

# More than a Book Review of *The Electronic Word*

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A review of Richard Lanham's computer version of *The Electronic Word* becomes the occasion for reflection on typographic performance on the page and the screen. The rhetorical role of typography is examined in relation to interpretation and meaning of the text. Lanham's argument that communication needs to be looked *at* rather than *through* is extended through demonstration. The format of this example of the Expanded Book is subject to critical scrutiny.

## More than a Book Review of *The Electronic Word*

Caught between the page and the screen, I deeply respect the achievements of our book culture, while I simultaneously understand that the screen is our future. Book culture is pervasive—the size of the journal you are now reading is a testament to Aldus Manutius' (1450-1515) octavo format, developed to make books more portable for the reader and easier to transport for the seller. It was a practical innovation by a scholarly publisher. The journal you are reading will change from paper to screen at some time in the future. It already exists in digital memory, but the problems of accessing it on the screen either on-line or with CD-ROM remain open as do other perplexing questions concerning authorial control, copyright law and presumptions of equipment and operating system. This journal, more than most others, cares about its appearance, not solely in cosmetic terms, but more particularly in terms of the reader pleasure derived from careful typographic consideration, visual diagrammatic or photographic evidence that advances understanding and its general exploratory attitude toward the communication of information.

While I can bring the journal to the screen and I can imagine wonderful new opportunities to pique interest, provide in-depth information and become even more visual, if I do it too soon, it will be a financial disaster (scholarly journals have a tenuous existence). If I do it too late, the journal loses its edge. Timing is critical.

In the spirit of the book to be reviewed, this journal and my own interests, this article is a hybrid. My purpose is to review the screen version of *The Electronic Word*,<sup>1</sup> but the article is also a reflection on ideas I, a design professor, have been pursuing that run parallel to those of Richard Lanham, an English professor and author of the book we will examine. Here I will necessarily re-present Lanham's ideas, I will reflect on them in my own terms by offering parallel concerns and visual demonstrations, and I will necessarily gloss or abstract aspects of his book. I am setting in motion a response that is slow to move in time via print, but if we imagine this response on screen, it becomes more immediate and could even evolve into a dialogue.<sup>2</sup>

## The ideas

(a gloss) In *The Electronic Word*, Richard Lanham argues that book centered culture is being displaced by the electronic one, and as a consequence, linear thinking is being replaced by networked thought. He cautions us as a culture to not mistake the package for the idea, but to consider what books (or screens) can do to and for us. Examples of bureaucracies and industries centered on a particular technology come to mind. They frequently fail to adapt and subsequently perish as their technology becomes obsolete. Our business is ideas and information and their delivery to interested parties — not books or journals or software or screens. He does not deny that media shape our way of thinking and understanding. But he places technology firmly in the category of a tool for intelligent use, subservient to the ideas and information it will carry. What is at the root of the conflicting possibilities of book and screen is nothing less than a fundamental conflict within Western culture, the conflict between philosophy and rhetoric.

Now some of you may say — wait a minute — I am not schooled or skilled in Greek philosophy — I live in the here and now—time to move on. Despite having read some philosophy, I, too, am not equipped to comment on this argument in any technical way. While the conflict between the philosophers and rhetoricians is at the root of our problem with media and communication, Lanham is a sophisticated and broadly read author: he contextualizes his argument in various arenas from literature and art to science, law and management. He ferrets out the deeply held values and presumptions that have guided Western culture for millennia and that in this century have been opened to question by French deconstructionist philosophers whom he does not applaud. In essence what is at issue is the transparency of language. We need recall the Platonic ideal — pure thought — unsullied by the problems of representation by words or images — a kind of early Vulcan mindmelding. To this we contrast the philosopher's attack on rhetoric as a duplicity or outright lie.

(a re-presentation) "The intellectual structures of formal rhetoric have formed part of Western culture for so long, and yet we have for so long suspected and despised rhetoric as simple hypocrisy and deception, that it is very difficult to recognize it for what [it] is — an information system. Systems, at least for humanists, have never escaped from the Platonic orbit; they are closed patterns organized like human society in the *Republic*. Everyone has a single job; every element a fixed place; the aim is perfect stasis.... What Plato wanted above all to exile from his utopia...was style, the unabridged range of ornament, of purposeless play. Rhetoric defines itself as a counter-system

to the Platonic political order by admitting stylistic, ornamental behavior, by acknowledging that such behavior lies at the heart of human life....Behavioral biology provides a teleonomic explanation for the stylistic, playful component in human behavior....The evolutionary explanation sheds light on two ranges of motive to which rhetoric has anchored itself, game and play. Human purpose is energized by our competitive urge" (C219-222).

