

# The Simple Reader

A visual essay describing the on-screen processes of publishing in printed and online formats.

When, in 2007, having avoided the idea for long enough, I decided to make a website, a simple question presented itself. Was it possible to consider what you saw within the bounds of the monitor as a sheet of paper, and so was the edge of the screen equivalent to the edge of the page? I didn't have any understanding of how to begin, but I had an idea of how I thought it should look, and how I wanted it to be structured. The coder made a template where the text and images were placed on what was equivalent to a piece of white paper.

Once we had the style for this simple format, it was then easy to duplicate page after page and begin the role of online publisher. Works that had been made primarily as books, the content interrupted by physical sequence, could now be reformatted as a single page: the format as wide as the frame of the browser, and of unlimited depth.

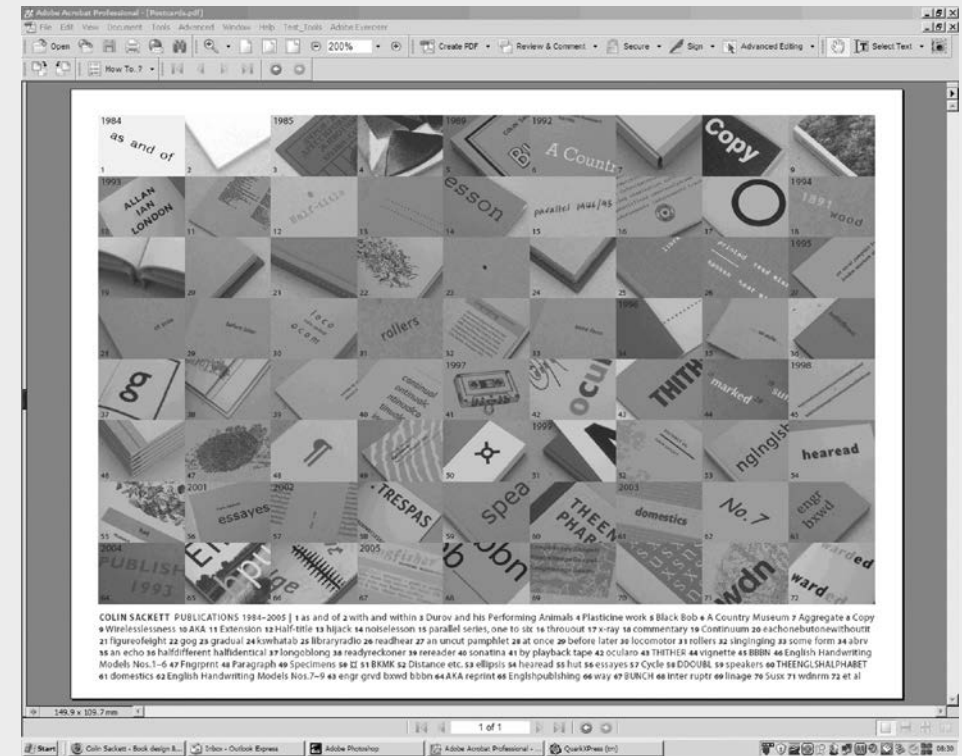
Basic HTML allowed simple variations to be applied to text; trial and error the process of learning. It was picked up as a system and it either worked correctly, or it was wrong. Pages could be published, then amended, and amended again, without the finality there is with print. During the next several years over thirty pages of online work was published.\*

New versions made in and for a browser, assembled from the raw materials of scanned or cut and pasted text, digital images, manuscripts and typescripts, to be read in the identical form that they were constructed. The entire process of publishing done within the illuminated bounds of the device, and the process of reading done likewise.

From an essay included in *Code-X: Paper, Ink, Pixel and Screen*; bookRoom, Farnham, 2015.

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\* Index, [colinsackett.co.uk/writing\\_readings\\_26.php](http://colinsackett.co.uk/writing_readings_26.php)



## The Simple Reader Colin Sackett

Illustrated above is the layout of a colour postcard, viewed on-screen as a pdf, and reproduced here in black and white.

The card shows a numbered grid of details of seventy-two books, published from 1984 to the end of 2005. Although the sequence is chronological, left to right and top to bottom, the overall impression is as one might have of this group of work in entirety, albeit haphazardly.

The books vary considerably in extent and format, and in means of production—handwriting, typewriting, letterpress, offset, photocopy, ink-jet—but the singular concern of the books is an examination of reading and writing, its meaning and variation within the structure offered by an extent of pages.

As well as the slighter books, works demonstrating a single idea, there are several extended collections—publications that gather and redeploy the parts of other publications to make something larger.

The most wide-ranging of these is *Englishpublishing, Writing and readings 1991–2002*; a reformatting and unifying of material in a standardised paperback. Densely typeset and 'constructed' entirely on-screen; edited and assembled as the sum of its parts.

*Common to all current practice of research, writing and composition, publishing and broadcasting, are the framed workings—browser, word processor, formatter.*

*The process of construction is made within the illuminated bounds of the device itself, and the reader in a document viewer or browser reads likewise.*

*The difference of sensation between the handling of the pages of a book and the articulation of active frames is not replicated in the focus of the eye and the brain, which are identical.*

*The directional movement from page to page, or from frame to frame, is contrasted by just the physical and actual—the hand and the means.*

The following sequences of frames and captions contrast several works, from process to publication in printed and online formats.