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The Promise and Problems of the Visual E-Book: Call for an Alliance between Authors and Librarians

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# The Promise and Problems of the Visual E-Book:

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## Call for an Alliance between Authors and Librarians

Anne Whiston Spirn, *Massachusetts Institute of Technology*

Ann Baird Whiteside, *Harvard University*

**Abstract**—This article explores the state of libraries and authorship in response to the evolving landscape of electronic books. The authors discuss the topic through a conversation about the choice to self-publish an electronic book in the visual arts. Issues such as the primacy of the image as argument for research in design and the visual arts, the availability of e-books to libraries, the influence of publishers on the e-book medium and market, and implications for libraries and collection development are considered.

### INTRODUCTION

Research and scholarship in the visual arts and design fields requires extensive use of images in order to make arguments about theory and practice. However, the cost of publishing the products of such investigations in the form of printed books and articles is quite high, and, despite digital technology, continues to be expensive. Those costs are passed on to consumers: libraries, students, faculty, and other readers.

Anne Whiston Spirn recently produced an original e-book about seeing as a way of knowing and photography as a way of thinking: *The Eye Is a Door: Landscape, Photography, and the Art of Discovery* (Wolfree Press, 2014) (Figure 1). This publication is the result of Anne's desire to find a new way to publish heavily illustrated books, make them rich and useful to scholars, and make them affordable. In October 2010, she attended the symposium *Why Books?* held at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University, and, in 2011, she applied for an internal grant at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) to explore and develop prototypes for richly illustrated e-books. The project was conceived in three parts: creating three prototypes

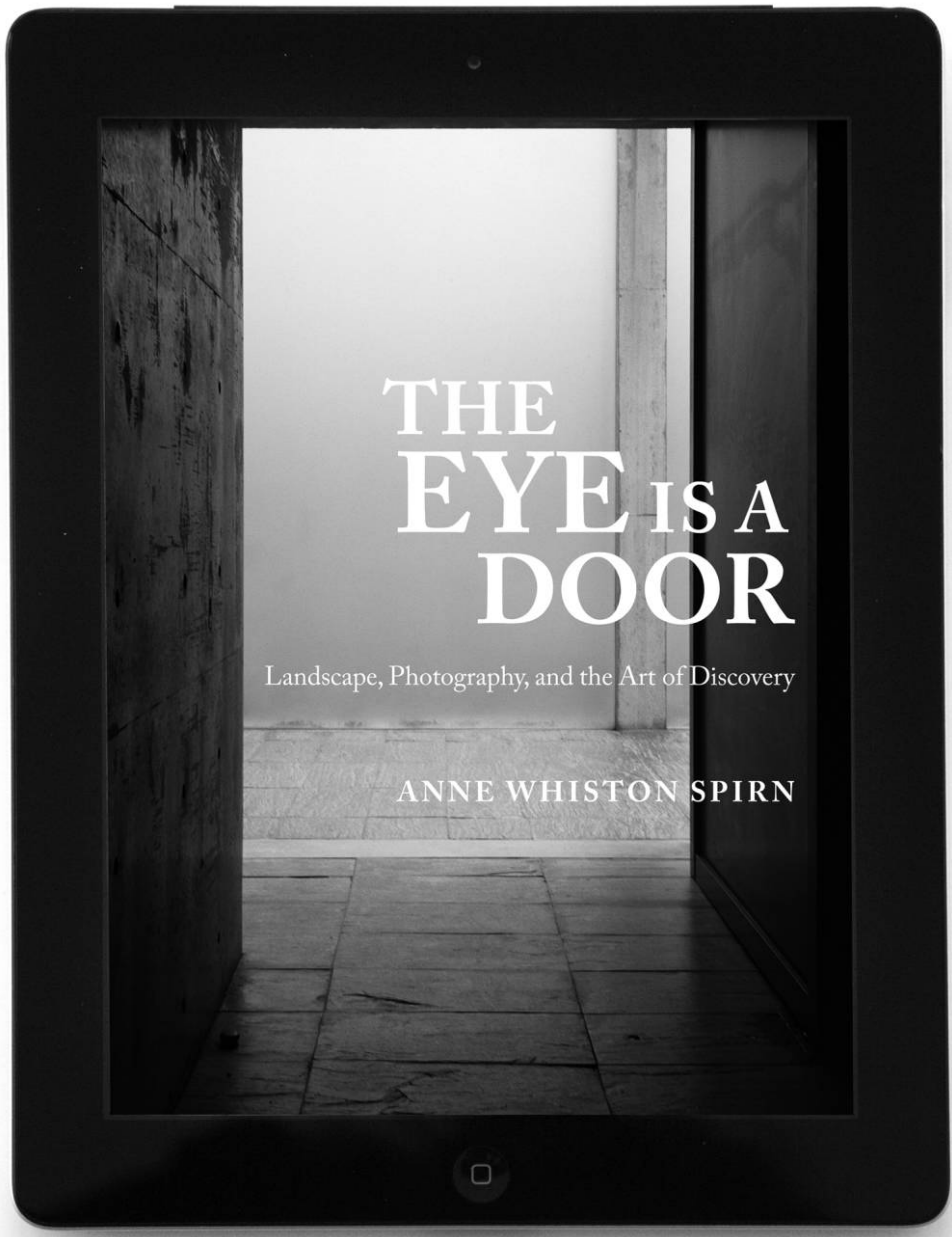
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**Figure 1.** Anne Whiston Spirn, *The Eye Is a Door: Landscape, Photography, and the Art of Discovery* (Wolfree Press, 2014) viewed on an iPad. Please see the online edition of *Art Documentation* for a color version of this image.

for the richly illustrated electronic book; research on the dissemination of electronic books; and producing a guide for other authors. One of Anne's revelations at the *Why Books?* symposium was that she was in a room full of librarians, all discussing books, publishing, and implications for scholarship. It was then she realized that librarians

are key to the future of the book, and that academic publishing needs to realign relationships. Authors and librarians should be partners. Right after that conference, she reached out to Ann Baird Whiteside for advice, which launched a series of discussions about the process of producing e-books and the implications of e-books for research and scholarship. The discussions began by considering the future of the richly illustrated e-book, how one should go about producing such books, and how to get e-books into libraries. Broader conversations then arose about how libraries acquire books, the relationships of publishers with authors and with libraries, the implications of digital publishing for research and scholarship, and the reasons why authors and librarians are allies.

### WHY E-BOOKS IN DESIGN AND THE VISUAL ARTS?

**Ann Baird Whiteside (ABW):** The publishing of electronic books in the visual arts is particularly interesting at this moment from the perspective of art and architecture librarians for several reasons. Despite the fact that the state of development of some e-book readers is not very advanced in capabilities for showing visual content, e-books challenge our perceptions of what book collections are and will become. Librarians in all disciplines are figuring out how to acquire e-books beyond the use of large aggregated packages, and e-books in general are creating a shift in the thinking of librarians because they require different management; they challenge us to think of new ways to manage our collections, and new ways to advertise what we have in our collections. Why did you decide to publish your new book as an e-book?

