

Copyright

by

Juliana Castro Varón

2018

The Report Committee for Juliana Castro Varón
Certifies that this is the approved version of the following report:

**Cita: A Feminist Open-Access Digital Library and Print-on-Demand
Publisher**

**APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:**

Supervisor:

Jiwon Park

Co-supervisor:

Carma Gorman

**Cita: A Feminist Open-Access Digital Library and Print-on-Demand
Publisher**

by

Juliana Castro Varón

Report

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
The University of Texas at Austin
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts

**The University of Texas at Austin
May, 2018**

Dedication

This report is dedicated to all the women who embark on and persist in creative and intellectual endeavors, and especially to my mother, who has devoted her life to teaching me, my two brothers, and thousands of young students that reading is exciting and powerful, and that generosity and kindness are revolutionary.

Acknowledgments

I thank my generous supervisors Jiwon Park and Dr. Carma Gorman: not only are they among the women to whom this report is dedicated, but their expertise, guidance, patience, and encouragement made my MFA rich in challenges and learning. I thank the Fulbright Commission for believing in and supporting my progress from the beginning. Thanks also to the School of Design and Creative Technologies and Department of Art and Art History, especially to Kate Catterall, James Walker, Kevin Auer, Dr. Louis Waldman, Amy Hauft, and kt shorb. My thanks to those who patiently listened to me speak for two years about museums, books, open-access, design and literature, and who, with their love and friendship, helped me through the roller-coaster that grad school is: Anika Steppe, Ingrid Tremblay, Alejandro Ponce de León, Marta Lee, and Marisol Bayona. Thanks to Juanjo Castro, for his support, emotional and technical, and for twenty years of making me feel that I have an ally. Thanks to my MFA mates, Ajinkya Barve, Ekin Levent, Kira Street, Subodh Trivedi, Jean Yang, Eric Zimmerman, Lauren Smedley and Jacob DeGeal, whose company and advice made me a better designer. Finally, I thank all the contributors and readers of Cita, for their trust and generosity.

Abstract

Cita: A Feminist Open-Access Digital Library and Print-on-Demand Publisher

Juliana Castro Varón, MFA

The University of Texas at Austin, 2018

Supervisor: Jiwon Park

Co-Supervisor: Carma Gorman

Most of the nineteenth century's feminist literature is now in the public domain, but many of these writings are not being republished by commercial publishers. When publishers do reprint public-domain texts, they rarely do so in open-access book formats. Because commercial publishers invest in curating and marketing well designed collections of reprints, they frequently commission original annotations or introductions from scholars, which in turn enables them to copyright and profit from their new editions.

In contrast, Internet-based archives such as Google Books, HathiTrust, and Archive.org make an enormous corpus of public-domain books available for free online, but do so as scans or in poorly designed digital formats. Moreover, internet archives usually do not make their collections particularly navigable or appealing to non-scholarly audiences, nor do they make it properly designed and easy to print.

Responding to the lack of well designed, affordable public-domain reprints, Cita is an open-access feminist digital library and print-on-demand publisher that promotes and

distributes the writings of female authors whose works are open-licensed or in the public domain. Cita's network of scholars and designers works to make and distribute free, high-quality editions that readers can view online using any device, or download, print, and—following simple instructions—bind for personal, library, museum, or school use.

Keywords: open-access, books, public domain, women's literature, publishing, editorial design, feminism, distribution, DIY, Creative Commons

Table of Contents

List of Figures.....	ix
Background and Problem Statement.....	1
Intellectual Property, Open-Access, and Books	1
Book Distribution.....	6
Women in the Publishing Industry and in Open-Source Initiatives.....	10
Cita: The Project.....	15
Principles / Manifesto.....	15
Process and System	16
Attribution and Licensing.....	16
Brand: Naming, Typography, and Color.....	18
User-Interface Design	22
Openness.....	25
Conclusion.....	27
References	29

List of Figures

Figure 1: Expansion of U.S. copyright law (currently based on the date of creation or publication). Author: Tom Bell, Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported License. Source: Wikipedia.....	1
Figure 2: Search results for <i>charlotte perkins gilman</i> on HathiTrust Digital Library, https://babel.hathitrust.org	3
Figure 3: Search results for <i>charlotte perkins gilman the yellow wallpaper</i> on HathiTrust	4
Figure 4: Scanned yellowed copy of <i>The Beautiful</i> by Vernon Lee – archive.org..	5
Figure 5: Text errors in archive.org’s OCR’d text of the <i>Complete Works of George Eliot</i> . Note incorrect spacing and the word “tlxe” at the beginning of the second paragraph in view: transcription errors have not been edited out – archive.org.....	5
Figure 6: Search of <i>charlotte perkins gilman</i> on Project Gutenberg. A link to the most important and visited title, The Yellow Wallpaper, is situated in the lower left, but it lacks any edition information or cover image	6
Figure 7: Search results for <i>feminism</i> in the Open Text Library: one book, called <i>International Relations Theory</i>	8
Figure 8: VIDA’s gender statistics for 2016 for two prominent English-based literary magazines: <i>The London Review</i> (21.9% of its pieces were written by women) and <i>The New Yorker</i> (39.4% of its pieces were written by women). VIDA Count - 2016.....	11
Figure 9: Internet usage rate worldwide in 2017, by gender and region	14
Figure 10: Cita’s credits page.....	17

Figure 11: Bluu, specimen study – Open Foundry. Design: Jean-Baptiste Morizot	18
Figure 12: Bitter, specimen study – Google Fonts. Design: Sol Matas, from Huerta Tipográfica	19
Figure 13: Interior of Cita’s edition of Judith Sargent Murray’s <i>On the Equality of the Sexes</i> , set in Sol Matas’s typeface <i>Bitter</i>	20
Figure 14: Cita’s visual identity	21
Figure 15: Covers of Cita’s books, created by six designers from four different continents	22
Figure 16: Cita’s website in mobile.....	23
Figure 17: Cita’s website on desktop.....	23
Figure 18: First sketches for Cita’s circular navigation – wireframes.....	24
Figure 19: Digital sketches for Cita’s mobile circular navigation – wireframes ..	24
Figure 20: Exhibition at the Visual Arts Center. Photo: Sandy Carson.....	25
Figure 21: Cita’s bookmaking workshop at the Perry Castañeda Library in March 2018. Photo: Colleen Lyon	26

Background and Problem Statement

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY, OPEN-ACCESS, AND BOOKS

Public domain is a legal term used to refer to visual or written works without intellectual property rights. Works enter the public domain for different reasons, including expiration of the rights, forfeiture (Grabber, 2008), waiver, or inapplicability, as in the case of pieces created before an existing legal framework. At the end of the eighteenth century, copyrights lasted only 14 years in the USA, with an option of renewing for another 14 years. However, copyright terms have expanded dramatically over the course of the twentieth century in the USA. Since the passage of the Sonny Bono Copyright Extension Act of 1998, most copyrighted works do not re-enter the public domain until 70 years after the death of the author. These extensions are created to benefit creators' interests, but not only oftentimes fail at doing so, but arguably stifle creativity, free speech, and the democratic exchange of ideas (Vaidhyanathan, 2001)

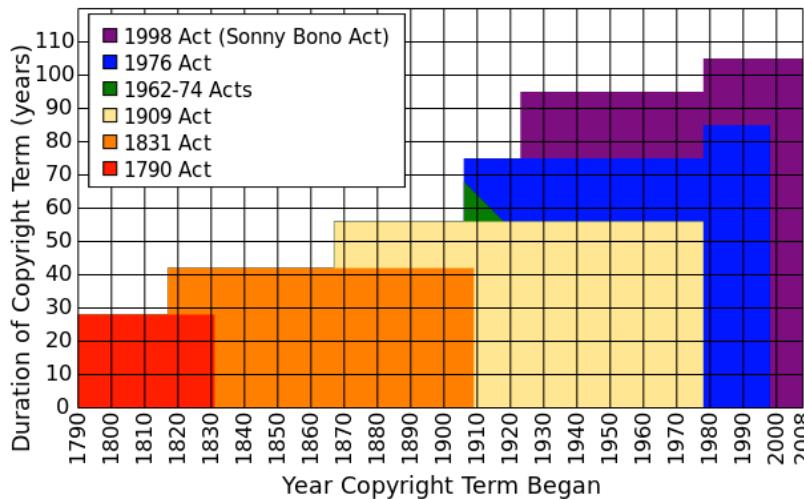


Figure 1: Expansion of U.S. copyright law (currently based on the date of creation or publication). Author: Tom Bell, Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported License. Source: Wikipedia

There are countless works written by women that are now available in the public domain. However, many of these pieces do not make their way into contemporary publishing houses to be distributed widely and inexpensively. The ones that do, often suffer serious design problems when opened in different digital devices, or are often published in restricted payment-based copyrighted editions, that make them less accessible.

