

2-6-2010

# Our Digital Future: The Challenge to Books

Edward Nawotka

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.utep.edu/carl\\_hertzog](http://digitalcommons.utep.edu/carl_hertzog)

Comments:

No. 14

---

## Recommended Citation

Nawotka, Edward, "Our Digital Future: The Challenge to Books" (2010). *Carl Hertzog Lecture Series*. 13.  
[http://digitalcommons.utep.edu/carl\\_hertzog/13](http://digitalcommons.utep.edu/carl_hertzog/13)

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the University of Texas at El Paso Library at DigitalCommons@UTEP. It has been accepted for inclusion in Carl Hertzog Lecture Series by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UTEP. For more information, please contact [lweber@utep.edu](mailto:lweber@utep.edu).

Carl  
Hertzog  
Lecture Series



*Our Digital Future:  
The Challenge to Books*

Edward Nawotka

Editor-in-Chief, *PublishingPerspectives.com*



# Carl Hertzog Lecture Series



The 2009-2010 Carl Hertzog Award and Lecture  
were made possible through generous underwriting support from:

Mr. and Mrs. J. Sam Moore

Mr. and Mrs. I. T. Schwartz

R. B. Price Family Foundation

*Special thanks to:*

Mrs. Marcia Daudistel

Ms. MaryAnne Talbott

Mr. Bill Wright

Copyright © 2010  
The University of Texas at El Paso  
El Paso, Texas 79968-0633

∞ The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American  
National Standard for Information Sciences.  
-Permanence of Paper for printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984

*Published in March, 2010, in a printing limited to 500 copies.*

# *The Carl Hertzog Lecture Series*

The Hertzog Lectures, inaugurated on February 5, 1989, and presented biennially in the month of his birth, honor the memory and life work of the "Printer at the Pass," J. Carl Hertzog (1902-1984).

A premier typographer and book designer long before his association with the University of Texas at El Paso, Mr. Hertzog brought his international renown to the then-Texas Western College in 1948. He launched Texas Western Press in 1952, serving as its director until his retirement in 1972.

Books bearing the distinctive Carl Hertzog colophon reached a standard of excellence that is unexcelled to this day.

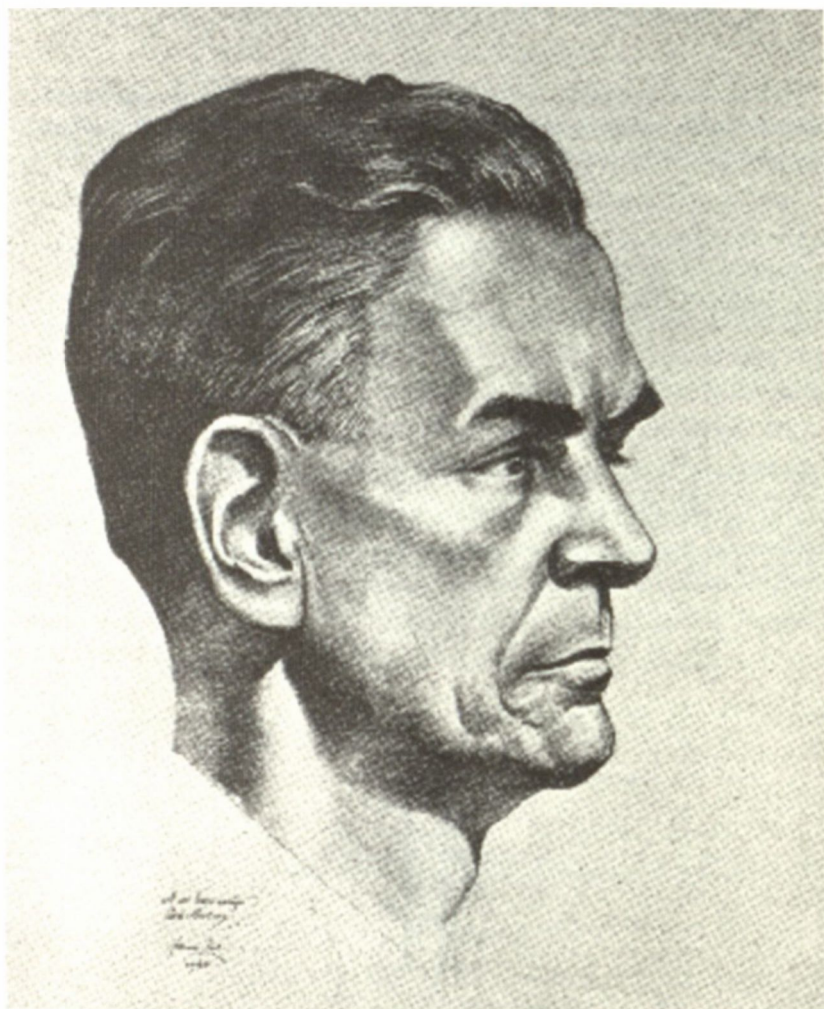
The University Library's Special Collections Department is the repository of the extensive collection of Carl Hertzog books and papers.

