HYBRID PUBLISHING LAB

Scholarly Communication in the Digital Age

» leuphana.de/hybrid-publishing
In developing and testing open source software solutions and business models in real-world settings, teams in the sub-projects Hybrid Publishing Consortium, meson press, HyperImage and Further Education and Lifelong Learning pursue a practical research approach that promotes technological and economical innovations in the field of scientific digital publishing. Central to the Lab’s projects is the idea of Open Access to education, academic knowledge and research reinforced by curiosity about new business models in a disruptive digital environment.

In addition to conducting basic research on the potential and challenges of a contemporary and open scholarly communication environment, the members of the Hybrid Publishing Lab apply their findings in projects such as developing business models for Open Access monograph publishing, technologies for single source publishing, research tools for image-based sciences and new approaches to lifelong learning. The following pages give you a broad overview of the challenges we tackle and the projects we pursue in the Hybrid Publishing Lab.
Anonymous "post-card confessions" were collected during the Post-Digital Scholar Conference in Lüneburg and uploaded to the twittersphere. Open Access Activism DARKNETS + GRAY ZONES: REMAKING OPEN ACCESS

Opening the Black Box of Academic Knowledge

There is a fine line between Open Access and piracy. The concept of Open Access refers to an unrestricted online access to scholarly research, yet is closely related and often confused with the ideals of open and free knowledge, which are at the same time principles of currently illegal shadow libraries. Copyright laws challenge both activists for Open Access as well as proponents of free knowledge, thus compelling these movements to continue to work with/against/around these opposing forces.

Research through Design

Our research critically explores the developing infrastructure and social practices within the Open Access Movement and highlights experimental practices in the gray zone between piracy and Open Access. There are various social movements with often opposing political agendas: On the one hand, top-down approaches to the academic publishing systems, lobbying and advocating for Open Access and on the other hand, bottom-up initiatives that grew from the open source software movements with often a more radical perception of Open Access. We are investigating emergent infrastructure ecologies around Open Access advocacy and activism, particularly by focusing on the creators of Open Source tools. The project applies design research methods to examine spaces of contradiction (gray zones) and potential solutions for the legal and institutional challenges Open Access is facing. Our first design intervention was the Rogue Scholar Confession Booth allowing scholars to anonymously share their stories and frustrations about the academic publishing system. "Why We ‘AAAAARG’" visualizes a corpus of user comments associated with this popular shadow library. The open here platform will showcase the group’s research process, which includes projects, multi-media stories and interviews that focus on the creative appropriation of technology, data and platforms in open(ing) access to Open Access. Overarching themes include:

— shadow libraries: free libraries built on radically open infrastructures
— text sharing networks: informal tools, protocols and systems that facilitate sharing
— off-line networks: mesh networks, DIY networks existing outside the internet, built on open hardware and open source tools

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The "Rogue Scholar Confession Booth" allows scholars to confess their "academic sins" anonymously.
The Hybrid Publishing Consortium (HPC) researches key parts of digital publishing workflow with a low distribution. Moreover, the necessary innovations are too costly for many participants of this sector. Consequently, there is a substantial need for affordable solutions to tap the full potential of digital publishing and distribution in the MLA sector. Our research approach is what is known as Design Research, which involves knowledge production through the process of making. This comprises both the development of concrete technology for digital publishing and the implementation of case studies. On a technological level, the focus is on speeding up production cycles, introducing new forms of publishing and lowering cost. Our aim is to address the problems of small cultural and academic publishers, in what is known as the Museums, Libraries and Archives sector (MLA), above all the digitization of their workflows and providing their content in various digital output formats respectively for different reading devices. The implementation of these aims is essential, since, especially in the MLA sector, an endless stream of great publications continues to stay in limited print runs. The development of an Open Access and open license software infrastructure for multi-format conversion and single source publishing, which is referred to as A-machine, is the foundation. The case studies are implemented as a series of publishing prototypes on the basis of this software. Exemplary for this is the project Merve Remix, which compiles 150 digitized titles of Merve Verlag's backlist and makes excerpts of these accessible online. In cooperation with the Fotomuseum Winterthur, Manifeste! attempts not only to digitize, but also to transfer high-quality museum catalogues into an integrated curatorial digital strategy for museums. Using the example of the archive of media theorist Marshall McLuhan, Traces of McLuhan examines how archive repositories, which contain audio and video material in addition to text, can be edited for digital publications and, thus, allow users a transmedia journey through archives.

Further information: » consortium.io and » a-machine.net
Until now, scientists could annotate and designate image details with words and symbols only. The Web does offer the possibility of tagging details with clickable maps, but that still involves tiresome manual work. Consequently, references to images are often reduced to labeling an image as a whole. HyperImage allows authors to select and highlight image details and set up a hypermedia link per mouse-click in a Web browser. This provides a new way to convey knowledge. For example, art historians can label recurring design elements in separate paintings and link images and image details with each other. The information is clearly organized in a knowledge network and interactively visualized. Interim results and final versions can be compiled at any time into online or offline hypermedia publications. A variety of individually introduced and proven methods and data repositories are brought together in HyperImage in a separately or jointly used research and publication environment.

