge about

10 Aideen Doran, "Free Libraries for Every Soul: Dreaming of the Online Library," *The Bear,* March 2014, http://www.thebear-review.com/#!free-libraries-for-every-soul/c153g.

11 Alison Flood, "UK Lost More than 200 Libraries in 2012," *Guardian,* 10 December 2012, http://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/dec/10/uk-lost-200-libraries-2012.

12 David Weinberger, "Library as Platform," *Library Journal,* 4 September 2012, http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2012/09/future-of-libraries/by-david-weinberger/.

13 Shannon Mattern, "Library as Infrastructure," *Design Observer,* 9 June 2014, http://places.designobserver.com/entryprint.html?entry=38488.

knowledge, produces knowledge about knowledge transfer: the public library produces sociability.

The public library does not need the sort of creative crisis management that wants to propose *what* the library should be *transformed into* once our society, obsessed with market logic, has made it impossible for the library to perform its main mission. Such proposals, if they do not insist on universal access to knowledge for all members, are Trojan horses for the silent but galloping disappearance of the public library from the historical stage. Sociability—produced by public libraries, with all the richness of its various appearances—will be best preserved if we manage to fight for the values upon which we have built the public library: universal access to knowledge for each member of our society.

Freedom, equality, and fraternity need brave librarians practicing civil disobedience.

Library Genesis[14] is an online repository with over a million books and is the first project in history to offer everyone on the Internet free download of its entire book collection (as of this writing, about fifteen terabytes of data), together with the all metadata (MySQL dump) and PHP/HTML/Java Script code for webpages. The most popular earlier repositories, such as **Gigapedia** (later **Library.nu**), handled their upload and maintenance costs by selling advertising space to the pornographic and gambling industries. Legal action was initiated against them, and they were closed.[15] News of the termination of **Gigapedia/Library.nu** strongly resonated in academic and book lovers' circles and was even noted in the mainstream Internet media, just like other major world events. The decision by **Library Genesis** to share its resources has resulted in a network of identical sites (so-called mirrors) through the development of an entire range of Net services of metadata exchange and catalog maintenance, thus ensuring an exceptionally resistant survival architecture.

Aaaaarg.org, started by the artist **Sean Dockray**, is an online repository with over 50,000 books and texts. A community of enthusiastic researchers from critical theory, contemporary art, philosophy,

14 See http://libgen.org/.

15 Andrew Losowsky, "Library.nu, Book Downloading Site, Targeted in Injunctions Requested by 17 Publishers," *Huffington Post*, 15 February 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/02/15/librarynu-book-downloading- injunction_n_1280383.html.

architecture, and other fields in the humanities maintains, catalogs, annotates, and initiates discussions around it.

UbuWeb[16] is the most significant and largest online archive of avant-garde art; it was initiated and is lead by conceptual artist **Kenneth Goldsmith**. **UbuWeb**, although still informal, has grown into a relevant and recognized critical institution of contemporary art. Artists want to see their work in its catalog and thus agree to a relationship with **UbuWeb** that has no formal contractual obligations.

Monoskop is a wiki for the arts, culture, and media technology, with a special focus on the avant-garde, conceptual, and media arts of Eastern and Central Europe; it was launched by **Dušan Barok** and others. In the form of a blog **Dušan** uploads to **Monoskop.org/log** an online catalog of chosen titles (at the moment numbering around 3,000), and, as with **UbuWeb**, it is becoming more and more relevant as an online resource.

Library Genesis, **Aaaaarg.org**, **Kenneth Goldsmith**, and **Dušan Barok** show us that the future of the public library does not need crisis management, venture capital, start-up incubators, or outsourcing but simply the freedom to continue fulfilling the dreams of **Melvil Dewey** and **Paul Otlet**, just as it did before the emergence of the Internet.

With the emergence of the Internet and software tools such as **Calibre** and "**[let's share books]**,"[17] librarianship was granted an opportunity, similar to astronomy and the project SETI@home,[18] to include thousands of amateur librarians who will, together with the experts, build a distributed peer-to-peer network to care for the catalog of available knowledge, because

> "the public library is:
> * free access to books for every member of society
> * library catalog
> * librarian
>
> With books ready to be shared, meticulously cataloged, everyone is a librarian.
> When everyone is librarian, library is everywhere."[19]

16 See http://ubu.com/.

17 "Tools," Memory of the World, n.d., https://www.memoryoftheworld.org/tools/.

18 See http://setiathome.berkeley.edu/.

19 "End-to-End Catalog," *Memory of the World*, 26 November 2012, https://www.memoryoftheworld.org/end-to-end-catalog/.

Sean Dockray and Lawrence Liang

Sharing Instinct: An Annotation of the Social Contract Through Shadow Libraries

Foederis aequas Dicamus leges
(Let us make fair terms for the compact.)
—Virgil's *Aeneid*, XI

Man was born free, and everywhere he is in chains.[1]

June 30, 2015

Dear Sean,

I have been asked by Raqs Media Collective to contribute to a special ongoing issue of e-flux journal *that is part of the Venice Biennale. Raqs's section in the issue rethinks Rousseau's social contract and the possibility of its being rewritten, as a way of imagining social bonds and solidarities that can help instigate and affirm a vision of the world as a space of potential.*

I was wondering if you would join me in a conversation on shadow libraries and social contracts. The entire universe of the book-sharing communities seems to offer the possibility of rethinking the terms of the social contract and its associated terms (consent, general will, private interest, and so on). While the rise in book sharing is at one level a technological phenomenon (a library of 100,000 books put in PDF format can presently fit on a one-terabyte drive that costs less than seventy-five dollars), it is also about how we think of transformations in social relations mediated by sharing books.

If the striking image of books in preprint revolution was of being "in chains," as Rousseau puts it, I am prompted to wonder about the contemporary conflict between the digital and mechanisms of control. Are books born free but are everywhere in chains, or is it the case that they have been set free? In which case are they writing new social contracts?

I was curious about whether you, as the founder of **Aaaaarg.org** *, had the idea of a social contract in mind, or even a community, when you started?*

Lawrence

Book I, Chapter VI : The Social Pact

To find a form of association that may defend and protect with the whole force of the community the person and

property of every associate, and by means of which each, joining together with all, may nevertheless obey only himself, and remain as free as before.'' Such is the fundamental problem to which the social contract provides the solution.

We can reduce it to the following terms: ''Each of us puts in common his person and all his power under the supreme direction of the general will; and in return each member becomes an indivisible part of the whole.''

June 30, 2015

Dear Lawrence,

I am just listing a few ideas to put things out there and am happy to try other approaches:

—To think about the two kinds of structure that digital libraries take: either each library is shared by many user-librarians or there is a library for each person, shared with all the others. It's a technological design question, yes, but it also suggests different social contracts?

—What is subtracted when we subtract your capacity/right to share a book with others, when every one of us must approach the market anew to come into contact with it? But to take a stab at misappropriating the terms you've listed, consent, what libraries do I consent to? Usually the consent needs to come from the library, in the form of a card or something, but we don't ask enough what we want, maybe. Also what about a social contract of books? Does a book consent to being in a library? What rights does it have or expect?

I really loved the math equation Rousseau used to arrive at the general will: if you subtract the pluses and minuses of particular wills that cancel each other out, then the general will is the sum of the differences! But why does the general need to be the lowest common denominator—certainly there are more appropriate mathematical concepts that have been developed in the past few hundred years?

Sean

Book I, Chapter II: Primitive Societies

This common liberty is a consequence of man's nature. His first law is to attend to his own survival, his first concerns are those he owes to himself; and as soon as he reaches the age of rationality, being sole judge of how to survive, he becomes his own master.

It is the relation of things and not of men that constitutes war; and since the state of war cannot arise from simple personal relations, but only from real relations, private war—war between man and man—cannot exist either in the state of nature, where there is no settled ownership, or in the social state, where everything is under the authority of the laws.

July 1, 2015

Dear Lawrence,

Unlike a logic of exchange, or of offer and return with its demands for reciprocity, the logic of sharing doesn't ask its members for anything in return. There are no guarantees that the one who gives a book will get back anything, whether that is money, an equivalent book, or even a token of gratitude. Similarly, there is nothing to prevent someone from taking without giving. I think a logic of sharing will look positively illogical across the course of its existence. But to me, this is part of the appeal: that it can accommodate behaviors and relationships that might be impossible within the market.

But if there is a lack of a contract governing specific exchanges, then there is something at another level that defines and organizes the space of sharing, that governs its boundaries, and that establishes inclusions and exclusions. Is this something ethics? Identity? Already I am appealing to something that itself would be shared, and would this sharing precede the material sharing of, for example, a library? Or would the shared ethics/identity/whatever be a symptom of the practice of sharing? Well, this is perhaps the conclusion that anthropologists might come to when trying to explain the sharing practices of hunter-gatherer societies, but a library?

Sean

July 1, 2015

Hi Sean,

I liked your question of what might account for a sharing instinct when it comes to books, and whether we appeal to something that already exists as a shared ethics or identity, or is sharing the basis of a shared ethics/identity? I have to say that while I have never thought of my own book-collecting through the analogy of hunter-gatherers, the more I think about it, the more sense it makes to me. Linguistically we always speak of going on book hunts and my daily trawling through the various shadow libraries online does seem to function by way of a hunting-gathering mentality.

Often I download books I know that I will never personally read because I know that it may either be of interest to someone else, or that the place of a library is the cave where one gathers what one has hunted down, not just for oneself but for others. I also like that we are using so-called primitive metaphors to account for twenty-first-century digital practices, because it allows us the possibility of linking these practices to a primal instinct of sharing, which precedes our encounter with the social norms that classify and partition that instinct (legal, illegal, authorized, and so on).

I don't know if you remember the meeting that we had in Mumbai a few years ago—among the other participants, we had an academic from Delhi as an interlocutor. He expressed an absolute terror at what he saw as the "tyranny of availability" in online libraries. In light of the immense number of books available in electronic copies and on our computers or hard discs, he felt overwhelmed and compared his discomfort with that of being inside a large library and not knowing what to do. Interestingly, he regularly writes asking me to supply him with books that he can't find or does not have access to.

This got me thinking about the idea of a library and what it may mean, in its classical sense and its digital sense. An encounter with any library, especially when it manifests itself physically, is one where you encounter your own finitude in the face of what seems like the infinity of knowledge. But personally this sense of awe has also been tinged with an immense excitement and possibility. The head rush of wanting to jump from a book on forgotten swear words to an intellectual biography of Benjamin, and the tingling anticipation as you walk out of the library with ten books, captures for me more than any other experience the essence of the word potential.

I have a modest personal library of around four thousand books, which I know will be kind of difficult for me to finish in my lifetime even if I stop adding any new books, and yet the impulse to add books to our unending list never fades. And if you think about this in terms of the number of books that reside on our computers, then the idea of using numbers becomes a little pointless, and we need some other way or measure to make sense of our experience.

Lawrence

Book I, Chapter VII: The Sovereign

Every individual can, as a man, have a particular will contrary to, or divergent from, the general will which he has as a citizen; his private interest may appear to him quite different from the common interest; his absolute and naturally independent existence may make him envisage what he owes to the common cause as a gratuitous contribution, the loss of which would be less harmful to others than the payment of it would be onerous to him.

July 12, 2015

Hi Sean,

There is no symbol that to my mind captures the regulated nature of the library more than that of the board that hushes you with its capitalized SILENCE. Marianne Constable says, "One can acknowledge the figure of silence in the library and its persistence, even as one may wonder what a silent library would be, whether libraries ever are silent, and what the various silences—if any—in a library could be."

If I had to think about the nature of the social contract and the possibilities of its rewriting from the site of the library one encounters another set of silent rules and norms. If social contracts are narrative compacts that establish a political community under the sign of a sovereign collective called the people, libraries also aspire to establish an authority in the name of the readers and to that extent they share a common constitutive character. But just as there is a foundational scandal of absence at the heart of the social contract that presumes our collective consent (what Derrida describes as the absence of the people and the presence of their signature) there seems to be a similar silence in the world of libraries where readers rarely determine the architecture, the logic, or the rules of the library.

So libraries have often mirrored, rather than inverted, power relations that underlie the social contracts that they almost underwrite. In contrast I am wondering if the various shadow libraries that have burgeoned online, the portable personal libraries that are shared offline: Whether all of them reimagine the social contract of libraries, and try to create a more insurgent imagination of the library?

Lawrence

July 13, 2015

Hi Lawrence,

As you know, I'm very interested in structures that allow the people within ways to meaningfully reconfigure them. This is distinct from participation or interaction, where the structures are inquisitive or responsive, but not fundamentally changeable.

I appreciate the idea that a library might have, not just a collection of books or a system of organizing, but its own social contract. In the case of Aaaaarg, as you noticed, it is not explicit. Not only is there no statement as such, there was never a process prior to the library in which something like a social contract was designed.

I did ask users to write out a short statement of their reason for joining Aaaaarg and have around fifty thousand of these expressions of intention. I think it's more interesting to think of the social contract, or at least a "general will," in terms of those. If Rousseau distinguished between the will of all and the general will, in a way that could be illustrated by the catalog of reasons for joining Aaaaarg. Whereas the will of all might be a sum of all the reasons, the general will would be the sum of what remains after you "take away the pluses and minuses that cancel one another." I haven't done the math, but I don't think the general will, the general reason, goes beyond a desire for access.

To summarize a few significant groupings:

—To think outside institutions;
—To find things that one cannot find;
—To have a place to share things;
—To act out a position against intellectual property;
—A love of books (in whatever form).

What I do see as common across these groupings is that the desire for access is, more specifically, a desire to have a relationship with texts and others that is not mediated by market relations.

In my original conception of the site, it would be something like a collective commonplace. Like commonplacing, the excerpts that people would keep were those parts of texts that seemed particularly useful, that produced a spark that one wanted to share. This is important: that it was the experience of being electrified in some way that people were sharing and not a book as such. Over time, things changed and the shared objects became more complete so to say, and less "subjective," but I hope that there is still that spark. But, at this point, I realize that I am just another one of the many wills, and just one designer of whatever social contract is underlying the library.

So, again—What is the social contract? It wasn't determined in advance and it is not written in any about section or FAQ. I would say that it is, like the library itself, something that is growing and evolving over time, wouldn't you?

Sean

Book II, Chapter VIII: The People

As an architect, before erecting a large edifice, examines and tests the soil in order to see whether it can support the weight, so a wise lawgiver does not begin by drawing up laws that are good in themselves, but considers first whether the people for whom he designs them are fit to maintain them.

July 15, 2015

Lawrence,

There are many different ways of organizing a library, of structuring it, and it's the same for online libraries. I think the most interesting conversation would not be to bemoan the digital for overloading our ability to be discerning, or to criticize it for not conforming to the kind of economy that we expected publishing to have, or become nostalgic for book smells; but to actually really wonder what it is that could make these libraries great, places that will be missed in the future if they go away. To me, this is the most depressing thing about the unfortunate fact that digital shadow libraries have to operate somewhat below the radar: it introduces a precariousness that doesn't allow imagination to really expand, as it becomes stuck on techniques of evasion, distribution, and redundancy. But what does it mean when a library functions transnationally? When its contents can be searched? When reading interfaces aren't bound by the book form? When its contents can be referenced from anywhere?

What I wanted when building Aaaaarg.org the first time was to make it useful, in the absolute fullest sense of the word, something for people who saw books not just as things you buy to read because they're enjoyable, but as things you need to have a sense of self, of orientation in the world, to learn your language and join in the conversation you are a part of—a library for people who related to books like that.

Sean

July 17, 2015

Hi Sean,

To pick up on the reasons that people give for joining Aaaaarg.org: even though Aaaaarg.org is not bound by a social contract, we do see the outlines—through common interests and motivations—of a fuzzy sense of a community. And the thing with fuzzy communities is that they don't necessarily need to be defined with the same clarity as enumerated communities, like nations, do. Sudipta Kaviraj, who used the term fuzzy

communities, also speaks of a "narrative contract"—perhaps a useful way to think about how to make sense of the bibliophilic motivations and intentions, or what you describe as the "desire to have a relationship with texts and others that is not mediated by market relations."

This seems a perfectly reasonable motivation except that it is one that would be deemed impossible at the very least, and absurd at worst by those for whom the world of books and ideas can only be mediated by the market. And it's this idea of the absurd and the illogical that I would like to think a little bit about via the idea of the ludic, a term that I think might be useful to deploy while thinking of ways of rewriting the social contract: a ludic contract, if you will, entered into through routes allowed by ludic libraries.

If we trace the word ludic back to its French and Latin roots, we find it going back to the idea of playing (from Latin ludere *"to play" or* ludique *"spontaneously playful"), but today it has mutated into most popular usage (ludicrous) generally used in relation to an idea that is so impossible it seems absurd. And more often than not the term conveys an absurdity associated with a deviation from well-established norms including utility, seriousness, purpose, and property.*

But what if our participation in various forms of book sharing was less like an invitation to enter a social contract, and more like an invitation to play? But play what, you may ask, since the term play has childish and sometimes frivolous connotation to it? And we are talking here about serious business. Gadamer proposes that rather than the idea of fun and games, we can think with the analogy of a cycle, suggesting that it was important not to tighten the nuts on the axle too much, or else the wheel could not turn. "It has to have some play in it … and not too much play, or the wheel will fall off. It was all about spielraum*, , 'play-room,' some room for play. It needs space."*

The ludic, or the invitation to the ludic in this account, is first and foremost a necessary relief—just as playing is—from constraining situations and circumstances. They could be physical, monetary, or out of sheer nonavailability (thus the desire for access could be thought of as a tactical maneuver to create openings). They could be philosophical constraints (epistemological, disciplinary), social constraints (divisions of class, work, and leisure time). At any rate all efforts at participating in shadow libraries seem propelled by an instinct to exceed the boundaries of the self however defined, and to make some room for play or to create a "ludic spaciousness," as it were.

The spatial metaphor is also related to the bounded/unbounded (another name for freedom I guess) and to the extent that the unbounded allows us a way into our impossible selves; they share a space with dreams, but rarely do we think of the violation of the right to access as fundamentally being a violation of our right to dream. Your compilation of the reasons that people wanted to join Aaaaarg may well be thought of as an archive of one-sentence-long dreams of the ludic library.

If for Bachelard the house protects the dreamer, the library for me is a ludic shelter, which brings me back to an interesting coincidence. I don't know what it is that prompted you to choose the name Aaaaarg.org; I don't know if you are aware it binds you irrevocably (to use the legal language of contracts) with one of the very few theorists of the ludic, the Dutch philosopher Johan Huizinga, who coined the word homo ludens *(as against the more functional, scientific homo sapiens or functional homo faber). In his 1938 text Huizinga observes that "the fun of playing, resists all analysis, all logical interpretation," and as a concept it cannot be reduced to any other mental category. He feels that no language really has an exact equivalent to the word fun but the closest he comes in his own language is the Dutch word* aardigkeit, *so the line between aaaarg and aaard may have well have been dreamt of before Aaaaarg.org even started.*

More soon,

Lawrence

X

Lawrence Liang is a lawyer and writer at the Alternative Law Forum in Bangalore.

1
All excerpts from *The Social Contract* are from Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract: And, The First and Second Discourses* , ed. Susan Dunn and Gita May (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002).

McKenzie Wark

Metadata Punk

So we won the battle but lost the war. By "we", I mean those avant-gardes of the late twentieth century whose mission was to free information from the property form. It was always a project with certain nuances and inconsistencies, but over-all it succeeded beyond almost anybody's wildest dreams. Like many dreams, it turned into a nightmare in the end, the one from which we are now trying to awake.

The place to start is with what the situationists called *détournement*. The idea was to abolish the property form in art by taking all of past art and culture as a commons from which to copy and correct. We see this at work in **Guy Debord**'s texts and films. They do not quote from past works, as to do so acknowledges their value and their ownership. The elements of *détournement* are nothing special. They are raw materials for constructing theories, narratives, affects of a subjectivity no longer bound by the property form.

Such a project was recuperated soon enough back into the art world as "appropriation." **Richard Prince** is the dialectical negation of **Guy Debord**,

in that appropriation values both the original fragment and contributes not to a subjectivity outside of property but rather makes a career as an art world star for the appropriating artist. Of such dreams is mediocrity made.

If there was a more promising continuation of *détournement* it had little to do with the art world. *Détournement* became a social movement in all but name. Crucially, it involved an advance in tools, from *Napster* to *Bitorrent* and beyond. It enabled the circulation of many kinds of what **Hito Steyerl** calls the *poor image.* Often low in resolution, these détourned materials circulated thanks both to the compression of information but also because of the addition of information. There might be less data but there's added *metadata,* or data about data, enabling its movement.

Needless to say the old culture industries went into something of a panic about all this. As I wrote over ten years ago in *A Hacker Manifesto,* "information wants to be free but is everywhere in chains." It is one of the qualities of information that it is indifferent to the medium that carries it and readily escapes being bound to things and their properties. Yet it is also one of its qualities that access to it can be blocked by what **Alexander Galloway** calls *protocol.* The late twentieth century was—among other things—about the contradictory nature of information. It was a struggle between *détournement* and *protocol.* And *protocol* nearly won.

The culture industries took both legal and technical steps to strap information once more to fixity in things and thus to property and scarcity. Inter-

estingly, those legal steps were not just a question of pressuring governments to make free information a crime. It was also a matter of using international trade agreements as a place outside the scope of democratic oversight to enforce the old rules of property. Here the culture industries join hands with the drug cartels and other kinds of information-based industry to limit the free flow of information.

But laws are there to be broken, and so are protocols of restriction such as encryption. These were only ever delaying tactics, meant to shore up old monopoly business for a bit longer. The battle to free information was the battle that the forces of détournement largely won. Our defeat lay elsewhere.

While the old culture industries tried to put information back into the property form, there were other kinds of strategy afoot. The winners were not the old culture industries but what I call the *vulture industries*. Their strategy was not to try to stop the flow of free information but rather to see it as an environment to be leveraged in the service of creating a new kind of business. "Let the data roam free!" says the vulture industry (while quietly guarding their own patents and trademarks). What they aim to control is the metadata.

It's a new kind of exploitation, one based on an unequal exchange of information. You can have the little scraps of détournement that you desire, in exchange for performing a whole lot of *free labor*—and giving up all of the metadata. So you get your little bit of data; they get all of it, and more importantly, any information about that information, such as the where and when and what of it.

It is an interesting feature of this mode of exploitation that you might not even be getting paid for your labor in making this information—as **Trebor Scholz** as pointed out. You are working for information only. Hence exploitation can be extended far beyond the workplace and into everyday life. Only it is not so much a social factory, as the autonomists call it. This is more like a *social boudoir.* The whole of social space is in some indeterminate state between public and private. Some of your information is private to other people. But pretty much all of it is owned by the vulture industry—and via them ends up in the hands of the surveillance state.

So this is how we lost the war. Making information free seemed like a good idea at the time. Indeed, one way of seeing what transpired is that we forced the ruling class to come up with these new strategies in response to our own self-organizing activities. Their actions are reactions to our initiatives. In this sense the autonomists are right, only it was not so much the actions of the working class to which the ruling class had to respond in this case, as what I call the *hacker class.* They had to recuperate a whole social movement, and they did. So our tactics have to change.

In the past we were acting like data-punks. Not so much "here's three chords, now form your band." More like: "Here's three gigs, now go form your autonomous art collective." The new tactic might be more question of being *metadata-punks.* On the one hand, it is about freeing information about information rather than the information itself. We need to move up the order of informational density and

control. On the other hand, it might be an idea to be a bit discreet about it. Maybe not everyone needs to know about it. Perhaps it is time to practice what **Zach Blas** calls *infomatic opacity.*

Three projects seem to embody much of this spirit to me. One I am not even going to name or discuss, as discretion seems advisable in that case. It takes matters off the internet and out of circulation among strangers. Ask me about it in person if we meet in person.

The other two are **Monoskop Log** and **UbuWeb**. It is hard to know what to call them. They are websites, archives, databases, collections, repositories, but they are also a bit more than that. They could be thought of also as the work of artists or of curators; of publishers or of writers; of archivists or researchers. They contain lots of files. **Monoskop** is mostly books and journals; **UbuWeb** is mostly video and audio. The work they contain is mostly by or about the historic avant-gardes.

Monoskop Log bills itself as "an educational open access online resource." It is a component part of **Monoskop**, "a wiki for collaborative studies of art, media and the humanities." One commenter thinks they see the "fingerprint of the curator" but nobody is named as its author, so let's keep it that way. It is particularly strong on Eastern European avant-garde material. **UbuWeb** is the work of **Kenneth Goldsmith**, and is "a completely independent resource dedicated to all strains of the avant-garde, ethnopoetics, and outsider arts."

There's two aspects to consider here. One is the wealth of free material both sites collect. For any-

body trying to teach, study or make work in the avant-garde tradition these are very useful resources. The other is the ongoing selection, presentation and explanation of the material going on at these sites themselves. Both of them model kinds of 'curatorial' or 'publishing' behavior.