The Carl Hertzog Lectures and the biennial Carl Hertzog Award for Excellence in Book Design are sponsored by the Friends of the University Library at the University of Texas at El Paso.



**Texas  
Western  
Press**

The University of Texas at El Paso



*(Drawing by Tom Lea, 1946)*

J. Carl Hertzog  
1902 - 1984

# **Our Digital Future: The Challenge to Books**

Edward Nawotka

Editor-in-Chief, *PublishingPerspectives.com*

**February 6, 2010**

Carl Hertzog lecture series, no. 14



# Our Digital Future: The Challenge to Books

by Edward Nawotka

Today we're here to talk about our digital future and what that means for the future of books. To begin, I'd like you to think for a moment – not about books, but about movies. Think about all the futuristic science-fiction movies or television shows you've ever seen – from *Blade Runner* to *Terminator*, *Firefly* to *Battlestar Galactica* — aside from the fact that all these movies depict dystopias, the other thing they have in common is...a lack of books. If you think about it, in virtually no science fiction world do books exist. And in those worlds where they do exist books are depicted as antiques, relics of the past before computers could provide all that we need to know, almost instantaneously, at the touch of a button. That is to say, before technology made books unnecessary.

This is not to say that I agree with this vision of the future, but it is one that has been laid out by visionaries themselves, the writers.

But to return to the here-and-now, I'd like to show you a recent headline from an esteemed newspaper that originates in Austin – *The Onion*. The headline reads: "Area eccentric reads entire book." The story continues, "'It was great,'" said the peculiar Indiana native, who despite owning a television and having an active social life, read every single page of *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee."

## The State of Reading

How close to the truth is this? Closer than any of us would care to admit. The fact is that the average American reads just one full book per year. Of those, about half – according to a recent survey by the National Endowment for the Arts – are reading a work of literature, be it fiction or poetry. That amounts to some 113 million people each year.

When you consider that we have some 60 million college graduates in the country – and nearly twice that amount are reading literature –that's a pretty optimistic sign. In fact, that NEA study from

last year indicated that the number of people reading literature is actually on the rise. Their estimate was 7% in all. It's a strong number. The reason there are so many new readers, according to the NEA at least, is attributable to two distinct things: the increased popularity of young adult novels (think of *Twilight* and Harry Potter) and the Internet – which is disseminating more free short stories, poems, novel samples, book reviews, essays, you name it really, than ever before.

In fact, Americans are collectively spending approximately one trillion hours in front of screens per year. Television screens, movie screens, computer screens, smart phone screens. The time spent on the latter – computer and smart phone screens – accounts for that rise in the rate of reading.

With devices such as Amazon's Kindle and the soon-to-arrive iPad, you can download a book wirelessly, instantaneously even, often for as little as \$9.99 or free – much cheaper than at your local Barnes & Noble. If you prefer to shop online, you can find upwards of 150 million new and used volumes for sale online. If you prefer to get all your books for free, you can browse through Google's cache of 20 million digitized volumes that they make available for free, or that is, until the moment when they decide not to offer them for free.

Never before in the history of books have so many books been available to so many people so cheaply. And yet, books themselves seem to be increasingly marginalized in our culture. I'm not talking about e-books, but the bound paper book – the 500 year old technology that libraries were themselves originally designed to house.

But before we go ahead into the future, I want to go into the past a little bit – specifically – some 38 years, which happens to be just how old I am.

