HYPER READINGS

Hyper readings - A peer to peer distributed and archival approach to reading lists.

<> Reading Lists

Before we get into the details about what a Hyper Reading List would be lets discuss normal reading lists.

> Common understanding

So, what is a reading list?

This is easy right. It is just a list of things to read.

For example:

- A formal collection of texts (eg. The State Library's collections)
  [image: state library website]

- Texts associated with a university course syllabus
  [image: Curtin library science syllabus]

- Specialist Bibliography (eg. contemporary poetry in Marrickville)

- Best book lists (eg. Top 100 Australian Short Fiction)

    [image: https://openlibrary.org/people/Fortitudine/lists/OL115431L/Savoir_Vivre]

- Informal collection of personal reading
- [image: https://jhand.space/books/]
- Even a book itself (as a collection of references)

    [image: the references at the back of a book]

This is the conventional way of thinking about reading lists. However, what we are proposing is a conceptual reframing.

> Conceptual reframing

We think a reading list is more than just a list of texts handed out to students at the beginning of a semester. It is more than the Sydney Morning Herald's Best books of whenever type thing.

Reading lists are aesthetic objects that at once organise and, importantly, also produce knowledge. They are paths in, through, and between collections of things. We share what we read, what we want to read and what we think other people should read. This sharing becomes a form of peer to peer education, and the propagation of informal and personal canons. Reading lists in this sense become a kind of writing - a writing of reading.

But before we get to deep.

> Why even talk about reading lists

Basically, We have been observing recently that the role of reading lists are shifting. People are writing original reading lists in response to charged political moments.

For example "Your Baltimore Syllabus"
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1B_oyOyu_tAwOVq5MY1oJL3orN6ps04O82JxWxnkGpho/preview#

Which "*Includes readings as reminders from Ferguson, context on the city and history of Baltimore, on "riots" and protest, on the Bigger Picture, movies, books, and news/memes/videos from Baltimore.*"

- Women and gender non-conforming people writing about tech
- https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Qx8JDqfuXoHwk4_1PZYWrZu3mmCsV_05Fe09AtJ9ozw/edit

In reaction to the Los Angeles Review of Books' latest digital edition, which includes 14 chapters, only one of which was written by a woman.

- The Marrickville School of Economics

- http://marrickvilleschoolofeconomics.tumblr.com/springsession2016
- Women Write Architecture
  https://womenwritearchitecture.wordpress.com/
- Modern/Colonial Middle East Science Bibliography
- https://docs.google.com/document/d/14TvuVWrFVNHyKUVt-01afbpeAcK5f1KB2tgKvR-Fysk/edit

Reading lists are becoming almost like manifestos, or provocations for the future.

In this sense reading lists are being used as tools for contesting established patterns in public thinking, but also importantly for publicly making sense of our current times, placing them in context, and in so doing also producing new and novel connections between different systems of knowledge.

The kind of knowledge that reading lists facilitate is not necessarily teleological in nature. Rather it is like the sinew and nerves in the production of knowledge, facilitating cross-referencing and discovery of connections between material. In the sea of abundance - a reading list can be a critical way of navigating from the known to the unknown.

<> Hyper Reading lists

It is with this a backdrop to our work that we started to sketch HyperReadings.

We are thinking about HyperReadings as infrastructure. An infrastructure for the generation and sharing of reading lists.

Just to be clear upfront - when you hear the word reading. What I mean is anything that can be read. In our thinking a reading list may also contain images, video, sound - any digital or non-digital artefact.

> **Key features:**

Just for a moment let's talk about what this infrastructure will consist of.

- HyperReadings is essentially a list of items.
- Items are just metadata (author, title, description)
- Items contain links to where to find content (digital or otherwise)

[image: illustration of concept]

- An Item may point to multiple sources for discovering (SLNSW, Trove, DAT public key, internet archive, online publications)

[image: illustration of concept]

- Reading lists can be updated over time by the creator
- They retain an archive of all changes

[image: illustration of concept]

- Reading lists will be decentralised and peer to peer distributed

[image: what does this look like]

So how do people engage with Reading Lists

Keep in mind this is super abstract, but it will all be made accessible through a simple web interface. So hopefully in the end most users will interface with hyper readings through an interface not too dissimilar to something like openlibrary.org or the libraries own discovery layer.