For instance, **Monoskop** has wiki pages, some better than *Wikipedia,* which contextualize the work of a given artist or movement. **UbuWeb** offers "top ten" lists by artists or scholars which give insight not only into the collection but into the work of the person making the selection.

Monoskop and **UbuWeb** are tactics for intervening in three kinds of practices, those of the art-world, of publishing and of scholarship. They respond to the current institutional, technical and political-economic constraints of all three. As it says in the *Communist Manifesto,* the forces for social change are those that ask the *property question.* While *détournement* was a sufficient answer to that question in the era of the culture industries, they try to formulate, in their modest way, a suitable tactic for answering the property question in the era of the vulture industries.

This takes the form of moving from data to metadata, expressed in the form of the move from writing to publishing, from art-making to curating, from research to archiving. Another way of thinking this, suggested by **Hiroki Azuma** would be the move from narrative to *database.* The object of critical attention acquires a third dimension, a kind of informational depth. The objects before us are not just a text or an image but databases of potential texts and images, with metadata attached.

The object of any avant-garde is always to practice the relation between aesthetics and everyday life with a new kind of intensity. **UbuWeb** and **Monoskop** seem to me to be intimations of just such an avant-garde movement. One that does not offer a practice but a kind of meta-practice for the making of the aesthetic within the everyday.

Crucial to this project is the shifting of aesthetic intention from the level of the individual work to the database of works. They contain a lot of material, but not just any old thing. Some of the works available here are very rare, but not all of them are. It is not just rarity, or that the works are available for free. It is more that these are careful, artful, thoughtful collections of material. There are the raw materials here with which to construct a new civilization.

So we lost the battle, but the war goes on. This civilization is over, and even its defenders know it. We live in among ruins that accrete in slow motion. It is not so much a civil war as an *incivil war,* waged against the very conditions of existence of life itself. So even if we have no choice but to use its technologies and cultures, the task is to build another way of life among the ruins. Here are some useful practices, in and on and of the ruins. ❧

DUŠAN BAROK

Collection as a Network Volume

Digital libraries and archives are guided by ideals and goals similar to those of their brick-and-mortar counterparts, namely, to provide access to our recorded past. They fulfil the traditional functions of memory institutions but start from a different premise—their collection unit is not a physical object, but rather a data record. This is perhaps not so surprising, but it begs the question as to whether that has any implications for the practices of reading and writing.

Let's look at libraries. In the digital environment, libraries allow access to texts through a variety of filters, and full-text search can identify texts containing any text sequence, regardless of their original material carrier and bibliographic data. In addition to the fact that the texts exist as separate units, the digital library thus allows them to be accessed simultaneously as a single corpus. For example, by digitizing the books about archiving, we obtain a corpus in which books published across publishers and decades are suddenly available to work with as one long text, a very long series of characters. Publishing and cataloguing standards are here only part of a repertoire of text-organization principles. The text can speak for itself.

In addition, parts of the corpus, or even the entire corpus, may be distributed across the web and may contain texts that have not yet been considered as candidates for library collections. A digital library presents itself as a specialized or even general internet search engine, as a mere website that shares the same goals as libraries. The size of its corpus is determined by the extent of the indexed content. However, the texts do not exist in a kind of amorphous virtuality; their places “on the shelves” are the web addresses. Thus, digital libraries are characterized by phenomena such as full-text search, corpus compactness, distributability, inclusiveness with respect to non-standard formats, and identification by web addresses. Books in the digital environment are not black boxes, they are content that is read and written by machines. They are digitized, automatically character recognized (OCR), converted, indexed, run, generated, displayed, projected, printed.

The advent of full-text search has thus created an environment in which all documents that are available and readable to a given search engine are treated as if they were a single document. For a sequence of text to be searchable, it does not matter what format it is in or whether its presentation interface is a web page built on a database or a plain text file. As long as the text can be extracted from the document, it is a set of text sequences, which itself represents a sequence in a bundle of a network of texts.

So, what do we encounter when we write? Despite our established habits of reading and searching the internet, we continue to be guided in our writing by the principle of coherence based on units, such as book chapters, academic essays or newspaper articles, and the intention of reading from beginning to end. At the same time, the range of textual forms we read has radically expanded, and so has the corpus with which we are constantly in contact. It includes discussion board posts, tweets, product reviews, private emails, weather

reports and spam, genres that have hitherto had no place in library collections. Texts are written by machines, controlled by keyboard, by copying, but also by programmed bots, worms and other intelligences, motion and temperature sensors, and so on.

Although the texts are attributed to the authors, they have relatively little power over the discourses their writing becomes part of. Crawler bots pre-read the internet with all the devices connected to it according to the agendas of their administrators, while decisions about how, when and to whom indexed texts are displayed are shrouded in source code. By going online, libraries and archives enter a realm inhabited by many other types of text collections that share the same goals: to contain available texts and provide them to readers. Whether they are online libraries and academic repositories, or web search engines and social media, or even intelligence agencies, they all preserve texts for a specific readership. One might think of Google Search as a collection of millions of indexed websites or Monoskop.org being a collection of different webpages and files. In this sense, we may treat a collection of online publications or websites as both a digital library and a single "network" volume, in reference to a book volume as a unit of publication. Their acquisition strategies, however, may also include indexing bots, social media activity, tracking algorithms, and basically anything that involves selecting, capturing, and embedding texts into structures that regulate their availability, thereby creating groups and communities of readers. Authors' efforts to engage in this or that discourse are conditioned by the operations of algorithms of inclusion, retrieval, and display. The Internet Archive structures discourse differently to how Elsevier does with its repository, Google with its search engine, Facebook with its walls, and the NSA with its Dragnet program. A digital library corpus seems to contain only one "volume" whose pages are web addresses with geo-tags in the form of IP addresses.

Decisions about who has access to particular sections, and under what conditions, are influenced by copyright laws, market prices for publications, corporate strategies for regulating attention, and national security concerns. Different sets of these operative conditions also change the notion of publication and publishing, and therefore the notion of the public.
In such an environment, we urgently need libraries and archives for which the web has remained a promise and an opportunity for autonomous communication. We need digital collections exploring different techniques for negotiating the public role of publishing, which may include self-archiving, open access, book liberation, leaking, zero tracking, and so on.

Writing is now a direct part of the processes that make searching, discovery and reading possible. Running digital libraries and archives is as much about organizing texts as it is about bringing them into volumes of a network.

THE SURPLUS OF COPYING—HOW SHADOW LIBRARIES AND PIRATE ARCHIVES CONTRIBUTE TO THE CREATION OF CULTURAL MEMORY AND THE COMMONS

CORNELIA SOLLFRANK

Digital artworks tend to have a problematic relationship with the white cube—in particular, when they are intended and optimized for online distribution. While curators and exhibition-makers usually try to avoid showing such works altogether, or at least aim at enhancing their sculptural qualities to make them more presentable, the exhibition *Top Tens* featured an abundance of web quality digital artworks, thus placing emphasis on the very media condition of such digital artifacts. The exhibition took place at the Onassis Cultural Center in Athens in March 2018 and was part of the larger festival *Shadow Libraries: UbuWeb in Athens*,[1] an event to introduce the online archive UbuWeb[2] to the Greek audience and discuss related cultural, ethical, technical, and legal issues. This text takes the event—and the exhibition in particular—as a starting point for a closer look at UbuWeb and the role an artistic approach can play in building cultural memory within the neoliberal knowledge economy.

UBUWEB—THE CULTURAL MEMORY OF THE AVANT-GARDE

Since Kenneth Goldsmith started Ubu in 1997 the site has become a major point of reference for anyone interested in exploring twentieth-century avant-garde art. The online archive provides free and unrestricted access to a remarkable collection of thousands of artworks—among them almost 700 films and videos, over 1000 sound art pieces, dozens of filmed dance productions, an overwhelming amount of visual poetry and conceptual writing, critical documents, but also musical scores, patents, electronic music resources, plus an edition of vital new literature, the /ubu editions. Ubu contextualizes the archived objects within curated sections and also provides framing academic essays. Although it is a project run by Goldsmith without a budget, it has built a reputation for making all the things available one would not find elsewhere. The focus on "avant-garde" may seem a bit pretentious at first, but when you look closer at the project, its operator

and the philosophy behind it, it becomes obvious how much sense this designation makes. Understanding the history of the twentieth-century avant-garde as "a history of subversive takes on creativity, originality, and authorship,"[3] such spirit is not only reflected in terms of the archive's contents but also in terms of the project as a whole. Theoretical statements by Goldsmith in which he questions concepts such as authorship, originality, and creativity support this thesis[4]—and with that a conflictual relationship with the notion of intellectual property is preprogrammed. Therefore it comes as no surprise that the increasing popularity of the project goes hand-in-hand with a growing discussion about its ethical justification.

At the heart of Ubu, there is the copy! Every item in the archive is a digital copy, either of another digital item or, in fact, it is the digitized version of an analog object.[5] That is to say, the creation of a digital collection is inevitably based on copying the desired archive records and storing them on dedicated media. However, making a copy is in itself a copyright-relevant act, if the respective item is an original creation and as such protected under copyright law.[6] Hence, "any reproduction of a copyrighted work infringes the copyright of the author or the corresponding rights of use of the copyright holder".[7] Whether the existence of an artwork within the Ubu collection is a case of copyright infringement varies with each individual case and depends on the legal status of the respective work, but also on the way the rights holders decide to act. As with all civil law, there is no judge without a plaintiff, which means even if there is no express consent by the rights holders, the work can remain in the archive as long as there is no request for removal.[8] Its status, however, is precarious. We find ourselves in the notorious gray zone of copyright law where nothing is clear and many things are possible—until somebody decides to challenge this status. Exploring the borders of this experimental playground involves risk-taking, but, at the same time, it is the only way to preserve existing freedoms and make a case for changing cultural needs, which have not been considered in current legal settings. And as the 20 years of Ubu's existence demonstrate, the practice may be experimental and precarious, but with growing cultural relevance and reputation it is also gaining in stability.

FAIR USE AND PUBLIC INTEREST

At all public appearances and public presentations Goldsmith and his supporters emphasize the educational character of the project and its non-commercial orientation.[9] Such a characterization is clearly intended to take the wind out of the sails of its critics from the start and to shift the attention away from the notion of piracy and toward questions of public interest and the common good.

From a cultural point of view, the project unquestionably is of inestimable value; a legal defense, however, would be a difficult undertaking. Copyright law, in fact, has a built-in opening, the so-called copyright exceptions or fair use regulations. They vary according to national law and cultural traditions and allow for the use of copyrighted works under certain, defined provisions without permission of the owner. The exceptions basically apply to the areas of research and private study (both non-commercial), education, review, and criticism and are described through general guidelines. "These defences exist in order to restore the balance between the rights of the owner of copyright and the rights of society at large."[10]

A very powerful provision in most legislations is the permission to make "private copies", digital and analog ones, in small numbers, but they are limited to non-commercial and non-public use, and passing on to a third party is also excluded.[11] As Ubu is an online archive that makes all of its records publicly accessible and, not least, also provides templates for further copying, it exceeds the notion of a "private copy" by far. Regarding further fair use provisions, the four factors that are considered in a decision-making process in US copyright provisions, for instance, refer to: 1) the purpose and character of the use, including whether such use is of a commercial nature or is for non-profit educational purposes; 2) the nature of the copyrighted work; 3) the amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole; and 4) the effect of the use upon the potential market for the value of the copyrighted work (US Copyright Act, 1976, 17 USC. §107, online, n.pag.). Applying these fair use provisions to Ubu, one might consider that the main purposes of the archive relate to education and research, that it is by its very nature non-commercial, and it largely does not collide with any third party business interests as most of the material is not commercially available. However, proving this in detail would be quite an endeavor. And what complicates matters even more is that the archival material largely consists of original works of art, which are subject to strict copyright law protection, that all the works have been copied without any

transformative or commenting intention, and last but not least, that the aspect of the appropriateness of the amount of used material becomes absurd with reference to an archive whose quality largely depends on comprehensiveness: the more the merrier. As Simon Stokes points out, legally binding decisions can only be made on a case-by-case basis, which is why it is difficult to make a general evaluation of Ubu's legal situation.[12] The ethical defense tends to induce the cultural value of the archive as a whole and its invaluable contribution to cultural memory, while the legal situation does not consider the value of the project as a whole and necessitates breaking it down into all the individual items within the collection.

This very brief, when not abridged discussion of the possibilities of fair use already demonstrates how complex it would be to apply them to Ubu. How pointless it would be to attempt a serious legal discussion for such a privately run archive becomes even clearer when looking at the problems public libraries and archives have to face. While in theory such official institutions may even have a public mission to collect, preserve, and archive digital material, in practice, copyright law largely prevents the execution of this task, as Steinhauer explains.[13] The legal expert introduces the example of the German National Library, which was assigned the task since 2006 to make back-up copies of all websites published within the .de sublevel domain, but it turned out to be illegal.[14] Identifying a deficiently legal situation when it comes to collecting, archiving, and providing access to digital cultural goods, Steinhauer even speaks of a "legal obligation to amnesia".[15] And it is particularly striking that, from a legal perspective, the collecting of digitalia is more strictly regulated than the collecting of books, for example, where the property status of the material object comes into play. Given the imbalance between cultural requirements, copyright law, and the technical possibilities, it is not surprising that private initiatives are being founded with the aim to collect and preserve cultural memory. These initiatives make use of the affordability and availability of digital technology and its infrastructures, and they take responsibility for the preservation of cultural goods by simply ignoring copyright induced restrictions, i.e. opposing the insatiable hunger of the IP regime for control.

SHADOW LIBRARIES

Ubu was presented and discussed in Athens at an event titled *Shadow Libraries: UbuWeb in Athens*, thereby making clear reference to the ecosystem of shadow libraries. A library, in general, is an institution that collects, orders, and makes published information available while taking into account archival, economic, and synoptic aspects. A shadow library does exactly the same thing, but its mission is not an official one. Usually, the infrastructure of shadow libraries is conceived, built, and run by a private initiative, an individual, or a small group of people, who often prefer to remain anonymous for obvious reasons. In terms of the media content provided, most shadow libraries are peer-produced in the sense that they are based on the contributions of a community of supporters, sometimes referred to as "amateur librarians". The two key attributes of any proper library, according to Amsterdam-based media scholar Bodó Balázs, are the catalog and the community: "The catalogue does not just organize the knowledge stored in the collection; it is not just a tool of searching and browsing. It is a critical component in the organisation of the community of librarians who preserve and nourish the collection."[16] What is specific about shadow libraries, however, is the fact that they make available anything their contributors consider to be relevant—regardless of its legal status. That is to say, shadow libraries also provide unauthorized access to copyrighted publications, and they make the material available for download without charge and without any other restrictions. And because there is a whole network of shadow libraries whose mission is "to remove all barriers in the way of science,"[17] experts speak of an ecosystem fostering free and universal access to knowledge.

The notion of the shadow library enjoyed popularity in the early 2000s when the wide availability of digital networked media contributed to the emergence of large-scale repositories of scientific materials, the most famous one having been Gigapedia, which later transformed into library.nu. This project was famous for hosting approximately 400,000 (scientific) books and journal articles but had to be shut down in 2012 as a consequence of a series of injunctions from powerful publishing houses. The now leading shadow library in the field, Library Genesis (LibGen), can be considered as its even more influential successor. As of November 2016 the database contained 25 million documents (42 terabytes), of which 2.1 million were books, with digital copies of scientific articles published in 27,134 journals by 1342 publishers.[18] The large majority of the digital material is of scientific and educational nature

(95%), while only 5% serves recreational purposes.[19] The repository is based on various ways of crowd-sourcing, i.e. social and technical forms of accessing and sharing academic publications. Despite a number of legal cases and court orders, the site is still available under various and changing domain names.[20]

The related project Sci-Hub is an online service that processes requests for pay-walled articles by providing systematic, automized, but unauthorized backdoor access to proprietary scholarly journal databases. Users requesting papers not present in LibGen are advised to download them through Sci-Hub; the respective PDF files are served to users and automatically added to LibGen (if not already present). According to *Nature* magazine, Sci-Hub hosts around 60 million academic papers and was able to serve 75 million downloads in 2016. On a daily basis 70,000 users access approximately 200,000 articles.

The founder of the meta library Sci-Hub is Kazakh programmer Alexandra Elbakyan, who has been sued by large publishing houses and was convicted twice to pay almost 20 million US$ in compensation for the losses her activities allegedly have caused, which is why she had to go underground in Russia. For illegally leaking millions of documents the *New York Times* compared her to Edward Snowden in 2016: "While she didn't reveal state secrets, she took a stand for the public's right to know by providing free online access to just about every scientific paper ever published, ranging from acoustics to zymology."[21] In the same year the prestigious *Nature* magazine elected her as one of the ten most influential people in science.[22] Unlike other persecuted people, she went on the offensive and started to explain her actions and motives in court documents and blog posts. Sci-Hub encourages new ways of distributing knowledge, beyond any commercial interests. It provides a radically open infrastructure thus creating an inviting atmosphere. "It is a knowledge infrastructure that can be freely accessed, used and built upon by anyone."[23]

As both projects LibGen and Sci-Hub are based in post-Soviet countries, Balázs reconstructed the history and spirit of Russian reading culture and brings them into connection.[24] Interestingly, the author also establishes a connection to the Kolhoz (Russian: колхо́з), an early Soviet collective farm model that was self-governing, community-owned, and a collaborative enterprise, which he considers to be a major inspiration for the digital librarians. He also identifies parallels between this Kolhoz model and the notion of the "commons"—a concept that will be discussed in more detail with regards to shadow libraries further below.

According to Balázs, these sorts of libraries and collections are part of the Guerilla Open Access movement (GOA) and thus practical manifestations of Aaron Swartz's "Guerilla Open Access Manifesto".[25] In this manifesto the American hacker and activist pointed out the flaws of open access politics and aimed at recruiting supporters for the idea of "radical" open access. Radical in this context means to completely ignore copyright and simply make as much information available as possible. "Information is power" is how the manifesto begins. Basically, it addresses the—what he calls—"privileged", in the sense that they do have access to information as academic staff or librarians, and he calls on their support for building a system of freely available information by using their privilege, downloading and making information available. Swartz and Elbakyan both have become the "iconic leaders"[26] of a global movement that fights for scientific knowledge to be(come) freely accessible and whose protagonists usually prefer to operate unrecognized. While their particular projects may be of a more or less temporary nature, the discursive value of the work of the "amateur librarians" and their projects will have a lasting impact on the development of access politics.

CULTURAL AND KNOWLEDGE COMMONS

The above discussion illustrates that the phenomenon of shadow libraries cannot be reduced to its copyright infringing aspects. It needs to be contextualized within a larger sociopolitical debate that situates the demand for free and unrestricted access to knowledge within the struggle against the all-co-opting logic of capital, which currently aims to economize all aspects of life.

In his analysis of the Russian shadow libraries Balázs has drawn a parallel to the commons as an alternative mode of ownership and a collective way of dealing with resources. The growing interest in the discourses around the commons demonstrates the urgency and timeliness of this concept. The structural definition of the commons conceived by political economist Massimo de Angelis allows for its application in diverse fields: "Commons are social systems in which resources are pooled by a community of people who also govern these resources to guarantee the latter's sustainability (if they are natural resources) and the reproduction of the community. These people engage

in 'commoning,' that is a form of social labour that bears a direct relation to the needs of the people, or the commoners".[27] While the model originates in historical ways of sharing natural resources, it has gained new momentum in relation to very different resources, thus constituting a third paradigm of production—beyond state and private—however, with all commoning activities today still being embedded in the surrounding economic system.

As a reason for the newly aroused interest in the commons, de Angelis provides the crisis of global capital, which has maneuvered itself into a systemic impasse. While constantly expanding through its inherent logic of growth and accumulation, it is the very same logic that destroys the two systems capital relies on: non-market-shaped social reproduction and the ecological system. Within this scenario de Angelis describes capital as being in need of the commons as a "fix" for the most urgent systemic failures: "It needs a 'commons fix,' especially in order to deal with the devastation of the social fabric as a result of the current crisis of reproduction. Since neoliberalism is not about to give up its management of the world, it will most likely have to ask the commons to help manage the devastation it creates. And this means: if the commons are not there, capital will have to promote them somehow."[28]

This rather surprising entanglement of capital and the commons, however, is not the only perspective. Commons, at the same time, have the potential to create "a social basis for alternative ways of articulating social production, independent from capital and its prerogatives. Indeed, today it is difficult to conceive emancipation from capital—and achieving new solutions to the demands of *buen vivir*, social and ecological justice—without at the same time organizing on the terrain of commons, the non-commodified systems of social production. Commons are not just a 'third way' beyond state and market failures; they are a vehicle for emerging communities of struggle to claim ownership to their own conditions of life and reproduction."[29] It is their purpose to satisfy people's basic needs and empower them by providing access to alternative means of subsistence. In that sense, commons can be understood as an *experimental zone* in which participants can learn to negotiate responsibilities, social relations, and peer-based means of production.

ART AND COMMONS

Projects such as UbuWeb, Monoskop,[30] aaaaarg,[31] Memory of the World,[32] and 0xdb[33] vary in size, they have different forms of organization and foci, but they all care for specific cultural goods and make sure these goods remain widely accessible—be it digital copies of artworks and original documents, books and other text formats, videos, film, or sound and music. Unlike the large shadow libraries introduced above, which aim to provide access to hundreds of thousands, if not millions of mainly academic papers and books, thus trying to fully cover the world of scholarly and academic works, the smaller artist-run projects are of different nature. While UbuWeb's founder, for instance, also promotes a generally unrestricted access to cultural goods, his approach with UbuWeb is to build a curated archive with copies of artworks that he considers to be relevant for his very context.[34] The selection is based on personal assessment and preference and cared for affectionately. Despite its comprehensiveness, it still can be considered a "personal website" on which the artist shares things relevant to him. As such, he is in good company with similar "artist-run shadow libraries", which all provide a technical infrastructure with which they share resources, while the resources are of specific relevance to their providers.

Just like the large pirate libraries, these artistic archiving and library practices challenge the notion of culture as private property and remind us that it is not an unquestionable absolute. As Jonathan Lethem contends, "[culture] rather is a social negotiation, tenuously forged, endlessly revised, and imperfect in its every incarnation."[35] Shadow libraries, in general, are symptomatic of the cultural battles and absurdities around access and copyright within an economic logic that artificially tries to limit the abundance of digital culture, in which sharing does not mean dividing but rather multiplying. They have become a cultural force, one that can be represented in Foucauldian terms, as symptomatic of broader power struggles as well as systemic failures inherent in the cultural formation. As Marczewska puts it, "Goldsmith moves away from thinking about models of cultural production in proprietary terms and toward paradigms of creativity based on a culture of collecting, organizing, curating, and sharing content."[36] And by doing so, he produces major contradictions, or rather he allows the already existing contradictions to come to light. The artistic archives and libraries are precarious in terms of their legal status, while it is exactly due to their disregard of copyright that cultural resources could be built that exceed the relevance of most official archives that are bound to abide the

law. In fact, there are no comparable official resources, which is why the function of these projects is at least twofold: education and preservation.[37]

Maybe UbuWeb and the other, smaller or larger shadow libraries do not qualify as commons in the strict sense of involving not only a non-market exchange of goods but also a community of commoners who negotiate the terms of use among themselves. This would require collective, formalized, and transparent types of organization. Furthermore, most of the digital items they circulate are privately owned and therefore cannot simply be transferred to become commons resources. These projects, in many respects, are in a preliminary stage by pointing to the *ideal of culture as a commons*. By providing access to cultural goods and knowledge that would otherwise not be available at all or inaccessible for large parts of the general public, they might even fulfill the function of a "commons fix", to a certain degree, but at the same time they are the experimental zone needed to unlearn copyright and relearn new ways of cultural production and dissemination beyond the property regime. In any case, they can function as perfect entry points for the discussion and investigation of the transformative force art can have within the current global neoliberal knowledge society.