## **My Book Story**

When I was growing up in Detroit, Michigan, our spare bedroom was filled with piles of paperbacks, from a fat, waterlogged copy of Herman Wouk's *The Winds of War*, which my mother had evidently dropped in the bath, to a hardcover copy of Phillip Roth's *The Ghost Writer*. The Roth was likely a "Book of the Month Club" selection

that arrived like clockwork every month – every month of my childhood that I can remember.

These books would pile up, read or unread. In addition to the Book of the Month Club Books there were the monthly volumes of leather bound Franklin Mint editions, often signed first editions of books like Joyce Carol Oates' *Them* and the poetry of W.H. Auden. These were reverentially put on top of the bookshelf – not to be touched by me until I was given permission to do so. The day that permission came, when my father pulled down a copy of John Hershey's *A Bell for Adano* and, later, Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five*, was special.

So was the day when my father gave me my first credit card. It came with one caveat: I could only use it at bookstores. It was quite a brilliant idea. This was, remember, a time when bookstores sold mostly books and not \$5 lattes all the way to \$100 life-sized stuffed animals. I have little doubt that this simple gesture by my father led to, if not a love of reading, at least an interest in shopping in bookstores.

For the truth is, I wasn't much of a reader before getting to college. I attended Catholic military schools in the Midwest and played a lot of role playing games. My grounding in myth comes not from reading mythology but from the *Dungeons and Dragons Players Handbook*. That said, something did eventually change my mind and in a panic, perhaps a need to catch up with my classmates at college, I set out in the summer of my sophomore year to read the *Norton Anthology of Literature* end to end – a project I abandoned after falling asleep on it one night, something that has left a permanent crick in my neck. Ultimately, the thing that turned me into a reader was when I got a job in a bookstore.

I still remember my first day – climbing a ladder to rearrange the travel section and what all those books smelled like. It smelled, frankly, a bit musty; but there was something familiar there too. It was home. In all, I would spend three years working in bookstores and it was the best education I ever received. Better, I would venture, than the one I was paying tens of thousands of dollars for at my private college in Boston. Being in the store with the books, packing and unpacking them, shelving and selling them, gave ample opportunity to learn about the vast breadth of books – as a college student, who knew that the phrase Sado-masochism came from the book *Venus in*

*Furs* by Leopold Von Sacher-Masoch or that so many people would try to steal Bibles. It wasn't quite the same thing I was learning in the classroom.

Then there was the interaction with authors, which itself was an education of sorts. The first author I met was the recently deceased Boston detective novelist Robert Parker, who proved a good host when he went and bought a bottle of wine to share with the bookstore employees when no one showed up at his reading one night (the night the remnants of a hurricane lashed Boston). And then there was Umberto Eco, whom I met while working at an antiquarian bookstore, and who announced his own entry with a booming, "I AM UMBERTO ECO..."

It is interesting to note that the antiquarian bookstore, while run by genteel blue-blood Bostonians whose families were founding members of the Boston Athenaeum and prided themselves on having a strong relationship with the Christian Science Church – they were tasked with selling many of the books from Mary Baker Eddy's library – still made most of its profits through the sale of Victorian erotica, books bound in purple velvet.

At this point, you may be asking yourself: What does all this have to do with digital publishing, e-books and the future of the book? My answer is: everything. What I'm trying to demonstrate is that from a very young age we have a physical, visceral relationship with books, be they the *Norton Anthology* or a volume of Victorian erotica. What happens to that relationship in a digitized world? That's one of the questions that remains to be answered.

For starters, I would suggest that the sense of achievement and pride that comes with finishing a particularly large volume of work – be it Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* or Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* – is lost. That sense of reading as a physical accomplishment is diminished.

Reading as an achievement is what leads people to display books on their shelves in their homes, often without regard to the quality of the work at hand. It's a point of pride merely to have a library – this is something door-to-door encyclopedia salesmen knew in the middle of the century. There's a sophistication about a home with books. You see this in homes where people display full sets of the Great Books or in homes with well-worn Stephen King hardcovers. Either way, it's done with pride.