Existing open-access online libraries like HathiTrust, Archive.org, Europeana, and Project Gutenberg generously catalogue and make accessible countless works that have entered the public domain. Other archives, like Google Books, provide limited access to copyrighted material or partner with commercial publishers to provide payment-based platforms for contemporary publishing. However, the overwhelming quantity of items in these online archives, the often poor quality of their scanned images, and technological incompatibilities make most of these archives difficult to navigate and intimidating to people who do not have a specific work in mind for which they are searching. For example, a search for *Charlotte Perkins Gilman* on HathiTrust yields 146,692 full-view items, and even a search for *Charlotte Perkins Gilman The Yellow Wallpaper* yields 6,212 results (figs. 2, 3).

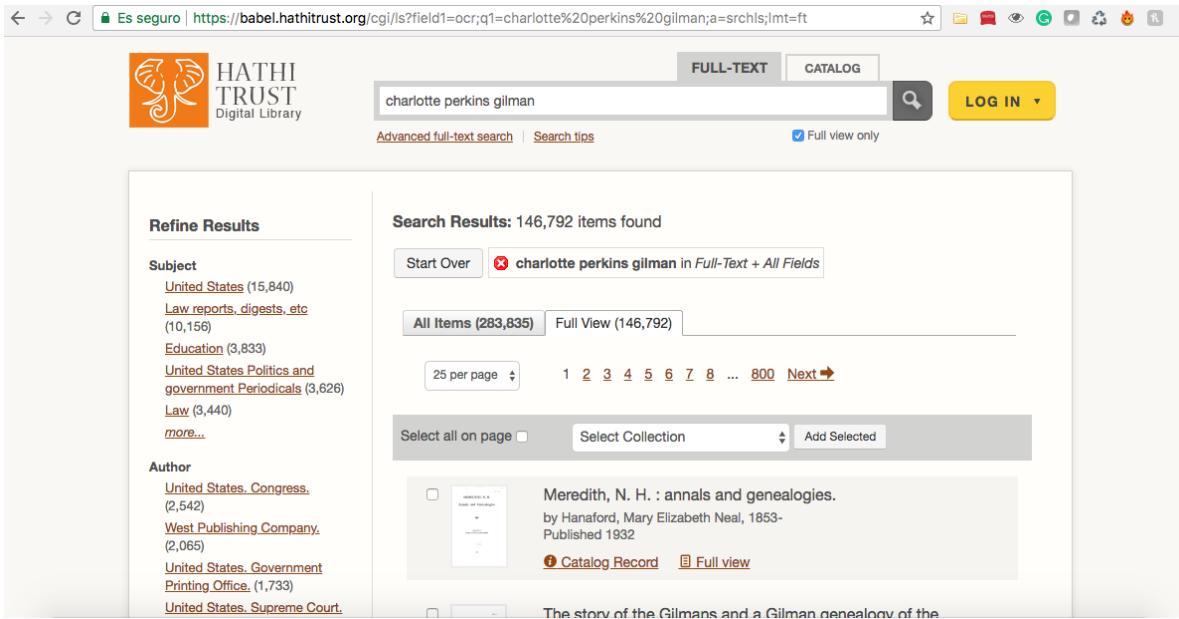


Figure 2: Search results for *charlotte perkins gilman* on HathiTrust Digital Library,
<https://babel.hathitrust.org>

None of the main page's first fifty results for *Charlotte Perkins Gilman* on archives like HathiTrust, Archive.org, and Google Books takes the user to Gilman's most famous piece of writing, *The Yellow Wall-Paper*. If one adds "The yellow wallpaper" to the search it still does not show on the main screen of HathiTrust.

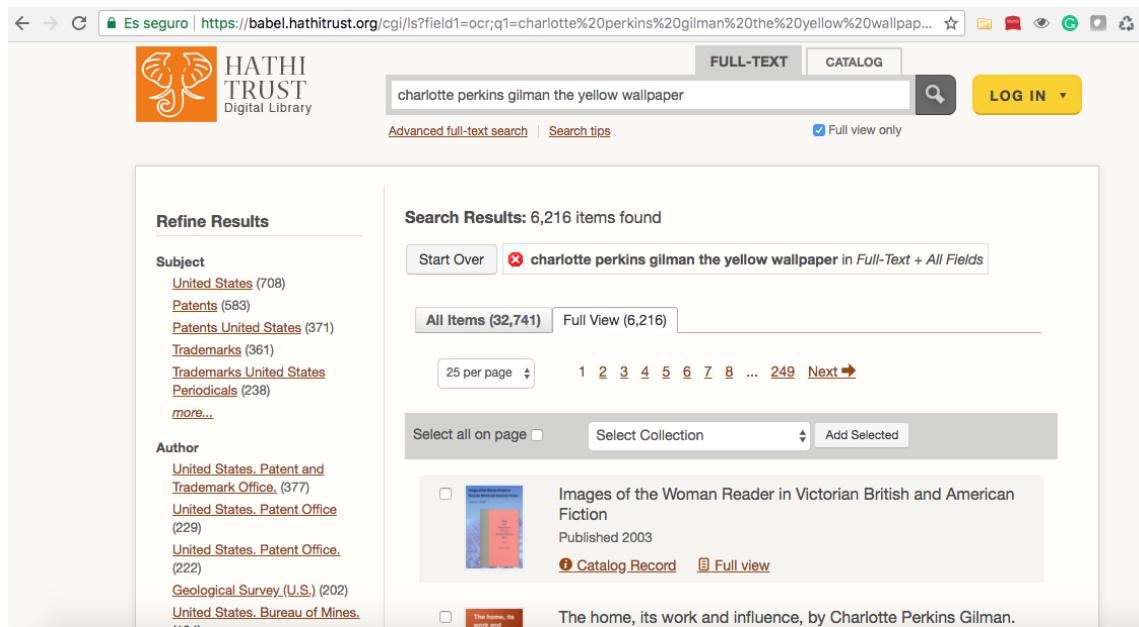


Figure 3: Search results for *charlotte perkins gilman the yellow wallpaper* on HathiTrust

In addition, these archives often provide either scans of the original editions, or unedited (and error-ridden) texts generated via Optical Character Recognition of scans (fig. 4 and 5). While Project Gutenberg does create e-books and proofreads most of its texts, it pays far less attention to the design of its website and to the cover design of books and texts than commercial publishers do. For example, if users type in the same search for *Charlotte Perkins Gilman The Yellow Wallpaper* on Project Gutenberg's website, they arrive at a record for the book, but the design of the website does not highlight the piece. The title of the book is situated in the lower left, with no cover image and no context (fig. 6). Finally, the only edition of *The Yellow Wallpaper* that is available on Project Gutenberg is from 1952, which, according to Dr. Catherine Golden, who wrote the introduction of Cita's 2018 edition of the book, lacks crucial passages from the original 1892 text. Project Gutenberg, however, does not alert readers to the fact that the 1952 text differs from the version that was originally published in 1892.

