

BRIDGING THE WEB AND DIGITAL PUBLISHING: EPUBWEB

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THE VISION

EPUBWEB is a vision for the future:

- Portable documents are fully native citizen of the Open Web Platform
- Separation between online (i.e., the “Web”) and portable (i.e., “EPUB”) is diminished to zero

THE VISION

In other words:

- Content authored for primarily offline use can be used online by loading it into a browser
- Content authored for primarily online use can be easily saved as a portable document for offline use
- These should be doable smoothly, solely based on the user's interaction

THE VISION

- Publishers can choose to utilize either or both of these publishing modes
- Users can choose either or both of these consumption modes
- Essential features flow seamlessly between on-line and off-line modes, like
 - cross-references, user annotations, access to on-line databases
 - licensing and rights management
 - etc.

WHY BOTHER?

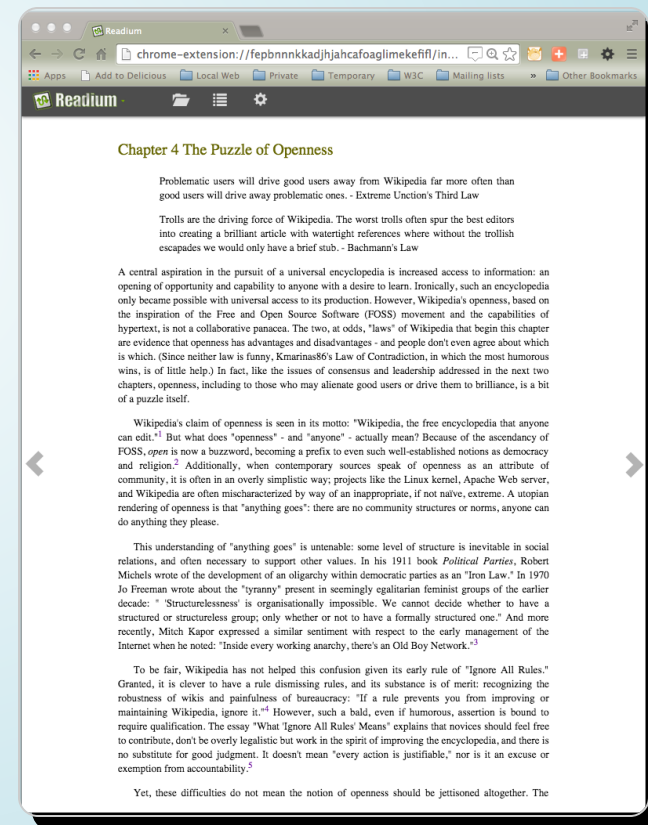
FOR EXAMPLE: BOOK IN A BROWSER

- On a desktop I may want to read a book just like a Web page:
- easily follow a link “out” of the book
- create bookmarks “into” a page in a book
- use useful plugins and tools that my browser may have



FOR EXAMPLE: BOOK IN A BROWSER (CONT.)

- But:
 - my book may be 2000 pages long
 - conventional Web browsing may not be the right way to view content, a paginated view may be better
 - I may also want to use a small dedicated reader device to read the book on the beach...
- All this should happen using the same book, and not a conversion from one format to the other!



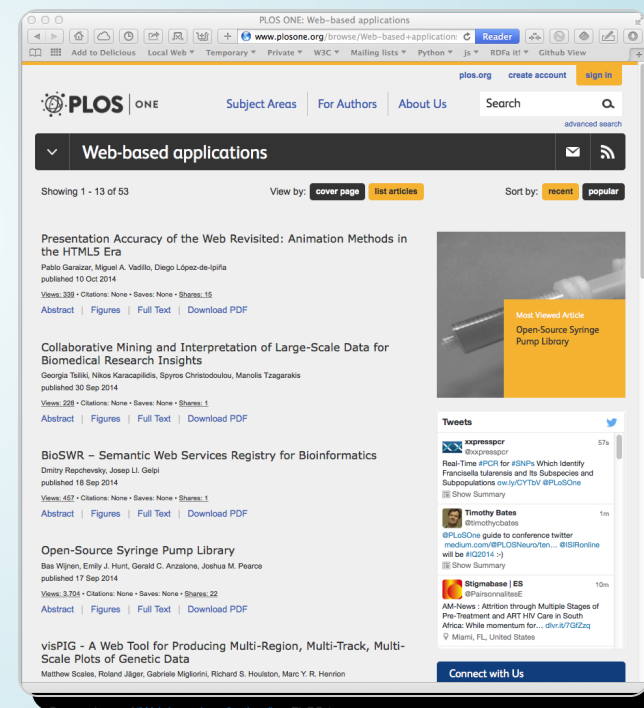
FOR EXAMPLE: I MAY NOT BE ONLINE...