## The Start of the E-book Revolution

In fact, it was Stephen King who ushered in the e-book revolution. With the release of his e-book *Riding the Bullet* in March 2000, he was the first major author to put out what is now referred to as a “digital-first” book. It sold some 50,000 copies, back when people could only read them on a computer. The first e-book I ever read was a copy of Jonathan Franzen’s novel *The Corrections*, which turned out to be a mere 4,934 pages – on a Palm Pilot screen. What I discovered, much to my surprise, is that if the story was good enough, I was still compelled to keep reading. I didn’t care that it was small and not particularly easy to see and that I had to replace the batteries. I just had to keep reading. It was an important lesson – of course, I was in my 20s; would I say the same thing today? Yes, I think so. I still think it’s the story, not the format that matters most.

But, since we’re in a library, it’s important to talk about the communal role that books play. They provide the very basis for a classroom education. Going back to my own experience with libraries, it has been fascinating to note how different generations of readers have been able to communicate with each other, in particular through the marginalia written in books. There’s something still slightly transgressive about writing in a book – and particularly more so when the book is not your own.

I have two favorite examples from my own reading adventures in libraries. When I was a graduate student at Columbia in New York, I would get a thrill by looking through the check out slips in the backs of books – particularly important works of literature – to see just how recently a given book had been checked out of the library. What I soon learned was that there was plenty to be gleaned from the marginalia, a place one might not think to look for edification.

There was one novel that was particularly instructive: William Gaddis’ *The Recognitions*. It appeared that there were entire generations of Columbia students who tracked their progress in the books via hash marks at the top of the pages. If you’re not familiar with the work, *The Recognitions* is itself a mammoth, modernist novel published in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and ranks up there as one of the unread great novels of American literature – along with works like Pynchon’s *Gravity’s Rainbow* and Don DeLillo’s *Underworld*. I

remember seeing somewhere around page 650 or so a handwritten note: “If you make it beyond this page, you’re a better man (or woman) than me.” Later, at the library at the University College Dublin, I found something inside an edition of Robert Musil’s *The Man Without Qualities* – one of the great unread modernist doorstops of *European* literature. Someone, clearly bored by the book, had copied out the entirety of a sex scene from a well-known Irish novel from a few years previous, Colm Toibin’s *The South*.

What I fear is that with the advent of e-books many of those conversations may be lost, the conversations with earlier generations of readers and writers. What’s more, you may very well lose touch with your earlier self. There’s no better way to learn something about your younger self than to go back and start reading the marginalia from your college and/or high school texts. The same goes for your family: what interesting things can be discovered by reading your parents’ marginalia.

That said, not all is lost. Many of these same conversations are taking place online on web sites like LibraryThing.com and GoodReads.com, places where booklovers congregate on the Web to talk about the books they love. What’s more, people are getting together to conduct group reads on websites like TheCorkLinedRoom.com (a blog dedicated to Marcel Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time* run by PublishingPerspectives.com) and EndlessSummer.com – a blog dedicated to the *Infinite Jest*.

## Do E-Readers Read More?

What’s interesting to note is that people who tend to spend time online and are willing to read about books digitally may offer an opportunity for the book business. Amazon reports that Kindle owners – owners of Amazon’s proprietary e-book reading device – tend to buy many more books than typical book buyers. The convenience and relatively low price encourages spontaneity.

One place where this is fully on display is in China, where e-books are very attractive to the younger generation. One company, Shanda Literature, runs three popular literary web sites of user generated fiction: Qidian ([www.qidian.com](http://www.qidian.com)) is targeted at young men and features kung-fu stories, science fiction, military and general history, while Jinjiang ([www.jjwxc.net](http://www.jjwxc.net)) and Hongxiu ([www.hongxiu.com](http://www.hongxiu.com)) publish romance and

are read primarily by young female readers. Together, the three sites attract more than 500 million page views a day. Shanda is the most popular literary web site in China, if not the world.

What's more, the company continues to grow, with Shanda's users posting 50 million words—or the equivalent of thousands of new books—per day. In all, the company estimates it has 2.7 million user generated titles on its site.

This amazing statistic is largely the result of China's one-child policy, which has left hundreds of millions of school children at home to be looked after by their grandparents while the parents are working. The grandparents, who insist that the child be studying, believe to a large extent that a child sitting at a computer – *and writing* – is doing schoolwork, when he or she is, instead, posting stories and reading Shanda and other brands of online literature.