**Anne Whiston Spirn (AWS):** It all came down to reaching readers. I wanted to control the price for the book so that it would be affordable to a broad audience. Cost is a problem with the richly illustrated book. My students cannot afford to buy most of the books I want them to read because they may cost one hundred dollars or more when first published. Once such books go out of print, the price may climb to hundreds or even thousands of dollars. A library may buy one copy, but if that copy is lost, it is not always replaced, especially if the book's price is too high.<sup>1</sup>

The cost of illustrations is a major barrier to publishing in the visual arts. And yet, books in the visual arts are *about* the visual content. This is a conundrum I have faced in the past, where I have had to limit the number of images in my books, but my new book with its many color photographs posed an economic problem of a different order. In fall 2010, as I was wrestling with these issues, I attended *Why Books?*, a conference held at the Radcliffe Institute about the future of books in a digital age. The first iPad had been released earlier that year, and its high-resolution color screen reproduced gorgeous images. The black-and-white Kindle readers had been available for some time, but they were not image-friendly. The iPad opened up a whole new world of possibilities for the richly illustrated book. That and the conference caused me to rethink how I was going to publish my book.

**ABW:** You have published your previous books with the University of Chicago Press, Yale University Press, and Basic Books. Why did you decide to publish this book yourself?

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1. Since 2010, when I started on this venture, new models have emerged to address issues of price and open access, such as Knowledge Unlatched, which is supported by libraries (<http://www.knowledgeunlatched.org/>).

**AWS:** I did not intend to do so originally. I would have preferred to do both an e-book and a print edition with an established publisher. But when my editor worked out the production costs and what the book would have to sell for, he told me that I would have to contribute a \$20,000 subsidy to help offset the cost of printing the book's many color photographs.

**ABW:** That is a lot of money for an author to spend to publish a book, which is something we do not always think about when the books arrive in the library. The author is personally making big sacrifices for scholarship.

**AWS:** It is a common requirement for books with many color images. And despite that subsidy, my editor estimated that the publisher would set the price at sixty dollars in hardcover and forty to fifty dollars in paperback. At this price, the book would not have reached the wide general audience that my previous books had enjoyed. My students certainly could not afford that price.

Another consideration for me was that publishers' contracts now require authors to grant electronic rights to the publisher, which means that the publisher's right to distribute the book might not expire during the author's lifetime. In 1997, I was able to retain electronic rights to *The Language of Landscape* with Yale University Press, but in 2007, when I signed a contract with the University of Chicago Press for *Daring to Look: Dorothea Lange's Photographs and Reports from the Field*, I was unable to retain e-rights. Although I retained copyright, the contract required that I grant to the publisher "all rights . . . in all media . . . that are now or hereafter available." That means that so long as the book is available in digital form, it is not out of print, and thus the rights will never revert to me. My agent tells me that she now puts a clause in the contract that if the publisher does not exercise the e-rights within a certain number of years, those rights revert to the author. But an individual author may not be able to get that agreement or think about asking for it. Many authors do not even think to retain copyright.

In the past, if a book publisher lost interest in an author's book, if it was not selling enough copies to make it worthwhile to keep the books in the warehouse, then it would let the book go out of print, and the rights would revert to the author (if the author had negotiated an "out-of-print" clause as part of the contract). The author could then take the book to another publisher and publish a new edition. Now all the publisher needs to do is scan the book and make it available in an electronic version, and set whatever price it wants. If the publisher does not want to bring out another edition, the author cannot do another edition.

That brings us back to the price of the book. Many publishers charge the same price for the print and electronic editions, and you have told me that libraries are often charged more for e-books than print books. I understand why they have to charge as much as they do for print books, which are printed on real material and must be transported and stored. There are so many costs associated with the printed book that simply do not apply to the e-book. But publishers are afraid that if the e-price is too low they will not sell the print books, and they have not yet found a new model for e-books that is distinct from the model for print books.

That was the background for my going to the conference at Radcliffe. After the symposium, I started thinking about the advantages e-books afford. If I had to raise

\$20,000 to subsidize print costs and the price of the book was going to be so high, and I could not retain the e-rights, then why not raise the money to publish the book myself? In fact, the e-book cost far less than \$20,000 to produce. I did not want to get into the business of arranging for the copy-editing and design and doing all the promotion and distribution. But it was worth it if it meant that I could retain the rights, explore this new medium, and set a low price for the book. I set the price at \$4.99, which my students assured me that they could afford.

### **E-BOOKS AND RESEARCH IN DESIGN AND THE VISUAL ARTS**

**ABW:** As I listen to you describe how you started down this path, I think about e-books in general, but especially in the visual arts, and I begin thinking about what the e-book means for research and scholarship in the visual arts.

**AWS:** E-books have the potential to open up new flows of ideas. Images are not just illustrations of an idea, they embody ideas. Those who conduct visually based research, whether artists, designers, or scholars, make an argument through visual images—in a single image or a *mélange* or a sequence of images. But, because it is so expensive to print visual images, and because text, in comparison, is so cheap, authors have been hindered from making visual arguments in printed books. Otherwise, the argument might be made almost entirely in images, with captions to help the reader move from one image to another and to follow the line of reasoning.

**ABW:** An interesting example of a description of the visual thinking you describe is one from a Society of Architectural Historians colleague, Dietrich Neumann, in which he described the use of a series of images to show design process over time. At the annual meeting of SAH in April 2008, Neumann presented more than a dozen images and traced the evolution of *Falling Water*, showing that it was central to Frank Lloyd Wright's work as the culmination of earlier work and a turning point for Wright's future work in terms of his use of horizontal and vertical elements (Figure 2, Figure 3). The visual argument made the verbal argument much more accessible.<sup>2</sup>

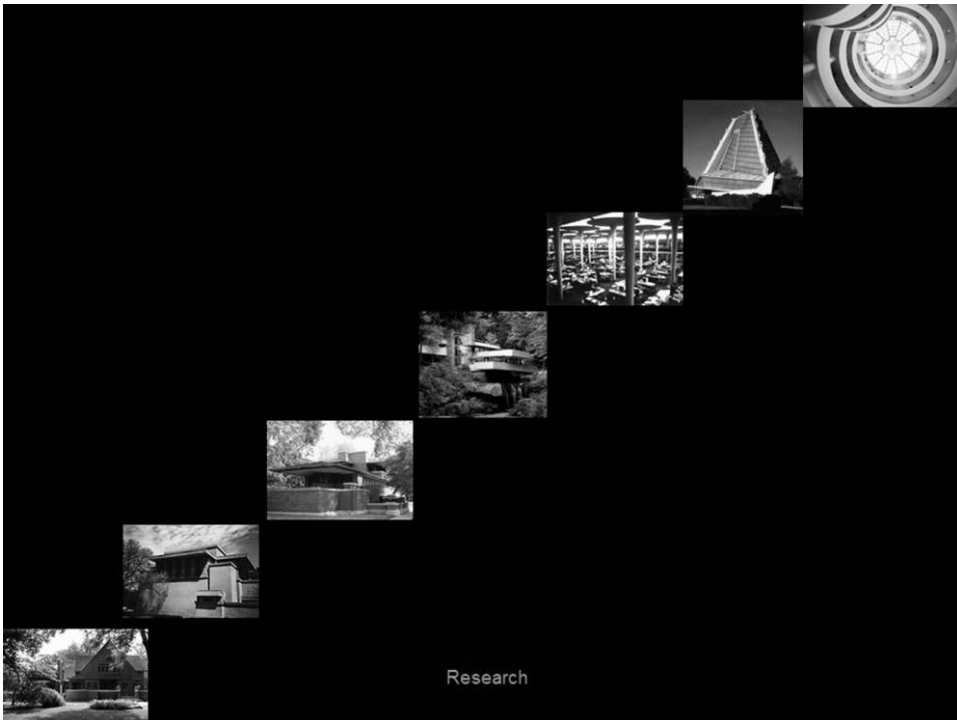
As an illustration of the use of the visual in intellectual arguments, I can see extending this to e-books, and I think that the e-book format allows freedom to use as much visual content as you want.

