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Index began as an online open submission project. Criteria being, 'submissions must have been used to communicate, or be communicative in their own right'. All submissions have been removed from their original context, breaking the messages or ideas for which they were created.

Using Index as a container, exhibition space and story-telling device, the pages that follow have been edited to create pairs or combinations of images that can be read as new narratives. The book is an experimental exchange of out-of-context, repurposed text and image.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form, without permission in writing from the publisher.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Index is curated by Café Royal Books and supported by the Contemporary Arts Development Group at the University of Central Lancashire.
Shuffle and Cut: editing and re-presenting material in artists’ books

There are many ways in which artists index and re-present information through book works, whether visual or text-based. Taking words and images from one context and repurposing them for another can create a completely new version of events or focus. This can involve collecting found physical artefacts: scouring second hand shops or car boot sales for old photographs, books to rework, or finding odd notes on the street. Research can also be screen based, letting an Internet search engine do the work by gathering seemingly random items through a common search theme, or monitoring and editing email advertising. The following books play with the reader’s experience through pagination, titling and format. Many have been made with a sense of humour, from edited children’s books to poetry produced from junk mail, others take a more serious view, attempting to untangle global connections within society or make visible the subtext of political speeches.

Screen grabbed
The Library of the Printed Web (LotPW)¹, founded in 2013 by artist Paul Soulellis is a perfect example of ‘indexing’. The project showcases physically printed books, each of which has created new narratives from an existing source (the Internet). Each artist’s publication in the collection has been produced under the concept of “search, compile and publish”; for example, gathering multiple images of a single subject - Fraser Clark’s Mona Lisa (2012), or Heidi Neilson’s Details from the Least Popular (2013) presenting the hundred least popular images from the Hubble Space Telescope’s online gallery. Paul Soulellis’s own books include Apparition of a Distance, However Near it May Be (2013) where he has scoured Google Books for images containing evidence of Google workers who scan them in. Usually removed before upload, the images of individual’s hands captured in the scanner remind us that these books were, and are a physical artefact, with real pages turned by humans during the digitising process. Mindy Seu’s xx, 1kg (2012) also in the LotPW collection, houses c.500 printed pages of one summer’s daily email correspondence with a friend, bound and cut into a book-shaped wedge. Ludovic Burel’s marvellously titled Another picture of me as Dracula (2007) publishes a collection of unrelated images gathered from his Internet searches for photographs uploaded with the word ‘me’ in the jpeg’s title.

Continuing with email transforming into books, American Psycho by Mimi Cabell and Jason Huff (2010) involved emailing the entire text of Brett Easton Ellis’s novel, page-by-page through a Gmail account, and monitoring the associated Google adverts that appeared through Gmail’s ‘reading’ of the messages. In this artist’s book, Ellis’s original text is erased, leaving only the chapter titles and the artists’ annotations indicating the Google ads that appear as footnotes. For example: “In one scene, where first a dog and then a man are brutally murdered with a knife, Google supplied ample ads regarding knives and knife sharpeners. In another scene the ads disappeared altogether when the narrator makes a racial slur.”² Although, Google cannot anticipate everything; the artists noted that advertising for teeth whitening remained consistent throughout.

Bill Burns’ book Dogs and Boats and Airplanes told in the form of Ivan the Terrible (Space Poetry, Copenhagen, 2011), is the result of a long term photography project (undertaken 2002-2011) to interpret Part 1 of Eisenstein’s original epic production through “replacing the film’s movement, players and story with pictures of dogs and boats and airplanes.”³ Images gathered of the former, from Seoul to Newfoundland have been arranged to create a visual narrative across 16 sections with headings including ‘Ivan Declares War Against Kazan’ – created from photographs of planes over Bilbao and Lake Ontario, or ‘Ivan on His Deathbed’ – using photographs of dogs taken in Berlin,

Picture This
Some photography collections also play with descriptive language: *Latescapes* by Eric Watier (2004) presents a short series of idyllic landscapes, culled from photographs he took through Estate Agents' windows of land plots that had been sold in his local area of Montpellier, France. Paul Paper's *Untaken Photographs* (Booklet press, 2012) is a 40-page book of handwritten descriptions of scenes instead of actual photographs, a book about visualising through language.