- I may find an article on the Web that I want to review, annotate, etc., while commuting home on a train
- I want the results of the annotations to be back online, when I am back on the Internet
- Note: some browsers have an “archiving” possibility, but they are not interoperable
 - the content can definitely no be read on a dedicated reader



FOR EXAMPLE: SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING

- My paper is published, primarily, on-line, but people may want to download it for offline use
- The format of the paper should be adaptable to my reading environment
 - do not want a two column, fixed layout file that I cannot handle on my iPad...
- My “paper” may also contain video, audio, data, programs...
- scholarly publishing is not text only any more!



FOR EXAMPLE: IN-HOUSE PUBLISHING

- Major companies (IBM, Intel, Boeing, FAO, Renault,...) are specialized publishers through the publication of huge amount of documentation
- Delivering it on paper is not an option any more
- Fast refresh time is needed
- The same document should be available offline (e.g., in the cockpit) or online (e.g., on the work floor): there should be no difference between the two



Photo: Bob Feltre/Agencia, Flickr

FOR EXAMPLE: ARCHIVAL AND PRESERVATION INSTITUTIONS

- Archiving digital assets (i.e., Web pages with all dependencies) is a major problem
- There is a need to produce, easily, a complete version of a page to be stored through archival facilities



FOR EXAMPLE: EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

- What is an educational publication?
 - *A book* of possibly long texts that requires offline access on dedicated devices?
 - *A packaged application* with built-in interactive tests, animated examples?
 - *A Web client* reaching out to Web services for assessing test results, to encyclopedia, ...?
 - *An interactive data container* storing various data for, e.g., demonstrations?
- The borderline between a “book” and a “(Web) Application” are becoming blurred!



Photo Credit: WashU College of Journalism, Rick

SYNERGY EFFECTS OF CONVERGENCE

ADVANTAGE FOR PUBLISHERS' COMMUNITY

- Publishers want to concentrate on what *they* know better: how to produce, edit, curate, etc, great content
- Publishers are *not* technology companies, nor do they intend to be; they want instead to rely on the vibrant Web community!

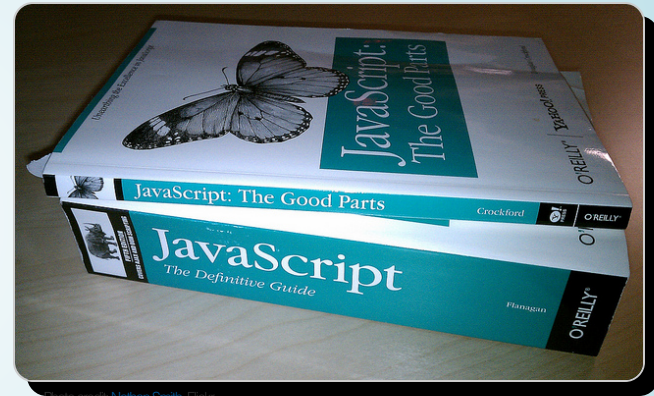
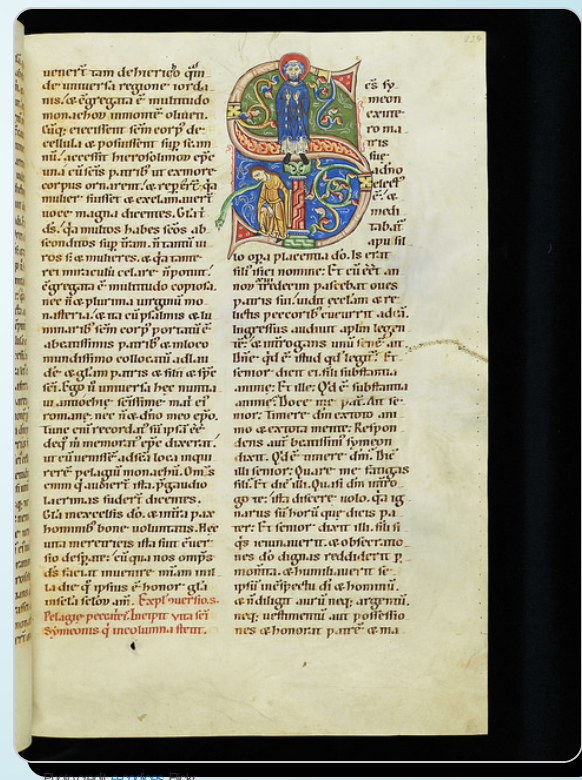