TOP TENS—SHOWCASING THE COPY AS AN AESTHETIC AND POLITICAL STATEMENT

The exhibition *Top Tens* provided an experimental setting to explore the possibilities of translating the abundance of a digital archive into a "real space", by presenting one hundred artworks from the Ubu archive.[38] Although all works were properly attributed in the exhibition, the artists whose works were shown neither had a say about their participation in the exhibition nor about the display formats. Tolerating the presence of a work in the archive is one thing; tolerating its display in such circumstances is something else, which might even touch upon moral rights and the integrity of the work. However, the exhibition was not so much about the individual works on display but the archiving condition they are subject to. So the discussion here has nothing to do the abiding art theory question of original and copy. Marginally, it is about the question of high-quality versus low-quality copies. In reproducible media the value of an artwork cannot be based on its originality any longer—the core criterion for sales and market value. This is why many artists use the trick of high-resolution and limited edition, a kind of distributed originality status for several authorized objects, which all are not 100 percent original but still a bit more original than an arbitrary unlimited edition. Leaving this whole discussion aside was a clear indication that something else was at stake. The conceptual statement made by the exhibition and its makers foregrounded the nature of the shadow library, which visitors were able to experience when entering the gallery space. Instead of viewing the artworks in the usual way—online—they had the opportunity to physically immerse themselves in the cultural condition of proliferated acts of copying, something that "affords their reconceptualization as a hybrid creative-critical tool and an influential aesthetic category."[39]

Appropriation and copying as longstanding methods of subversive artistic production, where the reuse of existing material serves as a tool for commentary, social critique, and a means of making a political statement, has expanded here to the art of exhibition-making. The individual works serve to illustrate a curatorial concept, thus radically shifting the avant-garde gesture which copying used to be in the twentieth century, to breathe new life in the "culture of collecting, organizing, curating, and sharing content." Organizing this conceptually concise exhibition was a brave and bold statement by the art institution: The Onassis Cultural Centre, one of Athens' most prestigious cultural institutions, dared to adopt a resolutely political stance for a—at least in juridical terms—questionable project, as Ubu lives from the persistent denial of copyright. Neglecting the concerns of the individual authors and artists for a moment was a necessary precondition in order to make space for rethinking the future of cultural production.

Special thanks to Eric Steinhauer and all the artists and amateur librarians who are taking care of our cultural memory.

1 Festival program online: Onassis Cultural Centre, "Shadow Libraries: UbuWeb in Athens," http://www.sgt.gr/eng/SPG2018/ (accessed on Sept. 30, 2018).

2 *UbuWeb* is a massive online archive of avant-garde art created over the last two decades by New York-based artist and writer Kenneth Goldsmith. Website of the archive: http://ubu.com (accessed on Sept. 30, 2018).

3 Kaja Marczewska, *This Is Not a Copy. Writing at the Iterative Turn* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 22.

4 For further reading: Kenneth Goldsmith, *Uncreative Writing: Managing Language in the Digital Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

5 Many works in the archive stem from the pre-digital era, and there is no precise knowledge of the sources where Ubu obtains its material, but it is known that Goldsmith also digitizes a lot of material himself.

6 In German copyright law, for example, §17 and §19a grant the exclusive right to reproduce, distribute, and make available online to the author. See also: https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/urhg/__15.html (accessed on Sept. 30, 2018).

7 Eric Steinhauer, "Rechtspflicht zur Amnesie: Digitale Inhalte, Archive und Urheberrecht," *iRightsInfo* (2013), https://irights.info/artikel/rechtspflicht-zur-amnesie-digitale-inhalte-archive-und-urheberrecht/18101 (accessed on Sept. 30, 2018).

8 In particularly severe cases of copyright infringement also state prosecutors can become active, which in practice, however, remains the exception. The circumstances in which criminal law must be applied are described in §109 of German copyright law.

9 See, for example, "Shadow Libraries" for a video interview with Kenneth Goldsmith.

10 Paul Torremans, *Intellectual Property Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 265.

11 See also §53 para. 1–3 of the German Act on Copyright and Related Rights (UrhG), §42 para. 4 in the Austrian UrhG, and Article 19 of Swiss Copyright Law.

12 Simon Stokes, *Art & Copyright* (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2003).

13 Steinhauer, "Rechtspflicht zur Amnesie".

14 This discrepancy between a state mandate for cultural preservation and copyright law has only been fixed in 2018 with the introduction of a special law, §16a DNBG.

15 Steinhauer, "Rechtspflicht zur Amnesie".

16 Bodó Balázs, "The Genesis of Library Genesis: The Birth of a Global Scholarly Shadow Library," Nov. 4, 2014, *SSRN*, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2616631, (accessed on Sept. 30, 2018).

17 Motto of Sci-Hub: "Sci-Hub," *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sci-Hub (accessed on Sept. 30, 2018).

18 Guillaume Cabanac, "Bibliogifts in LibGen? A study of a text-sharing platform driven by biblioleaks and crowdsourcing," *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, 67, 4 (2016): 874–884.

19 Ibid.

20 The current address is http://libgen.io/# (accessed on Sept. 30, 2018).

21 Kate Murphy, "Should All Research Papers Be Free?" *New York Times Sunday Review*, Mar. 12, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/13/opinion/sunday/should-all-research-papers-be-free.html (accessed on Sept. 30, 2018).

22 Richard Van Noorden, "Nature's 10," *Nature*, Dec. 19, 2016, https://www.nature.com/news/nature-s-10-1.21157 (accessed on Sept. 30, 2018).

23 Bodó Balázs, "Pirates in the library – an inquiry into the guerilla open access movement," paper for the 8th Annual Workshop of the International Society for the History and Theory of Intellectual Property, CREATe, University of Glasgow, UK, July 6–8, 2016. Online available

at: https://adrien-chopin.weebly.com/uploads/2/1/7/6/21765614/2016_bodo_-_pirates.pdf (accessed on Sept. 30, 2018).

24 Balázs, "The Genesis of Library Genesis".

25 Aaron Swartz, "Guerilla Open Access Manifesto," *Internet Archive*, July 2008, https://archive.org/stream/GuerillaOpenAccessManifesto/Goamjuly2008_djvu.txt (accessed on Sept. 30, 2018).

26 Balászs, "Pirates in the library".

27 Massimo De Angelis, "Economy, Capital and the Commons," in: *Art, Production and the Subject in the 21st Century*, eds. Angela Dimitrakaki and Kirsten Lloyd (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), 201.

28 Ibid., 211.

29 Ibid.

30 See: https://monoskop.org (accessed on Sept. 30, 2018).

31 Accessible with invitation. See: https://aaaaarg.fail/ (accessed on Sept. 30, 2018).

32 See: https://www.memoryoftheworld.org/ (accessed on Sept. 30, 2018).

33 See: https://0xdb.org/ (accessed on Sept. 30, 2018).

34 Kenneth Goldsmith in conversation with Cornelia Sollfrank, *The Poetry of Archiving*, 2013, https://vimeo.com/60377169 (accessed on Sept. 30, 2018).

35 Jonathan Lethem, *The Ecstasy of Influence: Nonfictions, etc.* (London: Vintage, 2012), 101.

36 Marczewska, *This Is Not a Copy*, 2.

37 The research project *Creating Commons*, based at Zurich University of the Arts, is dedicated to the potential of art projects for the creation of commons: "creating commons," http://creatingcommons.zhdk.ch/ (accessed on Sept. 30, 2018).

38 One of Ubu's features online has been the "top ten", the idea to invite guests to pick their ten favorite works from the archive and thus introduce a mix between chance operation and subjectivity in order to reveal hidden treasures. The curators of the festival in Athens, Ilan Manouach and Kenneth Goldsmith, decided to elevate this principle to the curatorial concept of the exhibition and invited ten guests to select their ten favorite works. The Athens-based curator Elpida Karaba was commissioned to work on an adequate concept for the realization, which turned out to be a huge black box divided into ten small cubicles with monitors and seating areas, supplemented by a large wall projection illuminating the whole space.

39 Marczewska, *This Is Not a Copy*, 7.

LEARNING FROM #SYLLABUS

VALERIA GRAZIANO,
MARCELL MARS,
TOMISLAV MEDAK

LEARNING FROM #SYLLABUS

VALERIA GRAZIANO, MARCELL MARS, TOMISLAV MEDAK

The syllabus is the manifesto of the 21st century.
—Sean Dockray and Benjamin Forster[1]

#Syllabus Struggles

In August 2014, Michael Brown, an 18-year-old boy living in Ferguson, Missouri, was fatally shot by police officer Darren Wilson. Soon after, as the civil protests denouncing police brutality and institutional racism began to mount across the United States, Dr. Marcia Chatelain, Associate Professor of History and African American Studies at Georgetown University, launched an online call urging other academics and teachers 'to devote the first day of classes to a conversation about Ferguson' and 'to recommend texts, collaborate on conversation starters, and inspire dialogue about some aspect of the Ferguson crisis.'[2] Chatelain did so using the hashtag #FergusonSyllabus.

Also in August 2014, using the hashtag #gamergate, groups of users on 4Chan, 8Chan, Twitter, and Reddit instigated a misogynistic harassment campaign against game developers Zoë Quinn and Brianna Wu, media critic Anita Sarkeesian, as well as a number of other female and feminist game producers, journalists, and critics. In the following weeks, *The New Inquiry* editors and contributors compiled a reading list and issued a call for suggestions for their 'TNI Syllabus: Gaming and Feminism'.[3]

In June 2015, Donald Trump announced his candidacy for President of the United States. In the weeks that followed, he became the presumptive Republican nominee, and *The Chronicle of Higher Education* introduced the syllabus 'Trump 101'.[4] Historians N.D.B. Connolly and Keisha N. Blain found 'Trump 101' inadequate, 'a mock college syllabus […] suffer[ing] from a number of egregious omissions and inaccuracies', failing to include 'contributions of scholars of color and address the critical subjects of Trump's racism, sexism, and xenophobia'. They assembled 'Trump Syllabus 2.0'.[5] Soon after, in response to a video in which Trump engaged in 'an extremely lewd conversation about women' with TV host Billy Bush, Laura Ciolkowski put together a 'Rape Culture Syllabus'.[6]

1 Sean Dockray, Benjamin Forster, and Public Office, 'README.md', *Hyperreadings,* 15 February 2018, https://samiz-dat.github.io/hyperreadings/.
2 Marcia Chatelain, 'Teaching the #FergusonSyllabus', *Dissent Magazine*, 28 November 2014, https://www.dissentmagazine.org/blog/teaching-ferguson-syllabus/.
3 'TNI Syllabus: Gaming and Feminism', *The New Inquiry*, 2 September 2014, https://thenewinquiry.com/tni-syllabus-gaming-and-feminism/.
4 'Trump 101', *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 19 June 2016, https://www.chronicle.com/article/Trump-Syllabus/236824/.
5 N.D.B. Connolly and Keisha N. Blain, 'Trump Syllabus 2.0', *Public Books*, 28 June 2016, https://www.publicbooks.org/trump-syllabus-2-0/.
6 Laura Ciolkowski, 'Rape Culture Syllabus', *Public Books*, 15 October 2016, https://www.publicbooks.org/rape-culture-syllabus/.

In April 2016, members of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe established the Sacred Stone Camp and started the protest against the Dakota Access Pipeline, the construction of which threatened the only water supply at the Standing Rock Reservation. The protest at the site of the pipeline became the largest gathering of native Americans in the last 100 years and they earned significant international support for their ReZpect Our Water campaign. As the struggle between protestors and the armed forces unfolded, a group of Indigenous scholars, activists, and supporters of the struggles of First Nations people and persons of color, gathered under the name the NYC Stands for Standing Rock Committee, put together #StandingRockSyllabus.[7]

The list of online syllabi created in response to political struggles has continued to grow, and at present includes many more examples:

All Monuments Must Fall Syllabus
#Blkwomensyllabus
#BLMSyllabus
#BlackIslamSyllabus
#CharlestonSyllabus
#ColinKaepernickSyllabus
#ImmigrationSyllabus
Puerto Rico Syllabus (#PRSyllabus)
#SayHerNameSyllabus
Syllabus for White People to Educate Themselves
Syllabus: Women and Gender Non-Conforming People Writing about Tech
#WakandaSyllabus
What To Do Instead of Calling the Police: A Guide, A Syllabus, A Conversation, A Process
#YourBaltimoreSyllabus

It would be hard to compile a comprehensive list of all the online syllabi that have been created by social justice movements in the last five years, especially, but not exclusively, those initiated in North America in the context of feminist and anti-racist activism. In what is now a widely spread phenomenon, these political struggles use social networks and resort to the hashtag template '#___Syllabus' to issue calls for the bottom-up aggregation of resources necessary for political analysis and pedagogy centering on their concerns. For this reason, we'll call this phenomenon '#Syllabus'.

During the same years that saw the spread of the #Syllabus phenomenon, university course syllabi have also been transitioning online, often in a top-down process initiated by academic institutions, which has seen the syllabus become a contested document in the midst of increasing casualization of teaching labor, expansion of copyright protections, and technology-driven marketization of education.

In what follows, we retrace the development of the online syllabus in both of these contexts, to investigate the politics enmeshed in this new media object. Our argument

7 '#StandingRockSyllabus', *NYC Stands with Standing Rock*, 11 October 2016, https://nycstandswithstandingrock.wordpress.com/standingrocksyllabus/.

is that, on the one hand, #Syllabus names the problem of contemporary political culture as pedagogical in nature, while, on the other hand, it also exposes academicized critical pedagogy and intellectuality as insufficiently political in their relation to lived social reality. Situating our own stakes as both activists and academics in the present debate, we explore some ways in which the radical politics of #Syllabus could be supported to grow and develop as an articulation of solidarity between amateur librarians and radical educators.

#Syllabus in Historical Context: Social Movements and Self-Education

When Professor Chatelain launched her call for #FergusonSyllabus, she was mainly addressing a community of fellow educators:

> I knew Ferguson would be a challenge for teachers: When schools opened across the country, how were they going to talk about what happened? My idea was simple, but has resonated across the country: Reach out to the educators who use Twitter. Ask them to commit to talking about Ferguson on the first day of classes. Suggest a book, an article, a film, a song, a piece of artwork, or an assignment that speaks to some aspect of Ferguson. Use the hashtag: #FergusonSyllabus.[8]

Her call had a much greater resonance than she had originally anticipated as it reached beyond the limits of the academic community. #FergusonSyllabus had both a significant impact in shaping the analysis and the response to the shooting of Michael Brown, and in inspiring the many other #Syllabus calls that soon followed.

The #Syllabus phenomenon comprises different approaches and modes of operating. In some cases, the material is clearly claimed as the creation of a single individual, as in the case of #BlackLivesMatterSyllabus, which is prefaced on the project's landing page by a warning to readers that 'material compiled in this syllabus should not be duplicated without proper citation and attribution.'[9] A very different position on intellectual property has been embraced by other #Syllabus interventions that have chosen a more commoning stance. #StandingRockSyllabus, for instance, is introduced as a crowd-sourced process and as a useful 'tool to access research usually kept behind paywalls.'[10]

The different workflows, modes of engagements, and positioning in relation to intellectual property make #Syllabus readable as symptomatic of the multiplicity that composes social justice movements. There is something old school—quite literally—about the idea of calling a list of online resources a 'syllabus'; a certain quaintness, evoking thoughts of teachers and homework. This is worthy of investigation especially if contrasted with the attention dedicated to other online cultural phenomena such as memes or fake news. Could it be that the online syllabus offers

8 Marcia Chatelain, 'How to Teach Kids About What's Happening in Ferguson', *The Atlantic*, 25 August 2014, https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2014/08/how-to-teach-kids-about-whats-happening-in-ferguson/379049/.

9 Frank Leon Roberts, 'Black Lives Matter: Race, Resistance, and Populist Protest', 2016, http://www.blacklivesmattersyllabus.com/fall2016/.

10 '#StandingRockSyllabus', *NYC Stands with Standing Rock*, 11 October 2016, https://nycstandswithstandingrock.wordpress.com/standingrocksyllabus/.

a useful, fresh format precisely for the characteristics that foreground its connections to older pedagogical traditions and techniques, predating digital cultures?

#Syllabus can indeed be analyzed as falling within a long lineage of pedagogical tools created by social movements to support processes of political subjectivation and the building of collective consciousness. Activists and militant organizers have time and again created and used various textual media objects—such as handouts, pamphlets, cookbooks, readers, or manifestos—to facilitate a shared political analysis and foment mass political mobilization.

In the context of the US, anti-racist movements have historically placed great emphasis on critical pedagogy and self-education. In 1964, the Council of Federated Organizations (an alliance of civil rights initiatives) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), created a network of 41 temporary alternative schools in Mississippi. Recently, the Freedom Library Project, a campaign born out of #FergusonSyllabus to finance under-resourced pedagogical initiatives, openly referenced this as a source of inspiration. The Freedom Summer Project of 1964 brought hundreds of activists, students, and scholars (many of whom were white) from the north of the country to teach topics and issues that the discriminatory state schools would not offer to black students. In the words of an SNCC report, Freedom Schools were established following the belief that 'education—facts to use and freedom to use them—is the basis of democracy',[11] a conviction echoed by the ethos of contemporary #Syllabus initiatives.

Bob Moses, a civil rights movement leader who was the head of the literary skills initiative in Mississippi, recalls the movement's interest, at the time, in teaching methods that used the very production of teaching materials as a pedagogical tool:

> I had gotten hold of a text and was using it with some adults […] and noticed that they couldn't handle it because the pictures weren't suited to what they knew […] That got me into thinking about developing something closer to what people were doing. What I was interested in was the idea of training SNCC workers to develop material with the people we were working with.[12]

It is significant that for him the actual use of the materials the group created was much less important than the process of producing the teaching materials together. This focus on what could be named as a 'pedagogy of teaching', or perhaps more accurately 'the pedagogy of preparing teaching materials', is also a relevant mechanism at play in the current #Syllabus initiatives, as their crowdsourcing encourages different kinds of people to contribute what they feel might be relevant resources for the broader movement.

Alongside the crucial import of radical black organizing, another relevant genealogy in which to place #Syllabus would be the international feminist movement and, in particular, the strategies developed in the 70s campaign Wages for Housework, spearheaded

11 Daniel Perlstein, 'Teaching Freedom: SNCC and the Creation of the Mississippi Freedom Schools', *History of Education Quarterly* 30.3 (Autumn 1990): 302.

12 Perlstein, 'Teaching Freedom': 306.

by Selma James and Silvia Federici. The Wages for Housework campaign drove home the point that unwaged reproductive labor provides a foundation for capitalist exploitation. They wanted to encourage women to denaturalize and question the accepted division of labor into remunerated work outside the house and labor of love within the confines of domesticity, discussing taboo topics such as 'prostitution as socialized housework' and 'forced sterilization' as issues impacting poor, often racialized, women. The organizing efforts of Wages for Housework held political pedagogy at their core. They understood that that pedagogy required:

> having literature and other materials available to explain our goals, all written in a language that women can understand. We also need different types of documents, some more theoretical, others circulating information about struggles. It is important that we have documents for women who have never had any political experience. This is why our priority is to write a popular pamphlet that we can distribute massively and for free—because women have no money.[13]

The obstacles faced by the Wages for Housework campaign were many, beginning with the issue of how to reach a dispersed constituency of isolated housewives and how to keep the revolutionary message at the core of their claims accessible to different groups. In order to tackle these challenges, the organizers developed a number of innovative communication tactics and pedagogical tools, including strategies to gain mainstream media coverage, pamphlets and leaflets translated into different languages,[14] a storefront shop in Brooklyn, and promotional tables at local events.

Freedom Schools and the Wages for Housework campaign are only two amongst the many examples of the critical pedagogies developed within social movements. The #Syllabus phenomenon clearly stands in the lineage of this history, yet we should also highlight its specificity in relation to the contemporary political context in which it emerged. The #Syllabus acknowledges that since the 70s—and also due to students' participation in protests and their display of solidarity with other political movements—subjects such as Marxist critical theory, women studies, gender studies, and African American studies, together with some of the principles first developed in critical pedagogy, have become integrated into the educational system. The fact that many initiators of #Syllabus initiatives are women and Black academics speaks to this historical shift as an achievement of that period of struggles. However, the very necessity felt by these educators to kick-start their #Syllabus campaigns outside the confines of academia simultaneously reveals the difficulties they encounter within the current privatized and exclusionary educational complex.

13 Silvia Federici and Arlen Austin (eds) *The New York Wages for Housework Committee 1972-1977: History, Theory and Documents.* New York: Autonomedia, 2017: 37.

14 Some of the flyers and pamphlets were digitized by MayDay Rooms, 'a safe haven for historical material linked to social movements, experimental culture and the radical expression of marginalised figures and groups' in London, and can be found in their online archive: 'Wages for Housework: Pamphlets – Flyers – Photographs', *MayDay Rooms*, http://maydayrooms.org/archives/wages-for-housework/wfhw-pamphlets-flyers-photographs/.

#Syllabus as a Media Object

Besides its contextualization within the historical legacy of previous grassroots mobilizations, it is also necessary to discuss #Syllabus as a new media object in its own right, in order to fully grasp its relevance for the future politics of knowledge production and transmission.

If we were to describe this object, a #Syllabus would be an ordered list of links to scholarly texts, news reports, and audiovisual media, mostly aggregated through a participatory and iterative process, and created in response to political events indicative of larger conditions of structural oppression. Still, as we have seen, #Syllabus as a media object doesn't follow a strict format. It varies based on the initial vision of their initiators, political causes, and social composition of the relevant struggle. Nor does it follow the format of traditional academic syllabi. While a list of learning resources is at the heart of any syllabus, a boilerplate university syllabus typically also includes objectives, a timetable, attendance, coursework, examination, and an outline of the grading system used for the given course. Relieved of these institutional requirements, the #Syllabus typically includes only a reading list and a hashtag. The reading list provides resources for understanding what is relevant to the here and now, while the hashtag provides a way to disseminate across social networks the call to both collectively edit and teach what is relevant to the here and now. Both the *list* and the *hashtag* are specificities and formal features of the contemporary (internet) culture and therefore merit further exploration in relation to the social dynamics at play in #Syllabus initiatives.

The different phases of the internet's development approached the problem of the discoverability of relevant information in different ways. In the early days, the Gopher protocol organized information into a hierarchical file tree. With the rise of World Wide Web (WWW), Yahoo tried to employ experts to classify and catalog the internet into a directory of links. That seemed to be a successful approach for a while, but then Google (founded in 1998) came along and started to use a webgraph of links to rank the importance of web pages relative to a given search query.

In 2005, Clay Shirky wrote the essay 'Ontology is Overrated: Categories, Links and Tags',[15] developed from his earlier talk 'Folksonomies and Tags: The Rise of User-Developed Classification'. Shirky used Yahoo's attempt to categorize the WWW to argue against *any* attempt to classify a vast heterogenous body of information into a single hierarchical categorical system. In his words: '[Yahoo] missed [...] that, if you've got enough links, you don't need the *hierarchy* anymore. There is no shelf. There is no file system. The links alone are enough.' Those words resonated with many. By following simple formatting rules, we, the internet users, whom *Time* magazine named Person of the Year in 2006, proved that it is possible to collectively write the largest encyclopedia ever. But, even beyond that, and as per Shirky's argument, if enough of us organized our own snippets of the vast body of the internet, we could replace old canons, hierarchies, and ontologies with folksonomies, social bookmarks, and (hash)tags.

15 Clay Shirky, 'Ontology Is Overrated: Categories, Links, and Tags', 2005, http://shirky.com/writings/herecomeseverybody/ontology_overrated.html.

Very few who lived through those times would have thought that only a few years later most user-driven services would be acquired by a small number of successful companies and then be shut down. Or, that Google would decide not to include the biggest hashtag-driven platform, Twitter, into its search index and that the search results on its first page would only come from a handful of usual suspects: media conglomerates, Wikipedia, Facebook, LinkedIn, Amazon, Reddit, Quora. Or, that Twitter would become the main channel for the racist, misogynist, fascist escapades of the President of United States.

This internet folk naivety—stoked by an equally enthusiastic, venture-capital-backed startup culture—was not just naivety. This was also a period of massive experimental use of these emerging platforms. Therefore, this history would merit to be properly revisited and researched. In this text, however, we can only hint to this history: to contextualize how the hashtag as a formalization initially emerged, and how with time the user-driven web lost some of its potential. Nonetheless, hashtags today still succeed in propagating political mobilizations in the network environment. Some will say that this propagation is nothing but a reflection of the internet as a propaganda machine, and there's no denying that hashtags do serve a propaganda function. However, it equally matters that hashtags retain the capacity to shape coordination and self-organization, and they are therefore a reflection of the internet as an organization machine.

As mentioned, #Syllabus as a media object is an ordered list of links to resources. In the long history of knowledge retrieval systems and attempts to help users find relevant information from big archives, the list on the internet continues in the tradition of the index card catalog in libraries, of charts in the music industry, or mixtapes and playlists in popular culture, helping people tell their stories of what is relevant and what isn't through an ordered sequence of items. The list (as a format) together with the hashtag find themselves in the list (pun intended) of the most iconic media objects of the internet. In the network media environment, being smart in creating new lists became the way to displace old lists of relevance, the way to dismantle canons, the way to unlearn. The way to become relevant.

The Academic Syllabus Migrates Online

#Syllabus interventions are a challenge issued by political struggles to educators as they expose a fundamental contradiction in the operations of academia. While critical pedagogies of yesteryear's social movements have become integrated into the education system, the radical lessons that these pedagogies teach students don't easily reconcile with their experience: professional practice courses, the rethoric of employability and compulsory internships, where what they learn is merely instrumental, leaves them wondering how on earth they are to apply their Marxism or feminism to their everyday lives?