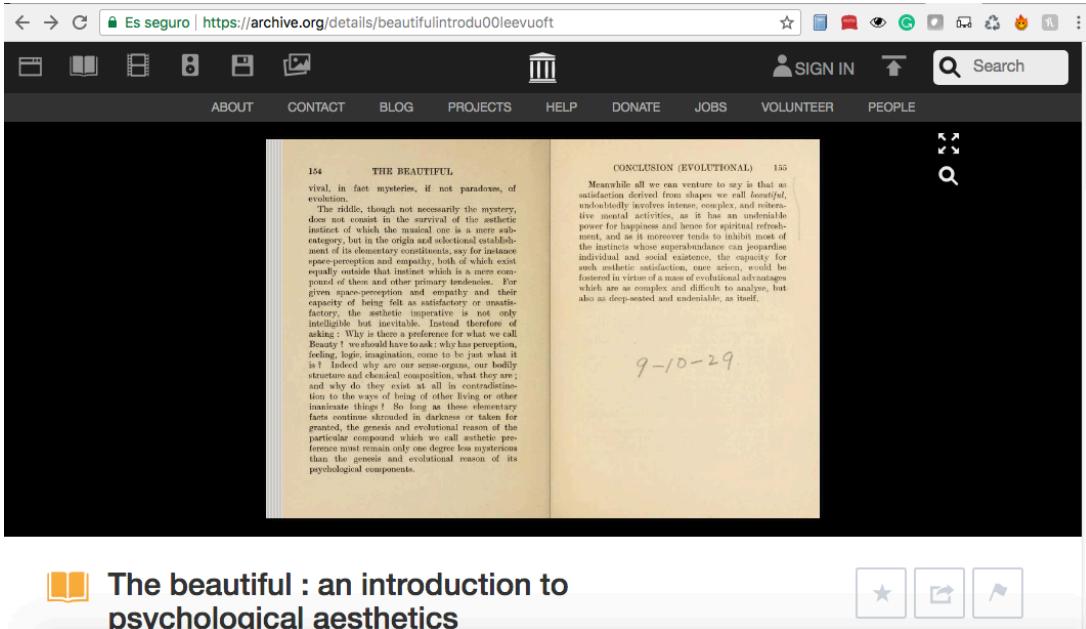


Figure 4: Scanned yellowed copy of *The Beautiful* by Vernon Lee – archive.org

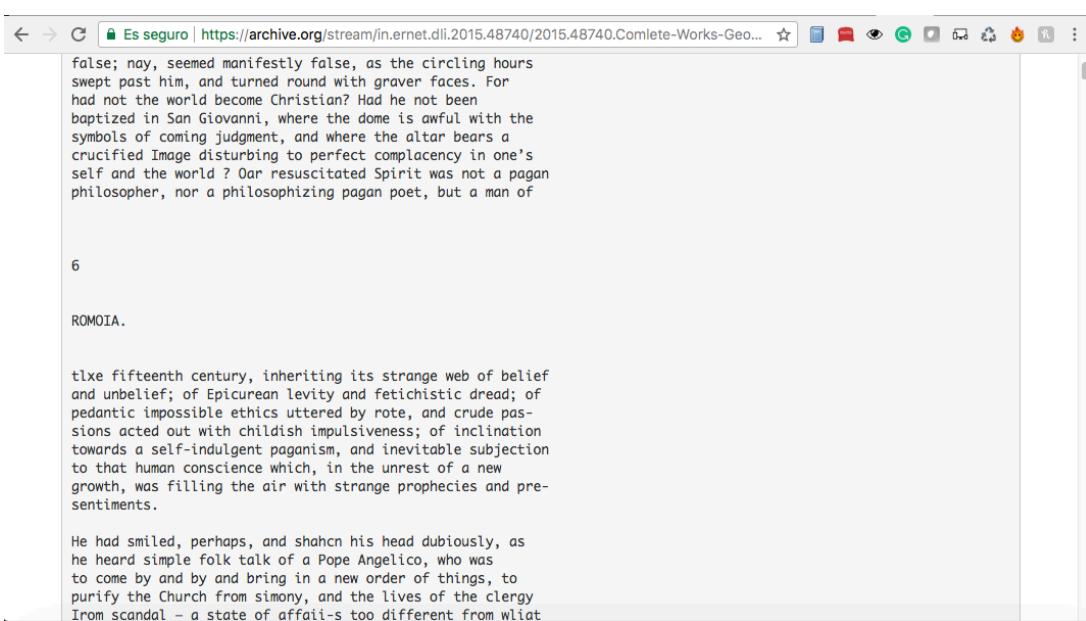


Figure 5: Text errors in archive.org's OCR'd text of the *Complete Works of George Eliot*.

Note incorrect spacing and the word “tlxe” at the beginning of the second paragraph in view: transcription errors have not been edited out – archive.org

In short, although there are plenty of websites that make public-domain editions of books available to read for free, the design of their interfaces and their books is often unsatisfying from a user-experience perspective, or incompatible with devices, screens and technologies used nowadays.

The screenshot shows the Project Gutenberg homepage with a search bar at the top containing 'charlotte perkins gilman'. Below the search bar, a banner states 'El Proyecto Gutenberg ofrece 56.534 ebooks libres para descargar.' with buttons for 'Donar' and 'Flattr this!'. The main content area displays a list of books by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, ordered by popularity. The books listed are:

- The Man-Made World; Or, Our Androcentric Culture** by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (131 descargas)
- The home: its work and influence** by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (81 descargas)
- The Crux: A Novel** by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (68 descargas)
- Concerning Children** by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (40 descargas)
- What Diantha Did** by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (33 descargas)
- The Forerunner, Volume 1 (1909-1910)** by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (20 descargas)
- Women as World Builders: Studies in Modern Feminism** by Floyd Dell (14 descargas)
- De economische toestand der vrouw (nederlandstalig)** by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (7 descargas)

On the left sidebar, there are links for 'Autores', 'Clasificar alfabéticamente', and 'Clasificar por fecha de publicación'. It also shows 'Mostrando resultados 1-10' and lists two more books: 'The Yellow Wallpaper' and 'Herland', both by Charlotte Perkins Gilman.

Figure 6: Search of *charlotte perkins gilman* on Project Gutenberg. A link to the most important and visited title, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, is situated in the lower left, but it lacks any edition information or cover image

BOOK DISTRIBUTION

Although bookstores are disappearing and a few large companies make distribution of printed books slow and expensive, data show that printed works remain much more popular with readers than other formats (Hom, 2016). Yet open-access publishing is nearly always digital; public-domain texts are almost never printed as open-access *physical* books, simply because there is no way for publishers to recoup the costs of paper, printing, binding, and distributing. When publishers reprint public domain content, they typically add new annotations or introductions that enable them to copyright and profit from their new editions, which in turn limits the circulation of books in affordable and accessible *print* formats.

However, the book publishing industry has undergone radical changes since screen-based content became a crucial part of our lives. As explored by Ted Striphias in *The Late Age of Print*, corporate booksellers are profit-driven giants that have economically harmed the rest of the actors in the book industry (Striphias, 2009). Because of the fetishized and intellectualized aura that printed books have, we often forget that books are mass-produced products in much the same way that furnishings or housewares are, and that their distribution is controlled by large corporations such as Amazon, Wal-Mart, and Barnes and Noble. These distribution structures make it difficult for small players to break into the publishing industry. However, in the last decade, the number of small, independent publishers has grown thanks to the advent of digital printing technology and print-on-demand services. Legal frameworks such as Creative Commons and Gnu licensing, and initiatives such as Open Source Publishing, enable authors and publishers to reach potentially very large audiences without much capital investment.

Creative Commons licenses were established in 2001, and the amount of visual and written material that authors have made freely available under CC licenses has increased enormously, especially since 2006 (Johnson, 2014). However, the number of publishing houses that use exclusively open-access or Creative Commons licenses is still small. Among the publishing areas in which Creative Commons licensing is gaining traction is textbook and educational publishing. One successful example is the Open Textbook Library, led by the Center for Open Education at the University of Minnesota. Its purpose is to fund, publish, and review university textbooks to be freely distributed and used. According to a 2015 report called “The State of Creative Commons,” Open Textbooks had already by that date saved students \$174 million.

However, even though the Open Textbooks index provides resources for many different disciplines, from economics to the social sciences, it skews toward conventional

subjects, texts, and approaches. There is no section for gender studies, for example, and the works in the literature and philosophy sections are predominantly by male authors. A search for *feminism* yields also only one hit, for a textbook called *International Relations Theory*, which is not the kind of title one would expect to find in such a search (fig. 7).

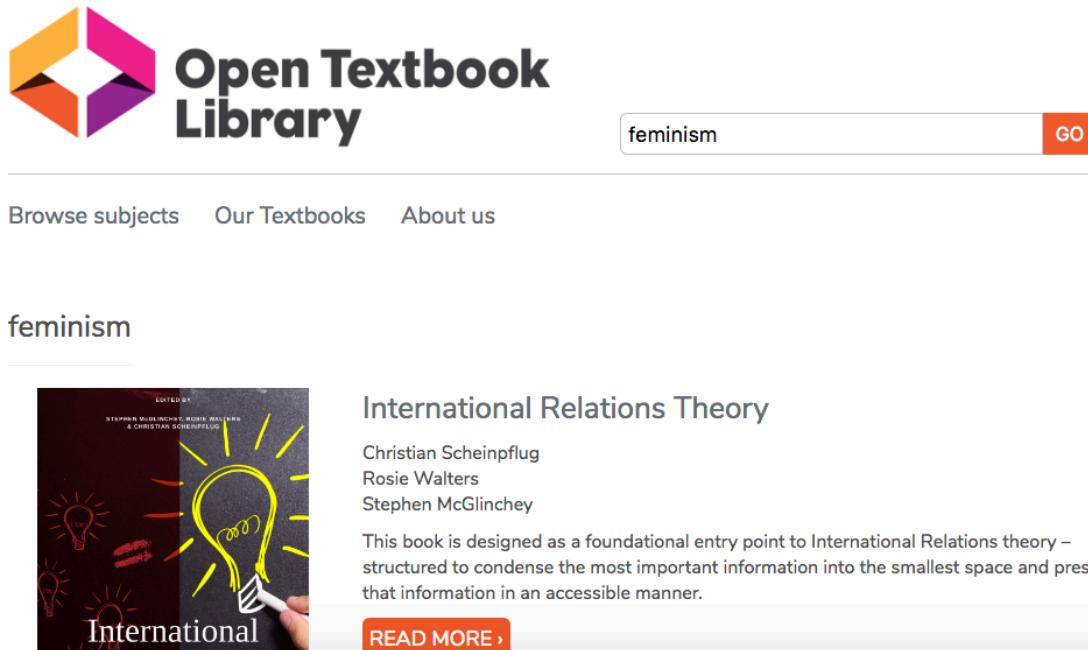


Figure 7: Search results for *feminism* in the Open Text Library: one book, called *International Relations Theory*

There are just a couple of examples of Creative Commons-based publishing houses: they are usually small, and are rarely focused on women's writings or digital accessibility. One example is *Pratham Books*, a non-profit children's book publishing house based in India, which started using Creative Commons licenses for all of their books in order to encourage their translation into other languages. But independent open-access-friendly publishing houses like *Pratham Books* usually have a very limited digital interface, which doesn't enable them to extend their generosity through online channels.

