



The Serving Library is a cooperatively-built archive that assembles itself by publishing. It will consist of 1. an ambitious public website; 2. a small physical library space; 3. a publishing program which runs through #1 and #2.

IN OTHER WORDS

Here is a thought-experiment. Imagine yourself in a virtual space surrounded by icons: a familiar optical illusion that looks like an open book projecting first out then in then out again; a claustrophobic negative photo of a woman, apparently underwater; a large asterisk; another open book in a heraldic shield, underscored by the phrase “Lux et Veritas”—Light and Truth; a man blowing what appears to be a handful of feathers but turns out to be a disintegrating book; a curious-looking alien glyph; and an odometer on the brink of changing from 9999999 back to zero.

These are the front pages of a number of Portable Document Formats, and this is www.servinglibrary.org, engine room of The Serving Library. Each PDF is a “bulletin” containing an article or essay that constitutes part of some overarching theme or themes—in this case, from specific to general: Libraries, Media, and Time. The essay behind the large asterisk, for example, contemplates the possibilities for human communication in light of some extraordinary physical attributes of the Octopus Vulgaris. As it turns out, that “asterisk” is actually *an octopus in plan view* This and the other PDFs are available for anyone to download for free. Contributions to the latest theme are added from time to time over a six month period, and at the end of the season they are collected together into a single document, printed and published in both Europe and the USA, each in an edition of 1,500, as *Bulletins of The Serving Library*. The PDFs remain available on the website, while a new theme is developed over the next half year.

One copy of *Bulletins of The Serving Library* is bound in hardback leatherette, catalogued, and placed on a shelf in the physical home of The Serving Library. Here it joins past issues, along with twenty issues of its predecessor, the left-field arts journal *Dot Dot Dot*. A neighboring shelf carries a larger collection of older, most frequently referenced books by the circle of contributors to both *Dot Dot Dot* and the *Bulletins*—on art, literature, philosophy, and so on—that maps a far-reaching but still very particular constellation of interests. And on another shelf, is a further assortment of relatively recent titles covering a wide gamut of contemporary publishing that had been sold from—and often published by—Dexter Sinister, a design workshop and bookstore on Manhattan’s Lower East Side that was run as a primitive form of The Serving Library by two of its founders from 2006–2011.

The walls that surround these shelves are hung with seventy or so framed artifacts. These are wildly diverse in size and medium, from a huge red wax crayon rubbing of a “Monument to Cooperation” (the original of which is located outside a housing estate, around the corner from Dexter Sinister) to a double portrait of Benjamin Franklin (the classic etching of a smug Postmaster General next to a photo taken of four people checking for evidence of forgery in a giant blow-up of the same portrait on a fake US\$100 bill, otherwise known as a North Korean “Superdollar”). Other objects include paintings, lithographs, record covers, faxes, acid blotter artwork, and a ouija board. At some point, each of these items appeared, scanned or photographed, as an illustration in an issue of *Dot Dot Dot* or the *Bulletins*, typically accompanying or triggering a piece of writing. As such, each one has an elaborate backstory. The ouija board, for example, was made by British polymath Paul Elliman while a professor in design at

Yale University in the early 2000s. It utilizes a version of the Bauhausier’s modular geometrical typeface to render A–Z, 0–9, a “yes” and a “no,” laser-cut from a square of the same hardboard Albers used in his famous color paintings. New *Bulletins* published from The Serving Library suggest new anecdotally-loaded objects to be sought, acquired, framed, and added to the wall.

A resident caretaker presides over these two collections of publications and artifacts. This is a rotating position which turns on the same six-month cycle as the *Bulletins*. His or her duties combine those of a regular librarian—cataloging, maintaining, and updating the collections—with those of an events organizer and editor. The caretaker is a constant presence at The Serving Library, available to open its doors to groups or individuals by appointment, then to supervise and direct their use of its resources. He or she also proposes reconfiguring the collections, drawing out certain books for display—perhaps highlighting an essay in an early *Dot Dot Dot* that explicates one of the artifacts, or juxtaposing some of the older, classic books in order to trace a history of, say, Pragmatic philosophy. Or, equally, reassembling the artifacts—chronologically, for example, or grouped by medium. The caretaker is also involved, to a greater or lesser degree, in the production of the *Bulletins* published during his or her tenure. Ideally, assuming the necessary skills, experience and insight, he or she will guest-edit the season’s material, proposing, coercing, and working on contributions.

The caretaker also attends—and attends to—a modest pedagogical program, which takes place in the Library environment during an allotted period every year. It is based on a reconsideration of the traditional Bauhaus Foundation Course, still the default model in contemporary art and design schools. Given that the Bauhaus was set up in direct response to specific cultural conditions almost a hundred years ago, why does it remain the standard today? Through the Library course, this question is considered in relation to the Photoshop toolbox icon—adopted essentially as a surrogate for any contemporary arts software. Working backwards from the fact that such digital “creative suites” constitute the consensus of commercial demand, various guests from different fields will deconstruct the toolbox by isolating a component—pointer, brush, pencil, paint, type, dodge & burn, magic wand, etc., then discussing its analogue past, virtual present, and potential future. These investigations are conducted through seminars and workshops, which draw frequently on the Library’s books and artifacts for immediate example and insight. This reconsideration proposes—initially for the sake of argument—that color wheels, circles, squares and triangles, and other principles of cross-disciplinary “basic design” are less relevant today than a communal effort to observe and relate contemporary conditions, by practicing the forms of reading, writing, and speaking that facilitate their articulation. In other words, the course will aim to build a critical faculty to comprehend the culture in which art and design operate in advance of (or parallel to) operating in it.