(a gloss) According to Lanham, game and play are the loyal opposition to "being serious." It is this opposition that has served Western thought for centuries. He goes on to discuss what he calls the C-B-S, or Clarity-Brevity Sincerity school of style, which permeates not only prose but also modernist design and architecture. Consider Miesian architecture; it is a high example of this style. In contrast, postmodernism self-consciously accepts elaborated surface and builds "meaning" between the sign and the interpreter. Miesian architecture is serious and transparent, while postmodern architecture is playful and opaque. Lanham presents a matrix that summarizes the situation (*figure 1*).

Unselfconscious to selfconscious is a stylistic continuum; unselfconscious is not without style. Lanham develops at length the idea of the oscillation between the elements on the matrix — between transparent and opaque — between looking *through* and *at*. I will take up these two in more detail.

Lanham's matrix charting the oscillation between communication attitudes.

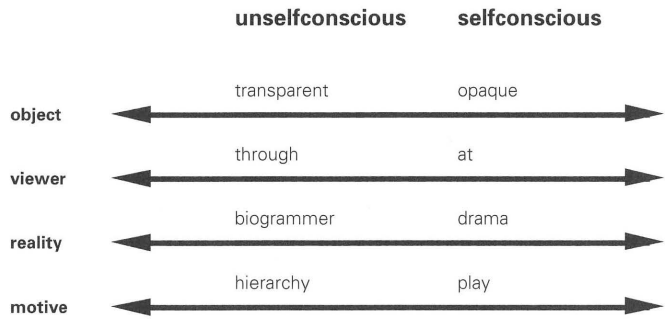


Fig. 1

## Reflections on transparency

Transparent typography, like some Platonic ideal, has been one of the modernist articles of faith. Beatrice Warde and her “crystal goblet” theory of excellence in type design<sup>3</sup> sought to reduce visible language to a transparent vehicle for thought. This ideal came closest to realization in modernist sans serif typography of Swiss and German origin in this century. Like much reductivist activity, it eventually hit the wall. It was carefully structured spatially, there was often no attention to the rhythm or emphasis of delivery, it was essentially delivered in a visual monotone. The aesthetics of an abstract, even gray field of type was the ideal. The text was deeply and transparently packed. To read it, one had to submit to the reading lesson,<sup>4</sup> to exercise discipline and take no-doz. Still, on some level, the experience of reading, while difficult, was also transparent — we looked *through* the type.

There have been counter-arguments to Platonic typography. Interestingly, a Swiss, Wolfgang Weingart, set type into play in the mid-seventies, but the play remained a formalist statement, an avant-garde for the modernist situation. This journal has also set type into play (see for example: Wolfgang Weingart covers on volume 9; and volume 11, number 2, and volume 12, number 3 for more internal elaboration of the text). In general, some of the most unreadable and outrageous typography we see, predominantly in the design community — designers acting out for other designers — is possible because of the flexibility of typographic manipulation in the digital medium. What was play on the screen becomes chaos on the page. Reading is not the focus, but iconographic painting with type. Attempts to read this material make us selfconscious of the very act as we look *at* the typography.

In the past six or so years, I have been experimenting with the elocutionary and meaning-based possibilities of typography. The focus has been to go beyond the formalist palette of modernism — to set type into play with *meaning* — to open the reading lesson to make content more accessible, more engaging and more memorable and to compete with other more seductive technology. Again, digital technology makes this play possible. There are well defined origins for this kind of experiment in poets and typographers from the early part of this century: Apollinaire, Marinetti, Malevitch, the futurists and dadaists, and later the concrete poets and other visual artists interested in the conventions of language, Duchamp, Magritte, Ruscha and Baldesarri to name a few.