### **Falling In and Out of Love with E-books**

When I think of my own child and her future with books, I'm decidedly mixed. Prior to having a child, I loved e-books. After she was born, I appreciated them even more because when I would cradle my newborn daughter in one arm, I loved that I could hold my Kindle in the other arm and flip a page with my thumb, one handed. It was convenient, it was handy. Now that my daughter is 20 months old and reading her own books, I'm equivocating.

My daughter loves to read. "Book, ook, ook," she'll say, trying to form the right word that will get my attention to plop onto a beanbag chair, pull her into my lap, and read to her from her growing library of small, square board books. There are some A-Z books, some "colors" and "shapes" books, some Dr. Seuss and Richard Scarry. But most often, what she wants is something by Sandra Boynton — *Barnyard Dance, Horns to Toes* – books that are age-appropriate. These are books full of sing-songy prose and hippos, elephants, and dogs doing things like bathing, brushing their teeth, and pulling on pajamas — all the things she's now learning to do herself. My daughter loves these books so much that she literally tries to climb inside them. Now that's commitment.

I'm not trying to say that either my experience or my daughter's is in anyway unique. Many, if not most, parents read to their children. Many of us have the same books — which is itself a testament to the

ability of some authors to stimulate that part of a still-forming child's mind that is universal (animals, bright colors, rhyme). Perhaps the only thing I do differently from other parents is, whenever I open a book and start to read, I insist on starting at the title page. I read the title of the book, the author's name, and finally the name of the publisher, pointing with my finger so my daughter can follow along. At first, she was impatient with the delay, wanting to just jump right into the story. Now, if you skip it, she makes you go back.

I suppose my insistence on reading the title and author is a force of habit from more than a decade of writing and thinking about publishing for 40+ hours a week. I would also like to think that I am instilling in my daughter an appreciation for the people who made that book — the one she's trying to climb into — possible.

Lately, as the economy has faltered, there's been plenty of introspection, both in the trade publications and online. The predominant debate is between traditional print publishing and new, digital models; between books and e-books, bricks-and-mortar and online bookstores. The tide seems to finally be turning in favor of digitization, particularly as the industry struggles to find new ways to make money.

But what I fear, as things go digital, is that a lot of the visceral love of reading will be lost. Not the romance of paper — although, there is that — but that physical connection one gets with books from an early age. That *climbing into* the book my daughter is doing, the way she can't turn the page fast enough when she's excited, the way she flips it aside when she's done.

Of course, there will always be children's board books. But the question is, as more and more parents spend more and more time with e-book readers and less with physical books, what kind of example does that set? Don't we spend enough time in front of screens as it is?

I know my daughter responds to books because, in part, as an infant she had to crawl through what must have looked like looming towers of review copies, threatening at a moment's notice to topple over on her. She was both curious about and wary of these piles. Would the same thing have happened if all my galleys came via e-mail to my Kindle?

I remain both a fan and an advocate of e-books. I own a Kindle and a Sony e-reader. But when my daughter was born, it didn't occur to me to go out and buy her one and fill it with my favorite children's

books. I went out and bought real ones, ones I knew she could touch, feel, smell and keep until she was old enough to read and understand them. Frankly, the battery on my Kindle 1 had to be replaced after one year — who knows if it will last another five?

Prior to my daughter's birth I bought as many volumes from and about the Mediterranean island of Malta that I could find. It's the island her great grandparents emigrated from back in 1908. I found them in antiquarian bookstores as well as online. Some of these books are more than 100 years old (and smell like it too). They may be available — someday, or perhaps even now — as digital copies. But it's simply not the same as having something tangible to pass down to her.

I worry that the advent of e-books — even our looming dependency on them — is less likely to produce future generations of readers. Or at least the type of reader my daughter is turning out to be. My daughter's love of brightly dressed animals who talk in rhyming, omniscient voices is physical and visceral. It's comforting and it's very, very real — to her at least. The experience of reading is something she can feel, not just an abstract something-or-other that goes on in her head.

Of course, that goes away with age. But the memory of that emotion, that first love of reading, lingers for a lifetime.

Whenever I let my daughter use my Kindle, she does not try to climb into it. She just sits there, slapping it with a tiny hand, occasionally pushing a button, watching the text flicker to the next "page", mesmerized by the movement on the screen and not by the words. That too is physical, visceral, and very real - though I doubt she's getting much out of the experience. Yet.