As new component classes are clipped onto the basic “handle” over time, a new metaphorical toolbox is assembled by the Library, which replaces the old foundation with something more fluid, pertinent and reflexive. And this customized, palimpsest set of soft tools-for-thinking is also folded back into The Serving Library’s live archive, a pedagogical branch of servinglibrary.org’s network that can be followed remotely online, as well as taught in the local space. As aspects of the teaching programs are hardened into new *Bulletins* to be published, which in turn feed back into subsequent teaching, the growing Library automatically charts its own development.

The Serving Library: ARTICLE OF INCORPORATION

The first libraries were premised on an ARCHIVE model, where important documents were held in restricted strongholds, eventually supplemented by a CIRCULATING model, where resources were pooled for collective use. The ecology described here amounts to a further development, the DISTRIBUTING model, which combines and extends the first two. Publishing and archiving have traditionally existed at opposite ends of the trajectory of knowledge production, but here, in accord with the cheap and easy distribution afforded by an electronic network, they coalesce into a single process. In this way The Serving Library diagrams a reversible, looping principle: it is an archive that publishes and a publisher that archives according to a motto borrowed from the annals of library science: HOSPITIUM AD INFINITUM, or infinite hospitality.

IN OTHER WORDS

Under Section 402 of the Not-for-Profit Corporation Law.

FIRST: The name of the corporation is: The Serving Library Company, Inc.

SECOND: The corporation is a corporation as defined in subparagraph (a)(5) of Section 102 of the Not-for-Profit Corporation Law and shall be a Type C corporation under Section 201 of the Not-For-Profit Corporation Law.

The corporation shall have no members.

THIRD: The purpose or purposes for which the corporation is formed are as follows:

a) To provide a facilitating structure for publishing, archiving, and related activities rooted in the fields of design and art, in direct response to the inflexibility of existing publishing channels;

b) To develop and maintain an extensive online website as a public archive of Portable Document Format (PDF) texts made available for download at www.servinglibrary.org, according to a regular publication schedule;

c) To publish a biannual journal as the *Bulletins of The Serving Library*, which addresses ideas related to publishing;

d) To found and maintain a physical library location with a specialized collection of books comprising a core of knowledge that is specific to the fields of art and design, and to the productively gray area between the two disciplines;

e) To host a design residency program for artists and designers at The Serving Library building for temporary periods in order to use the library facilities to pursue self-directed projects and to participate in developing and teaching workshops;

f) To develop freely distributed informational materials for use by the public, based on the Bauhaus Foundation Course, as reconceived through the standard toolbox of contemporary design software;

g) To provide a physical facility inside The Serving Library building to host visiting groups of students from other art and design programs for workshops led by The Serving Library Company residents, and to stage exhibitions, events, and other public programs;

h) To conduct all lawful activities, which may be related to, or useful in accomplishing, the foregoing purposes.

i) The public objective of the corporation is to enable a diverse community of designers, artists, writers, researchers, and others to address the urgency of contemporary publishing proactively and productively, by providing online, print and physical venues through which the evolving material and social mechanics of contemporary publishing can be considered and affected outside the expectations fostered by the habitual trajectory of commercial publishing and distribution; and by

reclaiming the concept of the library—whether online or physically sited—as a space for public use, where resources are pooled to generate and maintain a network of shared information that serves the common interests of a committed community. This objective is pursued broadly and publicly by the corporation to the best of its abilities for the edification of international audiences whose cultural interests span many disciplines.

FOURTH: In furtherance of the foregoing purposes, the Corporation shall have all the general powers enumerated in Section 202 of the Not-For-Profit Corporation Law and such other powers now or hereafter permitted by law for a corporation organized for the foregoing purposes, including the power to solicit grants and contributions for any corporate purpose.

FIFTH: Notwithstanding any other provision of this certificate, the Corporation is organized exclusively for literary purposes, and shall not carry on any activities not permitted to be carried on:

(a) by a corporation exempt from Federal income tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, as it may be amended (the “Code”); or

(b) by a corporation contributions to which are deductible under Section 170(c)(2) of the Code.

SIXTH: The Corporation is not formed for pecuniary profit or for financial gain and no part of its assets, income or profit shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributed to its members, trustees, directors, officers or other private persons, except that the Corporation shall be authorized to be reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of Section 501(c)(3) purposes.

SEVENTH: No substantial part of the activities of the Corporation shall be the carrying on of propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, except to the extent permitted by the Code, and the Corporation shall not participate in or intervene in (including the publishing or distributing of statements) any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office.

EIGHTH: Nothing herein shall authorize the Corporation to engage in any of the activities mentioned in Section 404(a) through (v) of the Not-For-Profit Corporation Law.

NINTH: The office of the corporation shall be located in the county of New York, State of New York.

TENTH: The names and addresses of the initial directors, each of whom is of full age, are as follows:

a) David Reinfurt, PO Box 1014, New York, NY 10002

b) Stuart Bailey, 272 Grace Drive, S. Pasadena, CA 91030

c) Angie Keefer, 232 Robinson Street, Hudson, NY 12534

ELEVENTH: The Secretary of State is hereby designated as agent of the Corporation upon whom process against it may be served. The address to which the Secretary of State shall mail a copy of any process against the Corporation served upon him is:

The Serving Library Company, Inc., ATTN: David Reinfurt, PO Box 1014, New York, NY 10002

TWELFTH: In the event of dissolution, all of the assets and property of the Corporation remaining after payment of expenses and the satisfaction of all liabilities shall be distributed to organizations which qualify under Section 501(c)(3) of the Code or to the Federal government or State or local governments for a public purpose, subject to the approval of a Justice of the Supreme Court of the State of New York.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF this certificate has been signed and the statements made herein affirmed as true under the penalties of perjury this 7th day of January, 2011.