The work that follows was done in an advanced typographic studio at the Rhode Island School of Design. The goal was for the students to take the short story assigned to them and to *interpret* the story — to add meaning and

Fig. 2

perspective — using typographic means to engage the reader and to move beyond the transparency of typical book text. We theorized that the reader would be curious and stimulated to look at the text. They would read and enjoy a particular interpretation of the story.

A section of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, "The Canon's Yeoman's Tale," is the first example (*figure 2*). It is increasingly difficult for young people to value the literature of the deep past — it fails to speak to their life and experience. In reading this tale, the student connected the yeoman's situation with that of *Generation X*.<sup>5</sup> Her interpretation centered on the idea that people develop in the shadow of their elders or those in authority. The metaphor of the shadow and emerging from the shadow became the typographic idea for reorganizing the text. In every situation where the shadow of overprinted typography appears, it creates tension and drama, but does not impede the reading. Oral aspects of the tale are also attended to — typographic weight and scale change — to underscore the changing voices and the character of their speech.

Ray Bradbury's short story, "The Velde," was another subject for investigation (*figure 3*). This science fiction story is about a children's virtual reality playroom run amok. Few of the students thought much of the story; it seemed too predictable and Jetson-like. But in examining the story closely, one student became fascinated with the text's recurrent theme of eating. The presentation of the story took on the character of a cookbook with the story text expanded with details of cooking definition or technique — "to dress a turtle," for example. Small animal icons separate speakers allowing a previously highly broken traditional text presentation to take on a more flowing spatial presentation.

These two examples demonstrate the power of typography to open a text when it is presumed to be visible — when the reader is encouraged to look at the text. All reading is an act of interpretation. These examples, while rendered on the page, could also be on the screen. Even on the page, the text can be purposefully or playfully opened for our increased understanding or pleasure.

Do book conventions sit too heavy on the text? Is typographic exploration of the text too challenging to authorial control? Some readers and authors are no doubt horrified. Transparency is shattered. The authority of the author is challenged. Digital possibilities are exposed. The typographer/-designer becomes a particular kind of reader/interpreter. Likewise, authors have become defacto typographers, who frequently overcode and trick up the page because it is easily possible. The realm of word and form and meaning come together. They are plastic. The influence of one on the

**Ha!** said the Yeoman. 'Now we'll have a game,  
Now I can talk, and I've a lot to tell.  
He's gone, the foul fiend carry him off to Hell!  
We'll never meet again, I'll tell you flat,  
For pound or penny, I can promise that.  
He was the first one brought me to the game,  
Grief strike him down, before he dies, in shame!  
For it's a serious thing to me I say,  
As I am well aware, think as you may.  
And yet for all my misery and grief,  
Long hours and injuries without relief,  
I never could leave the business, any price.  
O that I had a brain that would suffice  
To tell you all that's proper to that art!  
Nevertheless I'll try to tell you part,  
And since my master's gone I will not spare;  
All that I know about it I'll declare.'



And by the time the man's gone raging mad  
And risked and lost whatever goods he had,  
He then eggs others on and off they run  
To lose their goods, as he himself has done.  
A spiteful wretch takes pleasure when he sees  
That others suffer from the same disease,  
So I was told once by a learned man.  
But what's the odds? I'll on as I began.  
When we had fixed a place to exercise  
Our esoteric craft, we all looked wise;  
Our terms were highly technical and quaint.  
I blew the fire up till fit to taint.  
As for proportions, why should I rattle on  
About the substances we worked upon,  
The six or seven ounces it may be  
Of silver, or some other quantity,  
Or bother to name the things that we were piling  
Like orpiment, burnt bones and iron filing  
Ground into finest powder, all the lot,  
Or how we poured them in an earthen pot?  
(You put in salt and pepper, be it stated,  
Before these powders I enumerated,

'Look what we've got, put in your hand and grope

And you will find some silver there, I hope.

Hell's devils! What else could have been the stuff?  
Silver filings are silver, right enough.

The priest put in his hand and took a scoop  
And out he brought the metal with a whoop,  
I nuzzed to the veins to see this silver rod.

'God's blessing on you, and the Mother of God  
And all his saints preserve you, worthy master!'  
He cried. 'And may they bring me to disaster  
Unless you will vouchsafe your kind compliance  
In teaching me this noble art and science.  
I'll work for you with all my might and main!'