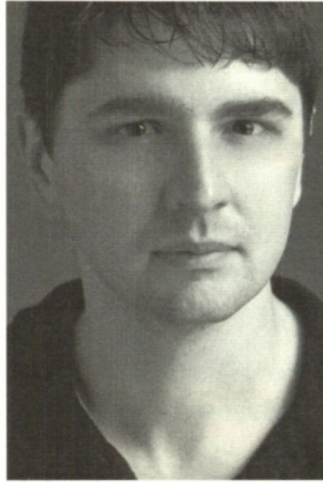
The big question for many is how this is going to change the role of publisher, author, and bookseller. With digital publishing the rules are being rewritten as we speak. What was once a prestigious business — one with a high barrier to entry and pretensions toward elitism — has now become democratized, particularly as digitization has reduced the costs of printing and book distribution to virtually zero. Authors, who previously were at the mercy of agents and publishers to get a work into print, are now able to take matters into their own hands and become their own publishers. Finally, bookstores as we know them are now competing against virtual bookstores selling a product that doesn't come in a box, doesn't need to be unpacked, stickered,

shelved and ultimately sold. For many booksellers, competing against Amazon and Apple is like fighting a ghost. You know it's there, you know it's threatening your life – or in this case, livelihood – and there's precious little you can do about it.

Of course, in a world where all things are “e” – there are many questions that have been raised and few that have been answered. Will we, in the end, see the disappearance of the printed book? Personally, I don't think so. What I think we'll see is a bifurcated book business. On the one hand you will continue to see printed books, but these will be expensive, perhaps more so than today. They will be the high-end art and photography books, or else fiction and non-fiction done in limited editions, or even works made exclusive to the print buying public – for a price. On the other hand, you'll have cheap, for lack of a better word, disposable – books: most fiction, current events, self-help, and diet books. Books that have a utility – whether practical or escapist – will be the ones to come into being as “digital-first” products and sold at affordable, mass market prices.

The customers, in the end, benefit the most – provided they are still reading. The publishers will find a way to capitalize on this changing scenario. Already the big conglomerate publishers – the Random Houses, Macmillans, and HarperCollinses – are putting together the various pieces. The people I'm most concerned about are the authors: those people who chose at some point in their lives to take a job that requires they sit by themselves, alone in a room, for eight hours a day. What will become of them in a world that is all “e” – surely they will have as much of the world's knowledge available to them at their fingertips for free via the Internet, they'll have access to most of the world's libraries for free via Google, for so long as Google *chooses* to offer that work for free, and they will have all the people of the world accessible to them almost instantaneously via online social-networking.

But my question to you is this: In a world where all books are “e” –after all the blood, sweat and tears of labor that goes into a conceiving, gestating, writing and publishing a book — what on Earth will they be left with to sign?



**Edward Nawotka**

Editor-in-Chief, *PublishingPerspectives.com*

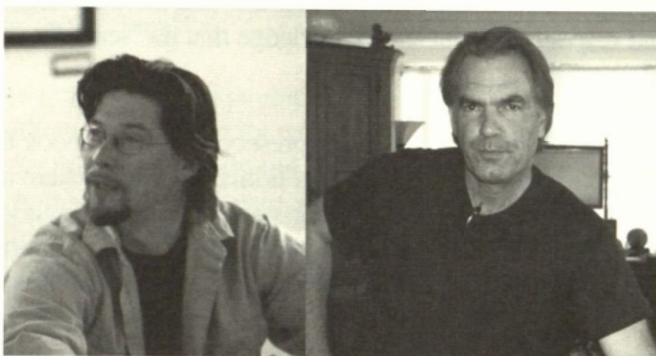
## Edward Nawotka

### BIOGRAPHY

Ed Nawotka is the founder and editor-in-chief of *PublishingPerspectives.com*, a Web site and newsletter covering the global publishing industry. Prior to launching Publishing Perspectives in May 2009, Ed served as daily news editor of Publishers Weekly from 1999-2004 and book columnist for Bloomberg News from 2005-2008.