Although the conversation about open-access among commercial publishers is growing, for obvious reasons, for-profit publishers do not usually embrace it. The international publishing house Bloomsbury, for example, offers two different open-access publishing options to its academic authors, usually using Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs (CC BY-NC-ND). The first model involves no charge to authors, but is offered only at the editors' discretion and is limited to the fields of Education, Film/Media Studies, Literary Studies, Theatre Studies, and Philosophy. Bloomsbury's second open-access model, Gold Open Access, requires authors to pay open-access fees of up to \$12,500 in order to make their work publicly accessible. Many authors cannot afford these fees, and/or are not willing to give up potential royalty income, which means that most academic research published by Bloomsbury is not freely available on the web. Many other academic publishers follow a similar model.

Despite the availability of a great deal of public-domain content online, and despite the recent creation of digital self-publishing and distributing platforms—including open-source platforms for textbook publishing and distribution—there is still a need for well-designed websites that provide access to carefully curated and designed collections of public-domain and open-source texts that can be read either digitally or in print. In particular, there is a need for collections of works created by historically underrepresented people and about subjects (such as feminism and gender studies) that are poorly represented on existing open-source platforms.

WOMEN IN THE PUBLISHING INDUSTRY AND IN OPEN-SOURCE INITIATIVES

In the last three centuries, women have gradually joined the publishing industry as active writers, often exploring topics considered inappropriate or even immoral for women to address. The printing press was developed by Johannes Gutenberg c.1439. By 1500, printing presses were operating all throughout Europe; by 1539 Spanish colonists were printing in Mexico; and by 1638 English colonists were printing in New England. However, until the early nineteenth century, writing was still a suspect occupation for women. Because writing was viewed as unfeminine (Fergus, 1991), the few women who had the educational background to write works of public interest would often publish anonymously, using masculine pseudonyms to avoid jeopardizing their social status. Art and literature have been sexist arenas, and for centuries women have had to fight outright prohibitions, social disapproval, lack of role models, isolation, and other forms of suppression in order to get their work published and recognized (Russ, 2005).

Virginia Woolf explored women's place in literary history in *A Room of One's Own* (1929), arguing that until women had a room of their own (both literally and metaphorically), they wouldn't be fully empowered to write. She argues that a fictional Judith, "Shakespeare's sister," who had the same gifts as Shakespeare, would have been denied the same opportunities and acclaim as Shakespeare simply because those opportunities were closed to women. Similar limitations extended even into Woolf's time; she stayed at home while her brothers went to school. Feminists' efforts have enabled more women to produce art. However, socioeconomic inequalities still remain, and still affect women's opportunities to write professionally.

The non-profit organization VIDA, which is committed to creating transparency around the lack of gender parity in the literary landscape, provides yearly statistics on the gender imbalances in publishing, organizing data by authors who received reviews,

reviewers, and books genre (VIDA Count, 2016). VIDA found that in 2016, the main literary magazines such as *The Atlantic*, *The New Yorker* and the *London Review* remained dominated by men (fig. 8).

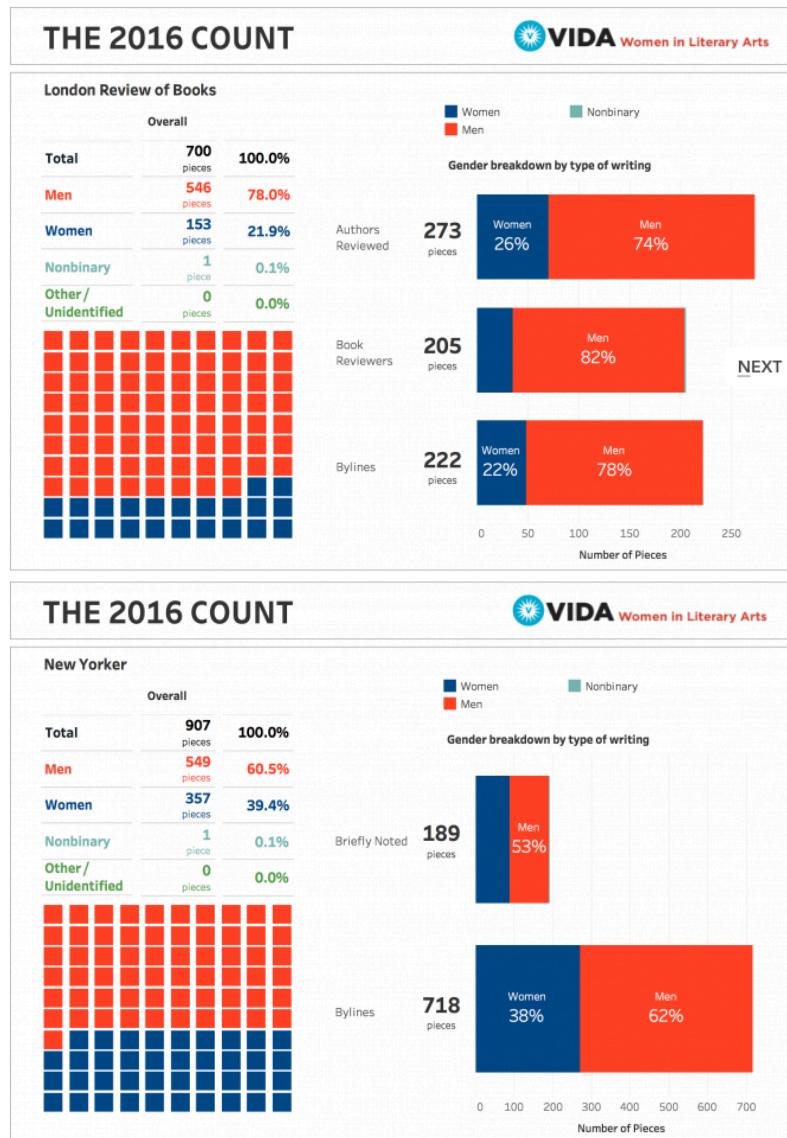


Figure 8: VIDA's gender statistics for 2016 for two prominent English-based literary magazines: *The London Review* (21.9% of its pieces were written by women) and *The New Yorker* (39.4% of its pieces were written by women).
VIDA Count - 2016

While these statistics improve each year —VIDA considered *The New Yorker* to be making “steady progress toward gender parity”— and the current gender division of published content is getting closer to be 50/50, the books that make their way into the mainstream are still mainly written by men and the areas in which women are encouraged to focus often reflect gendered prejudices that prolong oppression (Rothfeld, 2015). Researchers at McGill University concluded that two thirds of the *New York Times Book Reviews* were written by men, and that book review assignments usually suggested gender-stereotyped *topic bias*: women were more likely to have their books reviewed if they addressed topics traditionally thought of as feminine, and factual information was usually assumed to be more legitimate when written by men (Hu, 2017).

Today, there are only five female authors represented within the top 50 books on Goodreads’ list of Popular Public Domain Books. Thanks to the systemic effects of patriarchy and sexism, it is no surprise that most of the “literary classics” from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries were written by men. This reflects not only the relatively low numbers of female writers during those centuries, but also their struggles for recognition and credibility as authors in their own era, *and* the subsequent sexism of scholars who have created canons of “literary greats” that exclude women writers.