'Well, said the canon, 'let me try again;

We'll have a second shot; pay careful heed

And you'll become an expert, and at need

Can try it in my absence, once you're in

The ways of scientific discipline.

Let's take another ounce of mercury,

This is no time for chattering, said he,

'And do the same with it as we have done

Already with the first, our silver one.

The priest then set to business and began  
To do precisely what this cursed man

Commanded of him, puffing at the fire  
In the mad nope of reaching his desire.  
Meanwhile the canon, if I need explain,  
Stood ready by, to gull the priest again,  
Dandling, to give him countenance in this,  
A hollow stick ~ observe the artifice! ~  
Into the end of which an ounce, no more,  
Of silver filings had been stuffed before,  
As in the beech-wood coal, with wax no doubt,  
To stop the silver filings falling out.

And while the priest was busy at his job  
The canon came and touched him with the knob  
And with a flourish cast the powder in  
Just as before ~ the devil scrape his skin,  
Hear me, O God, and flay him for the trick! ~  
And stirred the crucible with this same stick  
Primed in the treacherous way that you have heard;  
He always was a crook in deed and word.  
He stirred the coals until the wax began  
To melt over the flame, as any man

Except a fool of course would know it must.  
Out of the stick slid all the silver dust  
And down into the crucible it fell.  
What can be better, gentlemen, than weir  
And taken it all for gospel, right as rain,  
For when this priest had been deceived again  
He was so happy that I can't express  
In words his ecstasy of happiness.

Body and soul. 'Eh,' said the canon. 'What?  
He proffered to the canon on the spot

I have some powers, though I seem poor to some,

But let me tell you there is more to come.

D'you happen to have some copper here?' said he.

'Yes,' said the priest, 'I think I have, maybe.'

'If not you'll have to buy some right away,

He went away and came back with the copper,  
The canon took it from him as was proper.

Be off with you, dear sir, be quick I say.'

And carefully weighed out a measured ounce.  
My tongue is all too simple to pronounce  
Words that could serve my thoughts or match my feelings  
About his bloody-minded double-dealing.  
Friendly he seemed to those he hadn't caught  
But he was a fiend in what he felt and thought.  
It wearies me to say how false he was,  
Yet I must try to speak of it because  
It may help others to beware his treachery  
In time, and truly that's my only reason.  
Within the crucible the canon placed  
His ounce of copper, set it then in haste  
Among the flames and cast the powder in,  
Telling the priest to stoop down and begin  
Blowing the fire, and it was all a hoax;  
He made a monkey of him with his jokes.  
He cast the molten copper in his mould  
And put it in the water to get cold;  
Leaning about it, in he put his hand.  
Now in his sleeve ~ as you will understand,  
You heard me say so ~ was a silver rod.  
He took it slyly out, the filthy sod,  
~ The priest knew nothing of his treacherous plan ~  
And left it in the bottom of the pan.  
He fumbled in the water, groped about  
And with amazing sleight-of-hand took out  
And hid the copper rod. With friendly charm  
He took the unsuspecting victim's arm

'By God, you're much to blame! Stoop down and poke;  
And said to him, as if it were a joke,

Help me as I helped you. That's only fair;

Come on, put in your hand and see what's there.'

other can be explored quickly, if not clearly. Consider as contrast an audio book, read eloquently by some actor with appropriate and subtle sound effects. This, too, is a specific interpretation. Rhythm and intonation, acoustic time and space are returned to the language. Another actor and producer would yield another interpretation emphasizing other colors in the text. Is there one text or are there as many texts as there are versions? Consider modern attempts to revitalize stories from the past: *The Gospel at Colonus*, a gospel choir rendition of the Oedipal tragedy; a feminist version of *King Lear*; *West Side Story*, a musical re-location of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*; *Kabuki Medea*, a modern Japanese version of the Greek Medea; and *J.B.*, a retelling of the story of Job by the poet, Archibald MacLeisch.

These kinds of experiments begin to suggest the radical re-mix of ideas now implicit in the unfolding word/image/sound digital realm. But at the heart of human making, whatever the medium, is a creative vision, an interpretation and control of extended language possibilities whether visual, verbal, textual, musical or spatial. While rich in possibility, once the book, tape or theater production is created, it is a closed system. Interpretation is always possible, but the authoritative text remains the touchstone.