**AWS:** E-publishing has the potential to transform the field because, theoretically, it will allow an almost unlimited use of images to make and to support intellectual arguments, and the author can include a sequence of images that traces a line of reasoning, instead of just showing the conclusion. And e-books permit the free use of color. Ultimately, I think that readers are going to choose color tablets because they will want to read everything from magazines to books electronically.

**ABW:** That is a freedom available only in publishing electronically. And it is also an opportunity to transform teaching. Someday, for example, color-calibrated e-readers may offer the viewer a virtual experience close to seeing a work in person.

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2. Dietrich Neumann, paper presented at the business meeting, Society of Architectural Historians 62<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting, Cincinnati, Ohio, April 23, 2008.



**Figure 2.** Dietrich Neumann, *Falling Water Series* (2008). Eighth of twelve images. Falling Water is in the center. The three buildings on the lower left predate Falling Water, the three on the upper right are later.

I think that we have an opportunity in e-books to give a different perspective of images as being used to provide intellectual arguments. It allows one to offer a greater context for the argument an author may want to make with different kinds of images.

**AWS:** There are many different kinds of images that could be incorporated into books. An author may, for example, have footnotes that are visual as well as those that are text-based. You might reproduce a page of diagrams from your field notes as a piece of visual documentation. You could link back to archival collections by providing a link from a footnote or bibliography so that a reader can go directly to the archive.

**ABW:** That creates a really interesting link between publishing and libraries as well as archival material. If I am doing research and I follow the link from an e-book to an archive I can see what the archive holds and what it does not hold without leaving the book. There is a possibility of literally transforming scholarship in the visual arts in ways that people have not quite imagined yet. It will attract a new generation of scholars who want to work with images and be visually literate. The transformation will be large, and there are a number of issues that have to be sorted out and addressed. I think getting things out on the table and beginning the conversation helps force discussion about the issues, both in scholarship and in libraries. If we can talk about it, it puts it out there for scholars, librarians, and publishers to start thinking about.



**Figure 3.** Dietrich Neumann, *Falling Water Series* (2008). Last of twelve images, which demonstrates how Wright's use of horizontal and vertical elements evolved after Falling Water. The central image of Falling Water is in color in the original, the others are in black and white.

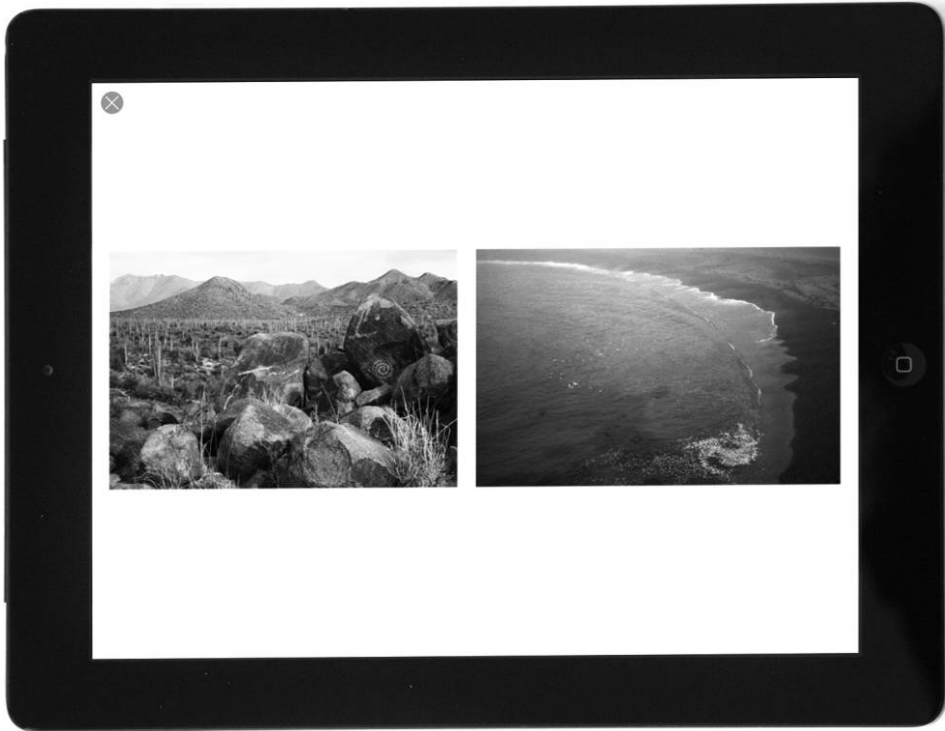
### THE RICHLY ILLUSTRATED E-BOOK: CHALLENGE AND PROMISE

**ABW:** You have referred to *The Eye Is a Door* as an experiment. In what ways is it an experiment?

**AWS:** The whole process has been an experiment from conception to production, promotion, and distribution. My hypothesis is that electronic publishing is the future of the richly illustrated book. I wrote a proposal and received a grant from MIT to produce three prototypes, the first being my current book, *The Eye Is a Door*, and the other two, my previous books for which I hold the e-rights: *The Granite Garden: Urban Nature and Human Design* and *The Language of Landscape*.

