Master of Arts in Digital Communication Environments
Institute Digital Communication Environments
Academy of Arts and Design / The Basel School of Design
University of Applied Sciences and Art Northwestern Switzerland

Individual Project Proposal (5 ECTS)

Alper Yagcioglu
Altstetterstrasse 189, 8048 Zürich
alper.yagcioglu@students.fhnw.ch
+41 76 478 96 34

Siiri Tännler
Erikastrasse 4, 4057 Basel
siiri.taennler@students.fhnw.ch
+41 79 483 20 46

6. September 2024

Exploring Web-to-Print: Rethinking Layout Design Through Experimentation

Keywords
Graphical Substrates, Layout Design, Web-to-Print, Digital and Print Media, Design Tools, Responsive Design

Project description

We aim to explore innovative layout techniques and graphical frameworks that function seamlessly across both web and print mediums. Traditional design tools often rely on static grids, which are effective for fixed formats but fall short in addressing the flexibility required for designs across media. In today's world, layouts must adapt fluidly to different formats, from websites to printed materials. We are particularly interested in how graphical substrates—structural frameworks that influence layout creation—can be used to create designs that transition effortlessly between digital and print. This project could provide designers with more effective solutions for navigating the complexities of working across various media.

Research Question and Goal

The questions we want to explore are:

1. How can we use graphical substrates to connect the design process for both web and print?
2. Where do current design tools fall short when it comes to making layouts that work well in both digital and print formats?
3. How can we experiment with tools or systems like Paged.js, JavaScript, P5.js, CSS, and HTML to explore how they might make it easier to create adaptable layouts?

Our main goal isn't necessarily to create a final polished tool but to experiment and learn how graphical substrates could be used in new ways. We aim to try different ideas and see what works and what doesn't, functioning as a sandbox for experimentation.

Practical and Theoretical Approach to the Subject
We plan to mix theory with hands-on design work. First, we'll look at what's already out there—reading up on existing tools, techniques, and ideas around design for web and print. This will help us understand what's missing and what could be improved. Then, we'll start experimenting with different software and tools to see how we can create and use graphical substrates in our designs. We'll experiment with a simple prototype tool that lets us play around with layouts and see how they adapt to both digital and print. Our focus is on learning and exploring rather than creating a finished product.

Division of Tasks and Individual Contributions
To ensure a collaborative approach and make the most of our respective strengths, we will divide our work as follows:

Alper (Coding and Tool Development Focus)
Expertise: Experience in coding, creating custom tools, and technical problem-solving.

Focus Area: Alper will lead the technical exploration, focusing on JavaScript, tool development, and experimenting with how graphical substrates can be implemented using P5.js and other coding frameworks.

Contribution
1. Research on the capabilities and limitations of current tools such as Paged.js, focusing on the technical aspects.
2. Develop prototypes that explore how JavaScript can be used to create adaptable web-to-print layouts.
3. Design and test interfaces that demonstrate the technical feasibility of adaptable layouts.
4. Document technical learnings and challenges faced during the experimentation phase.

Siiri (Design and Layout Focus)
Expertise: Extensive experience in book design, layout design, and an understanding of traditional and digital media integration.

Focus Area: Siiri will focus on the aesthetic and functional aspects of layout design, exploring how CSS can be utilized to enhance the adaptability of designs across web and print.

Contribution
1. Research on the design implications of web-to-print, focusing on layout adaptability and user experience.
2. Experiment with CSS to create responsive layouts that work seamlessly in both print and digital formats.
3. Collaborate on the development of a prototype tool, emphasizing the layout design and user interface aspects.
4. Document design insights, reflecting on how design elements translate between web and print.

Collaborative Tasks

1. *Research and Exploration*: We will both contribute to initial research, with Alper focusing on the technical aspects and Siiri on design and usability.
2. *Prototype Development*: Collaborative effort where Alper leads the coding and tool creation, and Siiri focuses on integrating effective design elements.
3. *Testing and Reflection*: We will both test the prototype and reflect on the process, focusing on technical performance and design outcomes.
4. *Process Documentation*: A shared responsibility to document the entire process, including learnings, reflections, and the overall journey.

Criteria for Evaluation

We'll evaluate our project based on:

1. *Experimentation*: How much we learned from trying out new ideas and tools.
2. *Usability*: Whether the tools we experimented with were easy and fun to use.
3. *Creativity*: How well we were able to come up with new ways to design layouts that work in both web and print.
4. *Learning*: What new skills and knowledge we gained during the project.

Research Plan

Here's how we plan to structure our project:

1. *Research and Exploration*: We'll start by researching existing design tools and methods to understand the current state of web-to-print design. This will also help us figure out what we want to experiment with.
2. *Experimentation and Prototype Development*: We'll dive into experimenting with different software and tools. We'll try to build some simple prototypes or visions that lets us create adaptable layouts using graphical substrates. This phase is all about playing around and seeing what works.
3. *Testing and Reflection*: We'll test our ideas by using the prototype and experiments. We'll reflect on what we've learned, what worked well, and what didn't. The goal here is to summarize our experiences and see how we can use what we've learned in future projects.

Personal Experience and Motivation

We are driven by a shared interest in rethinking web-to-print design and exploring new ways to create adaptable layouts. Our complementary skills—coding and tool development on one hand, and book design and layout expertise on the other—enable us to approach the project from different but interlinked perspectives. This project offers us the opportunity to experiment, learn, and expand our capabilities beyond traditional design constraints, aiming not for a polished end product but for a deeper understanding of how web and print design can converge.

Final Output

Given the process-oriented nature of our project, our final deliverable will be a detailed process documentation that outlines our experiments, key learnings, and potential pathways for further exploration in the field of web-to-print design.

References

Maudet, N., Jalal, G., Tchernavskij, P., Beaudouin-Lafon, M., & Mackay, W. E. (2017). *Beyond Grids: Interactive Graphical Substrates to Structure Digital Layout*. Proceedings of the 2017 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing System, pages 5053–5064.

PrePostPrint. (n.d.). *Resources*. PrePostPrint. https://prepostprint.org/resources/

Institute of Network Cultures. (2014). From Print to eBooks: *A Hybrid Publishing Toolkit for the Arts* [PDF]. Institute of Network Cultures. https://networkcultures.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/0419-HVA_DPT_from_print_to_ebooks_OS_RGB_aanp_lr_totaal.pdf

Paged.js. (2020, April 15). *Starterkits for Paged.js*. Paged.js. https://pagedjs.org/posts/2020-04-15-starterkits-for-pagedjs/

CSS4. (n.d.). *CSS for publishing*. CSS4. https://css4.pub/