Cognitive dissonance is at the basis of degrees in the liberal arts. And to make things worse, the marketization of higher education, the growing fees and the privatization of research has placed universities in a position where they increasingly struggle to provide institutional space for critical interventions in social reality. As universities become more dependent on the 'customer satisfaction' of their students for survival, they steer away from heated political topics or from supporting faculty members who might decide to engage with them. Borrowing the words of Stefano Harney and Fred Moten,

'policy posits curriculum against study',[16] creating the paradoxical situation wherein today's universities are places in which it is possible to do almost everything except study. What Harney and Moten propose instead is the re-appropriation of the diffuse capacity of knowledge generation that stems from the collective processes of self-organization and commoning. As Moten puts it: 'When I think about the way we use the term 'study,' I think we are committed to the idea that study is what you do with other people.'[17] And it is this practice of sharing a common repertoire—what Moten and Harney call 'rehearsal'[18]—that is crucially constitutive of a crowdsourced #Syllabus.

This contradiction and the tensions it brings to contemporary neoliberal academia can be symptomatically observed in the recent evolution of the traditional academic syllabus. As a double consequence of (some) critical pedagogies becoming incorporated into the teaching process and universities striving to reduce their liability risks, academic syllabi have become increasingly complex and extensive documents. They are now understood as both a 'social contract' between the teachers and their students, and 'terms of service'[19] between the institution providing educational services and the students increasingly framed as sovereign consumers making choices in the market of educational services. The growing official import of the syllabus has had the effect that educators have started to reflect on how the syllabus translates the power dynamics into their classroom. For instance, the critical pedagogue Adam Heidebrink-Bruno has demanded that the syllabus be re-conceived as a manifesto[20]—a document making these concerns explicit. And indeed, many academics have started to experiment with the form and purpose of the syllabus, opening it up to a process of co-conceptualization with their students, or proposing 'the other syllabus'[21] to disrupt asymmetries.

At the same time, universities are unsurprisingly moving their syllabi online. A migration that can be read as indicative of three larger structural shifts in academia.

First, the push to make syllabi available online, initiated in the US, reinforces the differential effects of reputation economy. It is the Ivy League universities and their professorial star system that can harness the syllabus to advertise the originality of their scholarship, while the underfunded public universities and junior academics are burdened with teaching the required essentials. This practice is tied up with the replication in academia of the different valorization between what is considered to be the labor of production (research) and that of social reproduction (teaching). The low esteem (and corresponding lower rewards and remuneration) for the kinds of intellectual labors that can be considered labors of care—editing journals, reviewing papers or marking, for instance—fits perfectly well with the gendered legacies of the academic institution.

16 Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study*, New York: Autonomedia, 2013, p. 81.
17 Harney and Moten, *The Undercommons*, p. 110.
18 Harney and Moten, *The Undercommons*, p. 110.
19 Angela Jenks, 'It's In The Syllabus', *Teaching Tools, Cultural Anthropology website*, 30 June 2016, https://culanth.org/fieldsights/910-it-s-in-the-syllabu/.
20 Adam Heidebrink-Bruno, 'Syllabus as Manifesto: A Critical Approach to Classroom Culture', *Hybrid Pedagogy*, 28 August 2014, http://hybridpedagogy.org/syllabus-manifesto-critical-approach-classroom-culture/.
21 Lucy E. Bailey, 'The "Other" Syllabus: Rendering Teaching Politics Visible in the Graduate Pedagogy Seminar', *Feminist Teacher* 20.2 (2010): 139–56.

Second, with the withdrawal of resources to pay precarious and casualized academics during their 'prep' time (that is, the time in which they can develop new course material, including assembling new lists of references, updating their courses as well as the methodologies through which they might deliver these), syllabi now assume an ambivalent role between the tendencies for collectivization and individualization of insecurity. The reading lists contained in syllabi are not covered by copyrights; they are like playlists or recipes, which historically had the effect of encouraging educators to exchange lesson plans and make their course outlines freely available as a valuable knowledge common. Yet, in the current climate where universities compete against each other, the authorial function is being extended to these materials too. Recently, US universities have been leading a trend towards the interpretation of the syllabus as copyrightable material, an interpretation that opened up, as would be expected, a number of debates over who is a syllabus' rightful owner, whether the academics themselves or their employers. If the latter interpretation were to prevail, this would enable universities to easily replace academics while retaining their contributions to the pedagogical offer. The fruits of a teacher's labor could thus be turned into instruments of their own deskilling and casualization: why would universities pay someone to write a course when they can recycle someone else's syllabus and get a PhD student or a precarious post doc to teach the same class at a fraction of the price?

This tendency to introduce a logic of property therefore spurs competitive individualism and erasure of contributions from others. Thus, crowdsourcing the syllabus in the context of growing precarization of labor risks remaining a partial process, as it might heighten the anxieties of those educators who do not enjoy the security of a stable job and who are therefore the most susceptible to the false promises of copyright enforcement and authorship understood as a competitive, small entrepreneurial activity. However, when inserted in the context of live, broader political struggles, the opening up of the syllabus could and should be an encouragement to go in the opposite direction, providing a ground to legitimize the collective nature of the educational process and to make all academic resources available without copyright restrictions, while devising ways to secure the proper attribution and the just remuneration of everyone's labor.

The introduction of the logic of property is hard to challenge as it is furthered by commercial academic publishers. Oligopolists, such as Elsevier, are not only notorious for using copyright protections to extract usurious profits from the mostly free labor of those who write, peer review, and edit academic journals,[22] but they are now developing all sorts of metadata, metrics, and workflow systems that are increasingly becoming central for teaching and research. In addition to their publishing business, Elsevier has expanded its 'research intelligence' offering, which now encompasses a whole range of digital services, including the Scopus citation database; Mendeley reference manager; the research performance analytics tools SciVal and Research Metrics; the centralized research management system Pure; the institutional repository and pub-

22 Vincent Larivière, Stefanie Haustein, and Philippe Mongeon, 'The Oligopoly of Academic Publishers in the Digital Era', *PLoS ONE* 10.6 (10 June 2015),https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0127502/.

lishing platform Bepress; and, last but not least, grant discovery and funding flow tools Funding Institutional and Elsevier Funding Solutions. Given how central digital services are becoming in today's universities, whoever owns these platforms *is* the university.

Third, the migration online of the academic syllabus falls into larger efforts by universities to 'disrupt' the educational system through digital technologies. The introduction of virtual learning environments has led to lesson plans, slides, notes, and syllabi becoming items to be deposited with the institution. The doors of public higher education are being opened to commercial qualification providers by means of the rise in metrics-based management, digital platforming of university services, and transformation of students into consumers empowered to make 'real-time' decisions on how to spend their student debt.[23] Such neoliberalization masquerading behind digitization is nowhere more evident than in the hype that was generated around Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), exactly at the height of the last economic crisis.

MOOCs developed gradually from the Massachusetts Institute of Techology's (MIT) initial experiments with opening up its teaching materials to the public through the OpenCourseWare project in 2001. By 2011, MOOCs were saluted as a full-on democratization of access to 'Ivy-League-caliber education [for] the world's poor.'[24] And yet, their promise quickly deflated following extremely low completion rates (as low as 5%).[25] Believing that in fifty years there will be no more than 10 institutions globally delivering higher education,[26] by the end of 2013 Sebastian Thrun (Google's celebrated roboticist who in 2012 founded the for-profit MOOC platform Udacity), had to admit that Udacity offered a 'lousy product' that proved to be a total failure with 'students from difficult neighborhoods, without good access to computers, and with all kinds of challenges in their lives.'[27] Critic Aaron Bady has thus rightfully argued that:

> [MOOCs] demonstrate what the technology is not good at: accreditation and mass education. The MOOC rewards self-directed learners who have the resources and privilege that allow them to pursue learning for its own sake [...] MOOCs are also a really poor way to make educational resources available to underserved and underprivileged communities, which has been the historical mission of public education.[28]

Indeed, the 'historical mission of public education' was always and remains to this day highly contested terrain—the very idea of a public good being under attack by dominant managerial techniques that try to redefine it, driving what Randy Martin

23 Ben Williamson, 'Number Crunching: Transforming Higher Education into "Performance Data"', *Medium*, 16 August 2018, https://medium.com/ussbriefs/number-crunching-transforming-higher-education-into-performance-data-9c23debc4cf7.

24 Max Chafkin, 'Udacity's Sebastian Thrun, Godfather Of Free Online Education, Changes Course', *FastCompany*, 14 November 2013, https://www.fastcompany.com/3021473/udacity-sebastian-thrun-uphill-climb/.

25 'The Rise (and Fall?) Of the MOOC', *Oxbridge Essays*, 14 November 2017, https://www.oxbridgeessays.com/blog/rise-fall-mooc/.

26 Steven Leckart, 'The Stanford Education Experiment Could Change Higher Learning Forever', *Wired*, 20 March 2012, https://www.wired.com/2012/03/ff_aiclass/.

27 Chafkin, 'Udacity's Sebastian Thrun'.

28 Aaron Bady, 'The MOOC Moment and the End of Reform', *Liberal Education* 99.4 (Fall 2013), https://www.aacu.org/publications-research/periodicals/mooc-moment-and-end-reform.

aptly called the 'financialization of daily life.'[29] The failure of MOOCs finally points to a broader question, also impacting the vicissitudes of #Syllabus: Where will actual study practices find refuge in the social, once the social is made directly productive for capital at all times? Where will study actually 'take place', in the literal sense of the phrase, claiming the resources that it needs for co-creation in terms of time, labor, and love?

Learning from #Syllabus

What have we learned from the #Syllabus phenomenon?

The syllabus *is* the manifesto of 21st century.

Political struggles against structural discrimination, oppression, and violence in the present are continuing the legacy of critical pedagogies of earlier social movements that coupled the process of political subjectivation with that of collective education. By creating effective pedagogical tools, movements have brought educators and students into the fold of their struggles. In the context of our new network environment, political struggles have produced a new media object: #Syllabus, a crowdsourced list of resources—historic and present—relevant to a cause. By doing so, these struggles adapt, resist, and live in and against the networks dominated by techno-capital, with all of the difficulties and contradictions that entails.

What have we learned from the academic syllabus migrating online?

In the contemporary university, critical pedagogy is clashing head-on with the digitization of higher education. Education that should empower and research that should emancipate are increasingly left out in the cold due to the data-driven marketization of academia, short-cutting the goals of teaching and research to satisfy the fluctuating demands of labor market and financial speculation. Resistance against the capture of data, research workflows, and scholarship by means of digitization is a key struggle for the future of mass intellectuality beyond exclusions of class, disability, gender, and race.

What have we learned from #Syllabus as a media object?

As old formats transform into new media objects, the digital network environment defines the conditions in which these new media objects try to adjust, resist, and live. A right intuition can intervene and change the landscape—not necessarily for the good, particularly if the imperatives of capital accumulation and social control prevail. We thus need to re-appropriate the process of production and distribution of #Syllabus as a media object in its totality. We need to build tools to collectively control the workflows that are becoming the infrastructures on top of which we collaboratively produce knowledge that is vital for us to adjust, resist, and live. In order to successfully intervene in the world, every aspect of production and distribution of these new media objects becomes relevant. Every single aspect counts. The order of items in a list counts. The timestamp of every version of the list counts. The name of every contributor to

29 Randy Martin, *Financialization Of Daily Life*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002.

every version of the list counts. Furthermore, the workflow to keep track of all of these aspects is another complex media object—a software tool of its own—with its own order and its own versions. It is a recursive process of creating an autonomous ecology.

#Syllabus can be conceived as a recursive process of versioning lists, pointing to textual, audiovisual, or other resources. With all of the linked resources publicly accessible to all; with all versions of the lists editable by all; with all of the edits attributable to their contributors; with all versions, all linked resources, all attributions preservable by all, just such an autonomous ecology can be made for #Syllabus. In fact, Sean Dockray, Benjamin Forster, and Public Office have already proposed such a methodology in their *Hyperreadings*, a forkable readme.md plaintext document on GitHub. They write:

> A text that by its nature points to other texts, the syllabus is already a relational document acknowledging its own position within a living field of knowledge. It is decidedly not self-contained, however it often circulates as if it were.
>
> If a syllabus circulated as a HyperReadings document, then it could point directly to the texts and other media that it aggregates. But just as easily as it circulates, a HyperReadings syllabus could be forked into new versions: the syllabus is changed because there is a new essay out, or because of a political disagreement, or because following the syllabus produced new suggestions. These forks become a family tree where one can follow branches and trace epistemological mutations.[30]

It is in line with this vision, which we share with the *HyperReadings* crew, and in line with our analysis, that we, as amateur librarians, activists, and educators, make our promise beyond the limits of this text.

The workflow that we are bootstrapping here will keep in mind every aspect of the media object syllabus (order, timestamp, contributor, version changes), allowing diversity via forking and branching, and making sure that every reference listed in a syllabus will find its reference in a catalog which will lead to the actual material, in digital form, needed for the syllabus.

Against the enclosures of copyright, we will continue building shadow libraries and archives of struggles, providing access to resources needed for the collective processes of education.

Against the corporate platforming of workflows and metadata, we will work with social movements, political initiatives, educators, and researchers to aggregate, annotate, version, and preserve lists of resources.

Against the extractivism of academia, we will take care of the material conditions that are needed for such collective thinking to take place, both on- and offline.

30 Sean Dockray, Benjamin Forster, and Public Office, 'README.md', *Hyperreadings*, 15 February 2018, https://samiz-dat.github.io/hyperreadings/.

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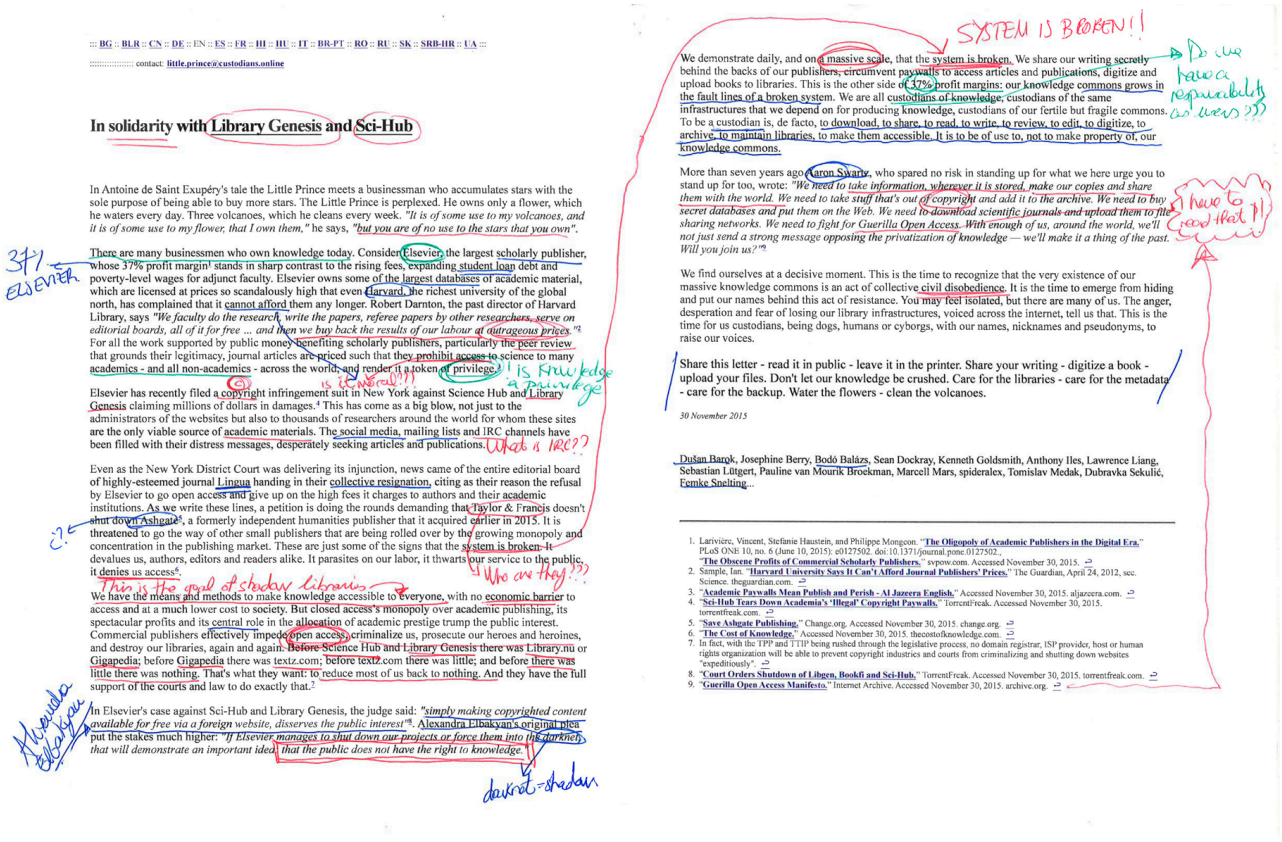

::: BG :: BLR :: CN :: DE :: EN :: ES :: FR :: HI :: HU :: IT :: BR-PT :: RO :: RU :: SK :: SRB-HR :: UA :::

:::::::::::::::: contact: little.prince@custodians.online

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[1] 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."*[2] For all the work supported by public money benefitting 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.[3]

Elsevier has recently filed a copyright infringement suit in New York against Science Hub and Library Genesis claiming millions of dollars in damages.[4] 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[5], 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[6].

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 litte; 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.[7]

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"*[8]. 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."*[9]

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?"*[9]

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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7. In fact, with the TPP and TTIP being rushed through the legislative process, no domain registrar, ISP provider, host or human rights organization will be able to prevent copyright industries and courts from criminalizing and shutting down websites "expeditiously".
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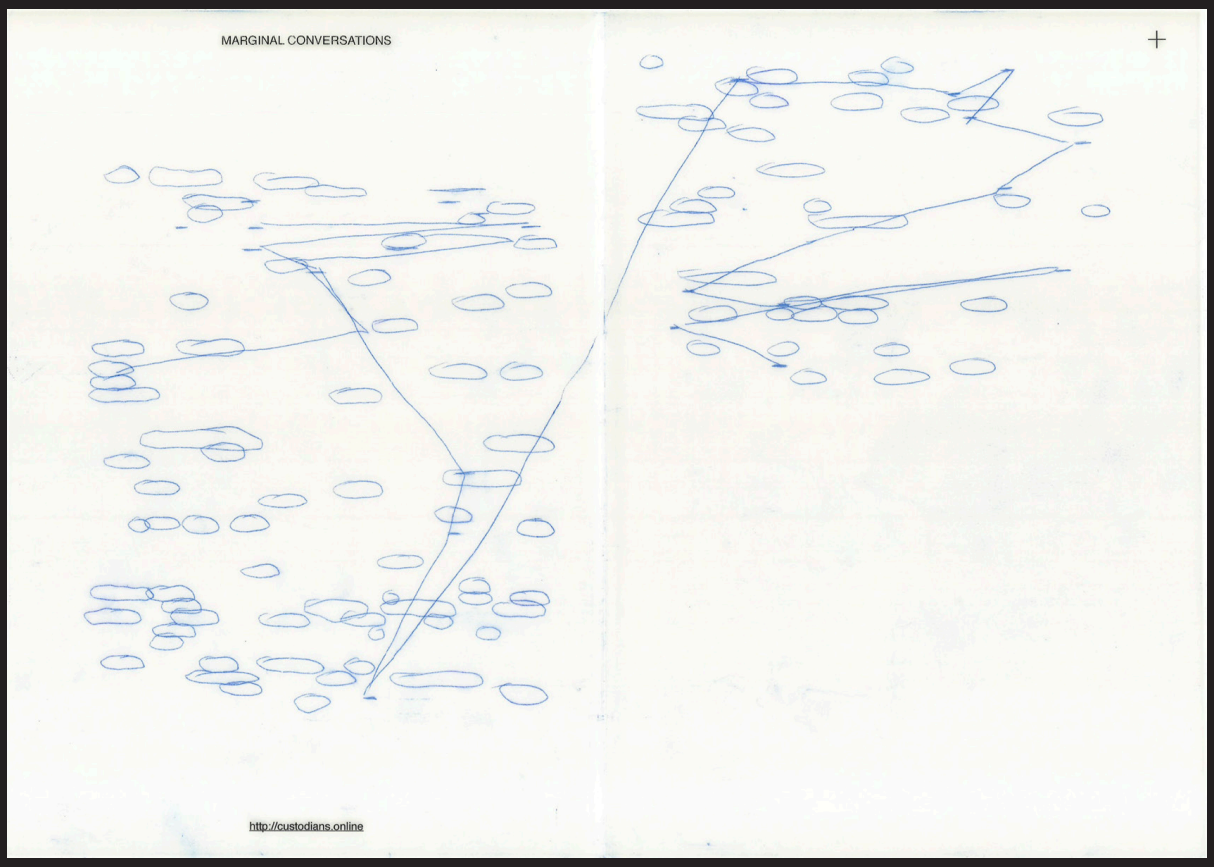
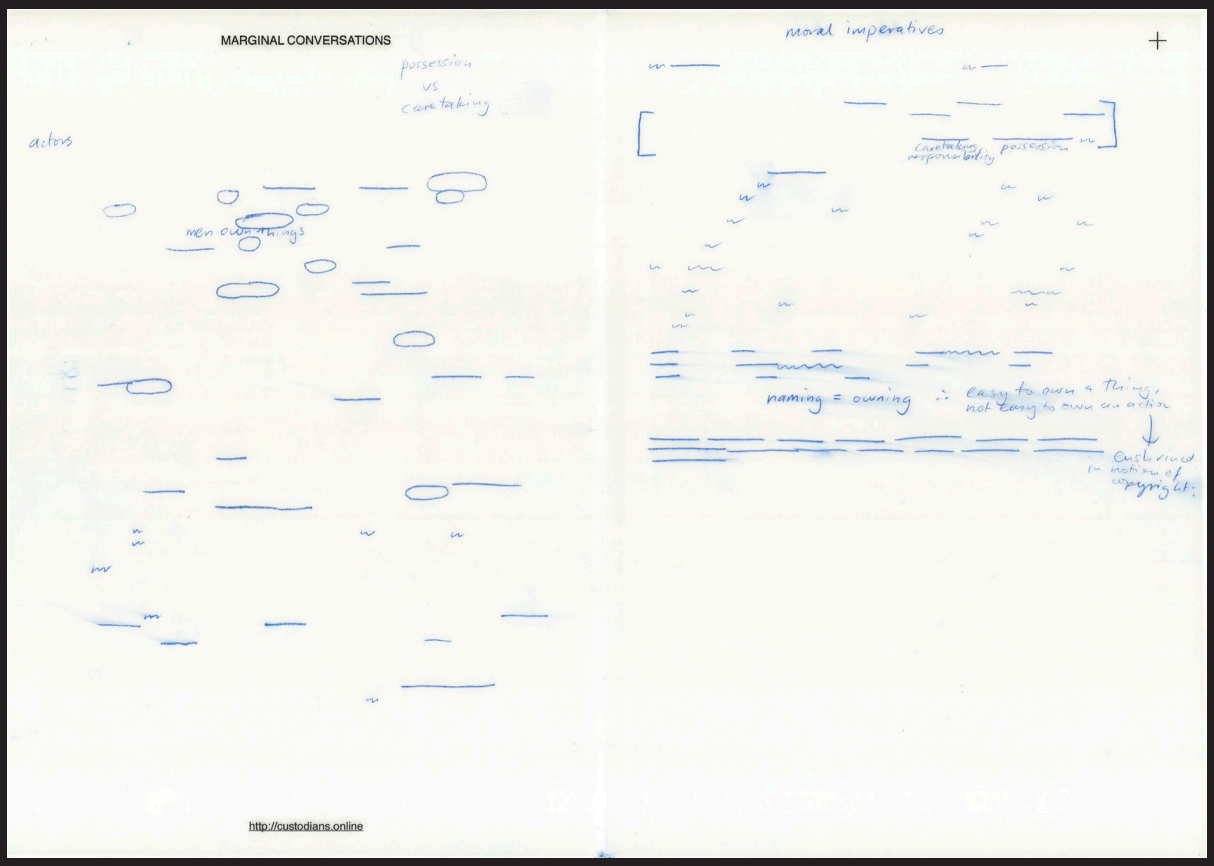
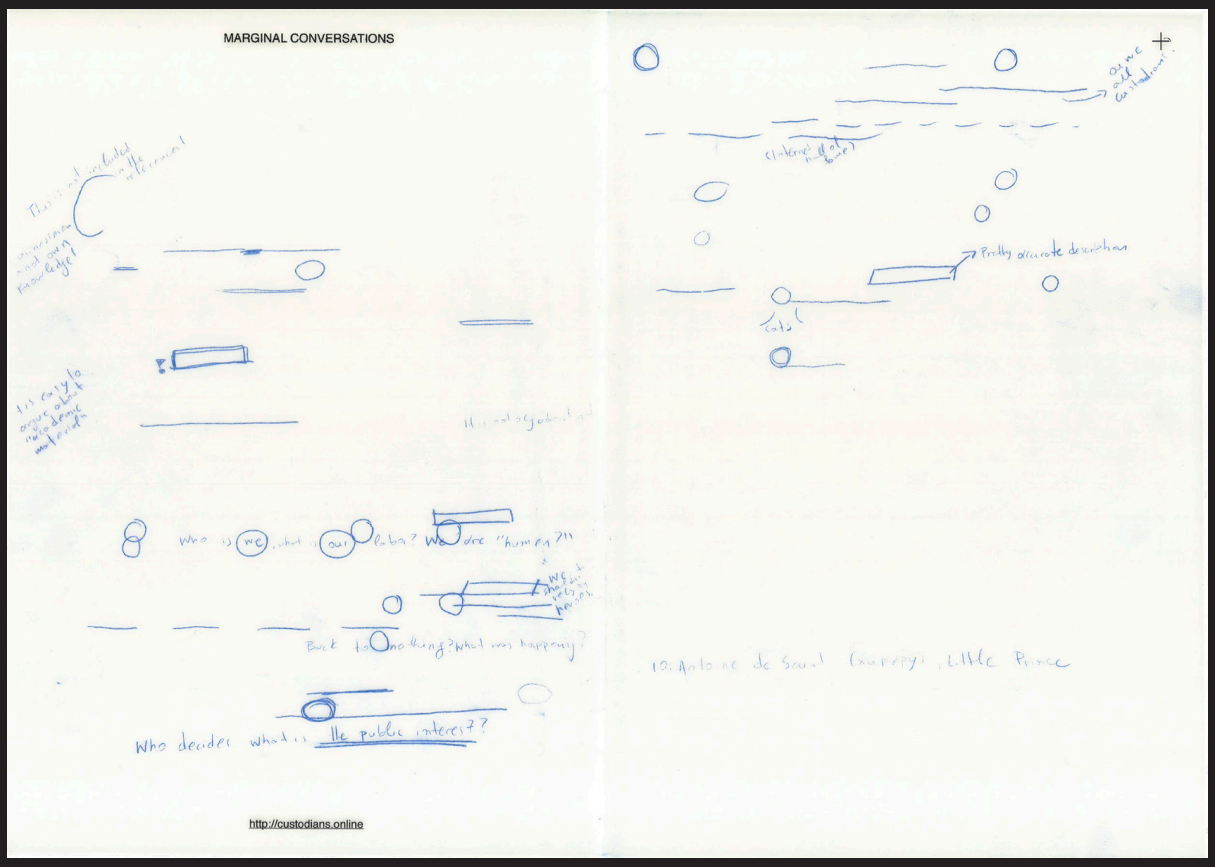
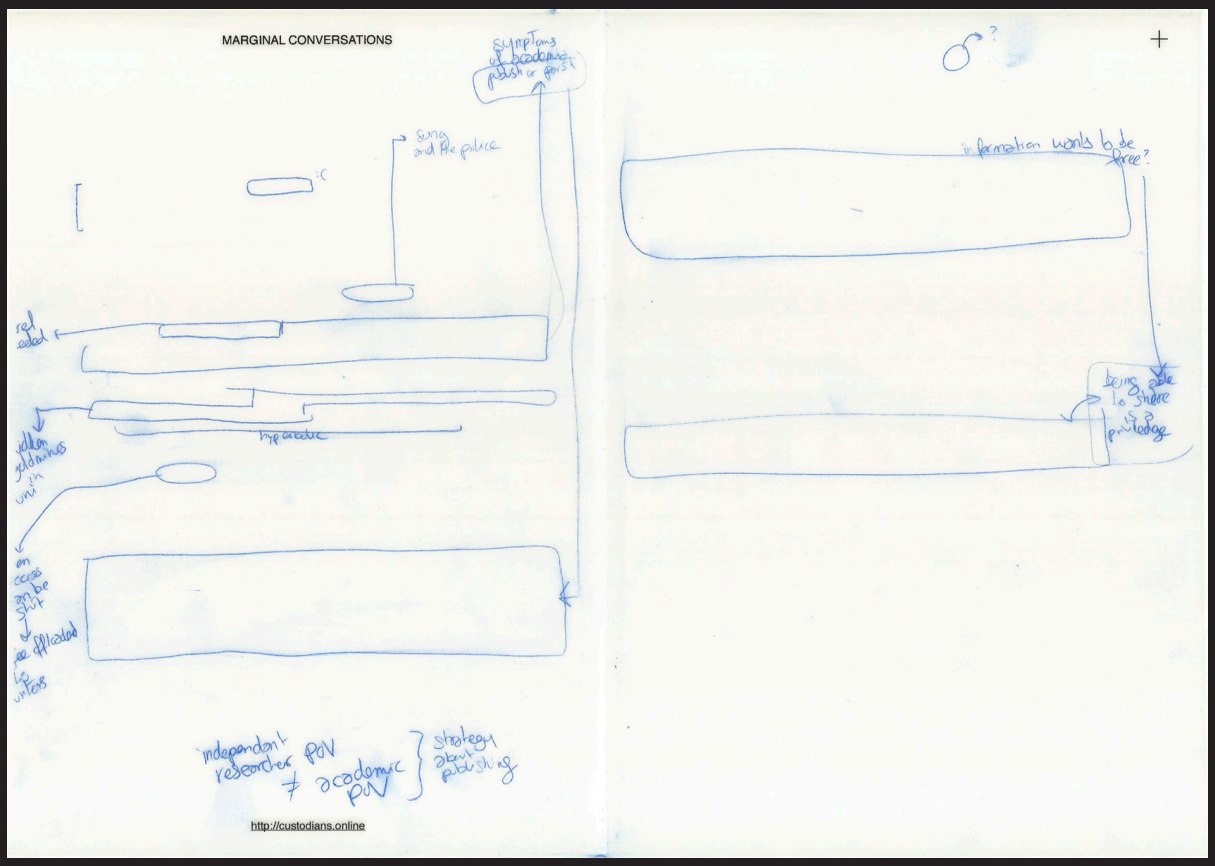
↑FIGURE 09 “In Solidarity with Library Genesis and Sci-Hub” annotated letter
→FIGURE 10 Book of collected annotations