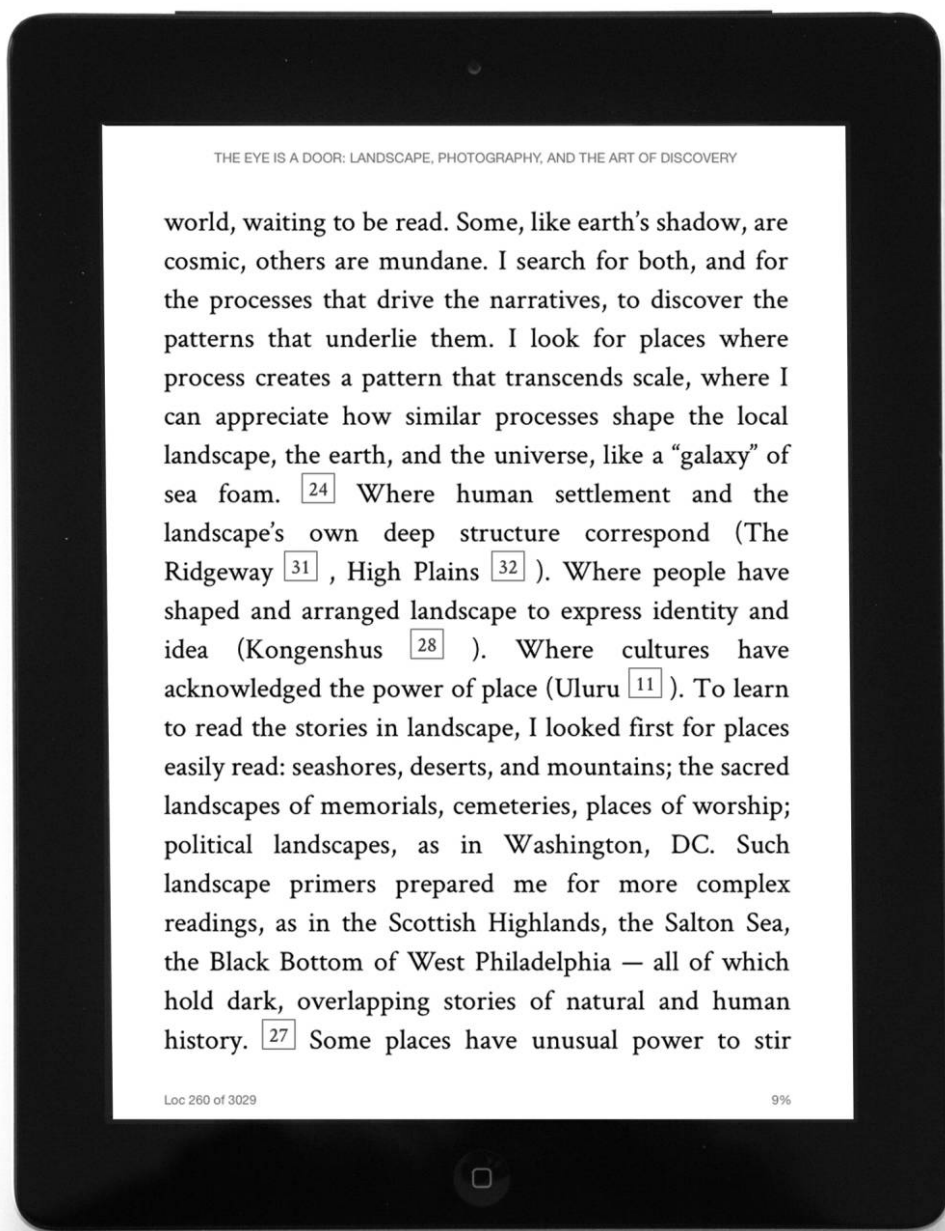
The content of *The Eye Is a Door*, as an interplay of images and words, is itself an experiment. The book's two photographic essays (composed of my own photographs) embrace a central text of short chapters. The first visual essay explores the sense of place and introduces dialogues among natural forces and human ideas, values, and actions. The second, which concludes the book, contains more complex photographic pairings that plot a sequence of ideas, an argument for a language of landscape (Figure 4). Eight chapters of text are a counterpoint to the photo essays. Images and words correspond, but a single photograph represents more than a single idea or story, and each photographic pair and sequence of pairs has its own logic. Given the





**Figure 4.** The second pair in a series of 13 pairs of photographs that, in sequence, make a visual argument for a language of landscape. From “Passage,” a photo essay in Spirn, *The Eye Is a Door*, viewed on an iPad. Many e-book readers permit the reader to switch between horizontal and vertical views. Please see the online edition of *Art Documentation* for a color version of this image.

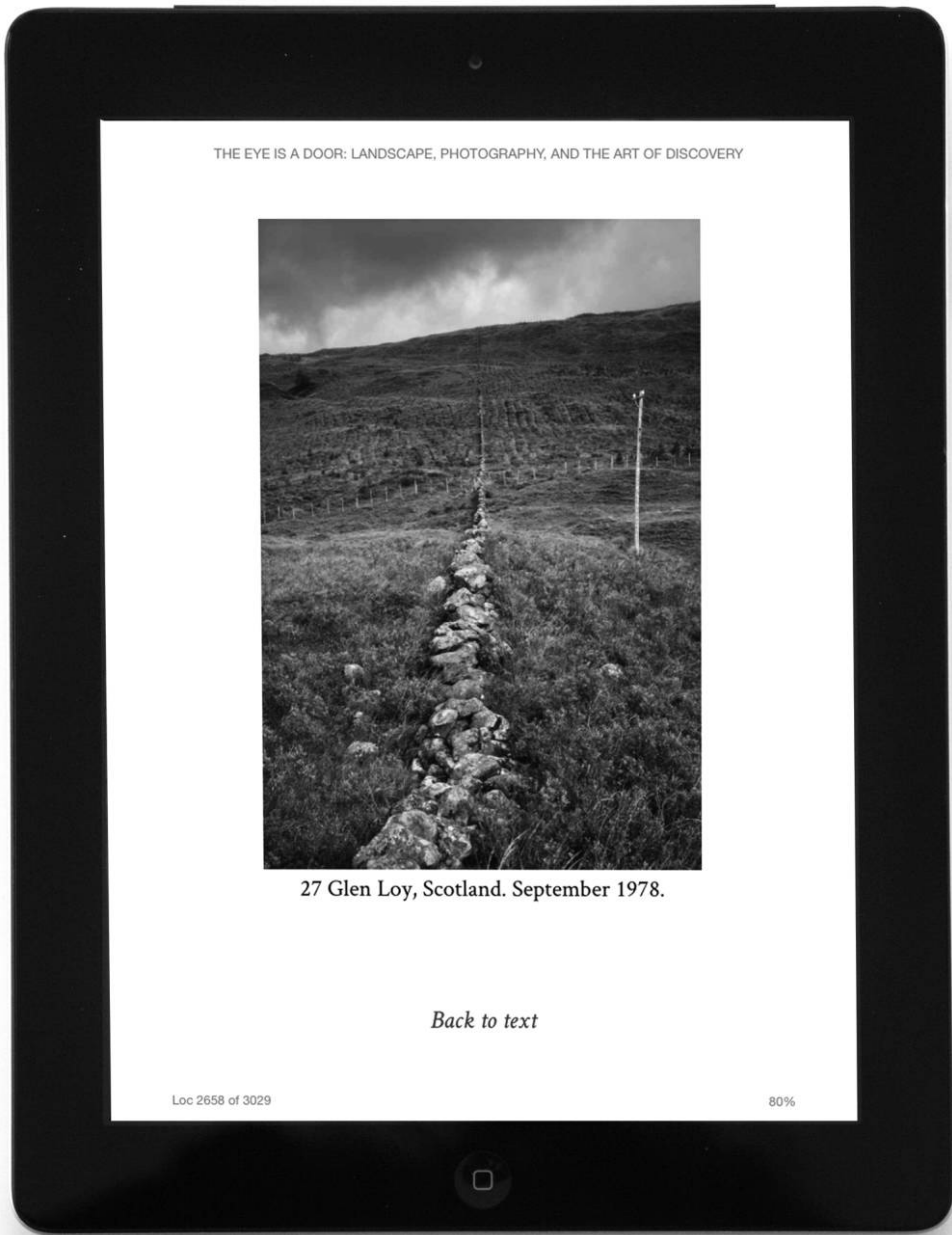
nature of the book’s ideas and structure, I wanted to experiment with the opportunities the digital medium affords to transform the reading experience itself. Imagine being able to call up images referenced in the text with a simple tap on an icon. Tap the screen, and the image appears, tap again, and it vanishes (Figure 5, Figure 6). That function alone transforms the reading experience. Your eye rests, undistracted, on the image, then returns to the text. No flicking back and forth between different pages, sticking your finger in two parts of the book when an image is referred to more than once. E-books also afford the potential for seamless movement between the book and the web. *The Eye Is a Door* cites works by other photographers, whose images appear in the e-book itself. Tapping on the caption takes the reader directly to that photographer’s website; tap again and return to the book. *The Eye Is a Door* website (<http://www.theeyeisadoor.com>) hosts features that complement the e-book, such as a journey via Google Earth to places depicted in the photographs, where the reader can explore the place on his/her own. Reflowable text is another feature made possible by e-books, the fact that you can change the size of the font and choose the font that is easiest on your eye. You can also select a black or white background. But reflowable text does not permit a fixed layout. For designers, control of the book’s