Tate Shaw's *The Placeholders Volume 3* (Preacher's Biscuit Books, 2007) is a collection of hand drawn people traversing the world's busiest pedestrian crossing in Shibuya, Tokyo. Shaw photographed his every step across, from hip height, using the photographs as source material for his drawings. Held within the figures' clothing is a series of photographic collages of other locations, a mishmash of people, places, cyclists and buildings weaving themselves in and out, up and down as the pages are turned. As you leaf through in either direction you begin to look for patterns and connections just as you do when you are walking about in the street yourself. As Shaw writes: “Each page opening is paradoxical - forward is backward, left is right, top is bottom, and the beginning is the ending. With more potential for movement, everything has the potential to show you the way and so to continually be seeking out a connection becomes the end goal.” Boniface has also published an online collection of notes found on the street, it's worth having a look, especially as he points out - that finding handwritten notes is becoming increasingly rare.

Recycled language
Elisabeth Tonnard makes many of her books through careful editing and arranging of extant material, including: *A Dialogue in Useful Phrases* (2010) based on “conversational phrases” found in Grenville Kleiser’s *Fifteen Thousand Useful Phrases* handbook (1917). *Enduring Freedom, The Poetry of the President* (2011) reworks speeches made by George W. Bush in the aftermath of 9/11 into poems that she first published in the Dutch literary magazine *Armada, tijdschrift voor wereldliteratuur*, No. 24, December 2001. These have been republished as a book where “the tone varies as we witness consolatory words and war speech. What does not change is the intensity of the rhetoric used.” Kate Morrell’s risograph-printed book *Alpine Spoilers* (2012) is a playfully edited appropriation of texts from the closing paragraphs of 100 books on mountaineering, held at Fell & Rock Climbing Club of the English Lake District archives, in The Armitt Library. The narrative created in the edited texts juxtaposes the romantic notions of exploring mountains with the practical realisation of the dangers of such pursuits. John McDowall’s *Giornata prima* (2012) reflects the pleasure and also this unreliability of storytelling; it is from page to page and book to book a correspondence of story following story.
from teller to listener/reader over time from one version to the next.”1\textsuperscript{12} Pages were reproduced from editions of Giovanni Boccaccio’s *The Decameron* held at university libraries in Leeds and Manchester, and from the artist’s own bookshelves. The artist’s selection procedure – “from left to right, top to bottom shelf, first page from the first book, second from the second etc. has lead to a new narrative of discordance with jumps from book to book, variations in language and pagination.”1\textsuperscript{13}

Ampersand Duck’s *pr0n coktales* (2010)\textsuperscript{14} is a zine of spam emails received, edited and represented as found poetry, letterpress printed in the style of a fine press poetry chapbook. Guy Bigland’s *All the four letter words that are sometimes used with another four letter word (that I can think of)* published in 2012, is a collection of 460 pages of 460 four-letter words “drawn from everyday language.”\textsuperscript{15} Gathered in pairs, but rearranged to from a new visual and narrative experience through ordering alphabetically. Much like Karen Reimer’s *Legendary Lexical Loquacious Love* (1996) that rearranged an entire romance novel into alphabetical order, or *Unforeseen Alliances* by Anita M-28 (Sally Alatalo, 2001) – both published by Sara Ranchouse\textsuperscript{16} - in which the artist arranged titles of existing romance novels to create a new book of poetry. There’s also the Alphabet series by Maria White, published by Essence Press, including *Alphabet week* (2010) presenting the days of the week starting with Friday. And finally, there is even an index of break times in between adventures. *The Famous Five Food: Five Have A Mystery To Solve* (2010) is a tiny pocket book by Christa Harris, filled with an alphabetical list of all the food and drink scoffed by the famous five in Enid Blyton’s children’s book *Five Have a Mystery to Solve* (1962), and it includes an awful lot of ham, biscuits and sandwiches.