MARGINAL CONVERSATIONS
http://custodians.online


MARGINAL CONVERSATIONS
possession
vs
caretaking
actors
men owning things
moral imperatives
caretaking
responsibility
possession
naming = owning
∴ easy to own a thing,
not easy to own an action
http://custodians.online


MARGINAL CONVERSATIONS
Who decides what is the public interest?
http://custodians.online


MARGINAL CONVERSATIONS
http://custodians.online

A Letter Performance (PART 1)

We have the means and methods to make knowledge accessible to everyone,

Knowledge?

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
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,
serve on editorial boards
all of it for free
free
freeeeeee
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 demands. 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 apon, 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 knowledgable. 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 academia, 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.

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, 0xdb.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.

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 Avantgarden (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 Avantgarden (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.

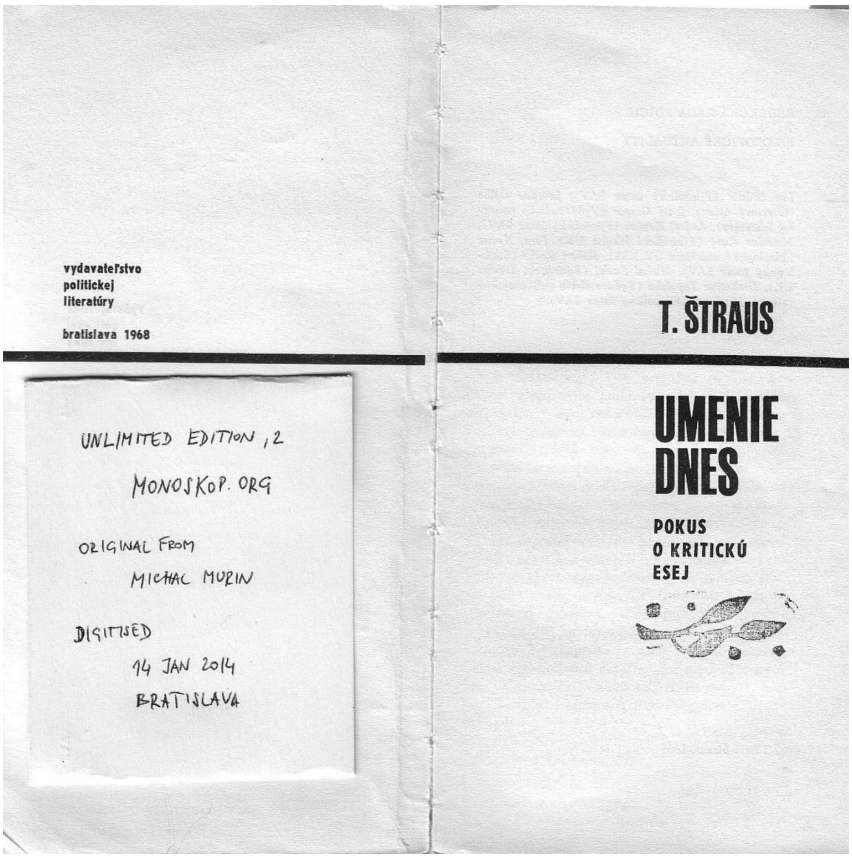
XPUB In your 2013 interview for *Neural Magazine* you say that takedown notices are often a reality for Monoskop. Do you keep records of which books you were asked to remove, and by whom you were asked to do it? Do you think this kind of practice could reveal valuable information on how free access to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

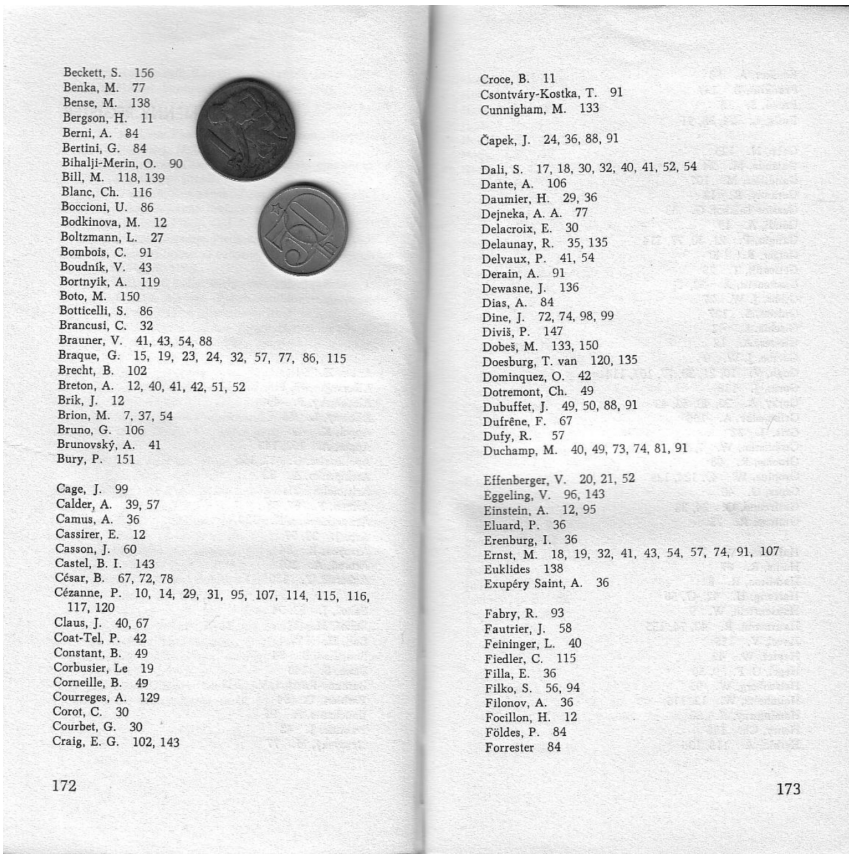
DUŠAN Yes we do keep records and try to be very open about it. As a rule, the entries on Monoskop Log are preserved even after the actual files are removed. I usually leave a note about the date and the subject who asked for deletion. This marks a part of the path of the book, even if it reaches a dead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

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 Elbakyans 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.'*

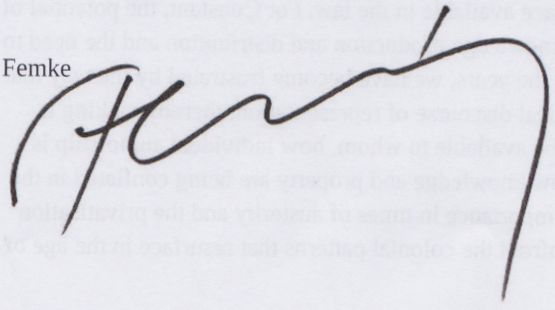
The disobedient stance of piracy can obscure the way it keeps categories of knowledge in place, either by calling upon universalist sentiments for the right to access, by relying on conventional modes of care or by avoiding the complicated subject of the law altogether. If we want to find ways to make 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



:::::::::::::::: contact: little.prince@custodians.online

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[1] 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."*[2] 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.[3]

Elsevier has recently filed a copyright infringement suit in New York against Science Hub and Library Genesis claiming millions of dollars in damages.[4] 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[5], 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[6].

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.[7]

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"*[8]. 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?"*[9]

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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1. Larivière, Vincent, Stefanie Haustein, and Philippe Mongeon. "**The Oligopoly of Academic Publishers in the Digital Era.**" PLoS ONE 10, no. 6 (June 10, 2015): e0127502. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0127502., "**The Obscene Profits of Commercial Scholarly Publishers.**" svpow.com. Accessed November 30, 2015. ↩
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4. "**Sci-Hub Tears Down Academia's 'Illegal' Copyright Paywalls.**" TorrentFreak. Accessed November 30, 2015. torrentfreak.com. ↩
5. "**Save Ashgate Publishing.**" Change.org. Accessed November 30, 2015. change.org. ↩
6. "**The Cost of Knowledge.**" Accessed November 30, 2015. thecostofknowledge.com. ↩
7. In fact, with the TPP and TTIP being rushed through the legislative process, no domain registrar, ISP provider, host or human rights organization will be able to prevent copyright industries and courts from criminalizing and shutting down websites "expeditiously". ↩
8. "**Court Orders Shutdown of Libgen, Bookfi and Sci-Hub.**" TorrentFreak. Accessed November 30, 2015. torrentfreak.com. ↩
9. "**Guerilla Open Access Manifesto.**" Internet Archive. Accessed November 30, 2015. archive.org. ↩

Dear Mr. Robert W. Sweet,

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:

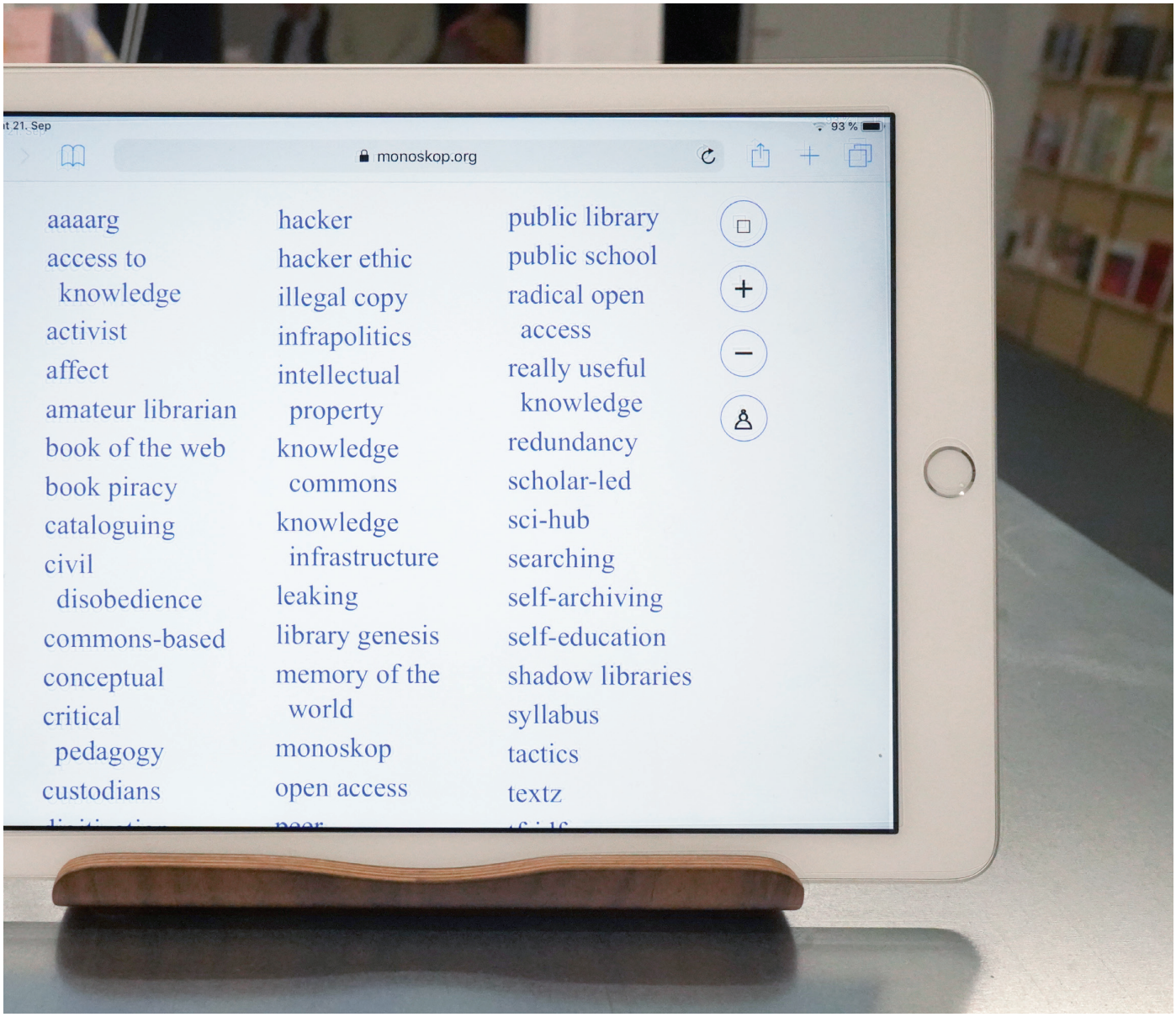
> "The Cost of Knowledge is a protest by academics against the business practices of academic journal publisher Elsevier. Among the reasons for the protests are a call for lower prices for journals and to promote increased open access to information. The main work of the project is to ask researchers 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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intellectual property
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knowledge infrastructure
leaking
library genesis
memory of the world
monoskop
open access
public library
public school
radical open access
really useful knowledge
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self-archiving
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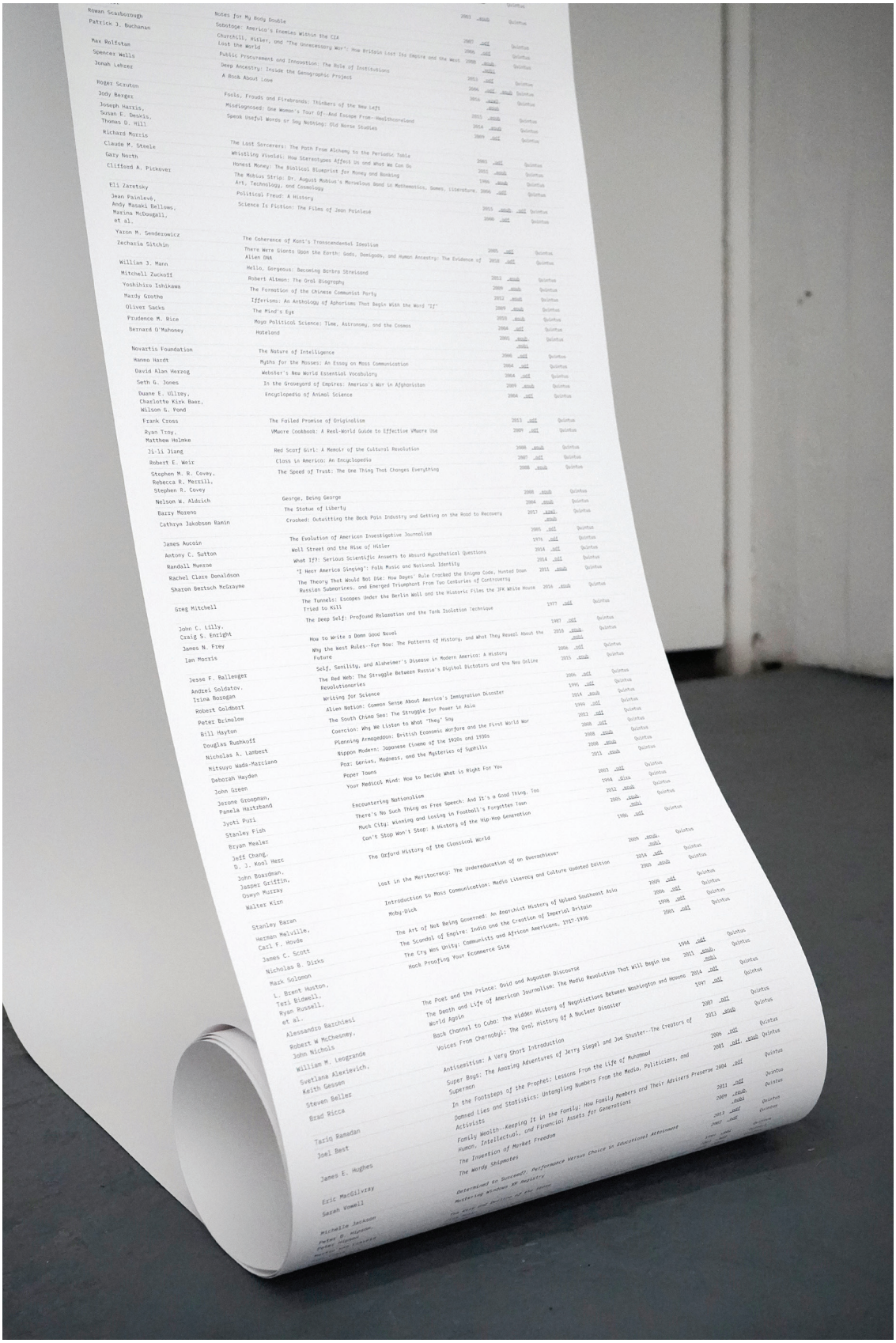


CODA

THE GHOST IN THE ALGORITHM

In today's culture, choice—and perhaps taste—is increasingly dictated by curation algorithms—bots that scrape your web-browsing history and spit it back at you in the form of a recommendation of the next thing you should watch or listen to or buy. These algorithms have become very precise, creating infinitely looping, self-reflexive, cultural filter bubbles. With the rise of what Shoshana Zuboff has termed "surveillance capitalism"[1]—the intensive marketing of your data trails—discovery has given way to predictability; the more targeted your clicks, the easier it is to forecast where you'll click in the future. The result is precisely targeted advertising—the tracking and surveillance of your online activities—a marketer's dream.

But the algorithm is just a string of code deployed to execute a specific task. The algorithm can also be programmed to surprise, as in its randomizing function, a staple of early web culture. When CDs appeared, the players had a shuffle function, something that was impossible with the LP or cassette. Putting a disc on shuffle was a way of breaking up well-known sequences of songs, of de-familiarizing old records. That sensibility did carry over to the web, where the algorithmic randomizer was used as a device to discover new sites—just think

of everything from Google's "I'm feeling lucky" button (which, until 2010, was placed alongside its "search" button on its front page) to Chatroulette, which brought you into contact with random strangers, producing, needless to say, a range of interactions and experiences.

In its early days, the web was tinged with surrealism, employing its methods of drift, disorientation, and disjunction as ways of opening up new and unknown experiences, if one were so inclined. Similarly and historically, other strains of the avant-garde sought to challenge prescribed habits with a panoply of de-familiarizing techniques, be it cubism's shattered painting surfaces or atonal music's jagged edges or modernist poetry's chopped-up words. In the avant-garde, formal innovations were often deployed as methods of discovery: nobody ever walked out of a concert hall whistling a Schoenberg twelve-tone string quartet, which was part of his intention. Instead, each time you listened to the quartet, you would hear something different. John Cage once said, "If you listen to Beethoven or to Mozart you see that they are always the same, but if you listen to traffic you see it's always different."[2]

The result was open-ended artworks, ones that denied singular readings—how you interpret that Schoenberg string quartet is equally valid to my interpretation of it—culminating in a situation in which the audience became, in a sense, collaborators with the works. This thread of communal experience was hard-wired into modernism—be it Gertrude Stein's *Everybody's Autobiography*, James Joyce's "here comes everybody," or Joseph Beuys's famous claim that "everyone is an artist"—rejecting the singular and opting instead for the multiple, the available, the plentiful, the inclusive, and the democratic. These seeds of resistance to our algorithmic world nestled within the historical avant-garde might be worth paying attention to as they resonate in the digital age. I can possess a copy of an MP3, but I can at

the same time share it with a potentially unlimited number of people.