**Figure 5.** Square icons indicate a linked image. Icons are red in the original. From Spirn, *The Eye Is a Door*, viewed on an iPad. Please see the online edition of *Art Documentation* for a color version of this image.

design will be an issue. I was committed to reflowable text, so the e-book design was a challenge.

I was not prepared for how difficult producing the e-book would be. The obstacles for design posed by Amazon, for example, are holding back the development of the visually rich e-book since Amazon has such a huge share of the e-book market.



**Figure 6.** Tap on the square icon, and the image fills the screen. Tap again, and return to the text. From Spinn, *The Eye Is a Door*, viewed on an iPad. Please see the online edition of *Art Documentation* for a color version of this image.

**ABW:** Can you tell me more about how Amazon is holding back e-readers in relation to other companies?

**AWS:** Amazon's Kindle readers use a proprietary format, MOBI or KF8, rather than EPUB, which has emerged as the industry standard. EPUB permits much more

control and flexibility in the design of richly illustrated books. There are things you simply cannot do in MOBI/KF8. Currently Amazon also limits the file size for e-books, which iBooks does not. As a result, many visually rich e-books are not offered on Amazon. The Library of Congress, for example, recently published a series of media-rich books that are available only from iBooks (e.g., *Great Photographs from the Library of Congress*).

**ABW:** I am interested in hearing about how you rethought the construction of an e-book as opposed to printed books.

**AWS:** Originally, I structured the book with the design of the codex in mind, so I was limited by the number of pages in a signature when selecting the images for the photo essays. The signatures also influenced the structure of the book itself, which was conceived as two essays of color photographs, each printed on its own set of signatures, with one essay appearing at the beginning of the book, and the other at the end. As in many printed books, this structure diverts the reader as he/she has to leave the text to find the image, and then flip back to the text. Moving to the e-book format freed me from such constraints, but it introduced others. For example, consider the difference between browsing through a book in a bookstore and reading a sample of an e-book from an online retailer. You can hold a printed book in your hands and page through it. Flipping through *The Eye Is a Door*, for example, the reader would see that images compose half of the e-book. But the sample pages from an online retailer contain only a fraction of a book. Amazon determines this automatically: the first ten percent of the book. I realized that, the way my e-book was set up, when readers got the sample pages they would have to go through many pages of text before they got to a single image! *The Eye Is a Door* is a visually oriented book, and designers and other visual thinkers are an important audience, so I redesigned the first section of the book. Right after the cover, I inserted five photographs that make a visual argument. Only then does the reader come to the epigraph (“The root of the word *idea* is ‘to see’ in Greek” and Dorothea Lange’s quote “The camera is a tool to see without a camera”), the table of contents, and the verbal introduction.

**ABW:** How do you create an e-book in a design field that works for the readers of books? It is a really different problem to think about e-books for the design fields. It is about the people reading the books. How do you make reading in a digital age the best experience it can be?

**AWS:** I have only just begun discovering what can and cannot be done given the constraints of the current e-book platforms and reading devices. In working on *The Eye Is a Door* with eBook Architects (<http://www.ebookarchitects.com>—they are e-book developers, not book designers), we had to adapt my notion of how the photo essays would be laid out and how images would be cited within the text. This could not be done the way that I had imagined. So we had to reinvent the layout of the book.

**ABW:** Do you think that it is as effective as the way you had imagined it?

**AWS:** I think so. *The Eye Is a Door*’s original design called for images referenced within the text to appear when called up, then to vanish. EPUB permits this, but Amazon’s current version of MOBI/KF8 does not. Our solution was to treat these images as endnotes, which means that they all must appear at the back of the book in

the order in which they were cited. Not ideal, since some images appear more than once, and the sequence seems haphazard. And yet, appropriate, for those images are, in fact, citations, footnotes of images rather than words. An unexpected and unfortunate result, however, is that in the sample pages downloaded from an online retailer, the images referenced in the verbal essays cannot be accessed since they are at the end of the book and thus are outside the sample, which includes only the first 10 percent of the book.

The solution for *The Eye Is a Door* inspired the design for the e-editions of my books now in production: *The Language of Landscape* and *The Granite Garden*. These new e-books will consist of two parts, where the parts can be read both separately and interactively. In the first part, the reading experience will be similar to the text portion of *The Eye Is a Door*. The second part will consist of all those images cited in the text, composed deliberately as sequenced essays of images and captions, where each image links back to the associated text. The reader may then choose whether to start by reading essays of text (with links to the images) or by reading essays of images (with links to the text). This is a new kind of book that serves both visual and verbal thinkers. **ABW:** In this case, the literal and intellectual structures of the book become different. You are creating a construct around the intellectual thought process through the use of images. This means you have been forced to think about what a book is in electronic form. You are also able, in your new e-books, to offer different perspectives for readers—from text to image, or image to text. This is an expansion of the concept of the structure of the book.

**AWS:** Yet most readers still prefer the printed book. The sociologist Howard S. Becker, who writes about photography and visual sociology among other topics, published *Thinking Together: An E-Mail Exchange and All That Jazz*,<sup>3</sup> a book that consists of an e-mail exchange with Robert Faulkner, written during the process of writing another book, *Do You Know . . . ?*,<sup>4</sup> about how jazz musicians who have never played with one another can come together successfully in a session. *Thinking Together* is an e-book, so every time Becker and his co-author mention a musical composition—there are hundreds of tunes and specific renditions—there is a link to YouTube where the actual composition is played.

**ABW:** That in itself is an example of how an e-book can change scholarship because the book allows readers to make visual and aural connections with the text without ever leaving the book itself.