[image: openlibrary.org]

But for now let's bear with the abstract.

- A reader can access a reading list if they have access to the key

[image: a key]

- A reader can access a reading list if they have access to the key
- Readers can access and "subscribe" to multiple reading lists. Meaning that they will receive any future changes that the creator/s make.
- By "subscribing" to a reading list, a reader also helps distribute the reading list, acting as redundancy.

[image: network of users]

- A reader can 'fork' an existing reading list and make changes to it. (to use a term programmers would be familiar with)

[image: illustration of forking]

- A reader can suggest additions to existing lists (readings or sources)

[image: illustration of pull request]

Through these features HyperReadings, openly encourages a culture of borrowing and attribution, where innovations can be more easily identified and recognised. It also sets the stage for debates about inclusion and exclusion, which as we all know is a much bigger debate about what our values are. And it creates a space for play and experimentation, through speculative, alternative versions, and unlikely variations.

A key part of this fellowship will obviously be focused on iterating over a number of potential designs for how to expose hyper readings to a nontechnical audience.

> infrastructure and audiences

Let's talk a bit more about audience, which means also talking about how we think about infrastructure.

To distort Raganathan's concept of Infinite Hospitality - just a little bit - we are interested in how to construct infrastructure that is infinitely hospitable. Meaning infrastructure that accommodates the needs and desires of new users/audiences/communities and allows them to enter and contort the platform to their own uses.

We don't see infrastructure as aimed at a singular specific group, but that in its affordances infrastructure facilitates the generation of spaces where people can be. I guess I am thinking of the poet Jean Paul who once wrote that books are thick letters to friends. Books as infrastructure enable authors to find their friends. This is how we ideally see Hyper Readings working.

That said, an essential part of our project will be about inviting contributions. From library staff, and our own personal networks of community activists, artists, poets, journalists and historians. We will learn how Hyper Readings works by developing lists with others. Some of the lists will be purpose-built to address socio-political circumstances, like offshore detention, real estate, land rights, language preservation, and the exploitation of natural resources.

Our reading lists will become a tool for the activation of the state library's collections. With the research for this, itself, becoming its own reading list.

We are keen to explore how reading lists could be integrated into events at the library too. For instance, when a visiting scholar presents a public talk - the referenced texts and supporting material could be added to a reading list and made public. Overtime this list would become a history of references and give an image of the concerns that have held the attention of the library and its community. In time it will be possible to even visualise the development of a reading list, seeing its evolution, and perhaps help researchers understand the heuristics of citations.

But I guess this also touches on one of your key questions. About which collection we want to work with.

> Collections

Our project would not address a singular collection, but rather would be situated across collections.

As stated earlier we are specifically interested in building a series of reading lists in collaboration with staff here. Using your expertise to pull out connections between material, and trace idiosyncratic and personal relationships between content.

These reading lists may comprise a single collection, however we are more interested in how reading lists could become a way of building connections between the library's special collections and the rest of the catalogue, and even texts outside the library.

As part of this project we will employ a research methodology, interviewing the staff in order to discover and collate material to expose through the structure of reading lists.
As such these reading lists will then act as both a portrait of the organisation and a model for how HyperReadings can be used by others.

<> A contextual aside about methodology

This would not be our first time working within cultural institutions as artists. I have personally been developing this type of methodology for a number of years, over a number of research residencies, and have a strong interest in the role of artists within organisations.

BF talk to these points
- State records office of WA - working with their collection
        For this I collaborated with sohan ariel hayes, an artist concerned with expanded cinema, to construct a work which exposed the archives collection. During this time we developed a conversational methodology, where we interviewed the staff of the archive and used there understanding

of the collection in order to grapple with the abundance.

- Museum of contemporary art sydney

In 2013 I was resident at the MCA for 6 months. I adopted a similar approach their, but also drew upon the work of the Artist Placement Group, Barbara Steveni and John Latham to inform the relationship between myself and the organisation.

Founded in 1966, APG was an artist-run organisation seeking to refocus art outside the gallery, predominantly through attaching an artist in a business or governmental context.

There manifesto was particularly pertinent for me at that time, and perhaps points 5 and 6 would also be applicable to how Sean and I could integrate into the state library.