In the western world, feminist and women-focused projects have been growing mainly since—and in response to—second-wave feminism of the 1960s. A primary example is the *Feminist Press* at the City University of New York, an educational nonprofit founded in 1970, whose mission is to advance women's rights and amplify feminist perspectives. The *Feminist Press*'s progressive approach has allowed them to win a respected place within the academic publishing community, but its digital accessibility is still limited. While books can be bought for as cheap as \$6.00, shipping to places outside

New York City doubles the price. There are not digital editions available for free or for purchase, and the press's web presence mainly serves marketing, not distribution, purposes.

Another example of women-focused publishing houses is *Persephone Books*, a bookseller and publisher founded in 1998 in the United Kingdom. *Persephone* is committed to publishing a handful of “lost” or out-of-print books every year, most of them interwar novels by women. While their mission is similar to that of the *Feminist Press*, they act as a for-profit, limit their online presence to sales and marketing, and are mainly focused on printed books. All their books have carefully annotated editions and are sold at a fixed price of \$20 plus up to \$7.50 shipping.

In the Americas, the percentage of women using the Internet is bigger than the percentage of men (fig. 13). However, women are still highly underrepresented in the tech industry and though they may be the main content consumers, they are usually not the main content creators. This well-known problematic has been the subject of criticism during the last few years (Colby, 2017). Internet-based initiatives aiming to fight this inequality have been launched all around the globe. Projects such as Art + Feminism, a campaign aiming to extend the coverage of cis- and transgender women as well as feminism and the arts on Wikipedia, have encouraged greater participation from women, and promote educational programs that empower women to become active makers, writers and editors.

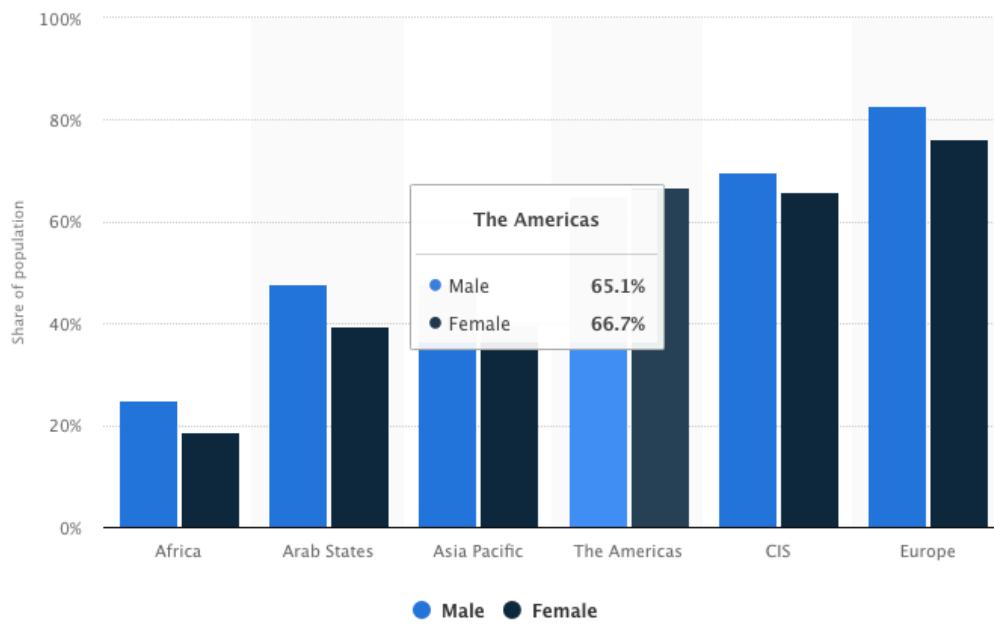


Figure 9: Internet usage rate worldwide in 2017, by gender and region

GitHub is a web-based hosting service with almost 20 million users and 57 million repositories. It's often used to host open-source software projects, like Cita. Open-source conversations, like most tech-related topics, is highly dominated by male voices. In the same way that only 10% of Wikipedia editors are women (Art + Feminism, 2018), 5.4% of GitHub contributors are women (Beneschott, 2017). These statistics not only point to the clear gender disparity in technology, but also point out that there are areas of real opportunity to encourage women's creativity and interest in technology and literature.

Cita: The Project

To address these gaps in the publishing industry, I created Cita, an open-access digital library and publishing platform that entices more people to read women authors' feminist texts by offering carefully designed and contemporary-looking books that can be viewed online or printed and bound at home, in a library, in a museum, or in a school, for free. Cita is both an editorial and a design project. By creating a library of carefully designed public-domain and open-access writings by women, I aim to increase the visibility of female-created content, foster new knowledge, and inspire future generations to read women's literature from the past.

PRINCIPLES / MANIFESTO

Cita:

- Elevates the work of those who first addressed gender inequality
- Uses open-source resources and credits them
- Maintains the content in open-access platforms and formats, including printed ones
- Gives free access to the content
- Makes visible and celebrates the work of contributors
- Pairs classic literature with contemporary open scholarship and design
- Is committed to intersectionality
- Adapts to all digital devices
- Is participatory, crowdsourced and open to new voices and collaborations

PROCESS AND SYSTEM

To begin my work, I made extensive searches to determine which foundational feminist works were accessible on the Internet in different online archives such as Ebooks@Adelaide, Project Gutenberg, or Archive.org. I selected texts that were short enough to reprint and bind in zine-like formats, and created a list of texts to potentially include in the first collection. For the content that needed it, I manually “cleaned” and re-formatted the text, removing extraneous characters, correcting misspellings, updating outdated HTML formats, and resetting the texts for both web and print layouts.

In addition to creating the books for web and printable read-on-screen formats using existing open source code—such as *Bindery.js* by Evan Brooks—I have designed a print on demand 8.5x11 inches pdf for each book, which can be printed using a desktop printer, and reproduced easily and inexpensively.

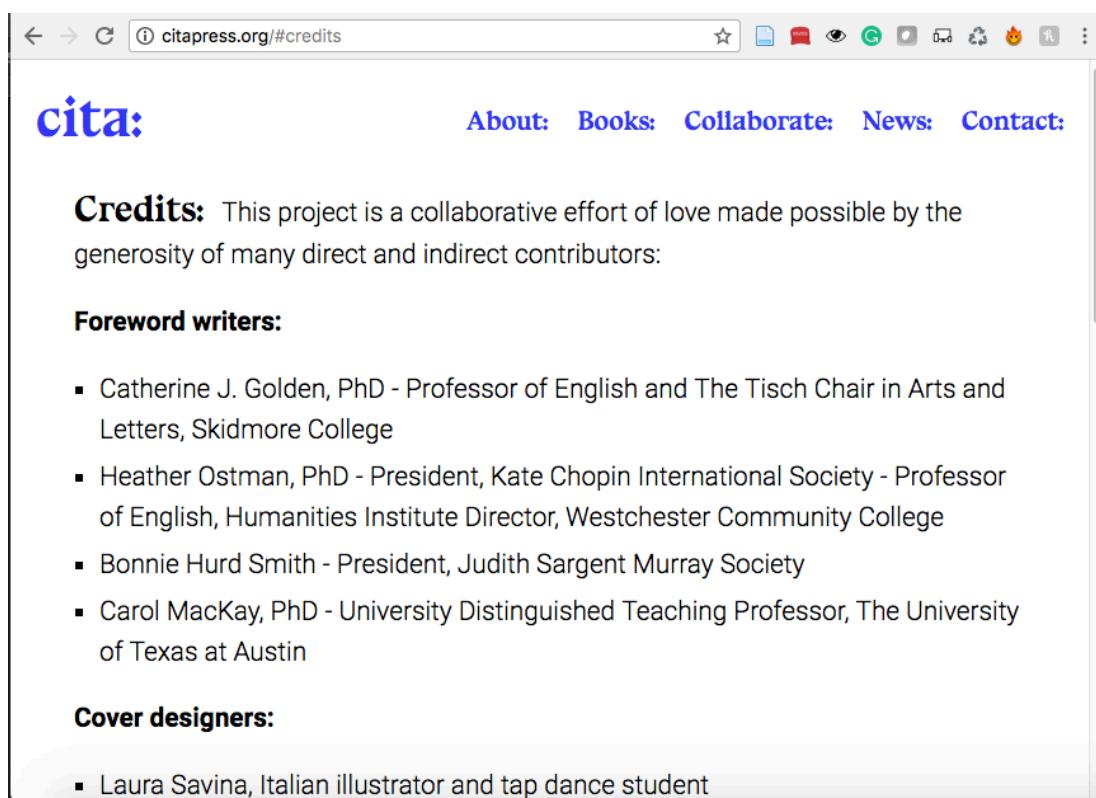
I virtually connected with literature scholars at UT Austin and elsewhere who specialized in early feminist literature and in authors such as Vernon Lee, George Eliot, Kate Chopin, Louisa May Alcott, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Most of them answered generously, suggesting content or other authors, and the majority of them decided to contribute to Cita, at no charge, moved by the prospect of making these public-domain books accessible for free, in carefully annotated editions. Designers and illustrators were equally excited about the idea, and also joined the project. Since Cita’s launch in late April 2018, four more illustrators have reached out to indicate their willingness to design future books.