**AWS:** Now let me tell you the depressing side of the story. The book was also published in print. The print version has all the e-mail exchanges, which refer to hundreds of tunes, but with no links to the music. Becker's friends bought the e-book, but when he asked them about it, they would say, "I haven't gotten around to looking at it yet." But when he gave

3. Howard S. Becker and Robert R. Faulker, *Thinking Together: An Email Exchange and All That Jazz* (Los Angeles: USC Annenberg Press, 2013). Print edition by Aubervilliers: Les Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers; Paris: Questions théoriques, 2013.

4. Robert R. Faulker and Howard S. Baker, *Do You Know . . . ? : The Jazz Repertoire in Action* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

them a paper copy, they read it. As a sociologist, Becker knows that you cannot force people to read e-books, they have to want to do so. But why would anyone prefer to read a printed book with no links to the tunes referenced, when they could read the e-book and listen to all the music? I am surprised that people are not as enthusiastic as I am (or as Becker is at the age of eighty-six!) about the potential of the e-book to transform the reading experience. I now do most of my reading on an iPad.

### DISSEMINATION OF E-BOOKS

**AWS:** Given the decline of brick-and-mortar bookstores and the book review in print media, it is now more difficult for readers to find books. We still have publications like *The New York Review of Books* and *Bookforum*, but for authors who want to reach a broad audience, reviews in popular media are important. Many readers discovered my first book when it was reviewed in the *New York Times Book Review*. It was not just general readers, but also scholars outside my own field, like historians and geographers. Today *The New York Times Book Review* is a shadow of its former self. The book review editor for a major newspaper used to think, "Who would write a really perceptive review of this book?" Now so few newspapers have book review sections. Perhaps those that survive the shift from print to online will reinstate their book review sections. If and when they do, I hope they will review e-books and books that are independently published, too.

**ABW:** Is there something else that you see replacing the concept of the book review?

**AWS:** Not the concept itself, but the platforms for review. There are bloggers who write about books, and there are websites where readers share their views, but discovering a good blog is not as easy as buying the *New York Times*.

**ABW:** Blogs are not quite self-reviewing, but anyone can happen to see your book and write a review. They are a form of review, and a form of advertising, but a blog is not peer review, nor is it a peer reviewer or someone with knowledge of a particular subject.

**AWS:** There are also social media sites for readers, like Goodreads and LibraryThing, but the books discussed are mainly genres like romance, science fiction, mystery, and memoirs. There are no large groups of readers on Goodreads devoted to books on the topics I write about: landscape, environment, art, photography, and design. These topics have tiny reader groups on Goodreads as compared to romance, for example.

**ABW:** We know people are reading, and publishing is certainly prolific. Yet there is a gap in the space between where books and readers come together. One can troll Amazon.

**AWS:** And Amazon lets you read a sample from a book. Perhaps you never want to go further in many, but, in the meantime, you do find new books and new authors. The challenge remains: how do we find richly illustrated e-books on art and design? Journals in design and the visual arts should publish review issues on e-books.

**ABW:** We know e-books in our fields are being published, but we have to learn the new places to look. Our former knowledge base about where to find books is shifting.

**AWS:** New firms have sprung up to distribute e-proofs and e-books to reviewers. NetGalley ([www.netgalley.com](http://www.netgalley.com)), for example, contacts reviewers and invites them to download the book. According to their website, more than 18,000 librarians currently

use the site to preview new titles. NetGalley serves independent as well as well-established publishers and is one of many companies that are cropping up to serve the growing number of independent publishers and the growing e-book market. *Publisher's Weekly* now has a section devoted to books by authors who publish independently: "PW Select." So many well-established authors are choosing to self-publish that the pejorative term "vanity" press is disappearing. There are several distributors for independent publishers—Smashwords, BookBaby, and Ingram Spark—which distribute e-books to multiple e-book retailers, including Amazon, iBooks, and many others. They collect the royalties and disburse them to the author, and they take a percentage.

**ABW:** What are the implications of these new services for libraries? Libraries have traditionally relied upon a limited number of vendors to get their books. Some vendors are just beginning to offer e-books in the same way they offer print books. Yet, at the same time, there are clearly more e-books being published and disseminated outside the vendor realm.

**AWS:** I was surprised by how difficult it is going to be to get *The Eye Is a Door* into libraries. All of my previous books are in libraries. It shocked me to learn that the Library of Congress will not catalog books (print or electronic) from publishers whose books are not *already* widely distributed to libraries as part of its Cataloging-in-Publication Program (CIP), nor are e-books eligible for CIP.<sup>5</sup> Think about the barrier that throws up, not just to independent publishing, but to new publishing firms. The MIT School of Architecture and Planning publication series, for example, is not eligible for Library of Congress cataloging in advance of publication. The LOC's current practice is a disservice to the dissemination of knowledge. I always thought that Library of Congress was our national library.

**ABW:** They will say that is not their role.

**AWS:** But what does it mean to not have a national library?

**ABW:** The United States has never had the concept of a national library, as in other countries. The Library of Congress was established to be a reference library for Congress. Its mission is "to support Congress in fulfilling its constitutional duties and to further the progress of knowledge and creativity for the benefit of the American people."<sup>6</sup> The Library of Congress has never *officially* taken on the role of providing the ultimate leadership in cataloging for other libraries, though we think of LOC in that role.

But, going back to thinking about how libraries acquire e-books, some of our library vendors do provide e-books. I have a choice now as to whether I want a book in e-format or in print format. But librarians need new workflows for finding reviews of e-books.

I am also thinking about how libraries acquire self-published e-books in the way you have been doing it versus the e-books in big packages.

**AWS:** How do libraries obtain e-books?

**ABW:** A vendor, ebrary (<http://www.ebrary.com>), for instance, offers thousands of e-books; the library pays a subscription fee, and we receive a package that we can offer

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5. Library of Congress, "About CIP," <http://www.loc.gov/publish/cip/about/>.

6. Library of Congress, "About the Library," <http://www.loc.gov/about>.

to our academic community. And while there are options to license individual titles, there remains the concern that the e-book packages start to feel more like the large aggregated e-journal packages. It is an e-journal package model that is being applied to monographs. It is a new territory that librarians need to navigate, understand, and really think about.

**AWS:** Who is making the decisions about what books distributors will offer to libraries and which books they will not distribute? These gatekeepers are invisible to authors. Why should a publisher or distributor be the one to select the books that a university library can buy? That is crazy!

**ABW:** Yes, I agree. I often look at a list of e-books and say, "There is little in there that our people care about, in our disciplines." But in large universities, the model is generally that all the libraries share the cost of the large packages as we do for journals. We subscribe to the EBSCO e-book package, and a search for books on landscape architecture, for instance, results in one book. There are e-books that are published in the art and design fields, but they are not found in great numbers in the large aggregated packages. It is important to note that it is the publishers who are creating the packages of books to which libraries will subscribe.

**AWS:** Librarians have long determined what books are available to their readers. They have curated their libraries' book collections. If the publisher or distributor is making that choice, that eliminates one of the most important roles of the librarian, at least to authors and readers. As a scholar, I have a problem with that.