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\textsuperscript{1} http://libraryoftheprintedweb.tumblr.com
\textsuperscript{2} http://www.mimicabell.com/gmail.html
\textsuperscript{3} http://billburnsprojects.com
\textsuperscript{4} http://ericwatier.info/editions/mai-2004-latescapes/
\textsuperscript{5} http://www.preachersbiscuitbooks.com/ThePlaceholders.html
\textsuperscript{6} http://www.hazardpress.co.uk/page3.htm
\textsuperscript{7} http://westviewstudycentre.co.uk
\textsuperscript{8} http://themostdifficultthingever.blogspot.co.uk
\textsuperscript{9} http://kevinboniface.co.uk/KiB/Found_Notes.html
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\textsuperscript{12} http://locatingboccaccio.wordpress.com/john-mcdowall/
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} http://ampersandduck.com/art/2010/03/16/pr0n-coktales/
\textsuperscript{15} http://guybigland.tumblr.com/allthefourletterwords
\textsuperscript{16} http://www.sararanchouse.com
Containers of / for information

There are three favourite books of mine, which I try not to let students studying curatorial practice graduate without having read. These are Lucy Lippard’s *Six Years*; Seth Siegelaub’s *Xerox Book*, and Art Metropole’s *Museums by Artists*.

Reading is not exactly what students do when they pick these books up from the library. They scan them, flip through them, dip in and out of them. These three books are all anthologies, compilations, edited collections. I would argue that as books, their content is curated, one more overtly than the other two. These books represent to me an interesting moment in art history, when systems-based art and conceptual art were understood in a conjoined field of practice, at a moment when the informational tools used in art (including text, photographs, instructions, photocopiers, fax machines, the postal service) — or art’s medium as media — were just beginning to be analysed, but before the personal computer became ubiquitous, before the Internet, and certainly before the now widely-held idea that anyone can be a curator.

To situate ourselves in the moment of these book’s import, a little art historical context is needed. In 1968 Jack Burnham was the editor of the influential magazine *Artforum*. He published an essay he’d written called *Systems Esthetics*. In it he described art as a relational activity, applying thinking from the field of cybernetics to an understanding of the process of art. He wrote that,

> The significant artist strives to reduce the technical and psychical distance between his artistic output and the productive means of society...

This strategy transforms artistic and technological decision-making into a single activity — at least it presents that alternative in inescapable terms. Scientists and technicians are not converted into “artists,” rather the artist becomes a symptom of the schism between art and technics. Progressively the need to make ultrasensitive judgments as to the uses of technology and scientific information becomes “art” in the most literal sense.

Burnham went on in the article to describe works in which telephones, steam machines, neon lights, weather balloons and typed text were employed in the idea and realisation of the work. Burnham was making the point that for art to remain relevant moving forward into this new advanced technological age, the artist had to implement a systems approach:

> Conceptual focus rather than material limits define the system. Thus any situation, either in or outside the context of art, may be designed and judged as a system. Inasmuch as a system may contain people, ideas, messages, atmospheric conditions, power sources, and so on, a system is, to quote the systems biologist, Ludwig von Bertalanffy, a “complex of components in interaction,” comprised of material, energy, and information in various degrees of organization. In evaluating systems the artist is a perspectivist considering goals, boundaries, structure, input, output, and related activity inside and outside the system. Where the object almost always has a fixed shape and boundaries, the consistency of a system may be altered in time and space, its behavior determined both by external conditions and its mechanisms of control.

I consider this then-emergent field of systems-based art to have been the first of many challenges to museum and gallery curators in how to exhibit the art of the time (as witnessed in the mixed reviews to the exhibition *Information* held at the Museum of Modern Art in 1970). An appreciation of this challenge — to ‘contain’
artworks that are implicated in relations with other systems than that of the museum or gallery – might explain why I, as a curator, hold these three books in such high regard.