(a re-presentation) "Fixed text accumulates its power through a compressed time-scale; we read in an hour what it took a year to think through and create, and the rush of that compression we will want to preserve. Volatile text pleads to a different constituency, to that chance which always favors the prepared mind; we don't want to forgo this source of power either." (C947)

(a gloss) Volatile text is interactive. The author is joined by the reader/writer in any one of us. We are encouraged to act on Jane Healy's theory that the learner is an active constructor of information rather than a passive receiver.<sup>6</sup> Reading, writing, speaking, listening are *together*, they complement and reinforce each other. While print has necessarily taken a one-size-fits-all approach to language presentation — the reader must adapt to the writer — electronic language presentation postulates a reader and writer who have options and can position themselves on a continuum. Lanham imagines "cultural vandalism" as a teaching tool that allows the student to digitally work on a visual, acoustic or poetic masterpiece. What budding musician hasn't played along with a favorite orchestra or jammed with a favorite group — perhaps even taping the collaboration. What art student hasn't deconstructed analytically or even "painted" a masterpiece. What student of language hasn't studied the poetic form and style of a famous bard. The purpose is to gain insight from understanding the structure and choices open to the creator, but the digital activity itself is more like play. Time and again Lanham returns the discussion to the needed oscillation between purpose and play.

"Filthy creatures," he heard his wife say. "The vultures."

"You see, there are the lions, far over, that way.

George Hadley put his hand up to shield off the burning light from his squinted eyes.

"A zebra or a baby giraffe, maybe."

"Are you sure?" His wife sounded peculiarly tense. "No, it's a little late to be sure," he said, amused.

"Did you hear that scream?" she asked.

"No." "About a minute ago."

"Sorry, no."

The lions were coming. And again George

Hadley was filled with admiration for the mechanical genius who had conceived this

room. A miracle of efficiency selling for an absurdly low price. Every home should have one. Oh, occasionally they frightened you with their clinical accuracy, they startled you, gave you a twinge, but most of the time what fun for everyone, not only your own son and daughter, but for yourself when you felt like a quick jaunt to a foreign land, a quick change of scenery. Well here it was!

• **Now they're on their way to the water hole. They've just been eating," said Lydia. "I don't know what. "Some animal."**

• **"Nothing over there I can see but cleaned bone, and the vultures dropping for what's left."**

• **To dress a Turtle**

Fill a kettle, with a quantity of water sufficient to scald the callapach and callapee, the fins, etc. and about 9 o'clock hang up your turtle by the hind fins, cut off the head and save the blood, take a sharp pointed knife and separate the callapach from the callapee, or the back from the belly part, down to the shoulders, so as to come at the entrails which take out, and clean them, as you would those of any other animal, and throw them into a tub of clean water.

• **cleaned bone**

fleshing: quantity and distribution of muscle and fat on an animal or carcass; removal of flesh from bones and skin.

Books have been purposeful from the very beginning. In contrast, the screen has been a vehicle for play almost from its conception. In the fall of 1993, I asked students at the Institute of Design in Chicago, in a multimedia studio course I was teaching, to read *Einstein's Dreams*,<sup>7</sup> from which they were to select five dreams to interactively represent using either Supercard or Macro-mind Director as the software base. *Einstein's Dreams* was a perfect text to use as a launching platform for demonstrations of various conceptions of time, because the author presents twenty-five or thirty dreams in which a particular notion of time is developed. Time underscores multimedia and interactivity, and designers need more experience thinking about and working with it. Multi-media also raises questions of text, sound and image, and their interrelationships. Screens from one of the solutions to this project show interactivity and the change of pace that can be developed on screen (*figure 4*). Working playfully allows the designer to step aside from conventions of the book to consider the possibilities of the screen.

The designer of this program was interested in encouraging people to explore new images and to associate them with prior experience. The viewer is taken through an experience that begins simply with screens that gradually become more densely interactive. As the viewer plans and takes a journey the screen becomes more highly textured. At the viewer's first visit, the objects show their generic states. As the viewer visits them again and again, the objects start to change, evolve and interact with each other. Finally all the objects merge into a single understanding based on the order of the objects visited. This is no static presentation — it is evolutionary based on the viewer's choices.