At a time when algorithms increasingly determine which cultural artifacts we engage with and which we don't, it's important to seek out alternatives to these automated, money-driven tastemakers. An algorithm isn't capable of a perverse sensibility, nor can it replicate the capriciousness of human taste. When accretion isn't mandated to proceed by logical order or recommendations made by a supposedly "intelligent" algorithm, other narratives become possible, such as the *dérive*, an unplanned journey in which people let themselves be "drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there."[3] Algorithms abhor surprise; they wish to cater to what you already know and like. Serendipity is the enemy of the mechanical.

Enhanced by new technologies and the access the internet provides, UbuWeb favors older, warmer models of discovery, such as drifting through library stacks or a used bookstore and letting certain books jump out at you or rambling through a flea market without intention, allowing yourself to be pulled by intuition and whimsy. On UbuWeb, alphabetization is our algorithm—our resources are organized A to Z so that nothing is more prominent or promoted than the next. UbuWeb is nonhierarchical; this is not more important than that. Odd neighbors—world famous and completely unknown—rub up against one another, sparking surprising connections. On Ubu, you don't need a "this is like that" algorithm because everything is like everything else; chances are that you will be interested in anything and randomly click on it because the site was assembled by humans around the broad theme of the avant-garde. This might be like that, but not for obvious reasons; their connections can be oblique and subtle or even counterintuitive or nonsensical—all sensibilities that algorithms are incapable of. Ultimately, the curation algorithm is transactional, a means of getting you to keep spending money.

All of the popular algorithms—"people who watched this also watched," "inspired by your recent shopping trends," "sponsored products related to this item," "frequently bought together," and "customers who viewed this item also viewed"—would stall on UbuWeb because of the simple fact that there are no transactions on the site.

UbuWeb is a human-driven work of sorting, curating, and archiving. In the end, the impulse to collect and gather is the impulse to preserve what we love and want to share, which became possible in new ways thanks to the web. By doing so, we write our own histories because—as demonstrated here in the case of obscure, challenging, and avant-garde materials—few are writing them for us. As the poet Charles Bernstein says, "I don't have faith that mainstream interests will preserve protect and defend any of this work. For me, the activity of archiving allows it to exist. If we didn't do this, it would be entirely lost. What would be preserved would be mainstream work, official verse culture. That is my work, organizing alternative forms of exchange. My goal is rather straightforward: Can you create spaces for cultural exchange outside of the dominant killing forces?"[4]

Olga Goriunova

Uploading Our Libraries: The Subjects of Art and Knowledge Commons

In this article, I explore digital libraries and repositories of texts, films and other forms of art and knowledge as commons in relation to the subject positions they formulate and from which they are made. Libraries are technically not always commons, although they are increasingly discussed as ecological infrastructures for a good life.[1] Shadow libraries and repositories, as discussed below, are non-state, no profit archives, precarious libraries, public knowledge ecosystems[2] that form new types of culture and knowledge commons. These radically open knowledge infrastructures[3] are unstable, ephemeral, inventive commons, whose subjects see and make the world differently.

PART 1
Introduction to Subject-Positions

The idea of the commons directly relates to the questions of subjectivity and subject (or subject-position). The subject here is taken to mean an abstracted position, almost a logical placeholder, which is distinct from subjectivity or self as a complex and indeterminate lived experience. The subject may abstract from self and maintain a connection to it, or may be a figuration, acting as quasi-subject or "model subject" and being unrelated to any particular individual. We know abstracted subject positions from role models, conceptual descriptions, and novelistic

1 Shannon Mattern, "Library as Infrastructure," *Places* (June 2014), https://placesjournal.org/article/library-as-infrastructure (all links in this text were last accessed October 21, 2020).

2 Cornelia Sollfrank, "The Surplus of Copying. How Shadow Libraries and Pirate Archives Contribute to the Creation of Cultural Memory and the Commons," *originalcopy* (November 2018), http://www.ocopy.net/essays/cornelia-sollfrank/

3 Alexandra Elbakyan, Transcript and Translation of Sci-Hub Presentation (2016), https://openaccess.unt.edu/symposium/2016/info/transcript-and-translation-sci-hub-presentation

or cinematic figurations. They also take part in the processes of subjectivation, albeit their zone of actualization is art, literature, or culture more broadly. Subject-positions also develop in digital media systems, formulated in relation to technological infrastructures and platforms.

Before setting out to describe the subjects of the projects generating and maintaining knowledge commons, the subjects of shadow libraries and repositories and the subject positions offered to and invented by their collective users, it is important to mark two important claims, from which the notion of the subject or subject position that I want to pursue here stems. The first is that subjectivity is a process rather than an essence. Subjectivity as a process relies on interactions with other humans and non-humans, with forces, laws, institutions, power—overall, on development and exchange in complex systems. Subjectivation, another term to emphasize the processual nature of becoming, is used to describe the flow of life that individuates into a particularity, and here the individual is never quite fully achieved in the sense of being final and whole: an individual is always in the process of being made, relying on the pre-individual, the collective, and the non-individual.

The second claim concerns aesthetics. An argument made by Mikhail Bakhtin is that aesthetics is core to the processes of subjectivation and to the production of the subject.[4] This aesthetics is not a characteristic of something that belongs to the world of art, neither it is something that is primarily visual or perceived by the senses. Aesthetics is a broader category. For Bakhtin, it is the aesthetic relation—that is, primarily a productive, creative force—that *makes sense* of a multitude of features, judgments, responses of a person. This becomes clearer if we take as our starting position the idea presented above that one unique subjectivity is a fiction. A human consists of multiple and multi-directed drives, actions, desires, thoughts—with this multitude dynamically evolving and permanently making sense in relation to the world in which one lives. A whole, one, centered and stable subjectivity is constant work, a fable. This fable, for Bakhtin, is told by aesthetics. It is the aesthetic relation that makes sense of the multiplicity of things

4 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Estetika slovesnogo tvorchestva* (Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1979). The essays included are published in English in Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982) and Mikhail Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993).

taking part and undergoing processes of subjectivation. The aesthetic relation is the one that makes sense, *creates the subject concretely*, in embodied reality, and *abstractly*, in abstracted meaning. Such aesthetic relation is of the person and of the world towards the person; here aesthetic relation is what creates both the person and the world.

When Bakhtin talks about the aesthetic protagonist (in Dostoevsky's novels), he suggests that a protagonist offers *a point of view*. The protagonist here is not a manifestation of socio-political forces (a classical Marxist view on literature), or a constellation of individual characteristics to produce a realist character (Tolstoy's achievement), but a specific point of view on oneself and the world, a conceptual and axiological position: a position from which meaning-making and judgment, evaluation of the world and oneself is made. Such a conceptual subject-position is fictional, i.e. it is literature, and yet a point of view from which a certain new version of the world can be created, and in that, it is aesthetic.

In a certain way, such a proposition is conceptually close to what Deleuze and Guattari describe as a "conceptual persona," of which they write: "The role of conceptual personae is to show thought's territories."[5] A conceptual persona maps and lays out a plane, a cut of the world, with its own coordinates and a horizon of possibility, and within which a mode of living or other form of difference can be invented and produced. Although Deleuze and Guattari say that conceptual personae are not "literary or novelistic heroes,"[6] they write: "the plane of composition of art and the plane of immanence of philosophy can slip into each other to the degree that parts of one may be occupied by the entities of the other."[7] "Great aesthetic figures of thought"[8] offer a point of view, a position, from which a territory can be mapped and creatively produced.

The subject positions described below are abstracted from the work and structures of shadow libraries, repositories, and platforms. They are formed as points of view, conceptual positions that create a version of the world with its own system of values, maps of orientation and horizon of possibility. A conceptual congregation of actions,

5 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* (London: Verso, 1994), p. 69.
6 Ibid., p. 65.
7 Ibid., p. 66.
8 Ibid., p. 65.

values, ideas, propositions creates a subject position that renders the project possible. Therefore, on the one hand, techno-cultural gestures, actions, structures create subject positions, and on the other, the projects themselves as cuts of the world are created from a point of view, from a subject position. This is neither techno-determinism, when technology defines subjects, nor an argument for an independence of the human, but for a mutual constitution of subjects and technology through techno-cultural formulations.

Similarly to how Sianne Ngai discussed the problem of the "tone of the text," as a general feeling that neither the reader nor any of the protagonists necessarily feel,[9] there are subject positions in and of a technical system that arise in complex ways. Such positions are figured by a range of possibilities and forms of engagement in a system, but are not necessarily prescribed in such a way that there is a subject position corresponding to a sequence of clicks through the interface. It is not possible to pin a subject position on a technical function alone; neither is the "user" set up through the design process. Sometimes such a subject position is not worth speaking about—it can be formulaic, offer a speck of a subject—but at other times it is a point of view, of meaning-making, of value, that makes a claim for another version of the world. Techno-cultural projects, including the ones I attend to below, form subject positions, both in terms of a position from which the project is created and maintained, and as a collective user/participant, developed through the project's technical realization, content, forms of interaction, and evolution over time.

I have previously developed the notion of organizational aesthetics to explain how the configuration and development of techno-cultural platforms and their practices contribute to the creation of an art movement and of artist and curator as subjects.[10] Subject-positions can be formed by software processes in relation to complex forms of organization of the repository. They can be constructed, among other factors, by specific computational configurations of networks, platforms, use functions, back-ends, software tools, interfaces, html-versions and connection speeds, as well as complex sets of ideas, decisions, chances,

9 Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), p. 69.

10 Olga Goriunova, *Art Platforms and Cultural Production on the Internet* (London: Routledge, 2012).

and cultural forms. Such subject-positions are aesthetic because they are creative processes that act productively, make sense of and create different cuts of the world and new forms of inhabiting it. In this article, it is the access to the changing structures of art and knowledge, and their changing position in larger infrastructures of society that is negotiated by the subjects under consideration.

There is a tradition for thinking technology in relation to subjectivation (as developed in the work of Gilbert Simondon), but in this text I am more concerned with abstracted subject positions, and how they work in the project of society, rather than going into detail about what they do to subjectivities. My proposition of the subject as a subject-position grows out of Bakhtin's offering. However, I suggest being cautious of the Cartesian tradition, followed by Bakhtin, of regarding a subject as always produced in relation to one human, or human mind, which turns back on oneself and realizes that it can think both the world and itself, thus splitting reality into an object of thought and the thinking subject, conscious of itself. This subject has been announced dead by the poststructuralists. It was decimated by feminist and postcolonial work that showed that such a subject is produced by subjugating the world and otherness, that such a subject is always precoded as white, male, and able. What I would like to do in this text is to argue away from such a subject, and instead think a subject position that acts aesthetically in the world, and in relation to subjectivities. If a subject is a process of abstraction, of turning back on oneself, or a falling out of immanence, as Deleuze called it,[11] there are many ways of abstracting subjects and many different kinds of abstracted subjects operating in the world.

The subject by virtue of its abstracted nature is inscribed in various structures of power (Althusser said that they are generated in response to them[12]), acting back on the self. Very different traditions can be brought together when thinking such subjects. One tradition that concerns itself with people and their subjects is grounded in the social sciences. Here, the formation of the subject is often about rendering people as units, by counting them and recording them as data, fitting

11 Gilles Deleuze, *Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life* (New York: Zone Books, 2001), pp. 26–28.

12 Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (1970), https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/althusser/1970/ideology.htm

them into categories, and calculating average persons. Well-known arguments, such as that of Ian Hacking, in the article "Making Up People," focus on the claim that statisticians make people up by creating categories and models, which are then filled in by people making themselves in the image of a category or rather society molding people in terms of the category.[13] This is a nominalist position: one names something and it comes to exist, not only as a label, but as embodied reality. The article is staged as an argument between a nominalist and a realist, seemingly with no side winning. Radical nominalism, after all, and perhaps especially after Duchamp, is indistinguishable from poetry or art.

Here is where the operations of counting, identifying, classifying cross to the art and humanities side, another tradition of thinking subjects: people also make themselves and others in the image of creatures of literature, art and film. A term suited to talking about this is that of a poetic figure, figuration, a persona or a subject-position. Here, a subject is an aesthetic position created by an art project, a Bakhtinian point of view offered by a novel's protagonist or a cinematic figuration.

Rancière called these two distinct domains the logic of fact and the logic of fiction. Fiction is not false: it has rigorous logic. I suggest that in computational, data-intensive cultures the logic of fact and the logic of fiction cross wires, creating abstract subject positions that are aesthetic, meaning productive and creative, and which partake in the processes of subjectivation as well as the creation and maintenance of society. There are many such subject positions. Some are very significant and all-encompassing, while others are "flecks of identity,"[14] elements of figurations created by techno-cultural gestures.

In Marxist readings of history, the problem I am trying to capture is normally addressed in terms of an opposition between the form of an individual forged by capitalist systems of relations, and a re-thinking of such an isolated self-managing subject in relation to the notions of collective subjectivation, collective knowledge and action, and alternative property regimes, amongst other things. Such an analysis

13 Ian Hacking, "Making Up People" (1986), https://serendipstudio.org/oneworld/system/files/Hacking_making-up-people.pdf

14 Matthew Fuller, *Media Ecologies: Materialist Energies in Art and Technoculture* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2005).

emphasizes that the production of an individual as a self-consistent unit functioning within an order of time and space of work is primarily the result of a transformation of people into disciplined labor power, which is to be further expropriated and turned into capital. The logic of capital governs the copyright system directly (in terms of laws protecting profits, whether immediate or imaginary) and by instilling habits and beliefs, a process of training that is so long that Felix Stalder calls for "unlearning copyright."

But how are such things learned in the first place? The early modern transformation of people into working subjects is explored in the work of Silvia Federici. Federici argues that the person that is homogenized, fixed in time and space, identical to itself, is an invention of capitalism seeking to produce a capable and willing, regularized workforce out of people orientating themselves around chance, magic, and different notions of time and need. This concerns, Federici says in *Caliban and the Witch*, not only the productive labor force, but also the reproductive labor force, primarily women, who were individualized, cut off from the commons, and subjugated into dependence on a man in a nuclear family unit in the early period of capitalist development.[15] Federici's argument emphasizes that historical commons, such as forests in England, were sites of subsistence, collectivity and cooperation. The use of the commons, her argument goes, produced and sustained knowledges and practices involved in the production of difference. This was the difference of how to be female—in relation to plants and the knowledge of herbs, which entailed relation to one's own body, including controlling reproductive capacities, and in relation to other women, their knowledge and shared practices. The common forest was also the source of food and warmth that entailed support for different modes of living and survival. Alongside the dispossession of people by way of enclosures and terminating the communal use of the forest, women were condemned as witches and executed in large quantities, with their forest-reliant knowledges and practices lost as a result.

Here, I would say, a witch is a subject-position. Today, people may decide to explore the option of being a witch, to figure themselves in the image of a witch, to develop a practice to communicate with what

15 Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch* (New York: Autonomedia, 2004).

Stengers calls the "unknowns" of modernity.[16] Such figuration would be conceptual, as well as collective, expressed in specific collective practices. At the same time, as Federici demonstrates, it is a category historically used in Europe to exterminate women to the order of hundreds of thousands during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. A figuration here crosses into a legal category, which, once applied to the person, provides grounds for her torture and execution. The tension between the aesthetic function of a subject-position, its political force and its utilization in juridical terms are core to the notion of the subject. The aesthetic figuration of a subject position can be militarized, turned into a weapon or put into shackles.

Overall, I argue that the shadow library projects considered below create subject positions that re-define horizons of possibility through intervening into and widening the processes of subjectivation. To do this is always a political as well as an aesthetic matter. The commons is a site of nourishment of various kinds, of knowledges and practices that sustain alternative political imaginaries of education, social relations, art, culture, economy, and the making of forms of solidarity. Commons are practices, forms of knowledge, action and cooperation, dynamic technical infrastructures that have corresponding subject-positions: they nurture and sustain specific subjects. Such subjects are techno-aesthetic figurations; as such, they may be formed as targets of state control or be targeted so that certain behaviors they represent can be eliminated. Similarly to how the witch hunt, when expressed in cultural, societal suspicion of women, attacked certain forms of feminine power, the copyright regime attacks certain powers: of a habit of knowing, of sharing, of experimental forms of art, of different orders of cultural importance, of building alternative infrastructures. Subject positions can and have repeatedly crossed into categories targeted by law: for instance, when launching a piece of software running a DDoS attack started to constitute criminal behavior rather than a form of political demonstration. Here, for example, acting in the image of a hacker, a member of *Anonymous* supporting Wikileaks against the blockade by Visa or PayPal (a thread of a subject-posi-

16 See work by Isabelle Stengers, including "Experimenting with refrains: Subjectivity and the challenge of escaping modern dualism," *Subjectivity* 22, no. 1 (2008): pp. 38-59, and Philippe Pignarre, Isabelle Stengers, *Capitalist Sorcery: Breaking the Spell*, trans. Andrew Goffey (London: Palgrave, 2011).

tion), in some cases quickly led to people ending up in prison. The damaging lawsuits against individuals who started shadow libraries is another example: an individual is singled out and framed as a criminal in specific nationally delimited legal systems that attempt to narrate the world and people in their own logic and language. The notion of the bourgeois subject is profoundly linked to the notion of individual property. Evasive murky subjects of commons, with their multiple and undefined roles, can offshore responsibility constituted in the terms of current copyright law and its enforcement. Multiple subjects of commons can allow not only for disidentification, but also for play and evasion of this regime.

In what follows, I review a number of the projects sustaining art and knowledge commons in the digital age in terms of the subject positions that arise from the way they have developed and work, as the positions of those who create, maintain, safeguard and use the commons and as the ways of understanding them. There are a few such figures: historically, a pirate, an outlaw, and, more recently, meta and underground librarian, public custodian, general librarian, critical public pedagogue, multiform bibliographer, fancy general archivist, and cultural analyst. All of these are ways of ordering reality and thus creating knowledge, art, and collaborative action. These subjects are not some whim, they are acting in and producing lived reality and the processes of subjectivation of those reliant, even if only occasionally, on them.

PART 2
Pirate, Thief and Otherwise an Outlaw

One of the important figures for the formulation of the commons in response to the rise of networks in the 1980s and 1990s, was that of the pirate. Bruce Sterling's 1988 *Pirates in the Net* described enclaves dedicated to "data piracy," but it was Hakim Bey's work on pirates, appearing in different formats, including *Pirate Utopias*, and culminating in his proposition of the concept of the Temporary Autonomous Zone (TAZ) that became influential for net critics, filesharers, media artists, and activists.

The historical pirates, in his account, held land in common in pirate enclaves; their wealth was held in common treasury.[17] Shared resources meant temporary liberation of land as well as imagination, and implied specific forms of self-governance and sovereignty. The TAZ, inspired by the figuration of an anarchist pirate, is a temporary free enclave that takes the form of a network, tactics, or organization. A TAZ is not necessarily a place in time per se, but is embedded in the Web, which is an "open structure of info exchange."[18] The Web is the necessary support system for a TAZ, which acts within the ethics of the counter-Net, leeching off the official, hierarchical, state-or-corporate-controlled Net. The "actual data piracy,""illegal and rebellious use" of the Net relies on having the structures, tactics, and ways of organizing via the Web. But it's not only that: the Web can also "*inform* the TAZ, from its inception, with vast amounts of compacted time and space which have been 'subtilized' as data."

In Bey's vocabulary, Net and counter-Net seem to act as infrastructures, whereas the Web is a form of their use, a mode of organization, a multiplicity of infrastructural features to support the TAZ, and provide it with time and space in the form of data. What would have been a network of locales, markets, knowledges of routes as well as songs and epics as shared infrastructure of pirate subsistence is "subtilized" into data and the Web.[19] The new formulation of a plastic techno-system, together with its practices of use, strategies, and poetics coalesce around the figure of the pirate. This pirate is a subject position that allows for the invention of new socio-political forms of life. In Bey's account, although he does not use the term, the Web as infrastructural commons enhances and supports forms of life, spaces and time rather than substitutes for them. The ideas come from elsewhere: the pirate imagines and actualizes new forms of society, relying on the common forms of organization, tactics, and resources of the Web.

The founder of *Sci-Hub,* Alexandra Elbakyan, uses related vocabulary today, setting up a fascinating context for her work in one of her

17 Peter Lamborn Wilson, *Pirate Utopias: Moorish Corsairs & European Renegadoes* (New York: Autonomedia, 1995), p. 195.

18 Hakim Bey, T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism, (1985/1991), https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/hakim-bey-t-a-z-the-temporary-autonomous-zone-ontological-anarchy-poetic-terrorism

19 Ibid.

interviews.[20] "We are the thieving magpies," was Bey's premise to his version of the commons. Elbakyan says that science was historically regarded as a theft of secrets from nature. While the figures of the pirate and heroic outlaws, such as Robin Hood, are also an important source of inspiration for her, she also activates a large variety of resources, from Ancient Greek mythology and Thomas Moore to the Soviet scientific community, to advocate for the abolition of private ownership of the process and the results of scientific enquiry. The figures of the pirate, the outlaw, and of cunning Hermes, a God of crossing boundaries, set up an ideational horizon that make the work of *Sci-Hub* possible.

Meta librarian

The context that Tomislav Medak sets up for his work with Marcell Mars includes the policy of austerity following the 2008 financial crisis, the crisis of mass education, and the underemployment of skilled workforces, read against the background affordances of technical infrastructures. Following the rise of American monopolies, such as Google, Facebook or Twitter, the channeling of information networks into private platforms, and the aggressive campaigns of publishing giants such as Elsevier, new figures and subject positions come to prominence.

Marcell Mars and Tomislav Medak initiated Memory of the World as a proof of concept for the project Public Library in 2012. Memory of the World was built in response to the specific situation when Croatian libraries were disposing of books. Staged as a response to the financial cuts, this disposal was also used as an opportunity to get rid of undesired political histories and knowledge. The librarians were throwing out Marxist books, books by Serbians or those written in the Cyrillic alphabet.[21] In response, Medak and Mars asked people to bring books and journals that were being chucked out; they were then scanned and

20 Elbakyan. Transcript and Translation of Sci-Hub Presentation (2016), https://openaccess.unt.edu/symposium/2016/info/transcript-and-translation-sci-hub-presentation

21 Croatians use the Latin alphabet for transcribing a language that was described as a single Serbo-Croatian language during the Yugoslavian period. It is possible to transcribe it either in the Latin or the Cyrillic alphabet. For more context, see "Knowledge Commons and Activist Pedagogies: From Idealist Positions to Collective Actions." Conversation with Marcell Mars and Tomislav Medak (co-authored with Ana Kuzmanić), https://monoskop.org/images/7/7f/Jandric_Petar_Kuzmanic_Ana_2017_Knowledge_Commons_and_Activist_Pedagogies_From_Idealist_Positions_to_Collective_Actions_Conversation_with_Marcell_Mars_and_Tomislav_Medak.pdf

made available to the readers (*Written-Off*, 2015). For example, the entire catalogue of the Yugoslav Communist research group journal *Praxis,* which was going to be destroyed, was put online: this opened up a worldwide discussion of the legacy of this group (*Digital Archive of Praxis and the Korč ula Summer School*, 2016).

The subject position of a *meta librarian* arises here in response to the crisis in the project of continuation of knowledge. A meta librarian is the next level up from the librarian; a librarian of librarians, it comes onto the stage when normal librarians fail. Mars and Medak emphasize the position of the institution of the library as a conflictual site. [22] Torn between the promise of universal knowledge and universal enlightenment, i.e. access to that knowledge, on the one side, and repression of otherness in the construction of universality, on the other, the institution of the public library has to serve multiple purposes. When it primarily acts as the regulatory institution of nation building, keen to serve a particular version of national identity to support the functioning of the nation-state, the preservation of multiplicity of knowledges requires disobedience, forking and complexification of the institution of the library and the subject of the librarian. The versioning of the position of the public librarian into a meta librarian institutes a new library.

The subject position of meta librarian is that of the one who intervenes and takes on the role of the public librarian, while being an amateur. A meta librarian safeguards and makes available knowledge and practices preserved in undesired or unavailable books. Here, two further notions converge under the general auspice of the meta librarian: a *public custodian and a general librarian.*[23]

Public custodian

Techno-cultural gestures and infra-structural actions inform and organize subject positions. The work of creating Memory of the World is physical labor: one person, working on it full time, was scanning 50

22 Tomislav Medak, "The Future After the Library. UbuWeb and Monoskop's Radical Gestures," in *Javna knjižnica / Public Library*, ed. Tomislav Medak, Marcell Mars, and WHW (Zagreb: WHW & Multimedia Institute, 2015).

23 "Before and After Calibre," Memory of the World: "When everyone is librarian, library is everywhere." It was accessible via this link during the time of writing: https://www.memoryoftheworld.org/blog/2012/11/27/before-and-after-calibre-2/

titles a day, delimiting the project's capacity of creation. This kind of work cannot be automated and does not scale well. Scanning and post-processing requires time, which poses a clear bodily limit. This means that the titles need to be selected; with old books and magazines, one has to take individual decisions on what to preserve, and to what degree of precision in terms of resolution or annotation. Here, the custodian comes on stage. *Custodians.online*, a collective of shadow librarians, published letters in support of Library Genesis and Science Hub in 2015: here, shadow librarians use the term "custodian" as a self-definition.