The overlap of systems-based art, conceptual art, and other formal practices by artists working with information (in printed or text form) situates the project known as the *Xerox Book*. Including work by Carl Andre, Robert Barry, Douglas Heubler, Joseph Kosuth, Robert Morris, Lawrence Weiner, and Sol LeWitt, the book was the exhibition, which was the catalogue, which was the intention of the art works in question, all in response to a call from curator Seth Siegelaub for these artists to produce a work in up to 25 pages which could be replicated on a photocopier (in a recent exhibition of Siegelaub’s papers at the library and archive of MoMA it was noted that while the *Xerox Book* initially was intended to be photocopied it was too costly to do so, and so the first edition, 1,000 copies, was actually offset printed). The exhibition which took place in New York at Jack Wendler Gallery in 1968 was also the distribution of the book itself. In a later conversation, Siegelaub described the project as having evolved,

...in collaboration with the artists I worked with. We would sit around discussing the different ways and possibilities to show art, different contexts and environments in which art could be shown, indoors, outdoors, books, etc. The “Xerox book” — I now would prefer to call it the “Photocopy book”, so that no one gets the mistaken impression that the project has something to do with Xerox — was perhaps one of the most interesting because it was the first where I proposed a series of “requirements” for the project, concerning the use of a standard size paper and the amount of pages the “container” within which the artist was asked to work. What I was trying to do was standardize the conditions of exhibition with the idea that the resulting differences in each artist’s project or work, would be precisely what the artist’s work was about.

Lippard’s *Six Years*, published in 1973, includes reference to the *Xerox Book* and other of Siegelaub’s exhibitions, as well as exhibitions which Lippard curated – of card catalogues, instruction pieces, mail art and the like – with catalogues which took the form of the work itself. *Six Years* is essentially a curated list of works and their contextual framing, and the full title gives it away: *Six Years: The dematerialization of the art object from 1966 to 1972: a cross-reference book of information on some esthetic boundaries; consisting of a bibliography into which are inserted a fragmented text, art works, documents, interviews, and symposia, arranged chronologically and focused on so-called conceptual or information or idea art with mentions of such vaguely designated areas as minimal, anti-form, systems, earth, or process art, occurring now in the Americas, Europe, England, Australia and Asia (with occasional political overtones). The book benefits from a chronological reading from start to finish, but also acts as a reference book, with a formidable index and formatting clues (italic text for Lippard’s comments, bold text for factual information such as bibliographic references). When the artwork is the text itself, its distribution in this book form means that its framing is paramount. Lippard calls the artworks ‘anthological material’ and situates them (in roman type) alongside statements from artists and excerpts from symposia and talks.

Both of these books would have been known to and possibly distributed by Art Metropole, the Toronto outfit founded by artist group General Idea and opened as a storefront in the front half of their studio in 1974. Art Metropole began with a collection of print materials, ephemera, correspondence, posters, mail art, artists’ books and videos, and copies of *FILE Megazine*, which had been published by the artists for two years at that point. Art Metropole was conceived as a “collection agency devoted to the documentation, archiving and distribution of all the images.” As a venue they did host artists’ talks, book launches and video screenings, and participated in art fairs such as Basel (sharing a booth with *Artforum*). Their practice extended to ‘displaying’ materials, such as *Postcards by Artists* in 1976 and their Canada-wide touring exhibition *Books by Artists* in 1980. I have chosen the book *Museums by Artists* (1983) over the earlier edited anthologies published by Art Metropole (*Video by Artists*, edited by Peggy Gale in 1976, *Performance by Artists*, edited by Peggy Gale...
in 1979, *Books by Artists*, edited by Tim Guest and Germano Celant in 1981) because of its relationship to curatorial practice and expanded ideas of the site of art. Edited by AA Bronson and Peggy Gale, the book both preceded the exhibition and acted as its catalogue. It includes texts and artist-designed pages (artworks) by Jean-Christophe Ammann, Michael Asher, AA Bronson, Marcel Broodthaers, Benjamin Buchloh, Daniel Buren, Marcel Duchamp, Robert Filliou, Vera Frenkel, General Idea, Walter Grasskamp, Hans Haacke, Wulf Herzogenrath, Image Bank, Donald Judd, On Kawara, Garry Neill Kennedy, Joseph Kosuth, Les Levine, Glenn Lewis, George Maciunas, Piero Manzoni, Museum of Conceptual Art, N.E. Thing Co. Ltd., Claes Oldenburg, Harald Szeemann, and Ursula Wevers. The integration of works into the book and their mirroring in the exhibition is a subject which could be unpicked further in a case study on curatorial practice, as the notion of a museum by artists is a kind of impossibility of both action and preservation, publicity and bureaucracy, as AA Bronson describes it in his essay, “on the one hand, poetic aspiration and the idealisation of the obsessed, on the other, empirical reality and the anti-poetic *per se*”. The exhibition took place at important collecting institutions rather than artist-run spaces across Canada (the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Musee d’Art Contemporain and the Glenbow Museum) further suggesting the distinctions between spontaneously generated artist-led activity and reflective formal presentation modes.