While the earlier book projects had to present the author's text as written, in this project the author merely provided the initial stimulus — a conception of time. The designer could choose to present the notion of time in any way they found appropriate. Because of this the designer was not bound to the author or any implications of book text. This is an important step to considering how the screen and the page are not synonymous or equal. This is a step in discovering how the screen can function as a medium. Alternative non-textual methods for representing an idea can be developed. The possibilities of the screen can be more fully developed.

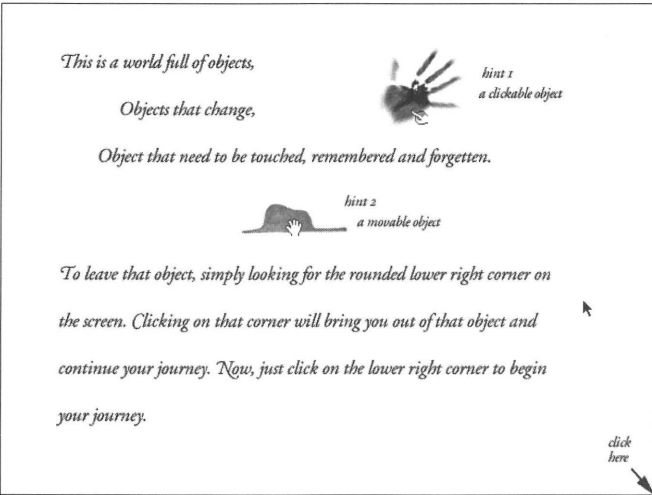
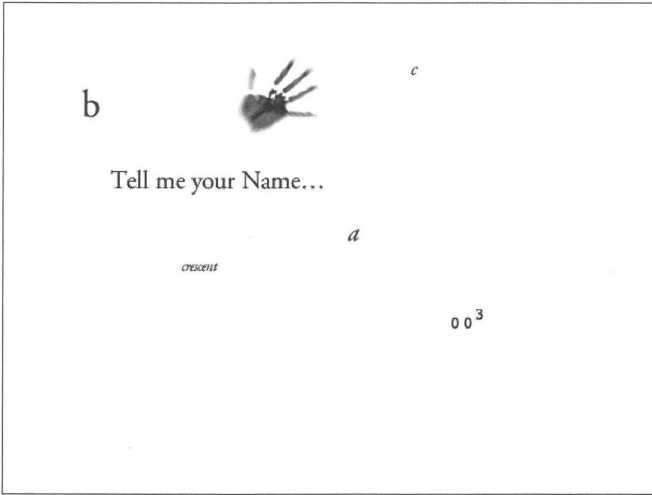


Fig. 4 Screens developed from inspiration drawn from Alan Lightman's *Einstein's Dreams*, created by Hsin Chien Huang at the Institute of Design, 1993. The first screens are simple and require simple interactions like typing a name to personalize the presentation and its memory.

Tuesday, August 9, 1994 9:23:04 AM

Sharon is planning a trip,  
to places not marked on maps, but only existing in dreams,  
to travel through air, time, and his mind . . . .

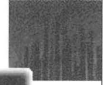


\_\_\_\_\_ is a must see, he put it in the first priority.

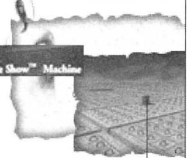
then he would like to visit \_\_\_\_\_  
since he has dreamed of it a thousand times.

sombody told him that \_\_\_\_\_ is a nice place,  
better includes it to \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ is a nice place,  
better includes it to \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ is a nice place,  
better includes it to \_\_\_\_\_

what else? maybe \_\_\_\_\_  
but, just maybe ...