ATTRIBUTION AND LICENSING

As a collaborative project, Cita offers contributors a platform for showcasing the work. In order to make accessible the work and not allowing the profit from the

contributors, Cita uses Creative Commons Attribution Share Alike Non-Commercial. This license dictates that anybody can access the content, share it and use it so long as the creators are cited and it is not used for commercial purposes.

In book design, it's extremely rare to have the name of the designer on the cover of the book. For annotated editions, the name of the person writing the foreword is only put on the cover when the writer is fairly famous. In contrast, to acknowledge the collaborative and volunteer nature of the work, Cita's books have the name of all collaborators in the cover, and in the digital editions, their contributors are promoted and presented in a way that elevates their work.



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL citapress.org/#credits in the address bar. The page itself has a white background with black text. At the top left is the word "cita:" in blue. To its right are links for "About," "Books," "Collaborate," "News," and "Contact." Below this, under the heading "Credits," is the text: "This project is a collaborative effort of love made possible by the generosity of many direct and indirect contributors." Under the heading "Foreword writers:" is a list of five names with their titles and institutions. Under the heading "Cover designers:" is a list of one name.

cita:

[About](#) [Books](#) [Collaborate](#) [News](#) [Contact](#)

Credits: This project is a collaborative effort of love made possible by the generosity of many direct and indirect contributors:

Foreword writers:

- Catherine J. Golden, PhD - Professor of English and The Tisch Chair in Arts and Letters, Skidmore College
- Heather Ostman, PhD - President, Kate Chopin International Society - Professor of English, Humanities Institute Director, Westchester Community College
- Bonnie Hurd Smith - President, Judith Sargent Murray Society
- Carol MacKay, PhD - University Distinguished Teaching Professor, The University of Texas at Austin

Cover designers:

- Laura Savina, Italian illustrator and tap dance student

Figure 10: Cita's credits page

BRAND: NAMING, TYPOGRAPHY, AND COLOR

“*Cita*” is the Spanish word for “date”, “appointment” and “quotation.” It is also a feminine diminutive suffix in Spanish. For example, *calle* means *street*; *callecita* means *little street*. *Mujer* means *woman*; *mujercita* means *little woman*. I felt this play on words was appropriate not only because I wanted to call attention to—or cite—the works of female authors, but also because my goal was to curate a small, focused collection of works, rather than a huge archive.

Inspired by nineteenth-century type design, I selected a contemporary sharp serif display typeface as the main typeface for Cita. *Bluu Next*’s playful shapes allows users to connect the aesthetic to the past, while its highly vivid, almost neon colors, give it a contemporary look.



Figure 11: Bluu, specimen study – Open Foundry. Design: Jean-Baptiste Morizot



Figure 12: Bitter, specimen study – Google Fonts. Design: Sol Matas, from Huerta Tipográfica

For printed books it is commonly accepted that the most readable typefaces are serif fonts (Lupton, 2011). For the running text of the books, in both print and web, I have selected a contemporary slab serif specially designed for reading on-screen: *Bitter*, distributed by Google Fonts under an Open Font License. This balanced text weight serif also happens to have a quality that most of the commercially used typefaces lack (Morley, 2016): it is designed by a woman, Sol Matas.

tutor. Many years later, she wrote to Winthrop, "I have, through life, mourned the want of early instruction."^{*}

Judith Sargent Murray was also a passionate Universalist—long before she married John Murray, the first Universalist preacher in America—and her faith in "God's plan" and "the next world" sustained her. A core tenet of Universalism was equality. Any obstacle that stood in the way of equality was, in Judith's mind, not part of God's plan.

Judith had first learned about Universalism from her father, Winthrop Sargent, a wealthy merchant from Gloucester, Massachusetts. She was among the courageous group of Universalists that faced expulsion from the established church and legal threats. In 1779, she added her signature to the Articles of Association to establish the first Universalist church in America. Surrounded by courageous people and enlightened ideas, it is no surprise that Judith began writing about equality in 1779. She first published her ideas (privately, not publicly) in a Universalist catechism she wrote for children in 1782.

In 1790, when Judith submitted "On the Equality of the Sexes" to the editors of the *Massachusetts Magazine*, they were already familiar with her work. Following the birth of her stillborn son, Judith had sent them her poem "Lines Occasioned by the Death of an Infant," among others. The editors would also have read Judith's first public essay, written for the

Gentleman and Lady's Town & Country Magazine in 1784. In "Desultory Thoughts upon the Utility of Encouraging a Degree of Self-Complacency, especially in Female Bosoms," Judith urged parents to respect their daughters as "rational beings," to educate them well, and teach them to "reverence themselves" for their "mental abilities."

Almost six years passed between "Desultory Thoughts..." and "On the Equality..." due to a series of life-altering events that derailed Judith's potential literary career. She had already lived through a war and the transformation of her colonial world into an optimistic new nation. After the war, in 1786, her first husband, John Stevens, escaped to the West Indies to avoid debtor's prison. He died there a year later, plunging Judith into widowhood, poverty, and depression. She married John Murray in 1788, but then endured the birth and death of their stillborn son in 1789.

By 1790, Judith had every right to be exhausted creatively. But along with her Universalist faith, writing sustained her and she completed her essay on equality. Her style was witty and provoking, playful and stern. She demonstrated an impressive knowledge of scripture, history, and contemporary thought. And she was fearless.

It is unclear how "On the Equality of the Sexes" was received by readers of the *Massachusetts Magazine*, but its editors invited Judith to continue submitting

Figure 13: Interior of Cita's edition of Judith Sargent Murray's *On the Equality of the Sexes*, set in Sol Matas's typeface *Bitter*

Colors are one of the main day-to-day gendered categories humans deal with from a young age. Traditionally, pinks and purples are stereotypically "feminine" colors, as are low-contrast, delicate pastels. Cita does not embrace these colors; its brand uses bright yellow and blue, because it rejects color stereotypes and is also not targeted exclusively towards female readers (fig. 14). The bold and vivid palette of colors that cover designers are given to work with includes a range from blue and a bright magenta, to black (fig. 15).

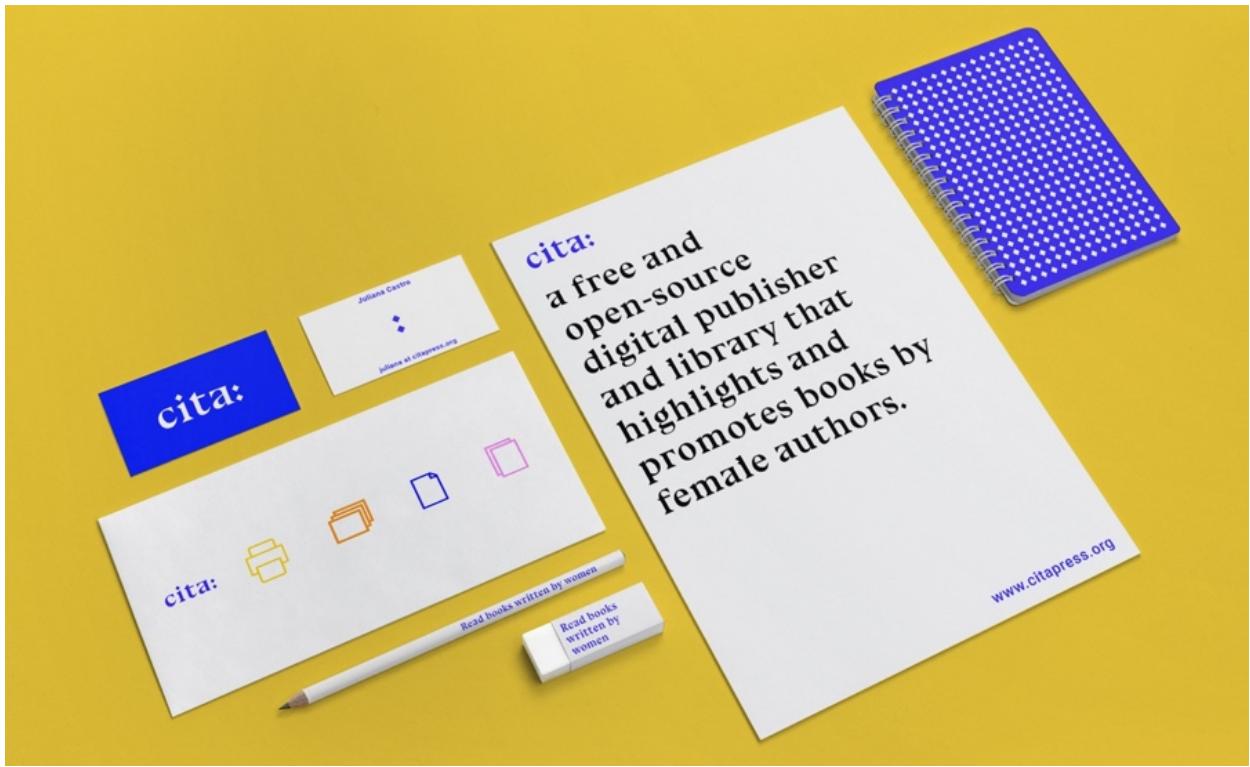


Figure 14: Cita's visual identity



Figure 15: Covers of Cita’s books, created by six designers from four different continents

USER-INTERFACE DESIGN

As noted above, existing public-domain internet archives often have unfriendly UI/UX design. Most non-profit archives invest the bulk of their time and effort in digitizing books, even though their platforms are slow, their search engines are not robust, their content hierarchy is inconsistent, and/or their sites’ aesthetics are poor. Cita’s point of distinction will be not only its more focused content domain, but also its superior interface.

