# 03 Genres of Publication

## Five genres

In the present project we deal with a variety of publication products which we have categorized into five genres:

1) Research publication;

2) Art/design catalogue;

3) Artist's/designer's book;

4) Art/design periodical;

5) New genres.

###1) Research publication

- Mainly text-based;

- Texts play a central role;

- Visuals are secondary (images refer to text);

- Often longer texts;

- Often with a standardized structure;

- Often with complex referencing (table of contents, footnotes, endnotes, cross-references, citations, bibliography, keyword and name indexes, list of illustrations, glossary).

**\*\*Going electronic: advantages and issues\*\***

Discussions on digital opportunities for research publications in sciences and humanities mostly revolve around the transition from the traditional textbook model to new forms of publication, which allow for more complex forms of visualization, inclusion of real-time data, and computation. However, if one wishes to publish in standard ebook formats and target a broad range of electronic reading platforms and devices, the visual and multimedia possibilities of current ebook technology are in fact quite limited – mainly because the file quickly becomes too large to quickly download. The alternative, developing research publications as visual apps, will in most cases not be a viable solution since apps have short lifespans of technical compatibility while research publishing is almost by definition long-term (and long-tail) publishing.

The first, most obvious advantage of 'going electronic' with research publications is that it makes things easier for users: ebooks allow researchers, students and other readers to search, copy and paste text in a simple and natural way. Also, the **\*\*datasets\*\*** used in the research can be included within the publication, allowing more serious readers to engage directly with the research material itself. For publishers, making texts available digitally has huge advantages in terms of access, particuarly on an international level, since distribution of ebooks is not limited by issues of shipment and storage. On the other hand there are specific problems related to digital research publications. One of these has to do with referencing: without fixed page numbers, there is no standard way of specifying the location of a reference within a publication. This is one reason why scientific ebooks are still often issued as PDFs.

'Going electronic' also opens up new possibilities for creating content. A high degree of standardized structure and ensuing 'modularization' allows for new ways of reading and writing essays. Particularly when different authors refer to each other, they often share data, quotations, tables, figures, etc. Multiple use and reuse of 'modules' can help foster communication within a community. However, this remains a future dream for now, since comments and annotations are not linked to (a specific place in) the book the way they are in the case of physical books, which makes sharing more complicated.[^Kircz](http://elpub.scix.net/data/works/att/234\_elpub2008.content.pdf) Another option that comes with modularization is that different users or readers of a text can each extract the modules they need. For example, if we consider an anthology of essays, this would make it possible for users to create a 'personal ebook' consisting of all the bibliographical references present in the separate texts.

###2) Art/design catalogue

- Mainly image-based;

- Visuals play a central role;

- Text is secondary (text refers to visuals);

- Descriptive texts of various lengths.

**\*\*Going electronic: advantages and issues\*\***

Most art/design catalogues are mainly image-based, and this is precisely the greatest challenge for electronic publishing in this genre. A publication containing many images with high **\*\*resolution\*\*** and high color fidelity will take a long time to download and will occupy a great deal of storage space on the user's device as well as the publisher's servers. And as download speeds and storage space continue to increase exponentially, there is an endless temptation to continue increasing the file size accordingly.

Possibilities in this direction lie in offering high-quality zoomable images and adding additional such as video (documentary, animation, etc.), audio (interviews, lectures, etc.) or even 'interactive' media. Also, most **\*\*tablet\*\*** computers offer much better color fidelity than the printed page, a fact which can be used to good advantage when offering ebooks optimized specifically for reading on a tablet. A possibly problematic issue is that such catalogues often require a fixed page layout: image and text that belong together should appear next to each other, however changes in size (of the device or of the user's settings) can influence the flow of content, so that the images and text will 'drift apart'.

As with research publications, modularization offers interesting opportunities for writing and presenting material. Since a catalogue often consists of components which are already modular in nature, there is much to be gained from using these features in electronic publishing. For example by providing readers with the opportunity to 'build' their own publication; by publishing different editions (small, medium, large) of a catalogue with little extra effort; or by easily updating part of the catalogue.