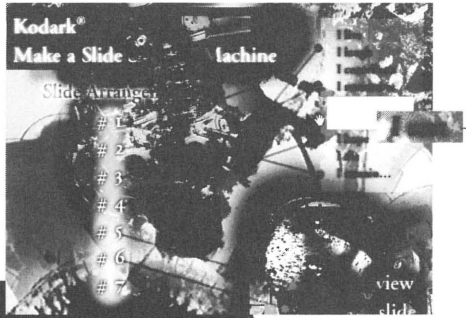
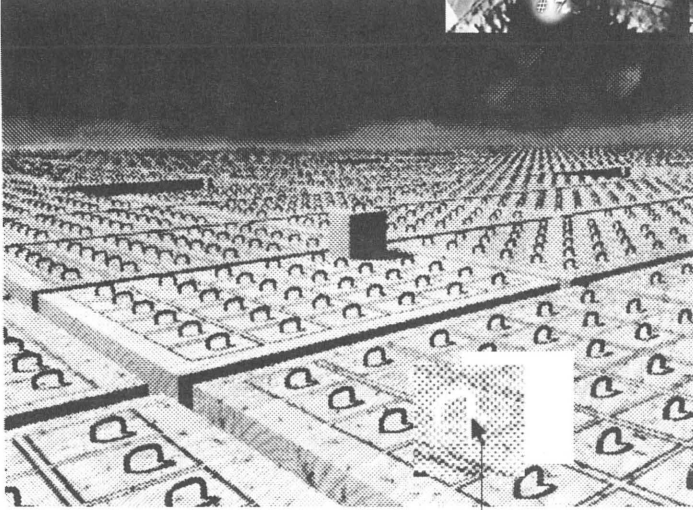


Kodak®  
Make a Slide Show™ Machine



Here a stack of images are unpacked,  
examined and a few are selected for  
the "trip." The selection sets the stage  
for what is to follow.

The images become more densely textured.  
Clouds move continuously. Clicking on a  
drawer causes it to open, releasing a sound.  
The viewer literally explores the images  
and makes discoveries.



Close



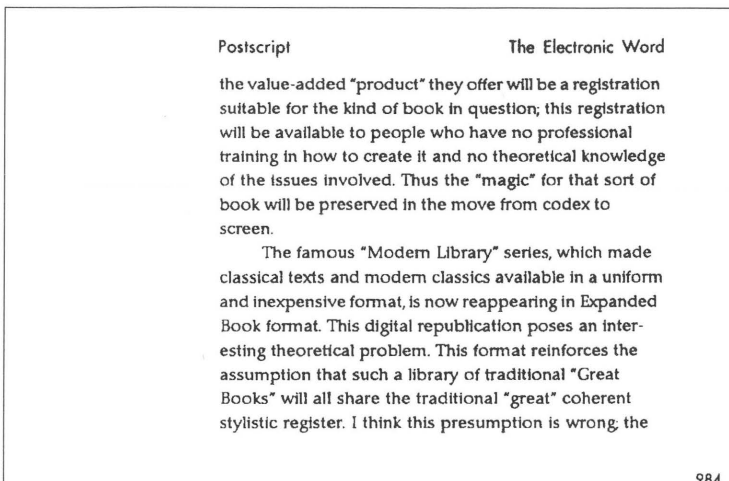
## The format

Sampling the digital realm is an ongoing activity of mine. I have seen IBM's Columbus extravaganza and Voyager's *Between Alice and Ocean*. I kind of read Michael Joyce's *afternoon, a story* from Eastgate, and I've seen Octavo's attempt to go electronic. While this is not the place to develop comment or criticism on these early forays into the future, in fact all these attempts to explore and form our new media should be applauded for bringing to our attention the issues that swirl around the screen. Designers, myself included, firmly believe in the importance of *making* the prototype, of getting a communication product into the marketplace and of learning from experience with the end-user.

When I popped *The Electronic Word* into my computer, I expected this "reading" experience to be as short lived as my others, but to my pleasure Lanham's clear writing style and intelligence, together with the fact that he was developing ideas in which I had a significant interest, kept my attention. Reading the screen, however, was not a pleasure. I found I could read about one hundred cards (one card = one screen of information, *figure 5*) at a time. I almost abandoned the screen altogether when I realized there were slightly over one thousand cards. I nearly went out to buy the book version, which I knew I could read, skim, annotate and navigate with ease. But I persisted with the electronic version in order to get the "experience." It was Lanham's energetic prose that kept me reading.

And this perhaps points to a disparity between my reading pleasure, which was based on his linear prose, and the vehicle, the Expanded Book, on which

This is a typical screen from *The Electronic Book*.



it was delivered to me. The delivery was choppy, screen-by-screen. The prose was seamless and closely argued, and discouraged hypertextual leaps. Lanham suggests that writing style for the screen will change, but his own style is synonymous with the page.