The custodian preserves culture and knowledge, but in contrast to the private custodian who safeguards a collection entrusted to them until times change for the better, the *public custodian* is compelled to activate the collection. This might include converting formats, making files readable by a variety of e-readers, and organizing material, including references, but more generally, the public custodian is committed to making the collection available for public use.

The subject position of Memory of the World is that of a public custodian. It is called into existence by a crisis in the politics of memory. As an amateur historian, a public custodian is keen to preserve and create access to alternative pasts and futures. Anyone who participates in creating the project, bringing or scanning material, takes on themselves parts of this subject position, while also contributing to it as the main conceptual principle of the resource. It is from the point of view of the position of the public custodian that the claim to a different version of political and social history, and a different relationship to the library and to the public, is made.

But the custodian is not only the position from which to salvage, to preserve and to take care of disappearing paper books. Shadow librarians use the idea of custodianship as an umbrella concept: they are united, as Mars and Medak state, by "gestures of disobedience, deceleration and demands for inclusiveness." [24] These gestures are actions that help constitute the position of the public custodian. The subject position of a public custodian here can be maintained by a com-

24 Marcell Mars, Tomislav Medak, "Against Innovation: Compromised Institutional Agency and Acts of Custodianship," *Ephemera* 19, no. 2 (2019), http://www.ephemerajournal.org/contribution/against-innovation-compromised-institutional-agency-and-acts-custodianship

mitment to hosting a mirror, by registering and re-registering domain names, and by a multitude of other gestures. One doesn't need to be a giant of custodianship to be a custodian. Small gestures contribute to the subject position from which a claim to advocacy, construction and maintenance of "online infrastructures" of art and knowledge can be made. Shadow librarians specify them in course syllabi and online materials: digitizing a book on a scanner, PDF authoring, adding metadata, managing sub-libraries, converting file formats, leaking files, removing DRM and syncing cataloguing software and e-readers are techno-cultural gestures performed from the subject position of custodian.[25] All these radical gestures reverse "property into commons" and "commodification into care."

General librarian

Public Library—a project and a conceptual proposal by Mars and Medak—is a catalogue of books shared through Calibre (open source software to organize PDF and EPUB files into virtual libraries), an index and a set of tools and tutorials. There is a minimal definition of a new kind of public library, developed by Medak and Mars: make your own collection of books available to the public through the catalogue (Calibre in their case). The catalogue software organizes the collection, adds and manages metadata and connects the collection and their readers. The readers contact librarians through the catalogue; librarians seed collections directly from their laptops.

This is a vision of a *general librarian*: similar to the notion of the general intellect, it is a librarian distributed through software—a librarian everywhere; everyone a librarian. The key technique of the subject position of a general librarian is the catalogue. The maintenance of the catalogue is the core gesture of the general librarian: because the catalogue is an abstraction, separated from the library, and a software tool, it semi-automates and partially liberates the librarian, while still requiring maintenance. The subject positions are sustained by actions and techno-cultural infrastructures, which they both create and are defined by. The general librarian is not a function of software, but a

25 Tomislav Medak, Marcell Mars, "Amateur Librarian – A Course in Critical Pedagogy," https://www.mondotheque.be/wiki/index.php?title=Amateur_Librarian_-_A_Course_in_Critical_Pedagogy

subject position mutually constituted by the book collection, the cataloguing tool, work put into managing catalogue software and some key concepts and values. "Let's share books" here becomes a point of view, a position from which a possibly universal but also polyvocal knowledge can be created by a very large network of small collections.

Underground librarian

In contrast, the subject-position of *underground librarian* relates to that of a heroic outlaw. Someone might contact a public custodian or a general librarian with an offer of 50,000 liberated books. They would not want to take care of the files, but seek to pass them on, for some other subjects and structures to process and absorb them into the pool of common resources. The aim of the underground librarian is to get the files and release them from constraints. Acting more like a leaker or interceptor of data, their key aesthetic is the move from something that is constrained or shackled to something unshackled, and whether it is used or not is of lesser concern. Custodians and librarians, by contrast, deal with rather small, selective collections. The gestures of stripping DRM or PDF watermarks and moving information flows that the underground librarians busy themselves with are perhaps on a continuum with those of the public custodian and a general librarian, but have a different aesthetic intensity and duration: intervention, detouring, leaking, making untrackable are their main gestures.

Critical public pedagogue

Aaaaarg, a text repository, was established by Sean Dockray to serve as a library for the Public School. An intervention into the field of education, it is rare among repositories as it has produced a strong community of users that catalogue, annotate, contextualize and discuss books. The position of Aaaaarg as an open collaborative website generated many ways of filtering content: one can go by discussions, recommended translations, thematic collections, related material, and many others. Sebastian Luetgert calls it a missing university library on a global scale, with a social layer of context around it.

It's hard to find junk on Aaaaarg. By deliberately slowing things down, impeding automated uploads and "sharing what you love rather than sharing everything," the techno-cultural gestures and structures of Aaaaarg come close to the communal investment of public custodians.

But there is also a strong legacy of critical pedagogy, whereby education is political through and through.

The role of education is to teach how to learn. Pedagogy is (ideally) guided by the aim of endowing the learner with the tools of learning. Here, curricula or syllabi, among other educational instruments, organize and evaluate knowledge, raising critical awareness. In the last five years, the rise of online syllabi as a response to political struggles signaled a new turn for public education, both inside and outside the classroom. In "Learning from #Syllabus," Graziano, Mars and Medak analyze #Syllabus as an object that fuses the social justice movements' tradition of using educational tools, including teaching material, to "support political subjectivation"[26] with the materiality of new media. #Syllabus is a web-based ordered list of links, circulated with the support of a social media hash tag, which abandons boundless user taxonomy and Google's indexing in favor of the creation of a crowd-sourced list of available resources and makes a pedagogical intervention on a specific politically urgent topic.

Critical pedagogy, self-education and public intervention as manifest in #Syllabus create the context for one of the subject positions of Aaaaarg: that of a *critical public pedagogue*. Such a pedagogue activates knowledge in specific ways, so that their students can undergo a critical transformation. Here, pedagogue and students can swap places. Everyone is an eternal student, and, quite likely, also a pedagogue.

Multiform bibliographer

Monoskop acts not only as a library, but as a system of knowledge maps that includes references pointing far beyond Monoskop. Sean Dockray suggests that by disaggregating the repository function and the referencing function, its founder Dusan Barok makes the entire Internet his archive. Barok himself calls this work "indexing."[27] Barok's indexing activates records by linking to them; it directs users

26 Valeria Graziano, Marcell Mars, Tomislav Medak, "Learning from #Syllabus," in *State Machine: Reflections and Actions at the Edge of Digital Citizenship, Finance, and Art*, ed. Yannis Colakides, Marc Garrett, Inte Gloeirich (Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2019), p. 119.

27 Dušan Barok, "More Than Numbers, Less Than Words," *Javna knjižnica / Public Library* conference, Nova Gallery, Zagreb, June 2015. https://monoskop.org/Talks/More_Than_Numbers_Less_Than_Words

by providing context, resources, and further bibliographies. In fact, the subject position of Monoskop is partially that of a researcher librarian, but overall it is that of a *multiform bibliographer*.

In the print era, a student starting work on a thesis was often advised to consult a bibliographic dictionary. Such a reference book on a specific topic looked like an encyclopedia, with entries on topics followed by an extended annotated bibliography of further reading. Monoskop is such a system for and of study, except that it also includes biographies, texts, a variety of media, different kind of references (for instance, to events), and generally such a huge variation of material, that the bibliographer in the making becomes richly multimedia and radically multiform.

Wiki is the technology of this subject position. Creating knowledge, but also re-organizing and activating the material of the web, wiki acts as a recording, pointing and mapping system. Research and annotation of knowledge in Monoskop is more than a curated index: the subject of Monoskop—a position from which it lives and grows and a user position from which to start the exploration of a topic—is that of an enhanced human browser. True to the original horizon of possibility of the World Wide Web, a universe of linked knowledge, here the hypertext mapping is updated to carefully constructed, but necessarily open narratives. The technically led subject-position of Monoskop, the logic of its construction, is that of a virtuoso forager, able to find results where there are none and follow their interests in constructing a wide range of knowledge frameworks. Encyclopedist, organizer of material, hypertext narrator, such a subject position is a curious combination of a classical formation of knowledge, the promise of hypertext, resistance to contemporary logics of walled gardens, where all links stay within one platform, and the contemporary informational condition of being overwhelmed by useless material but being unable to find anything beyond it.

Monoskop started as a mapping initiative; an impulse that still remains. Students are asked to make entries on Monoskop: a documentation of a learning process, mapping knowledge and history, creates a subject position from which to see oneself and the world in the mode of a wiki. Incomplete, fragmentary, light, it is multiple; mapping on the Monoskop wiki is a mode of research and of pedagogy, the Internet of the future, the discovery of Eastern Europe by

Eastern Europe,[28] and many other multimodal, multimedia and multiform things.

Fancy general archivist and postmodern curator of the avant-garde

UbuWeb is a curated repository of artworks, extended by a multitude of related material to what Cornelia Sollfrank called "the cultural memory of the avant-garde."[29] The subject position of UbuWeb is that of an archivist of a radically new kind. Such a new archivist does not ask for permission. Browsing the dark corners of the Web for files, they upload them to their archive, which over time acquires coveted status. If the copyright holder complains, the archivist enters into communication with them, sometimes succeeding in convincing them to allow access to their work in exchange for being part of a distinguished collection of artists. Such an archivist is a new, although critical, gatekeeper. Archiving becomes curation, and the archive starts functioning as an art institution.

Established 20 years ago, and still running on html 1.0, UbuWeb grew out of collections of modern and contemporary art that people at times personally gave to its founder. Widely used in teaching art and small in size, it leads a precarious existence. Each file is provided with a download link bearing the imperative: "if you find something on the internet, save it." The technical-organizational aesthetics of the archive formulate a subject position that offers and challenges everyone to be an archivist, although of a different status. The *fancy archivist*, the curator, licenses certain kinds of art histories. As the archive can disappear any minute, everyone must become an archivist, a *general archivist*, fancy or not. Building on interpersonal networks, the fancy archive is always temporary, un-indexed, invisible, but hugely important. For its birthday, UbuWeb got a present from the custodians: mirrors.

Cultural analyst

0xDB, started in 2007, is an experiment in software development for a database of movies. Initially developed as part of the *Oil of the 21cen-*

28 Nanna Thylstrup, "The Licit and Illicit Nature of Mass Digitization," in Nanna Thylstrup, *The Politics of Mass Digitization* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2018).

29 Sollfrank, "The Surplus of Copying."

tury project, it actualized, through software, an imaginary world: "this is how it could look." 0xDB offers a multitude of ways to represent, watch, understand, cut through, and study a movie. One can sort films by budget, genre, color, number of cuts, cuts per minute, the words in subtitles, and multiple other means. The result of the sorting is information intensive: it is a data visualization. 0xDB treats time-based media as a database, and offers creative ways to query it. The subject position of the project is that of a *cultural analyst*, where data analytics is applied to art and culture.

An intervention into software as a cultural system and a system for culture, Sebastian Luetgert and Jan Gerber's methodology is to start with the imaginary result and walk back. Here, the transversality of roles is emphasized: a software developer can have a creative role, and a point of view: what one sees is political. Working with Pad.ma, an online archive of video material, the team also developed a platform for alternative activist video that documents events such as mass murder during riots in Western India and Gujarat. This video material is not finished, cannot be attributed to authors and most often, cannot be published. This raw material, which is a process rather than an item, Luetgert says, requires fluid and dynamic handling from the technical system, in contrast to treatment of finished and authored films as individual complete units. Software here must protect the identity of the author, act as a guard, and aid in enquiry. Proposing the position of a forensic film analyst, Pad.ma moves closer to the work of Forensic Architecture and to Wikileaks, where software is a weapon of investigation.

Conclusion

Subject positions offer points of view from which to make interventions, to create new relations, and to affirm alternative imaginaries. Such subject positions are maintained by gestures, actions, and ideas performed in techno-cultural structures. These two statements already present a program.

Firstly, a subject position is created not, or not solely, as a response to power, out of the self turning back on itself, but in relation to technology and information infrastructures, which shape relations to

knowledge and art. The shadow libraries and repositories discussed above intervene in the organization of information and structuring of knowledge, art and culture. Their multiform cutting-through existing structurations creates conditions of possibility for the emergence of a diverse range of subjects. Above, I explored only a few subject positions, formulated specifically in relation to the question of intervention upon structuration of knowledge and art. But it is the optionality afforded by these projects as part of the commons that forms the basis on which subjects that can offer difference, whether in how to be a woman, how to act politically, or how to study, understand and act, can be developed. Difference starts with the possibility of choosing and creating subject-positions, rather than absorbing them by prescriptive encoding. This process relies on nutritious substrate, which can be made available or withdrawn, and where the means of availability or formulations of restriction are increasingly technical.

Secondly, it is a pragmatic program: doing things creates subjects, and ways of technical doing, including small gestures and long-term tending to the systems, figure subject-positions. Affection is key to creating and maintaining contemporary commons. Tending to the projects that constitute commons is a continuous individual and collective action. Care, affection, filiation are performed by small gestures of software installation or big gestures of registering domain names and hosting mirrors.

Bahktin also used filiation as the grounds of aesthetic construction and the holding together of the subject. What is core to such a principle is that it makes relation the basis and condition of living: acquiring a subject position is achieved through relations, which, in these projects, are mediated and realized also by technology. The relations are multidirectional, and so it is also true that by creating a certain subject position, a re-formulation of a cut of the world takes place. The subject position is not only produced but produces—practices, environments—which, in turn, trickle further away, introducing changes to spaces perhaps not very much concerned with the questions at hand. Once a subject-position, a point-of-view, a techno-cultural gesture is established, it travels: in networks, in space-time, in methods, in disciplines, in politics, in imaginaries. In that, the subject-positions explored in this text exhibit capacities to transform things beyond their immediate fields of operation. The transformations these sub-

ject positions bring about concern principles of the organization of knowledge and ways of knowing, politics of memory and geopolitical histories, modes of abstraction and distribution of authority and care alike, with and through technical systems, disciplinary reproduction or undoing of domination through pedagogy, techniques of vision and learning, agency, and many others. They concern processes and infrastructures of societal life that need to keep changing in order to sustain and generate inhabitable spaces.

PUBLIC LIBRARY AND THE RETURN OF THE REPRESSED MEMORY OF THE WORLD

Tomislav Medak
and Marcell Mars

When the dominant idea of freedom in an age is that of freedom regulated by markets, the collective capacity to pursue autonomy, equality, and welfare becomes reduced to the freedom of capital flows, the freedom of competition, and the freedom of consumer choice.

Under the coercive invisible hand of the market, the freedom of journalism tends to transmogrify into sensationalist media acting on behest of commercial and political interests; the freedom of expression into officially condoned hate speech; the freedom of research and education into sky-rocketing student fees, precarious academic labour, and intellectual self-censoring.

When the idea of freedom as regulated by markets meets the idea of political freedom as self-assertion of ethnic domination, as was the case over the last three decades in the countries of former Yugoslavia, then the sensationalist media, the normalized discrimination, and the intellectual self-censorship turn a blind eye when books are thrown out of the libraries, documents are disappeared from the archives, and monuments are blasted into the air.

Thus are material acts and facts created that wipe out the collective memory of a past where the emancipatory labour movement and anti-fascism defeated—even if temporarily—Nazism, racism, and exploitation of the underclasses. In their toleration of such material acts and facts that destroy memory, the media, the public, and the intellectuals are complicit in a rewriting of history anew. The monoethnic identity of new capitalist nation-states thus descends into a self-justificatory spiral of historical revisionism.

In this short text, we return to three of our interventions into the politics of memorialization to highlight the role of amateur archivists and librarians in countering the revision of history, and in undoing the policing of access to the critical knowledge necessary for debunking revisionism that is imposed through the intellectual property regime.

Debunking Historical Revisionism

The post-socialist period brought a surge of historical revisionism, particularly in Eastern Europe. Fuelled by the European Parliament's 2009 resolution against "totalitarian regimes", which effectively equated fascism and communism, historical revisionists, Holocaust deniers, and neo-fascists started publishing their confabulations through institutional publishing pipelines. Consequently, their narratives began to colonize the public understanding of the Second World War, absolving the Quisling regimes of their complicity and responsibility in the extermination of Jews, Roma, Sinti, Slavs, and other ethnic minorities, as well as in repression against communists, antifascists, crips, and queers. These confabulations have seeped into national Wikipedia entries, due to that medium's formal criteria for citations from published sources. As a result, many East European Wikipedias have become hotbeds of alternative, reactionary historical narratives.

In 2022, Memory of the World initiated a project of digitizing post-Yugoslav revisionist and non-revisionist historiography, which included work with two historians to create a series of small experimental publications debunking the methods and claims of historical revisionism. By contextualizing passages from revisionist texts with non-revisionist texts and archival documents, intervening with critical tools including footnotes, source citations, and commentary, and providing access to the original archival sources, the intervention aims to tackle not only revisionist narratives but also the shortcomings of historiographic methodology constrained by intellectual property, which restricts access to many of the sources that allow for a critical reading of revisionist narratives and a proper collective accounting for the past.

The series of debunking publications was written on Memory of the World's publishing platform *Sandpoints*, which was initially developed to document practices of social movements and prototyped through our Pirate Care Syllabus (https://syllabus.pirate.care). It con-

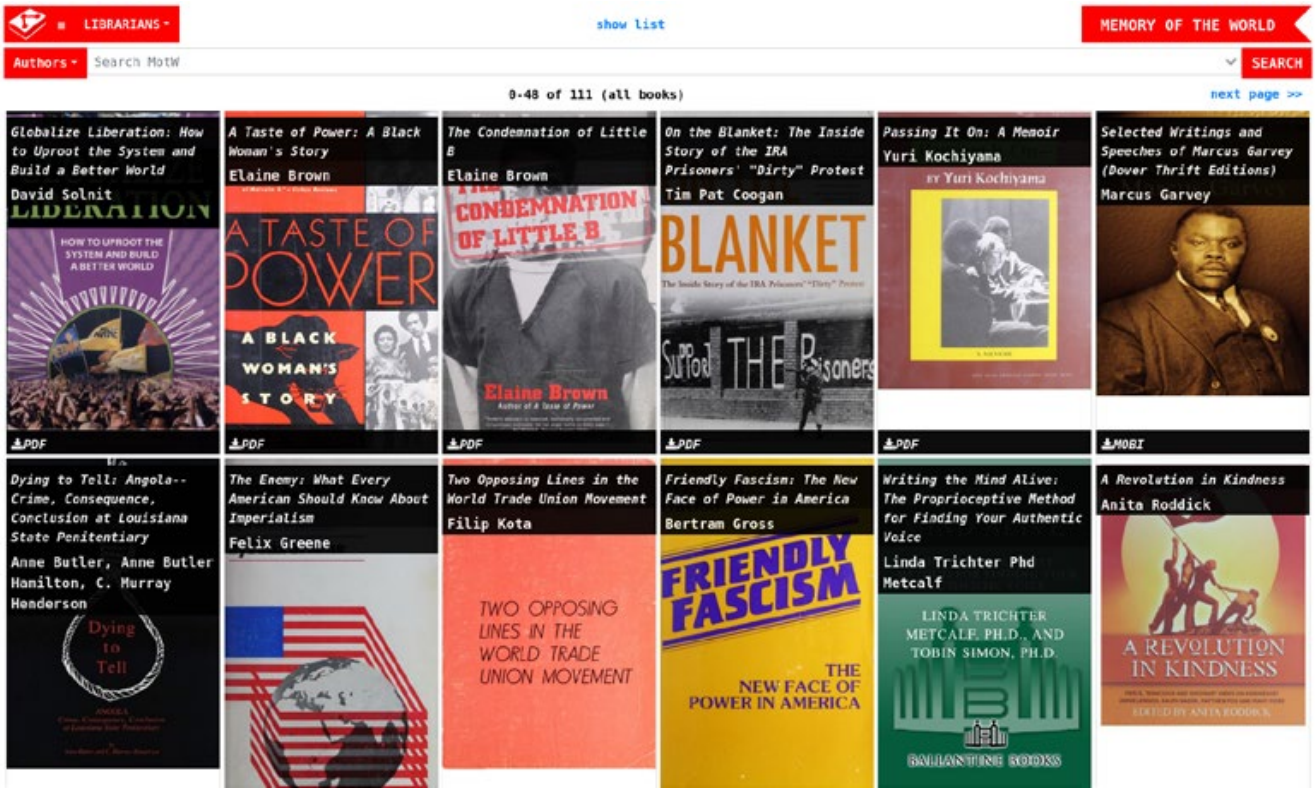
tains both the revisionist texts and the critical commentary, and the entire collection of texts and can be used as a website or printed as a booklet.

Herman's Library

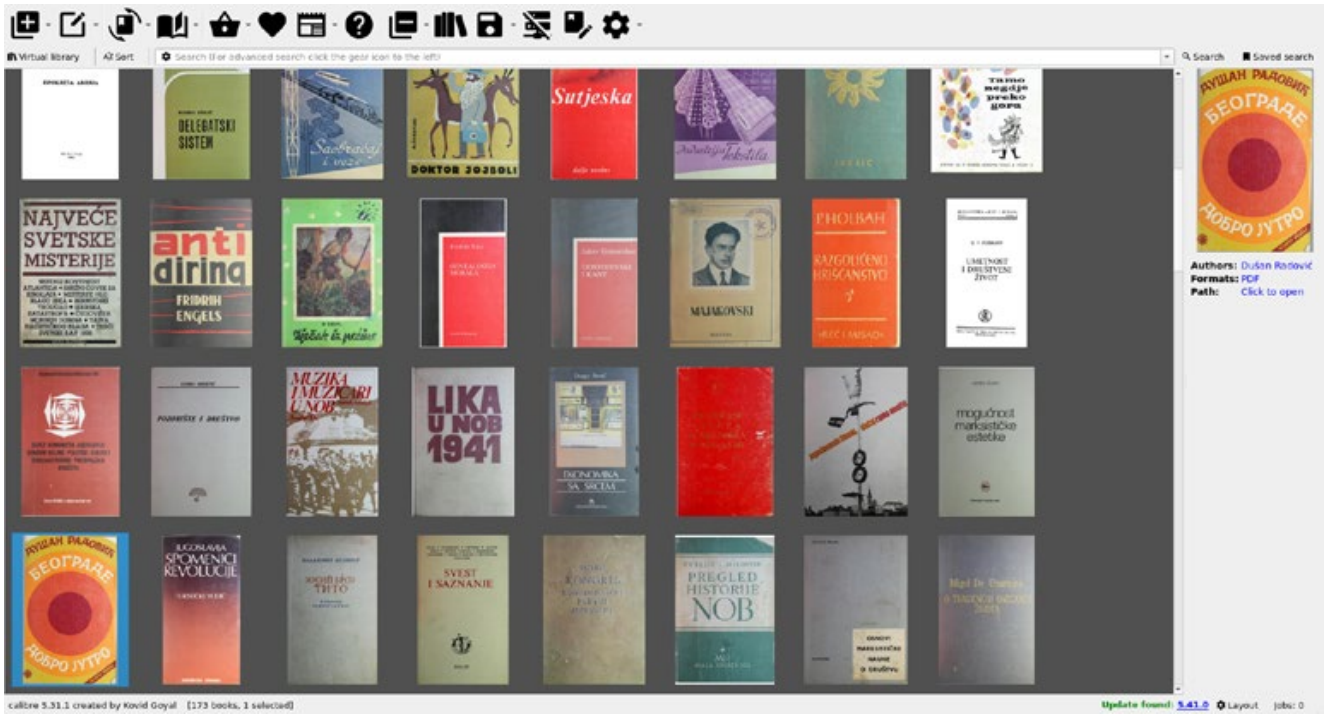
For over forty years, Herman Wallace, a Black Panther activist, lived in solitary confinement in Louisiana's state prison system. Wallace, born in New Orleans in 1941, was initially convicted of armed robbery and sent to the Angola prison in 1971. In 1971, together with Ronald Ailsworth, Albert Woodfox, and Gerald Bryant, he established the Angola Chapter of the Black Panther Party. After a prison guard was murdered, with no physical evidence linking them to the scene of the crime, the Angola's most prominent organizers for prisoners' rights, Herman Wallace, Albert Woodfox, and Robert King, were convicted of the murder and sentenced to solitary confinement for life. In July 2013, Amnesty International called for the release of 71-year-old Herman Wallace, who had advanced liver cancer. He was released on 1 October and died three days later, on 4 October 2013.