While the activity of museums suggests that exhibitions can be containers for information art, these books show that publications can be containers for exhibitions – curated material – without being catalogues that merely ‘accompany’ exhibitions. The same could be argued of curatorial projects which connect information-based art forms to systems of new media, such as the two volume, partly unbound publication for the exhibition *Les immatériaux* curated by philosopher Jean-François Lyotard in 1985 for the Centre Georges Pompidou which includes transcripts of chat logs from early, pre-email computer-based conversation systems. It remains to unpack how the networked information age we live in now will change the idea of the book, or the artist’s book, or the edited collection, or the exhibition, or even the museum. Tumblr blogs and tweets have become material for unique ‘off-line’ publication formats, just as the online world with its multiple modes of dissemination, duplicates original artworks into copies and spin offs. The online art exhibition platform or-bits.com has a publishing initiative called *On the Upgrade* and their recent book *WYSIWYG* (2013) could be considered the *Xerox Book* of its age, with the aesthetic of the web-browser bleeding through on its print-on-demand artist-designed pages in the way that the photocopy grain did on its forebear 45 years earlier.

Dr Sarah Cook  
Curator / Dundee Fellow  
Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, CASE, University of Dundee


Citations:


Further references:


Chip will pick you up at 7:45 not 7:30.
Im sorry I was so grumpy this morning I love you very much and missed you today I really wondered what the hold up was when I had no mail for a couple of days thanks for finding out about that arrival evasion I now understand it more thoroughly than I did we will definately go to see Dr Donald when you come home and if I do have to go in hospital well I shall go it will be for my own good won’t it I shall never give up we will make a proud mum and dad for someone some day wont we so flaming Harriet Lawrence has wrote to you again has she
before long I will about tear her apart if my gran knew about her she would soon be over there giving her something to be going on with strikes me she hates to see folks happy I have never been happier in my life as I have now and more so since I have been with Mrs Barstow she really looks after me swell your mum makes me mad Harriet Lawrence has been visiting her of course it has nothing at all to do with me but if anyone had done as much to one of my sons I would just about kill her never mind entertain her
Nihilist Sound Track
Grandma riding Leo
NOTE: LAMPHOLDERS AND SWITCH PLATES MUST BE EARTHED IF THEY ARE METAL.
Presented
by the
National Bible Society of Scotland

TO

27th May 1917

P. Gray

ON ACTIVE SERVICE

1917

"Be strong and of good courage, for the Lord is with thee whithersoever thou goest."
I am directed to transmit the accompanying 1914-15 STAR which has been awarded to you in respect of your services with the Cameron Highlanders.

I am to request that you will be so good as to acknowledge the receipt of the decoration on the attached form, which is to be returned to the above address in the enclosed addressed envelope, which needs no stamp.

I am,
Your obedient Servant,

[Signature]

i/c Records
ENTRE LE CREATEUR ET L'HOMME

L'ANIMAL

DANS LES ARTS NON-EUROPEENS
to her current family
GOODS PUT TO SIDE ONLY WITH DEPOSIT

Thanks
LOADING FROM POLICE STATION
went on a steam train stayed with Mel and Lyn played with the dog seen lots of horses and ponies went to the beach saw a big sand castle
PRESTON
PR / FY