I decided to maintain a mainly copy-based brand, that uses dynamic text sizes and engaging typography to maintain users’ attention.



Figure 16: Cita's website in mobile

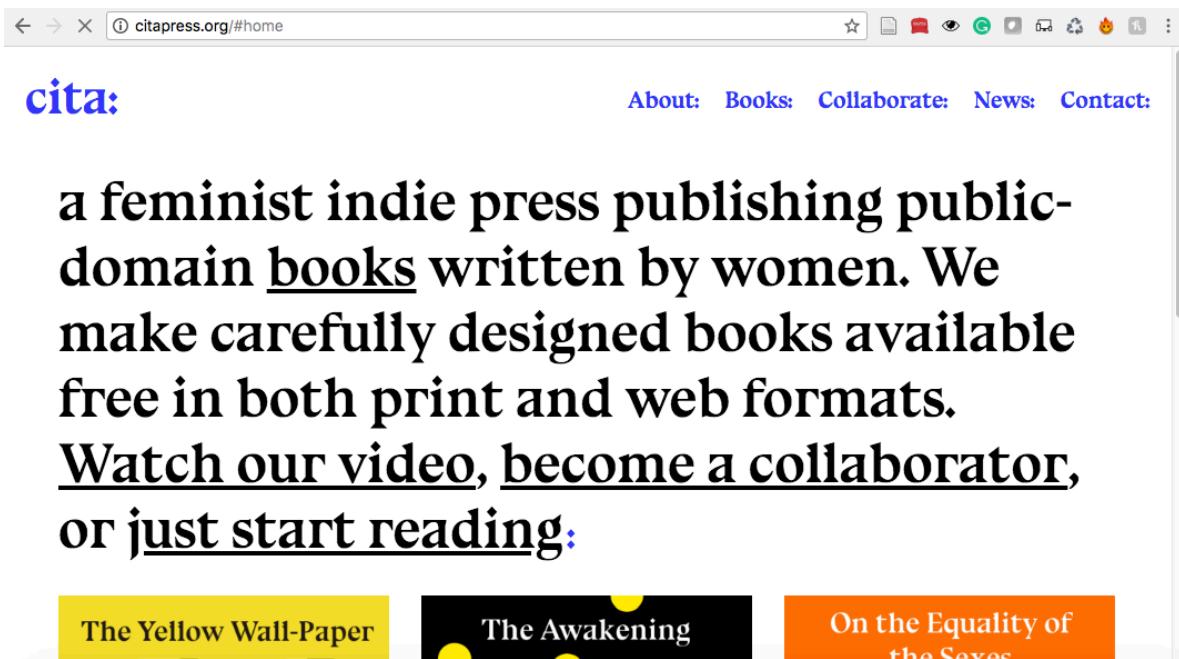


Figure 17: Cita's website on desktop

In order to make the website easy to navigate, citapress.org's navigation is circular, meaning from every page it's possible to arrive at any of the others, most of the times in one or two clicks, or through just one if using the menu. This system encourages discovery and helps people avoid getting "lost" on or frustrated with the interface.

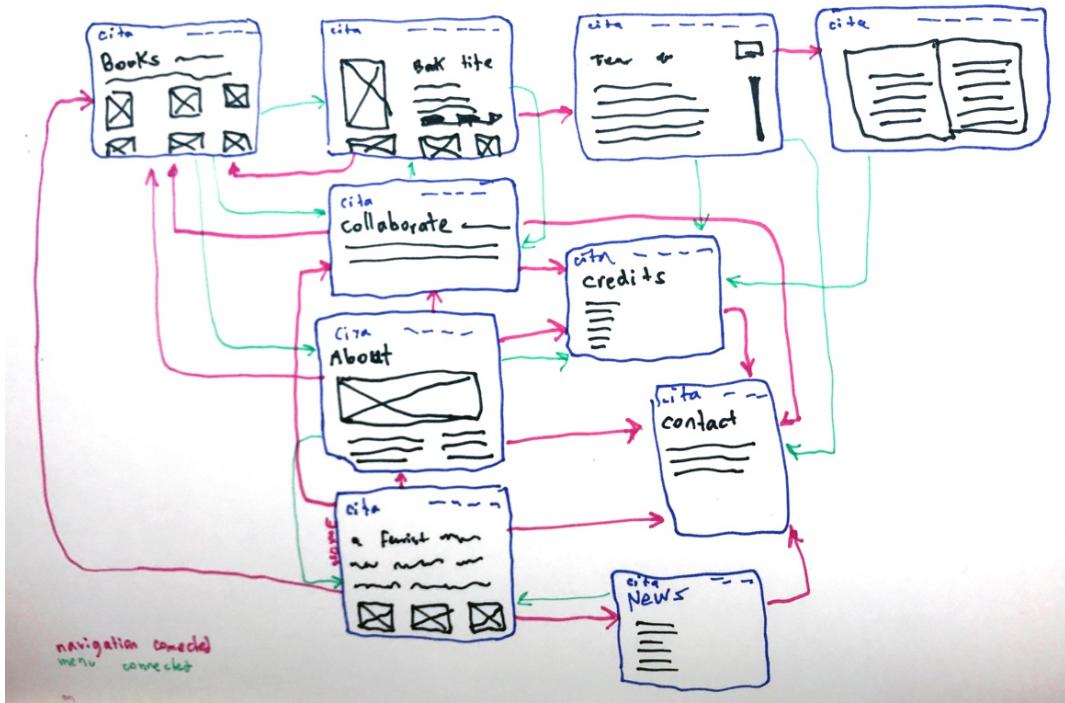


Figure 18: First sketches for Cita's circular navigation – wireframes

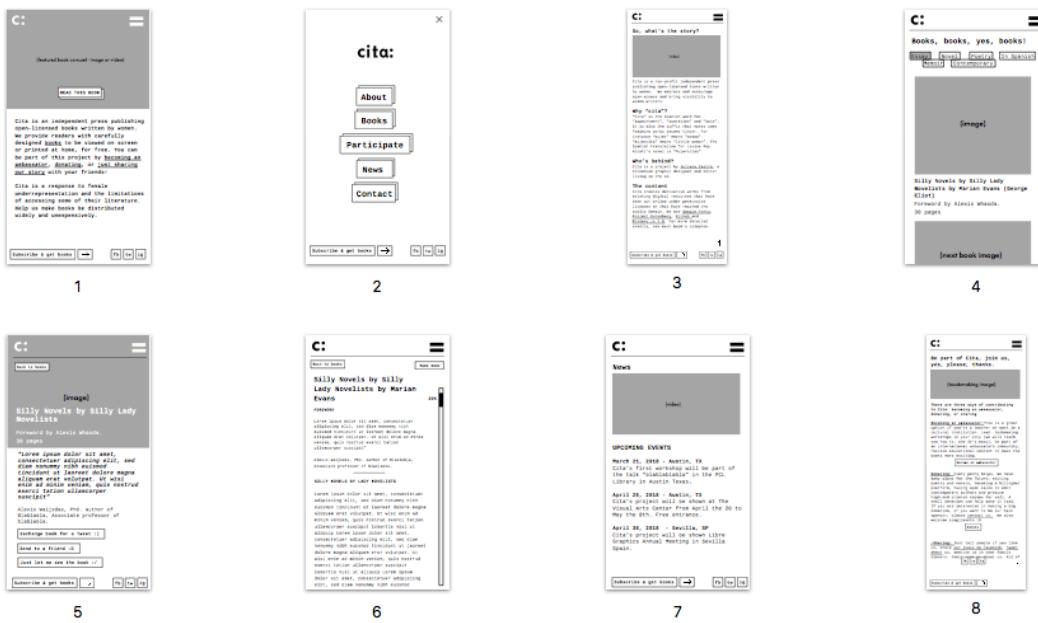


Figure 19: Digital sketches for Cita's mobile circular navigation – wireframes



Figure 20: Exhibition at the Visual Arts Center. Photo: Sandy Carson

OPENNESS

Open design changes relationships among who creates, uses and looks after things (Thackara, 2011). Cita is a project built upon existing material and with the help of others who believe in the importance of collective inquiry and building shared knowledge.