Photo credit: Nathan Smith, Flickr

ADVANTAGE FOR THE WEB COMMUNITY

- Publishers have a long experience in ergonomics, typography, paging, complex layout, etc.
- Publishing long texts, with the right aesthetics, readability, structure, etc., is an expertise the Web community can profit from
- Experience of publishers in the complete curatory workflow for producing content may become important for Web design



HOW DO WE GET
THERE?

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

- A strong cooperation between the two communities should be ensured
- Technical challenges must be identified
- A new generation of EPUB (“EPUBWEB”) has to be specified

In what follows some of the main technical issues will be highlighted

ARCHIVAL FORMAT

- EPUB is based on ZIP
- There is no standard packaging format for browsers yet...
 - although there is a need for, e.g., applications or data sets
- ... but ZIP may not be the right approach on the Web
 - Multipart Mime may be an alternative
- There is a new work item at W3C on packaging standard, and that may affect EPUBWEB

OVERALL DOCUMENT STRUCTURE

- A complete, offline content may need additional information
 - list of all necessary content, default reading order, etc.
 - in EPUB these are stored in additional, auxiliary files
- But these data may not be necessary for a simple Web page with a few CSS files
 - i.e., some sort of a default structure should be defined
- User interaction paradigms should also be developed to create documents from more complex Web sites easily

IDENTIFICATION

- A concise and unique identification for a book is necessary
- I.e., what is the URI for...
 - Shakespeare's Hamlet?
 - its digital edition published by Publisher XYZ?
 - the copy I own and annotate?
- This is necessary to make a book a first-class citizen on the Web
- This is already the topic for huge debates in the publishing and library community...

IDENTIFICATION (CONT.)

- Unique identification is not enough
- A fragment identification framework is also necessary to link *into* the book
- There are fragments defined for various media, but a universal approach, workable for browsers, is still missing
 - these should be agnostic to offline vs. online state, to media type, etc.

IMPROVEMENT ON STYLING, PAGINATION

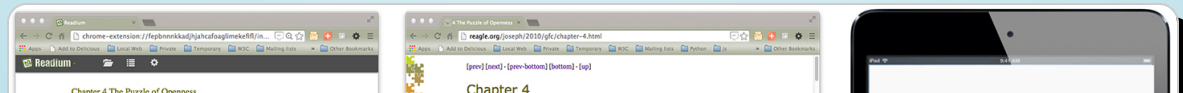
- Books usually need higher quality typesetting than average Web pages
 - control over fine aspects of drop caps, alignments, justification, hyphenation, etc.
 - cf. <http://www.w3.org/TR/dpub-latinreq/>
- The main issue, however, is paged view of the content; what is a “page” for an electronic content?
 - Is this a new CSS concept? Do we need an extension to the DOM?

PRESENTATION CONTROL

- What is the level of user control of the presentation?
- The Web and eBook traditions are vastly different:
 - In a browser, the Web designer is in full control
 - CSS alternate style sheets are hardly in use
 - some user interface aspects can be controlled but only for the browser as a whole
 - In an eBook reader, there may be more user control
 - foreground/background color
 - choice of fonts
- There is a need to reconcile these traditions

CONCLUSION

- There is a great potential in a convergence between the Open Web Platform and Portable Documents
- It will require a common effort and cooperation of both communities
- But it is an exciting prospect!



WHAT IS NEXT?

WHAT IS NEXT?

- We collect comments on this vision
 - this conference
 - F2F meeting of the Digital Publishing Interest Group next week
 - internal discussions at IDPF and W3C
- Plan to release a public White Paper in November
 - taking into account all the comments we receive
- Extensive discussions with various communities should then happen

IF THERE IS CONSENSUS

- Work with existing IDPF and W3C groups, where necessary, on specific details
- Set up a new group (or groups) to define the EPUBWEB specific issues
 - lots of details to be clarified...

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

These slides can be accessed on the Web (in HTML):

<http://www.w3.org/2014/Talks/1023-SF-IH/>

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