**ABW:** I have a hard time wrapping my head around it, both intellectually and from a practical perspective. What do I do with this package? What does this mean for the library?

You asked about challenges, and I think that refers back to this earlier point—how do libraries find, acquire, and keep e-books . . . or do they keep them? They are licensing them, so again they are more like electronic journals. In some cases, libraries can buy e-books and can obtain perpetual access to them if this is within the terms of the contract. Portico (<http://www.portico.org>) is working with publishers and libraries to offer an enduring access option for both e-books and e-journals. Another large issue is, if an e-book is self-published and our library acquires it, how do we keep it in a way that over time retains the original intent of the author in terms of structure and the technologies used to produce the book? Your e-book is a good example. The formatting issues and the construct of the book need to be retained and preserved over time for the book to be understood. What are the implications for storage and preservation? Libraries have not yet taken the task on of preserving e-books, though Portico is beginning to look at this. It is similar to digital scholarship projects in that we need to think about how we keep scholarship in its original formats, with the original visual and navigation intents, with all the embedded tools over time.

**AWS:** Those issues of long-term usability are the reason that I chose to produce my e-book in standard formats (MOBI/KF8 and EPUB) rather than as an app. Apps may provide authors with more functionality and flexibility in the short-term, but they pose a challenge for preservation. Authors should keep this in mind.



**ABW:** Access is another issue. Access to e-books and e-book packages is complicated because some vendors allow only one user at a time as opposed to multiple users. There are a number of e-books being published outside mainstream publishing, but the small publishers do not yet have a model for selling or licensing to libraries. Strelka Press (<http://www.strelka.com/en/press/books>), for instance, offers a series of books on architecture and design as downloads for individuals. That model does not work for libraries. And how do we as librarians work with someone like yourself, as the author of a self-published e-book? Do we work with individual authors to determine these issues? Is there an intermediary who takes on this role? Or do libraries have an opportunity to shape the building of new models? Another issue is whether or not libraries share e-books.

**AWS:** Like interlibrary loan?

**ABW:** Yes, but with e-books, most vendors will not allow that. If it is a self-published book that I "purchase," then we may have more options for thinking about this.

**AWS:** What do you mean by saying that most vendors will not allow that?

**ABW:** The publishers put restrictions on how e-books are distributed within an institution. I can license the package which will allow x number of users access to an e-book simultaneously.

**AWS:** Are you saying that another university cannot borrow it for one user?

**ABW:** Generally not.

**AWS:** That is terrible. Think about what that means for access to knowledge, about what it means for scholarship. I use interlibrary loan all the time. Libraries are used to sharing resources. So now they are being told by publishers and distributors that they cannot share resources anymore? Most scholars cannot afford to travel to a distant library in order to read a book. This development is part of a larger issue of who controls access to knowledge.

**ABW:** I also want to know what this means for collection development. But first, I have to understand what is and is not in e-book packages. If we are going to collect e-books, how do we reframe collection development in libraries to not just accept packages but to look at them critically? If you get a package of the Safari e-books, which is mostly technical manuals, that is kind of a no-brainer. They are more reference-like. They are not monographs on individual artists. And I think that is a distinction that we need to consider.

Our conversation is bringing up all sorts of issues concerning scholarship and knowledge sharing that I am not sure libraries and scholars are addressing, either separately or together. We are addressing them in the open access arena, but not in the e-book arena. Libraries tend to focus how we deal with our physical stacks in light of e-books and e-journals, but librarians on the ground are not yet fully engaged in the conversations about the implications for scholarship of the changes you and I are discussing. But we can see some new, library-led models developing, such as the University of Michigan's library publishing program.<sup>7</sup>

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7. University of Michigan Library, "Michigan Publishing," <http://www.publishing.umich.edu/about/>.

**IS SELF-PUBLISHING A MODEL FOR OTHERS?**

**ABW:** Would you advise other scholars to take the approach that you did? What does it mean to publish digitally or independently when you are an established scholar versus a non-established scholar?

**AWS:** I would advise caution. There is still resistance to the e-book among many readers, including academics. And I would certainly not advise a young scholar to publish a book independently. However, there are alternative publishers that have emerged, such as New Academia, which have peer review. Critical peer review helps authors sharpen and strengthen their arguments, and peer-reviewed publications are generally given more weight in decisions about academic promotion and tenure.

Independent publishing and e-publishing have the potential to transform research and scholarship in the visual arts and design because they enable more experimentation than a commercial or academic publisher might be willing to undertake. In order to experiment with the e-book medium, in order to keep the rights to my book, and in order to keep the price low and thereby increase dissemination, I decided to publish the book independently. But I already had a presence on Amazon, in libraries, and I already had tenure. This is not something that I would advise an untenured faculty member to do.

**ABW:** As a tenured faculty member you think it is OK to do independent e-book publishing, but you would never want young scholars to do that?

**AWS:** No, not e-publishing only, and not on their own without going through a well-established publisher. Peer review is so important, and, at some universities, there is pressure on junior faculty to publish with a handful of prominent presses. The presumption is that if the book is important, then it will be published at a prestigious press.

**ABW:** You are saying that there is a hierarchy of the presses. Do you think it is going to be important in the e-publishing, digital book world to change the perceptions of what is acceptable for tenure? Do you envision a time when an e-book will be viewed as the equivalent of a published monograph in print form?

**AWS:** Yes, especially if it is published by a press at the high end of the hierarchy.

**ABW:** Will you publish your next book independently?

**AWS:** Probably not. I would rather be an author than a publisher. I have had great experiences with publishers. Working with the University of Chicago Press on *Daring to Look*, from design and production to marketing and promotion, was a pleasure. I have missed that partnership, missed working with professionals who contributed their own talents to the book. Publishers do a lot for authors. All that I have learned over the past four years will make me a better partner with a publisher (and with librarians!). However, I do want to figure out a mutually acceptable agreement on e-rights and the pricing of e-books.

This brings up another issue. There is a growing trend for schools of design to assume the role of publisher. Even individual departments of architecture or landscape architecture, for example, are publishing books. What began decades ago with student-edited journals or research monographs and then expanded more recently to studio reports has become, in some schools such as Harvard, the University of Penn-

sylvania, and MIT, a full-fledged publishing enterprise that produces books by faculty, including untenured faculty. There is often no peer review and little, if any, professional copy-editing. The books may have an ISBN, but no Library of Congress catalog number since most do not qualify for the LOC Cataloging in Publication Program. I believe that this is a response to the very same conditions in print publishing that led me to publish *The Eye Is a Door* as an e-book. In its current form, such publishing is a very risky route to publication for untenured faculty since many, if not most, universities will not give the same weight to such publications in the promotion and tenure process as they give to peer-reviewed articles and books published by a well-established publisher. However, with the incorporation of a strong external peer review process, there is great potential in such ventures.

**ABW:** This is indeed a growing trend that architecture librarians are witnessing. I think the trend is partly driven by the desire to publish design research, and partly because we have the technology to self-publish. The self-publish model allows school-based publications to be quickly produced, using many images. The model does not require the costs of peer review or editing (though in some cases, there is some form of copy editing done), and the cost of producing images is much less. Some schools use a commercial distributor to sell these books. And, as you say, it allows young academics to be published, which may help with the tenure and promotion process in some universities, but may pose a problem in others. If these books are not truly peer reviewed or edited, how does this model support young academics in the tenure process?