In order to extend the possibilities of accessibility and collaboration, Cita makes use of the Internet, the best contemporary medium for the democratization of culture (Lessing, 2004). While reforming the copyright system is a task that involves changing how capitalism works for creative endeavors, understanding new opportunities for sharing, licensing and using existing contents, can help bring up to date how we distribute, use, create and learn about design culture in the 21st century.

This ambitious project is possible thanks to the trust and the help of generous individuals who believe in open-access to culture. Writers, scholars and designers have come together and joined Cita, believing that the editions may encourage more readers to start these books, or get more people engaged with open-access.

Cita targets librarians and educators to be the main replicators of the books. Libraries, reading groups, and high school classes, are small communities in which collective bookmaking can easily happen, and not only multiply engagement in a school or a cultural institution, but extend the benefits of crafting in a short and entertaining activity.

There are many advantages to sharing an edition while reading a book as a group. However, mainly because of socioeconomic barriers, this rarely happens; and students or participants usually access different qualities of editions, which makes citing, and collective discussing more complicated.



Figure 21: Cita's bookmaking workshop at the Perry Castañeda Library in March 2018.
Photo: Colleen Lyon

Conclusion

Cita is an open-access digital library of books written by women. By creating this resource, I aim to celebrate and make accessible the work of female writers, and inspire people to explore open publishing formats. In the future, I plan to extend Cita's reach as an active open-source editing platform that is committed to intersectionality and that welcomes diverse voices and backgrounds by republishing new works, especially in Spanish, including those of living authors who are willing to open-license their works.

As is the case with most successful open-source projects, Cita needs user-contributor engagement in order to grow. The existing collaborative community is likely to extend their work towards creating new material, and potential new contributors will be encouraged to join in at different levels of the book-creating process, including cleaning texts, reformatting HTML, designing covers, laying out texts, marketing the site, etc. I plan to apply for small grants that can cover certain parts of the book making process, such as formatting and free distribution of printed copies. But Cita's success will ultimately rely on the efforts of those who, like me, are interested in celebrating and making women's art and literature more accessible.

The reasons that led me to publish exclusively feminist texts are both personal and political. As a woman from a small city in a third world country, I have been able to access most of my privileges thanks to my education, and therefore, through reading. At the National University of Colombia, my undergraduate *alma mater* and the most important higher education institution in my country, women weren't allowed as students until 1936. In the time in which Cita's authors were published, women in similar conditions to mine wouldn't have had the same opportunities that I have had. Over the course of the twentieth century, feminism has dramatically changed the conditions of many women's lives in the

western hemisphere, especially as regards women's access to education. For a pacifist movement, feminism has been a remarkably successful revolution. My personal experience is a testament to the efficacy of feminism. I aim to honor this privilege by acknowledging that there is still a lot that art and design can contribute to the cause.

I was 16 when I decided to study graphic design because I loved books and had recently fallen in love with the Internet. Cita is at the core of what I have focused on during my educational path, since I was a freshman in college to a graduating MFA student, and I am still learning about the infinite things that typography, book design and Internet-based content entail. I have now understood that one of the design paths I find the most exciting is one that extends knowledge to others and invites others to collaborate.

Cita accomplishes something that existing online archives and publishers do not: it showcases a focused, curated set of texts by women, a traditionally under-represented group in both publishing and technology; it distributes these public-domain works for free via an appealing and easy-to-navigate website; and it provides these texts in both on-screen *and* print-on-demand formats. Moreover, it showcases and prominently credits open-licensed scholarship and designs by women who contribute their labor to the project. In short, Cita does a combination of things that no one else in the publishing industry is doing.

References

Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon : Art + Feminism. (2018). Retrieved April 24, 2018,

from <http://www.artandfeminism.org/>

BBC - Future - Are paper books really disappearing? (n.d.). Retrieved August 12, 2017, from

<http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20160124-are-paper-books-really-disappearing/>

Beneschott, B. (2017) Women in Open Source | Toptal. Retrieved April 24, 2018, from

<https://www.toptal.com/open-source/is-open-source-open-to-women>

Bloomsbury.com. (n.d.). Bloomsbury - Open Access. Retrieved April 24, 2018, from

<https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/academic/open-access/>

Colby, L. (2017) Women Are Underrepresented in the High-Tech Industry Globally -

Bloomberg. Retrieved from <https://www.bloomberg.com/quicktake/women-are-underrepresented-in-the-high-tech-industry-globally>

Ellis-Petersen, H. (2015, April 7). Male writers continue to dominate literary criticism, Vida

study finds. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from

<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/apr/07/male-writers-continue-dominate-literary-criticism-vida-study-finds>

Fergus, J., & Wood, J. L. (1991). *Jane Austen: A Literary Life* (Edición: 1991). Hounds mills,

Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Graber, C. B., & Nenova, M. B. (2008). *Intellectual Property and Traditional Cultural*

Expressions in a Digital Environment. Edward Elgar Publishing.

- Hom, M. (2016) Why Humans Prefer Print Books | SciTech Connect. (n.d.). Retrieved August 30, 2017, from <http://scitechconnect.elsevier.com/why-humans-prefer-print-books>
- Lessig, L. (2005). *Free Culture: The Nature and Future of Creativity* (Reprint edition). New York, NY: Penguin Books.
- Lessig, L. (2009). *Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy* (8/30/09 edition). New York, NY: Penguin Books.
- Lupton, E. J. (2005) *D.I.Y.: Design It Yourself (Design Handbooks)*: New York: Princeton Architectural Press
- Lupton, E. (2008) *Indie Publishing: How to Design and Publish Your Own Book*: New York: Princeton Architectural Press; Edition: 1
- Lupton, E. (2010). *Thinking with Type, 2nd revised and expanded edition: A Critical Guide for Designers, Writers, Editors, & Students* (2 Rev Exp edition). New York: Princeton Architectural Press.
- Lynch, C. (2002). Digital Collections, Digital Libraries and the Digitization of Cultural Heritage Information. *First Monday*, 7(5). Retrieved from <http://www.firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/949>
- Mandell, L. (2015). *Breaking the Book: Print Humanities in the Digital Age* (1 edition). Wiley-Blackwell.
- New Report Details the Incredible Growth of Creative Commons. (2015). Retrieved April 24, 2018, from <https://www.shareable.net/blog/new-report-details-the-incredible-growth-of-creative-commons>

Ramrattan, L., & Szenberg, M. (2015). *Revolutions in Book Publishing: The Effects of Digital Innovation on the Industry*. Springer.

Rothfeld, B. (2015) Why Gender Equality in Literature Isn't as Simple as 50/50. Hyperallergic Retrieved April 24, 2018, from <https://hyperallergic.com/202322/why-gender-equality-in-literature-isnt-as-simple-as-5050/>

Russ, J. (2005). *How to Suppress Women's Writing* (Edition: Eight paperback printing). Austin: University of Texas Press.

Thackara, J. (2011) Into the Open – Open Design Now Retrieved from
<http://opendesignnow.org/index.html%3Fp=403.html>

The Feminist Bookstore Movement. (n.d.). Retrieved August 3, 2017, from
www.dukeupress.edu/the-feminist-bookstore-movement

The Overwhelming Gender Bias in “New York Times” Book Reviews - Pacific Standard. (2017). Retrieved April 24, 2018, from <https://psmag.com/social-justice/gender-bias-in-book-reviews>

The 2016 VIDA Count. (2017, October 17). Retrieved May 1, 2018, from
<http://www.vidaweb.org/the-2016-vida-count/>

The Women Redressing the Gender Imbalance in Typography. (2016, September 28). Retrieved April 24, 2018, from <https://eyeondesign.aiga.org/the-women-readdressing-the-gender-imbalance-in-typography/>

Vaidhyanathan, S. (2001). *Copyrights and Copywrongs: The Rise of Intellectual Property and how it Threatens Creativity*. NYU Press.

Woolf, V. (2012). *A Room of One's Own* (Edition: 3.5.2012). Martino Fine Books.