Voyager, the developer of the Expanded Book format, apparently envisions it as a new "Modern Library" series. Designed for the Powerbook, the screen size on my Mac was not pleasing, the format did not fill the screen. I wanted more text per screen in order to smooth out the reading. Voyager imagines travellers in airports and hotels reading Expanded Books to pass the time. What is at issue is the various kinds of reading and writing we do. Not all writing and reading is appropriate for the screen. Hypertextual opportunities support investigation, tracing through references, hunting down comparisons, browsing with a purpose. This is reading more strongly associated with research than with literary pleasure. First readings of *good* books, and here I include nonfiction, are usually linear. What might a first reading of an Expanded Book be like? I am caught between the page and the screen.

Late in his discussion, Lanham celebrates a book, the Baskerville *Horace*, that for him exemplifies mastery and harmony of form. First he lists four levels of information that the book contains: "1) the binding and the paper (the physical substance of the book); 2) the typography; 3) the alphabetic information itself, those particular configurations we usually call 'style'; 4) the 'meaning' for which we read." (C976) He goes on to say that mastery and harmony depend on all four levels of expression emerging from the same transparent theory of style. The Expanded Book format, while not transparent at the beginning, becomes so as we read. And Lanham's style of writing is book-like, hence there is a disparity between electronic form, writing style and typography that signals a lack of harmony.

Lanham investigates the text in an ancillary document, *Electronic Word Annotations*, which contain six typographic demonstrations. Most of these demonstrations are trivial, but the section on paragraph, prose and sentence revision shows the dynamic possibilities of teaching with an annotated moving text demonstration.

In *The Electronic Word* itself, the interface is obvious and navigation is simple, but not too reliable. The reader can mark pages, print screens or fields, annotate in the text margins, move from footnote to reference details, close and automatically re-open to the last screen examined. If the reader moves from the main text through several linked references, the program is unable to return the reader to the paragraph from which the search commenced. This is a serious shortcoming — the reader's path should be

tracked several moves deep with a smooth return to the departure point. Other features include a progress bar to measure reader movement through the text, and a large print version, which is a blow-up of the regular screen that removes all margins and with it the possibility of annotation. This is a format that needs further exploration.

The *Electronic Word* is a significant book for its ideas rather than for its format. Thinking that everything can simply be translated into another medium is misleading. To his credit, the author reminds us of this translation problem with many explicit examples. Digital republication does not mean churning out the old stuff in the latest technology. Nevertheless, the University of Chicago Press has taken a brave step to explore the possibility of an electronic text delivery system. Digital technology alters the boundary conditions of communication. Lanham believes that new theory will emerge from the digital situation. For this we must be thoughtful and patient. When I called the University of Chicago Press to check on the publication details of this book, I also inquired about its success. The book format was sold-out, but the electronic version remained available.

(a re-presentation) "Life is information; life is the *logos*. It is an evolutionary system, dynamic, perpetually emergent. It *creates* new meanings, as does poetry, rather than simply communicating preexisting knowledge in a transparent capsule." (C887)

#### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Lanham, Richard A. 1993. *The Electronic Word, Democracy, Technology and the Arts*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (A Chicago Expanded Book). ISBN 0-226-46884-4 \$19.95  
System specs: Macintosh computer with at least 2MB of RAM, a hard drive (4MB of RAM recommended), system software 6.0.7, and Hypercard 2.1 or Hypercard Player 2.1 are required. This book is shipped on two 1.4 MB high-density floppy disks. The book version is ISBN 0-226-46883-7 \$22.50
- <sup>2</sup> The character of response on paper or screen is different in many ways, not the least of which is the thought and attention that forms the response. Because this is a print response that will be fixed, I am perhaps spending more time on thinking it through, elaborating examples and formulating a formal presentation, than if I responded directly on-line.
- <sup>3</sup> Warde, Beatrice. 1958. *The Crystal Goblet: Sixteen Essays on Typography*. London: Sylvan, 11-17.
- <sup>4</sup> The idea of the reading lesson as it relates to typography is developed in my article, Probing the Text, in *Spirals91*, volume 5, 201-210.
- <sup>5</sup> Coupland, Douglas. 1991. *Generation X*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- <sup>6</sup> Healy, Jane. 1990. *Endangered Minds: Why Our Children Don't Think*. New York: Simon and Schuster.