A group of architecture librarians is looking at this topic, trying to assess what the collecting implications are for our libraries. We have begun by compiling a list of known school publications, and more work will be done over the course of the next year.

**AWS:** This is similar to an issue that has long faced libraries that serve the design and planning professions: whether and how to collect professional reports published by private firms and public agencies. Such reports often represent important contributions to practice and theory, and yet they are seldom collected by libraries. When I was a young assistant professor at the Graduate School of Design at Harvard and a member of the library committee, I raised the issue with your predecessor, Angela Giral. She agreed with the importance of the issue, but pointed out the many difficulties in identifying, assessing, and collecting such publications.

**ABW:** And yet, some of this material is, in fact, critical to design and planning libraries. These materials, too, are being looked at again by libraries, especially as they are published in digital form, and no one knows if they will be maintained over time on websites.

#### **AN ALLIANCE BETWEEN LIBRARIANS AND AUTHORS**

**ABW:** Tell me what you are thinking about scholars and librarians as allies.

**AWS:** We are allied in the desire to make knowledge freely available. Authors produce knowledge, and one of the missions of librarians is to help readers get access to knowledge. Both authors and librarians operate in a world where knowledge (books, articles, databases) is increasingly owned by for-profit corporations.

One strong thread in our discussion is this increasing corporate ownership and control of the dissemination of knowledge—from those who develop the reading platforms to those who distribute and sell books and journals. Electronic publishing has enabled and accelerated this trend at the same time that, paradoxically, it has facilitated the sharing of knowledge and information. So, there is a dark side to digital technology. At what point will the price charged for publications stifle the advance of knowledge?

Authors and librarians are both getting squeezed. Authors are getting squeezed at the production end, and libraries are getting squeezed at the dissemination end. The issue of rights and the new publishing contracts also needs to be considered because it is the flip side of what some publishers are doing to librarians with e-books and subscriptions to e-journals.

**ABW:** That is also part of the knowledge-control issue that is of concern.

**AWS:** We are talking about an alliance between librarians and authors, but we should include the reader too. Authors and librarians have sometimes found themselves in adversarial positions over the royalty issue, so I think we need to educate authors about how librarians are allies. I remember a librarian in my public library who was my trusted guide. I browsed the shelves, but I would never have found so many authors had she not led me to them. Librarians still fulfill that function for readers, and authors should not be so concerned about whether they get a royalty every time the book is checked out. They should be worried about their books *not* getting into libraries.

**ABW:** A major issue we have identified is who controls knowledge.

**AWS:** Yes. *Who controls knowledge*—the flow of knowledge, the access to knowledge. That flow is blocked when the e-book cannot be shared with another library, through interlibrary loan, or even with other readers.

**ABW:** That is a reason it gives me pause when librarians, or library systems, start saying, “We are going to go all digital.” But we have not figured out all the problems and implications, not just for libraries, but for scholarship itself. We have not had these discussions.

**AWS:** Authors and librarians are natural allies. We always have been.

**ABW:** I think that the idea of aligning and collaborating with authors is going to be part of the evolution of the role of the librarian. We have been primarily a service profession, but I think there are librarians who see that our futures are shifting and that our roles must change as well. I think that we have an opportunity for changing roles that includes working with authors and scholars to support the publishing of their books and educating scholars and graduate students about publishing and authors’ rights.

## CONCLUSION

The journey of publishing a richly illustrated e-book and the ensuing discussions between us have transformed our thinking. E-books will indeed transform both scholarship and libraries, but there are implications for authors/scholars, librarians, and scholarship in the academy. Robert Darnton wrote in his recent article in the *New York Review of Books* that “authors generally have one dominant desire—for their work to circulate freely through the public: and their interest coincides with the goals of the

open access movement.”<sup>8</sup> Darnton discusses a movement among authors to make their books available online through non-profit distributors. This may also be a moment when university libraries can step into the publishing/distribution arena, as they have for open-access repositories.

The implications of collecting e-books in libraries also require further thought, discussion, and strategy. There are a couple of models that libraries have now: to license e-books through subscriptions, or to purchase and license perpetual access. Much like e-journals, we are recognizing that there are limits to our use and sharing of e-books. This alone is a huge shift in how libraries think about collections. We do not “own” an e-book, and therefore our right to disseminate an e-book is limited to what a publisher will allow according to the licensing contract. These constraints go against the open access culture of libraries and the belief in the free dissemination of knowledge. Section 109 of the US Copyright Act (the First Sale Doctrine) allows the owner of a copy of a published work to sell or otherwise dispose of that copy without permission from the copyright owner. However, the First Sale Doctrine applies to “material objects,” and a copyrighted digital book is not a material, physical object. Additionally, the licensing of e-books, rather than selling them, suggests that under these licenses e-books cannot be shared, or loaned, or resold. By putting use constraints in license agreements for e-books, publishers are effectively taking away the rights of libraries to share, preserve, collect, and disseminate books to other patrons, and are also therefore limiting the dissemination of knowledge. From our perspective, this is a detriment to the advancement of knowledge. Librarians and authors need to develop a new model for publishing, and we need to think about the following questions. Do we collect solely through licensed subscriptions? Do we broaden our collecting outside of our vendors and begin collecting individual e-books directly from authors or vendors? Will libraries take on the distribution of e-books? Will libraries build their own e-book platforms, as is being planned in the Connecticut State libraries and Douglas County libraries? The Library Publishing Coalition is one example in which academic libraries have formed their own group focused on publishing.<sup>9</sup>

Or is this another arena in which we pursue deeper collaboration across institutions, and share collecting of e-books distributed through other venues such as the Digital Public Library of America and HathiTrust?

There is also an opportunity for the alliance between authors and librarians to develop into deeper relationships focused on the development of research and scholarship within our institutions. Libraries could take the path of library-as-publisher, which would support scholars and their work from inside our institutions, as opposed to the current model where the scholarship taking place inside the institution is published outside the institution, then sold back to us. Librarians themselves have the opportunity to work more closely with authors, through shared learning about copyright, authors’ rights, publishing contracts, and the opportunity to help lead the way in thinking about different dissemination models for authors’ works. These include

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8. Robert Darnton, “A World Digital Library is Coming True!” *The New York Review of Books*, May 22, 2014, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2014/may/22/world-digital-library-coming-true>.

9. Library Publishing Coalition, <http://librarypublishing.org>.

some of Robert Darnton's ideas referenced earlier, such as expanding open-access repositories. There are many library systems creating new roles, such as MIT's scholarly publishing librarian, and Harvard's copyright advisor (in the Office for Scholarly Communication in the Harvard Library). How these transformations happen will vary from institution to institution, and from discipline to discipline. Some scholarly societies may keep their roles as publishers; some libraries may take on roles as advisors to authors; others may venture more deeply into publishing. One thing we do believe is that authors and librarians need to build alliances as a starting point.

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