SD talk around

THE PUBLIC SCHOOL is a school with no curriculum. At the moment, it operates as follows: first, classes are proposed by the public (I want to learn this or I want to teach this); then, people have the opportunity to sign up for the classes (I also want to learn that); finally, when enough people

have expressed interest, the school finds a teacher and offers the class to those who signed up.

THE PUBLIC SCHOOL is not accredited, it does not give out degrees, and it has no affiliation with the public school system. It is a framework that supports autodidactic activities, operating under the assumption that everything is in everything.

Initiated by Telic Arts Exchange in Los Angeles in 2008. Also exists in Brussels (set up by Komplot in Nadine), Helsinki, Los Angeles, New York City (at Common Room), Paris (at Bétonsalon), Philadelphia, San Juan.

Sean did want me to say, that although TPS was accessible to anyone but it certainly wasn't for everyone. It worked with and across some pretty esoteric, marginal, political people, groups, and institutions. This wasn't solved through code, but through the long-term social performance of the project. So, working with staff, with particular communities, or around specific topics are seeds because they either grow into something, or they establish a precedent that is then copied again and again. [But in this phrasing, the "initial conditions" are very important and it would help to be clear about what initial conditions we'll set up - another example from TPS was that our first call out for proposals was to 100 artists that we had worked with over the years; they created the "seed"]

 > **DAT Library**

No to return back to the concrete. Let's talk about pragmatics.

Modeled after the best parts of Git, BitTorrent, and the internet, the Dat Protocol is a peer-to-peer protocol for syncing files and data across distributed networks.

<> Pragmatics

So how will we actually make hyper readings and how will we approach the fellowship?

> Technology

Firstly technology.

Basically Hyperreadings will be made possible through the use of the DAT protocol.

Modeled after the best parts of Git, BitTorrent, and the internet, the Dat Protocol is a peer-to-peer protocol for syncing files and data across distributed networks.

> Timeline

We should probably also discuss timelines.

We are proposing a series of four two-week residencies at the State Library, with the intention of continuously developing the software for HyperReadings.

November: *Initial research*

- Establish a website for publicly documenting progress.
- Getting to know the people and infrastructure of the DXLab.
- Begin interviewing staff, including librarians and digitization staff
- Understand the library's technology stack and expertise available to the project.
- Software development of HyperReadings tool is ongoing

January: *Initial lists*

- By this point, we have a working version of the HyperReadings tool
- Continue building on relationships with staff
- Explore the collections through their insight and guidance to create our own lists to serve as examples and help people imagine the trajectory of the project.
- Begin developing a few small reading lists based on staff interviews

It's worth mentioning that although a working prototype will be completed by January. We will continue to iteratively development the software throughout the entire time. Incorporating the direct feedback and ideas arising from interviews, initial lists, and the general experience of time spent within the library itself.

April: *Opening up the research*

- Host a discussion around one of the initial reading lists. That discussion will inform the first "fork" of a reading list into a new, modified reading list.
- Host a small tour of the Indigenous Language Collection and the First Fleet collections with the aim of creating reading lists
- Invite our peers in the artistic and academic communities to build, contribute and share their own reading lists
- Use the feedback of the events and selected users to further refine features that are key to people's use of reading lists

May: *Public release*

- Work with staff to move towards a public release of HyperReadings collections
- Finalisation of public outcome, a website for aggregating and exhibiting the reading lists on the SLNSW website, or linked from it.
- Hold a public launch with a workshop on how to build reading lists
- Possible print publication of the lists produced during the residencies

> What support

Both of us are pretty savvy programmers - with a lot of technical knowledge between us. So, as such the only tech support that we would be seeking is related specifically to the protocols and standards that you employ here at the state library. It would be ideal to make our hyper reading lists compatible with already existing interfaces and standards so as to facilitate adoption. We would love to learn from you.

Besides that knowledge support our project would also require material support in terms of ongoing server space. Technically this may require hole-punching through any firewalls in order to allow for the DAT protocol to be used. The internet archive has recently opened up ports specifically for DAT archives, so hopefully this will not be too difficult to navigate.

We would also be open to collaborating closely with the DXLab in the development of possible interfaces for how to best integrate reading lists into the state libraries own discovery layer.

Conclude