In 2003, the American multidisciplinary artist Jackie Sumell asked Herman Wallace a question: "What kind of house does a man who has lived in a 6' x 9' box for over 30 years dream of?" The answer to this question was made real in a remarkable project called *The House that Herman Built*. Although Wallace passed away in 2013, the project has transitioned from being a virtual simulation of that home to an actual home to be built in his birthplace, New Orleans.

While Wallace was still alive, Sumell also asked him what books the dream library in his dream house would contain, to which Wallace responded with a list of around one hundred books that had formed the basis of his political subjectivation. Until that home is built, Herman's dream library remains housed at an art residency in Stuttgart, where it is kept locked and under restricted access in the library. Therefore, in 2015, Memory of the World approached Sumell and



Herman's Library (https://herman.memoryoftheworld.org)



Otpisane (Written–off) (https://otpisane.memoryoftheworld.org)

arranged to digitize the collection, so that others may access it and learn from Herman's politicization (https://herman.memoryoftheworld.org).

Otpisane (Written-off)

Otpisane (Written-off) (https://otpisane.memoryoftheworld.org) is a collection of books that were digitized based on the write-off lists and witness accounts documenting the massive removal and destruction of books from public libraries in the early 1990s in Croatia. Under the guise of a legitimate librarian procedure of writing off damaged or unused copies of books, almost three million books by Serbian authors and publishers printed in Cyrillic as well as books dealing with socialism, the Second World War resistance movement, or the history of the labor movement were removed from the shelves of Croatian libraries in just a couple of years in the early 1990s. This removal and destruction of books *en masse* testifies to the ideological and censoring function that libraries and memory institutions can play in processes of state and ethnic identity building.

In 2015, on the 20th anniversary of *Operation Storm*, which saw some one hundred thousand Serbs flee Croatia, the Croatian government organized a military parade. In response to the construction of collective memory that celebrated armed conflict instead of the peace-building and integration that ensued in 2000s, the collective What, how and for whom/WHW and Memory of the World jointly organized an action calling people to bring copies of the books documented to have been removed from the library shelves two decades earlier to Galerija Nova in Zagreb for digitization. Through the act of digitization, that which was repressed from collective memory was brought back to public agenda.

The collection and action were based on data collected in extensive research on "library cleansing" conducted by the economic historian and unofficial archivist of the Korčula Summer School,[1] Ante

Lešaja, and documented in his book *Libricide – The Destruction of Books in Croatia in the 1990s* (Lešaja 2012). What Lešaja's work clearly shows is that the destruction of books—as well as the destruction of monuments of the People's Liberation War—was not a result of individual actions, as official accounts are trying to argue, but a deliberate and systematic activity which symbolically crystalizes the dominant revisionist politics of the 1990s.

And yet, if public libraries can serve repression and regulation by sanctioning political domination, they can also act as infrastructures of emancipation from the domination of the market and of nationalism.

Public Library

Emerging from the bourgeois and proletarian revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the institution of the public library gradually formed in the liminal zone of capitalist development. By providing decommodified access to increasingly commodified culture and knowledge, the public library limited the market's ability to decide who will have access to education and edification—and whether knowledge serve continued domination or transformation of the world.

From those early days, the public library held a utopian promise of making all the world's memory available to all members of society without barriers—a promise that, with the emergence of the internet, appeared within reach. And yet, the parallel rise of digital capitalism and the reassertion of capitalist nation-states has severely limited the public library in the pursuit of its emancipatory mission and sometimes has driven overzealous librarians to commit systematic acts of ideological purge.

The parallel effect of enclosures and discriminations by means of intellectual property and identitarianism has led to the creation of digital shadow archives and libraries by internet communities, often in open disobedience of copyright law and the dominant ideology of nationalism, providing access to knowledge for all and the preserving

collective memory of emancipatory struggles when public institutions were denied or have failed to do so.

Evisceration of the public library's mission

In the present, however, the public library is an endangered institution, doomed to extinction. While the Internet has enabled a massive expansion of access to all kinds of publications, libraries were initially and remain severely limited in extending to digital 'objects' the decommodified access they provide in print. Consequently, the centrality of libraries in facilitating, organizing, and disseminating information, science, and literature has faded.

For instance, until relatively recently, libraries did not—and in many places still do not—have the right to purchase e-books for lending and preservation. If they do, they were limited in how many times and under what conditions they could lend digital books before not only the license but the "object" itself was revoked. In the case of academic journals, the situation was even worse: as journals moved to predominantly digital models of distribution and streamlined their costs, libraries could provide access to publishers' servers and "preserve" the journals only for as long as they continued paying skyrocketing prices for subscriptions.

While a transition to digital media has provided opportunities to reconsider how societies produce, sustain, and make available written culture and science, i.e., to socialise those forms of production, vested commercial interests in combination with the property-form that treats intellectual creation as if it were a piece of land have created insurmountable barriers to transforming our systems of cultural and knowledge production.

In the 1960s, the library field started to call into question the merit of objectivity and neutrality that librarianship embraced in the 1920s with its induction into the status of science. In the context of social upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s, librarians started to question

'the myth of library neutrality' (Branum 2008). With the transformation of information into commodity and the transition to a knowledge economy, librarians could no longer ignore that the notion of neutrality effectively perpetuated implicit structural exclusions of class, gender, and race, and that in their roles as librarians, they were gatekeepers of epistemic and material privilege (Jansen 1989; Iverson 1999). The egalitarian politics inscribed into the public library's DNA through its decommodifying mission started to trump neutrality, and libraries came to acknowledge a commitment to the marginalized, their pedagogies, and their struggles.

However, the economic developments of recent decades have created conditions for public libraries that largely overturn the reorientation towards socialising knowledge. In 2019, we learned from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's annual survey of libraries in the United Kingdom that over the last decade of Conservative-led governments, no less than 773 out of 4,356 public library branches have closed, that spending on libraries has declined by 29.6%, that the number of salaried staff has dropped from 24,000 to 15,300, and that visits have dropped from 315 million to 226 million. Much of this decline is a consequence of the reduction of funding for local councils left with no choice but to direct their modest means toward 'priority services such as social care' (Flood 2019).

Petit-bourgeois denial prevents society from recognizing this disturbing insight into the public library's decline and potential extinction. As in many other fields, the only way out of this obsolescence and defunding offered by the policymakers is innovative market-based entrepreneurship. Some have suggested that the public library should become an open software platform on top of which creative developers can build app stores (Weinberger 2012) or Internet cafés for the poorest, ensuring they are only a click away from the Amazon.com catalogue or the Google search bar. But these proposals overlook, perhaps deliberately, the fundamental principles of access upon which the idea of the public library was built.

Those who are well-meaning, intelligent, and tactful will try to remind the public of the many critical social elements brought together in a public library—as a major community centre; a service for the vulnerable; a centre of literacy, informal, and lifelong learning; a place where hobbyists, enthusiasts, old and young meet and share knowledge and skills (Mattern 2014). Unfortunately, for purely tactical reasons, this kind of reminder does not tend to contain an explanation of how its varied effects arise out of the central function of the public library in societies: that universal access to knowledge for each member of society produces knowledge, that it produces knowledge about knowledge, and that it produces knowledge about the social constitution of knowledge. The public library thus creates and recreates sociability through access to knowledge.

The public library does not need creative crisis management that wants to propose *what* the library should be *transformed into* after our societies—obsessed with the logic of markets, intellectual property, and authorship—have made it impossible for this institution to continue providing access to knowledge and thus to perform its principal mission in the digital domain as well as in print. Such proposals, if they do not insist on universal access to knowledge for all members of a society, are Trojan horses for the silent but creeping disappearance of the public library from the historical stage. Sociability—produced by public libraries, with all the richness of its various appearances—will be best preserved if we manage to fight for the values upon which we have built the public library: universal access to knowledge for each member of our societies with no barriers.

Shadow Libraries

Staying with public library's principal mission in the shift to digital access thus necessitated disobedience.

Science Hub, Library Genesis, Aaaaarg.fail, Monoskop, and UbuWeb (just as our Memory of the World) are all examples of fragile

knowledge infrastructures built and maintained by brave amateur librarians and archivists practicing disobedience to provide access that the public library was long unable to provide in the digital domain. These projects thus complement the public library, doing in the digital realm what the public library does in the realm of print.

Science Hub (https://sci-hub-links.com), the "Robin Hood of access to science", provides public access to tens of millions of scientific articles that are protected by intellectual property and legally available only to academic institutions and individuals that can pay exorbitant subscriptions or per-article prices. Science Hub was created in 2011 by Alexandra Elbakyan, a computer science student in Kazakhstan who a couple of years earlier developed a script to circumvent paywalls to access articles she and her university could not afford. After repeatedly being asked to share articles, she set up a website that functions as a search engine and a repository of all retrieved articles. Ten years later, Science Hub provides access to over 60 million or around 85% of all articles behind paywalls, serving requests coming largely from low and middle-income countries. Since 2015, Science Hub has been sued by the likes of Elsevier for damages running into tens of millions of dollars. It has had several of its domains revoked over years, and recently Twitter also revoked its account, following an injunction from an Indian court initiated again by Elsevier—the largest in the oligopoly of five commercial publishers, famous for the 37% profit margin it makes from articles that scientists write, review, and edit for free. Losing domains is a given for 'shadow libraries', but Elbakyan managed to keep the servers out of reach of the authorities where it was sued. Elbakyan holds that the Mertonian ideals of science are grounded in 'common ownership of knowledge (i.e. communism)' and that copyright law should be abolished (Elbakyan 2016). By choosing not to hide but rather to speak out in the media and in letters to courts, Elbakyan has upheld the principle that the public has the right to knowledge. In so doing she has chosen to act in the tradition of disobedience disrespecting the unjust laws.

Library Genesis (https://libgen.rs) is an online library with over two million books. It is the first project in history to offer everyone on the Internet a free download of its entire collection (as of this writing, about hundred terabytes of data), together with the all metadata (MySQL dump) and PHP/HTML/Java Script code for webpages. The largest online library prior to Library Genesis was *Gigapedia*, later renamed *Library.nu*, which handled its upload and maintenance costs by selling advertising, which helped publishers to eventually trace its operators, take legal action against them, and take down the library. (Losowsky 2012) The news of the takedown of Gigapedia/Library.nu came as a major blow to academics and readers across the economically uneven world of knowledge and culture, who suddenly found themselves denied access to all digital texts available to their counterparts in well-funded academic institutions usually situated in high-income countries. The decision by Library Genesis to share its collection, metadata, and webpages came in response to this vulnerability and has spawned a network of similar sites (so-called 'mirrors'), providing an exceptionally resistant infrastructure for knowledge commons.

Beyond Science Hub and Library Genesis, there are also smaller shadow libraries with very specific approaches to their collections:

Aaaaarg.fail (https://aaaaarg.fail), created by the artist Sean Dockray, is an online repository with over 100,000 books and texts. Its distinct feature is the community of researchers from critical theory, contemporary art, philosophy, architecture, and other affiliated fields who maintain, catalogue, and create the literature lists and the discussion boards of the collection.

UbuWeb (https://ubu.com) is the largest and most significant online archive of avant-garde art in its various forms: poetry, sound, video, writing. UbuWeb was created in 1996 by the conceptual artist Kenneth Goldsmith, who continues to edit it today. UbuWeb has grown into a resource of critical relevance for access to and education in contemporary art, so much so that the Zurich University of the Arts maintains an official mirror of UbuWeb (https://ubu-mirror.ch).

Monoskop (https://monoskop.org) is a wiki for arts, culture, and media technology, created with an initial focus on avant-garde, conceptual, and media arts in Eastern and Central Europe. It is primarily the work of Dušan Barok. Nowadays, it encompasses various geographical, artistic, and academic fields, with comprehensive articles and lists of often rare sources on issues such as architecture or anthropocene. In the form of a blog at Monoskop.org/log, Barok also maintains an curated online catalogue of books numbering over 3,000 titles.

Alexandra Elbakyan, the community behind Library Genesis, Sean Dockray, Kenneth Goldsmith, and D ušan Barok indicate that the future of public library does not need crisis management, reinvention, or outsourcing, but simply the freedom to continue extending the dreams of Melvil Dewey, Paul Otlet, and other visionary librarians to provide universal access to knowledge for all without socioeconomic barriers—both digitally and in print.

With the Internet and the plethora of software tools for maintaining digital text collections, librarianship has been given an opportunity to include thousands of amateur librarians who can, together with the professional librarians, build a distributed networked infrastructure to share the catalogue of digitized knowledge and culture.[2] However, just as public libraries were denied the ability to provide digital access, so are they denied from working with shadow librarians who complement their work in the digital realm. Under these conditions, shadow libraries will have to continue to disobediently complement and act in lieu of public libraries, standing up to the exclusions of intellectual property and identitarianism.

After all, a public library is:

- free access to books for every member of society
- library catalogue
- librarian

With books ready to be shared, meticulously catalogued, everyone is a librarian.

When everyone is librarian, library is everywhere.
(Memory of the World 2012)

ENDNOTES

1 Korčula Summer School was a yearly gathering of prominent Marxist intellectuals from both sides of the Cold War divide, organized on the island of Korčula between 1964 and 1974. Organized by the editors of *Praxis* journal, it was a place of convergence for most prominent critical thinkers of the period, including Àgnes Heller, Leszek Kołakowski Ernst Bloch, Eugen Fink, Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse, Jürgen Habermas, Henri Lefebvre. Together with Ante Lešaja and Documenta, Memory of the World has digitized the archive of the *Praxis* journal and the Korčula Summer School, which can be found at https://praxis.memoryoftheworld.org.

2 This opportunity can be compared to what the project SETI@home made possible in the field of astronomy (See http://setiathome.berkeley.edu/).

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(See: shard/ Autonomous Life, ⁞reflection:interdependentarchives.mdnot found). They are fragile and ephemeral. They are vernacular, functional rather than monumental. They change hands. From custodians to custodians. They are shard/ produced through care.

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reflection/ In Solidarity and From Curiosity

glassblowers/ *Nick Thurston*

Dušan Barok

Marcell Mars

Tomislav Medak

Nick Thurston, April 2024

A reflection can be a mirror image, a consequence, or an act of serious consideration.

This reflection is a little of all three.

It's a glimpse back at the circumstances, drives and decisions that brought about two of UbuWeb's (Ubu) kindred projects, Memory of the World (MotW) and Monoskop (Msk), as recounted at ease, in conversation, by the people who built them.

Theoretical, critical and systematic histories of both projects are published elsewhere. Like all reflections, this glimpse is partial and impressionistic. Which is to say, it's limited, it's biased, and it values the subjective reactions and thought-chains of the people involved. In all those senses, it's also a reflection of me.

I spoke with Marcell Mars and Tomislav Medak (MotW) and Dušan Barok (Msk), together, in the sunshine on Cres. I love this kind of oral history, not because it registers any kind of definitive account but because it gets us a little closer to the vernacular processes (words, discussions, actions, values, networks, etc) that shape every compositional gesture.

One thing should become clear in my reflection: I see MotW, Msk, Ubu and their other kin (like Aaaaarg) as compositions, as made cultural expressions, as profoundly social enactments of the speculative imaginary. And the value of the speculative imaginary deserves to be defended in our discussion about the future of digital archives, too, as well as the data, the networks, and political principles they entail.

Here are five historical nuances the vernacular heritage taught me, shuffled into paragraphs so we can see the nuances clearly in the mirror…

MotW and Msk emerged from quite different experiences of the 1990s, each in response to very local cultural conditions – the former in Zagreb, the latter in Bratislava.

Mars: "We were inspired by the Free Software movement in so far as it demonstrated a modality of working together without recourse to private property. Similarly, we took a cue from peer-to-peer sound sharing networks that had emerged with the internet among an underground of experimental musicians. In 2001, we started a free Net music label called EGOBOO.bits, which was based on live-acts at Mama and later workshops where we shared digital sound samples and teach one-another how to make music on a computer. A few years later I started Skill-sharing sessions at Mama, and all these were really the hotbed for what became MotW. From very early on Mama became a place where diverse communities intersected, from top-notch computer hackers and engineers to queer and alternative political communities. At the time, none of us realised how unique and transformative this setup would be for our lives."

Medak: "When Marcell and I started working together in the early-2000s, we were driven, in part, by a shared nostalgia for societal property, which had been the dominant form of property relations during our upbringings under Yugoslav socialism. We were looking for ways and for forms to collectivise property again, to avoid the pressured privatisation of property. From the beginning, that was our social mission: to abolish the exclusions created by private property in whatever forms of activity we created, in the hope that our paradigm would trickledown or show-up as a possibility for other people, for other fields of activity."

Barok: "During my student days in Bratislava, I started co-running a cultural space in the city with a group of about 10 peers. I was studying IT – database programming, that sort of thing – but I was socially and creatively involved in the city's cultural scenes

from the late 1990s. There, Msk emerged as an experiment in using the recent technology of the Wiki, which had made a massive change to the accessibility of online content-sharing because suddenly you didn't need programming languages to present and properly organise content on webpages. I saw the Wiki as a new technical possibility for a socially-organised form of information sharing. So Msk emerged in this Bratislavan cultural scene. Later I moved to Prague, then Berlin, and eventually to the Netherlands where I started to concentrate more on Msk.

Both MotW and Msk were formed by a subjective mix of solidarity and curiosity.

Barok: "At first, documents or books weren't central to Msk. I started it in 2004 to map new art and technology scenes in my region, which were unmapped. I wanted to see if this tool could help East-to-East networks develop, and help participants in those networks to map their alliances through the connecting of entries linked by categories that could traverse places and topics. I imagined it as a practical directory of people and scenes in eastern Europe, their interests and initiatives."

Mars: "I moved to the Netherlands to do a residency at the Jan van Eyck Academy in Maastricht. I was interested in the emergence of start-ups powered by venture capital, which seemed to solve real-life logistical problems more effectively than the Free Software movement. The social potential of platforms like Twitter was politically confusing when they first appeared. Investors, founders, and their workers, who were all promised shares, truly believed they were part of a revolutionary change of the society driven by the Internet. We, known at the time as"You", subscribed to the promise and created accounts on all these platforms. My research was called 'Ruling Class Studies'. After spending years among hackers and musicians, I found myself at Jan Van Eyck surrounded by people who read, write, and discuss theory. I was expected to read as well. However, at the beginning of my journey, I discovered that our access to recommended books was a mess. Even when the books were already downloaded, they were saved who-knows-where on the hard disk. So, I started a blog post called 'Let's Share Books,' explaining how we could use a cataloguing software called Calibre to share books digitally. What I 'created' during the residency was a tool to organize other people's access to publications—a 'shadow library'—so I could engage in discussions about what they were reading, partly so I didn't have to read everything myself."

Medak: "Marcell started this work on shadow libraries and invited me to join in. We work together like that, as a sounding board for one another's interests; and from the start, we both wanted to create interventions and provocations that would resonate in our context, in post-socialist eastern Europe. In 2012, we were invited to curate the biennial HAIP Festival in Ljubljana, and we developed the idea of transforming the festival venue into a public library by installing a server with the entire repository of

Library Genesis alongside a book-scanning station, enabling anyone to quickly digitise, save and file-share volumes of books. That was the seed of our later idea about the practice of custodianship, the idea that the custodianship of digital libraries and archives was the reflexively appropriate model of agency and solidarity for the kind of knowledge commons we wanted to help foster. With our fellow shadow librarians, we articulated that idea of custodianship in 2015, when we wrote an open letter in support of LibGen and SciHub, against who legal action legal action was started by the corporate publisher Elsevier. This model of solidarity and agency is what Marcell and Felix Stalder then further developed into letters and a technical support structure for Ubu, dovetailing with Felix's work on digital solidarities."

Part by plan and part through play, MotW and Msk both developed networking infrastructures that others could use, adapt and extend.

Mars: "We always wanted to make, or even just recommend, tools that enable people to do what they want regardless of us. And giving people what they need or want feels great, especially when you can do it by messing with super-cheap, pre-prepared frameworks. I say 'messing' because these interventions we make are based on us engaging with a real-world problem through serious play. For example, we're over-identified with the public library cause, but we like that over-identification and we play with it. We play in order to politicize the cause. Energising all this play, for us, are various kinds of writing – our writing practice has different levels. For me, it always involves writing code. Writing code is a way of bringing what you want to say to people without simply 'saying it'. Instead, when the computer executes your code, it demonstrates what you want to say."

Barok: "I moved to the Netherlands in my early 30s to study networked media at the Piet Zwart Institute in Rotterdam. There, people told me Msk was an art project. I thought, 'okay'. I ran with it and became an artist. As I spent more time in these different cultural scenes, including a wider European art scene, I wanted a way of extending the reach of Msk's coverage to western Europe as well. To do that, I introduced bibliographies with every entry, so the frame of reference does the expanding without necessarily needing a top-level entry. The same principle applied to extending coverage of North America and the global South regions. At first, storing the book files behind those bibliographic lists was just about gathering material that contextualised the entries. But as Msk rapidly expanded its coverage, it's user-base grew, too. It became an extra-institutional space for people to learn about art and technology, so it felt natural to offer a library of resources that people could easily access via entries and the bibliographies."

Collaboration and comradeship between digital archives has been a fertile and vital support system.

Barok: “Gigapedia was the first big digital library I discovered. As a programmer, I thought it was great. But more importantly, as a Slovakian, it made me realise the politics of access – or rather, the lack of access – to publishing culture experienced by people in my region. When I started to collect book files, as I developed the bibliographies for Msk entries, I knew I was continuing a long tradition in eastern Europe from the 1960s of self-documenting and self-contextualising. I was keeping and sharing my own records. Eventually the library also became a functional apparatus for Msk to self-historicise its growth, a 1:1 record of the references that shape the ideas it channels. Soon after 2012, there was a surge of interest in digital experiments like Msk, and we were brought together especially through the work of Marcell and Tom and the idea of ‘shadow libraries’ as a broader political field of practice. Conferences started to happen and academic interest grew. These shared experiences and extended discussions gave me a context to reflect on the struggles we were in the middle of. Running something like Msk involves a lot of time at the computer. So learning about the ways in which Msk was important to people around the world was a great motivation. I thought it was pretty great that a little website from Bratislava had become a go-to historical record for lots of interesting people and groups.”

Medak: “The politics of memory are key here in a nationalist post-socialist Croatia. The interventions we make together, as a community of people around MotW, and as a broader network of digital libraries, defend a history of diversity and struggle and socialised co-living. We defend those histories against the revisionist purges set in train by neoliberal nationalists, who want to re-narrate our literatures, our records and our shared memory. In that sense, ours is a counter-historical practice. We want to create and support counter-archives that will let people look more richly at the complicated histories that are traced by our scriptural culture and its discourses. The library at MotW is one important part of this practice, practically and symbolically, because in this scriptural culture books emerged at a moment of technological change in the 15th-century, then they became the very unit or product that ushered in a consolidation of capitalist markets around cultural goods with the invention of copyright. Sharing books reminds everyone that we can socialise cultural goods in ways that are other than private. But alongside the library, we also help groups to make digital collections of their literatures, by teaching them how to create and organise collections of digital facsimiles and to catalogue them effectively.”

MotW and Msk are online projects that open different conversations through offline activity. The online and offline dimensions of the practices are inter-dependent and inter-effective.

Medak: “We have a practice of organizing exhibitions and politicizing shadow librarianship through that format. There’s an exhibition we did in 2015, ‘The Written

Off', which was done as a counter-memorial to mark the anniversary of the end of the civil war in 1995. The war did return Serb-held territories to Croatia, but it also led to the mass exodus of over a hundred thousand people, and the killing of over a thousand Serbs. We explicitly invited people to bring their copies of books that appear on the lists of books purged in early 1990s from Croatian libraries because they were in Cyrillic, or by Serbian authors, or about socialism. By scanning these purged books and cataloguing digitised copies on MotW, we made a virtual space to defends access to the memory of the purged and the purging. To bring in the people who have those books, it had to be IRL, a civic public action. Exhibitions have been an important forum for our offline work since then. We did a show called 'Public Library' in 2014 with the Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart, which really surveyed this network of digital libraries and archives we're part of. Then in 2019, we did another exhibition called 'Paper Struggles' at Raven Row in London, which was intended to show that shadow librarianship pre-dates digital networks – that books have long been exchanged by making paper copies."

Barok: "These text-heavy educational exhibitions have a longer history in Yugoslavia than in Slovakia. Learning about that history by participating has been great, for me, because my offline activity as Msk is really discourse oriented. Offline events offer a parallel channel for communication, and a way to contextualise the active digital spaces that are online, which are dynamic but also vulnerable. Beyond that communicative function, what's become more and more exciting for me about exhibitions is that they engage people's sensory apparatus in a way that facilitates different discourses than the ones we have just through language. We need to engage that affective level, too."

reflection/An Interdependent Network of Archives

glassblower/ ***Alessandro Ludovico***
mentioned in/ ***Autonomous Life***

The form of network distributes, duplicates and dislocates entities which can take responsibility for specific content. Tactically counter-balancing the induced