The software, which is released under an open source license, can be downloaded free of charge from »github.com/HyperImageLeuphana.

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HyperImage can hypertextually link intellectually marked image details (green) with details in the same image or other images, image collections or texts. By marking and linking totally different image details in a project on image publishing of the French Revolution, HyperImage has revealed how symbolics of power were present in comprehensive contexts in printed graphic work around 1789.
meson press

AN OPEN ACCESS PUBLICATION PROJECT BY ACADEMICS FOR ACADEMICS

Whereas the digitization of publishing is already quite advanced in the sciences, it has yet to find its way into the humanities and social sciences. Likewise, little progress has been made there in Open Access publishing. Particularly for the central format of the monograph, which is so vital to these academic areas, no viable business models have been developed yet.

Against the backdrop of these challenges, meson press concentrates on two core objectives:

1. the development of a sustainable and reusable business model for Open Access monographs and
2. the founding of an internationally oriented Open Access publishing house that applies this model and offers media and cultural scholars a tailor-made digital publication infrastructure.

meson press pursues its goals with a concept based on five cornerstones:

1. a high-quality, clear-cut program from the area of media theory, philosophy of technology and networked media with thorough quality assurance, provided in English and German,
2. openness to experimentation and new collaborative methods,
3. strictly hybrid publishing in varied digital formats and with modern print-on-demand technology,
4. book design especially developed for the digital realm,
5. a network-like, open organizational structure.

These elements result in a publishing model that pursues the so-called “golden way” of Open Access and that adheres to the fundamentals of libre Open Access by using liberal Creative Commons licenses. With this consciously "open" design of Open Access, the project wants to contribute to open, digital scholarship and to fully realize the varied potentials of a digital academic publication landscape.

You can find more information about this Open Access publishing project on meson-press.com.

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Further Education:

LIFELONG LEARNING

Educational technologies are rarely featured on the front pages of newspapers. In recent years, however, news media increasingly covered stories about new digital learning environments (e.g., Massive Open Online Courses). To determine the relevance of the new formats for the German and European educational landscapes and their implications far beyond the media hype, the project Further Education and Lifelong Learning investigates the rapidly evolving digital learning environments and contributes to their ongoing development in close cooperation with the business world (e.g., ZEIT Verlag and Cognos AG).

Learning is important not just at school but throughout the entire lifetime; it is the key element in acquiring skills and knowledge. Particularly in a society in which digital transformation is a part of everyday life. Digital media are becoming increasingly socially relevant and are the basis for learning environments. Today many people use the Internet for self-organized education and training. Educational institutions such as schools and universities, however, lag behind in the development and implementation of digital media in pedagogical and didactic approaches. Important aspects in this context are Open Access, open educational resources and open science.

With HybridDocs, an open source prototype for a new learning environment is being developed. It is based on the idea of (re-)structuring educational resources collaboratively in an efficient and clear process. The application helps to convert analog and “raw” educational resources into a hybrid and structured digital format. The application promotes the further utilization and processing of existing publications and educational content and serves as a digital learning environment in which users can easily acquire the content.

The new digital technologies should be understood as an invitation to innovation. In order to develop the results and build on the experience of the Hybrid Publishing Lab when the funding period ends, we are attempting to spin off a consulting service for digital teaching and learning materials from the Further Education sub-project.

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DIALOG WITH LOCAL MEDIA PROFESSIONALS

Promoting the exchange of ideas, facilitating encounters to create new business models as a research project at Leuphana University of Lüneburg’s Innovation-Incubator, the Hybrid Publishing Lab emphasizes the dialogue with local businesses in Lüneburg and the greater area of northern Lower Saxony. Consequently, a Hybrid Publishing Lab representative was part of the jury in the March 2014 “Digital Communication” edition of the Incubator’s contest series “Ideenkraft trifft Wissenschaft” (Ingenuity meets Science) that aims to provide impetus to the local economy. ANALOG, a series of networking events, shares this objective.

As part of this series, the Hybrid Publishing Lab gathered local media professionals in June 2014 for a panel discussion about the effects of digitalization on the local publishing industry. “Digital or Print? The Future of Paper-Based Media” was the topic that Dr. Mercedes Bunz, head of the Hybrid Publishing Lab at the time, discussed with Andreas Jörß, CEO of von Stern’sche printers, Peter Bauer, chief-editor at Weser Kurier media group, Stefanie Thörmer, CEO of the “Alte Jeetzel” bookstore and publishing house and Ulrike Teschke, commercial director of ZEIT publishing group, who also gave a keynote on the subject. The participants agreed that books, newspapers and the like do have a future as long as quality content and an intelligent combination of print and digital presentation are provided. Afterwards, all guests were invited to further discuss and network in a relaxed atmosphere. Events like these contribute to an impetus-generating knowledge transfer between research and practice and thus provide a gain for everyone involved.

If you have any questions concerning research work at the Hybrid Publishing Lab, please don’t hesitate to contact us!

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