###3) Artist's/designer's book

- Book *\*by\** an artist, rather than *\*about\** an artist;

- Complex use of images and typography, often pushing the possibilities of the medium;

- In print: making use of the book as a material, visual and tactile object;

- Often difficult or impossible to adapt/convert to other media;

- Text is often used in a non-descriptive or non-narrative way.

**\*\*Going electronic: advantages and issues\*\***

Since an artist's/designer's book often constitutes a reflection upon the medium itself, the question of choosing a digital format or a print edition, of 'going electronic' and considering the ensuing advantages and issues, does not apply as it does with other genres. Rather, it is a fundamental choice which will determine from the start many fundamental characteristics of the the artist's book. Also, choosing an electronic format such as EPUB for an artist's/designer's book requires mastery of the specific characteristics of such a format. This seems to be one of the reasons why there are few digital artist's books, if we exclude electronic (scanned) reproductions of printed artist's books which can be found on websites such as UbuWeb and Monoskop.

When working on an electronic edition of an existing printed artist's/designer's book, the choice of the file format is crucial. The end result is to a large extent determined by

The specifications of each format, and more generally of each medium. Here too, as with art/design catalogues, the quality of images and the relation between text and images is extremely important.

In the case of artist's books or pamphlets which are not primarily a reflection of their medium (for example Sol LeWitt's 1968 'Sentences on Conceptual Art' which consists of handwritten text on paper pages) are are not particularly difficult to adapt/convert to electronic media, the advantages of doing so are similar to those for other genres: access and distribution, reaching new audiences, the ability to easily copy and paste text and images, and the possibility to incorporate interactive materials.

###4) Art/design periodical

- Both text-based and image-based;

- Images as well as texts play a central role;

- Use of images is primary as well as secondary;

- Texts of various lengths;

- More or less fixed page layout format;

- Recurring or periodical publication format (e.g. magazines, series etc.).

**\*\*Going electronic: advantages and issues\*\***

A periodical thrives well by its physical presence. It can be tossed in a bag and just as easily be disposed of. In a digital form, the physical presence becomes limited in this sense. Of course the digital domain offers other forms of 'nudging' and ways to keep a periodical present for the reader, such as 'push messages' on tablets and smartphones, e-mail notifications, and sharing via social media, but this is not quite the same.

The archival aspect provides other chances and issues for digital art/design periodicals. New articles can refer to older ones and even integrate parts. The periodical as such becomes a repository and therefore a playground for new work.

Advantages are mostly the same as with the other genres listed: increased possibilities in extending content (interactivity, video etc.); decreasing distribution costs; outreach to a large audience; modularity. However, storage and download/update speed present a challenge, as already mentioned above.

###5) New genres

New genres of publication are likely to emerge out of the ongoing digitization of the publishing industry. They could even fall outside of what we would normally consider a 'book', like short pamphlets, poems, essays, sketches, or – in the world of digital media – apps, a series of tweets, a blog et cetera. Or similar to adventure games, we can imagine the use of an interactive approach where the reader is able to control the narrative or to build or customize the publication.

## Three levels of electronic publishing

Independently of the different genres listed above we can sketch a basic picture based on similarities and differences. The scope of e-publishing starts with simple conversions from paper publications to electronic ones like offering the PDF of the print edition as an ebook, moving towards full-scale electronic publications incorporating advanced digital formats such as video or being issues as a native app. When thinking of the different forms of publishing in this respect, the role of metadata and the use and application of metadata also comes into view. [![Bloglink](images/dpt\_blog\_verwijzing.png)](http://networkcultures.org/digitalpublishing/2013/10/09/embedding-a-custom-set-of-metadata-based-on-dublin-core-into-a-multimarkdown-document/ "Link to blog post: Embedding a Custom Set of Metadata Based on Dublin Core Metadata Initiative Into a MultiMarkdown Document")(Embedding a Custom Set of Metadata Based on Dublin Core Metadata Initiative Into a MultiMarkdown Document)

A division into three levels can be made, which are described in further detail below [![Bloglink](images/dpt\_blog\_verwijzing.png)]( http://networkcultures.org/digitalpublishing/2014/09/25/from-print-to-what/ "Link to blog post: From Print to What?")(From print to what?):

**\*\*1. One-to-one\*\***; the book is considered a separate product where text-authors, illustrators, artist photographers, and designers work together to produce the book, which then is published and exists as a single edition. The print book can as such be translated one-on-one into an ebook.

