Rhode Island School of Design
Spring 2014, Graph–3111
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Design Center, Room 501
Tuesdays, 8am – 1pm
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Instructor: John Caserta, jcaserta@risd.edu
Office Hours: Mondays 10am – 12pm
Design Center, Room 105

Introduction

The Web browser is an ideal development envi-
ronment because it combines data awareness
and interactivity with increasingly robust pre-
sentation options. This one-time studio elective
makes use of the Web browser as a design tool
to create off-browser forms: event ephemera,
wallpaper and textiles, publications and objects.

Readings, site visits, lectures from experts in
the field and case studies will inspire a work-
shop-style research-oriented classroom. Most
projects will have open deliverables intended to
foster cross-disciplinary experimentation and
collaboration. The course is open to everyone,
but will be most beneficial to students who have
Web development experience.

Course goals

   * To see what the Web platform can offer
     non-Web work
   * To bring awareness to the limitations of al-
     gorithms, automation and the web
   * To help question known forms and methods
     by using speculative ones
   * To resee the Web experience as a lush
     expression-filled space vs 'usable' space
   * To expand the notion of "responsive design"
     beyond the screen
   * To create new knowledge on the topic and
     share code and knowledge in a public format
   * Spur culture of student-directed projects
     and research

Students will opt into several research areas and work together to produce experiments, projects and conclusive writings to be published in a final single book. The "chapters" and research areas will begin with the list below, but may evolve based on the interests of the class. Any additions to these research areas should be agreed upon.

Research areas (1st half of semester)

GRAPHIC FORM

How can the Web authoring and display environment be used to generate form. Is there an advantage to form made in this way? Is it speed, convenience, reach, the pleasure/familiarity of the development environment? When drawing or assembling collages, there are immediate responses that take place. What are the sensory effects of making form in the browser? How might the construction of graphic form in the browser provide an alternative to traditional tools and methods. Possible areas of interest: patterns for wallpaper and textiles; responsive iconography.

DESIGNING IN SERIES

All programming languages are generative systems, with parameters that define known or unknown outcomes. How might this programmatic mindset be applied to the systems we're used to seeing in finished physical forms: poster series, event fliers, book covers, type specimens, etc. This area of research allows us to exaggerate and better understand the web mantra: separate the look from the content.

TYPOGRAPHY

As a specific, but important offshoot to the previous two areas, typography itself is a worthy area of examination in terms of how the Web can be ported over for use in type specimens, letterhead and other

type-heavy applications. What is the cur-
rent state of typography and the browser?
What are the implications for licensing if one
licenses type for the screen but not the
desktop? Can letterhead exist in the Cloud,
but sent via post?

PHYSICAL OBJECTS
How do SVG/Canvas/CSS3D and other ren-
dering engines in the browser contribute to
the creation of physical objects?

DYNAMIC VISUALIZATION
How can APIs matched with visualization
tools like D3 produce snapshots of data for
print, physical space, as object?

Research area (2nd half of semester)
BOOKS/JOURNALS
The Web has influenced books in terms of
information design (the importance of navi-
gation), but is relatively untapped in terms
of how authoring, commenting, database-in-
telligence and layout might be leveraged to
create the look and structure of the book.
What are conventions of a book that could
be reconsidered and played with when the
browser becomes the output device.

The culminating offering of the class is our
most important deliverable. Guest lectures
and visits, interviews and student research
will fold into a final collective work.

Students will be responsible for the prepa-
ration of all of their research into the final
book form.

Research deliverables
* Presentation of technical and theoretical
  findings in class, online and within final book
  (as transcript)
* Original writings on your findings
* Digital and physical design artifacts; includ-
  ing open-source code, printed works and
  documentation of work

Conversations/Interviews

Feb 21	Linked by Air (Printed Matter, etc)
Feb 25	Brooks Hagan (RISD Textiles/Patterns)
Mar 07	Lev Manovich (Software takes Command)
Apr 04	Peter Bil'ak (Works that Work)
TBD	Paul Soullelis (Library of Printed Web)
TBD	Nick Sherman/Jason Pamental (Fonts)
TBD	Andrew LeClair (Ether Press, Notices app)
TBD	David Reinfurt (servinglibrary.org)
TBD	Jürg Lehni (eitherand.org)

Grading/Assessment

Grades from A to F will be assigned at both the middle and end of the semesters. Only the end of semester grade is on record. The following criteria are used for assessment:

Citizenship   30%
* Attendance (2 unexcused absences fail)
* Participation
* Motivation/Attitude
* Personal improvement

End Products   70%
* Research/Interview   20%
* Project 1   25%
* Project 2   25%

   Criteria: Craft, Risk taking, Depth of investigation, Importance to larger community

Note: The same projects submitted for two courses is not allowed by RISD. Simply be open about what you're working on, and the instructors will guide you to find outcomes for each course that are appropriate.