# What interactivity means on the www

In a nutshell interactivity can be described as the response to an input but, like many aspects in life, the ‘in a nutshell’ idea is not enough. To analyse this question, we’ll have a look at various academia.

Aaron Smuts lists four key attributes of an interactive object [1]: it is not completely in control, controlled, its’ reaction is predictable i.e. the output is in some relationship to the input and it is responsive. With this idea, is there a clear line on what is a valid relationship? As a completely random output to an input is a type of relationship (i.e. random).

Lev Manovich in <em> The language of new media </em> [2] describes that as soon as an object enters a digital space, it is interactive by nature and therefore the term is too broad to be of any meaningful use. This idea is completely focused on the digital aspect of interactivity.

Espen Aarseth sheds light on Lev Manovich’s statement by refraining from using the word <em> interactive </em> completely. Instead, he coins a new term: <em> Ergodic </em> in his book entitled <em> Cybertext- Perspectives on Ergodic Literature </em> [3]. This term describes the use of nontrivial work required to go through text.

With these works in mind, together with my understanding, an interactive element can be described as responsive in a predictable manner, ability to modify the shape a text and requires nontrivial effort. Methods that allow for such interactivity are: mouse movements, keyboard controls and gestures among others.

<u>References</u>

[1] Smuts, Aaron (2009). What is interactivity? \_Journal of Aesthetic Education\_ 43 (4): pp. 53-73.

[2] Galloway, A.R., 2011. WHAT IS NEW MEDIA? TEN YEARS AFTER" THE LANGUAGE OF NEW MEDIA". Criticism, 53(3), pp.377-384.

[3] Aarseth, E.J., 1997. Cybertext: Perspectives on ergodic literature. JHU Press.