**\*\*2. One-to-many\*\***; the publication has various chameleonic appearances, dependent on the context and available presentation media (type & size of screen/paper). In other words, a book is offered in formats such as print, EPUB, **\*\*PDF\*\***, **\*\*MOBI\*\***, **\*\*web\*\***, and looks and works according to the format used.

**\*\*3. One-to-database\*\***; here the book is not a separate, defined, and limited entity. A publication is put together out of various independent components defined as modules that can be used and re-used multiple times by whomever has access to them. For example: a reader chooses a selection of chapters on offer and gets an EPUB specially made in this occasion.

![Three Levels of Electronic Publishing](images/04\_1\_three\_levels.png "Three Levels of Electronic Publishing.")

###1) One-to-one publications

On the first level, there is the unique book. Each book is considered as a separate product where authors, illustrators, artists, photographers, and designers work together to produce the book as a one-off team. The production workflow can be unique from book to book, but mostly is traditional, moving from manuscript to a designed PDF ready to be printed. Pictures and/or full layout pages do not work as reusable (digital) objects. In many cases no archives of the independent ingredients that together create the end-product are available.

Usually this implies that going electronic means making an e-representation of the same book. In some cases files of the final pages or book are being converted into EPUB 3 by an external agent. This e-edition is checked on readability and the digital make-up (for example, that figures and captions are on the same page). On this level the ebook is not more than an exact-as-possible picture of the printed book.

The publisher might use a document management system, which can be a mere collection of folders/directories on a hard drive. Archiving files is important for possible reprints. Sometimes publishers are forced to scan their own books in order to reprint them because they don't have an archived version of it. Herein lie great possibilities, because having an archive of semantically structured content allows reissuing the publication in efficient ways and in new formats not envisioned before.

There are many common characteristics between books in one genre. The question is how we can reveal and define these characteristics to enhance insight in the nature of the genre at hand and thus enhance the realization of these new options.

###2) One-to-many publications

The next level presents a split between the manifestation of a (one) paper print version and (many) electronic versions. The electronic version, contrary to the paper version, is not a single object but has various appearances, due to different presentation substrates of electronic book formats. Offering one title in many formats is a way to respond to the fact that due to the multiplicity and flexibility of reading devices one cannot rely on all readers seeing or experiencing exactly the same book on their screen. The sizes of reading devices are not standardized and generally allow for both portrait and landscape viewing. On top of this, the popular semi-standard EPUB 3 allows for flowable pages and a change in font and font size.

Workflow schemes become very important when working towards a one-to-many publication, as the same texts and images are used in various outlets. A structured and detailed workflow, accompanied by a related descriptors (metadata) set is necessary. In such a way, the ebook is not a byproduct of the print book anymore, but is produced simultaneously in different formats.

###3) One-to-database

Database publishing presents the final level. Database publishing means that all objects or entities constituting a publication can be used independently from each other. To that end they should be uniquely defined and stored in a database. As a precondition for full scale database publishing, the editorial workflow is important, because it is there that a decision is being made on what items are defined as individual entities and which characteristics and features (metadata) they have.

Especially in publications which have a more or less fixed layout database publishing opens new ways of conceiving books. For example, in the case of a collection of essays readers are able to make a personal choice from the available texts. The same can be thought of in the case of catalogues and journals. Based on metadata a structured presentation of all material is made possible, allowing the reader to navigate and put together a collection based on personal interests. Of course this means that **\*\*tagging\*\***, describing, and storing of all components should happen in the early stages of publication with utmost care.

It is important to note that there will not be one workflow which fits all but if the relevant metadata is available publications in different forms can be created.

[^Kircz]: Anita de Waard and Joost Kircz, Modeling Scientific Research Articles –

Shifting Perspectives and Persistent Issues, Proceedings of the 12th International Conference on Electronic Publishing held in Toronto, Canada, 25-27 June 2008, http://elpub.scix.net/data/works/att/234\_elpub2008.content.pdf.