A widely published book critic and journalist, Ed has written for dozens of newspapers and magazines, at home and abroad, including *The New Yorker*, *International Herald Tribune*, and *The Guardian*. Prior to covering publishing, Ed was a foreign correspondent, and covered world events including the change of sovereignty in Hong Kong and the fall of the Indonesian dictator Suharto.

Ed holds a BA from Boston College, an MFA from Columbia University and an MA from University College Dublin. He is a member of the National Book Critics Circle and serves on the advisory board of the University of Texas Libraries. He lives in Houston.



## **Chad Pastotnik and James Dissette**

**2009-2010 co-Recipients of the Carl Hertzog Award  
for Excellence in Book Design**

Title: Heart of Darkness

Author: Joseph Conrad

Publisher: Chester River Press and Deep Wood Press, 2008

Printer: Deep Wood Press

## **Remarks by Chad Pastotnik at the Carl Hertzog Lecture, February 6, 2010:**

It is a great honor to receive the Carl Hertzog Award for Excellence in Book Design – a rare moment indeed to be acknowledged for this sort of work which happens to be my life-consuming passion. At a time in history when books have become trivialized in form and production or threaten to become obsolete altogether, it is encouraging to know that there are those who still admire and respect the vehicle of knowledge that has served us so well for over a millennium.

My attempts at this great art are in the preservation of the book beautiful, to elevate this common object to a level of utilitarian grace where the text is brought to life by the materials, artwork, composition – bringing them together in one harmonizing entity. At the same time, it is important to me to retain the processes of book production that have been with us specifically these last 500 years of recent history. Composing texts in lead type, making or modifying the ink to suit the need, using paper stocks of cotton content, binding the sheets by hand and assembling the boards, tooling the covers, etc. – all of these practices are disappearing faster than excellent quality books themselves, with the advent of digital composition, glue bindings and other “labor saving” efforts.

The sources for high quality materials and raw ingredients are also dwindling. The demand isn't there, even in a global economy, for a small mill in Europe to continue making the excellent paper they've been producing for 300 years. Likewise, the type foundry in New Jersey, which is the last of the giants that dominated typography in the 19th and 20th centuries, is fading; the tannery in England that produces the finest hides for our beloved leather bindings are now remnants that carry on our tradition. These are certainly an artisanal arsenal of trades that will never be revived when the last shops close. The skills, manufacturing processes, and machinery cannot be recreated once lost and will become modern marvels akin to Stonehenge. And while the use of all these refinements may not be apparent at first glance, their cumulative impact can be nothing but charming if well executed and all in a package that will survive your children's grandchildren with moderate care.

In an age of e-books, email, texting, and other global communication technologies, the book is but one victim. History, as we know and interpret it now, is based on the correspondences, diaries, and notes from generations

past – the paper trail. What will cultural historians make of us in 500 years in the absence of these necessary clues?

In lieu of all this, it is with great joy that I can focus my attention on great authors, artists, and the artisans who produce the raw materials. Being able to work closely with these people, assimilating their insights of process and vision, only enriches my own work and life in grand fashion. I consider myself so very fortunate to have these acquaintances, friendships, and shared dreams of the “ideal.”

It may be even more important to cultivate the people who support our efforts, for without them our trades would fade. It is always a delight actually to meet these individuals and discuss with them their own passion for the book, to discover their personal journeys that led them on this path. It is wonderful to know that El Paso has so many of these fine individuals and it is my great pleasure to have made these acquaintances. You give me the inspiration to proceed and create.

Thank you.

## **Remarks by James Dissette at the Carl Hertzog Lecture, February 6, 2010:**

I'd like to thank the Hertzog Committee and Friends of the Library at UTEP for this great honor. It's humbling to be selected out of a wide assortment of esteemed designers and sets a high bar for me personally in my endeavors to continue the tradition of book design and printing limited edition fine press books.

Ed Nawotka has given us a sound overview of current publishing trends, specifically in regard to electronic media and has raised the question we are all asking—is there a future for the traditional book in this historic transition? Bookstores are struggling and some are closing as they try to compete with discounted internet sales. Electronic readers and e-books are no longer gadgets of curiosity but are contenders for our attention. Many libraries are relocating their book inventories to make way for banks of computers and in one case a New England secondary school sold off all of its 20,000 books, replacing them with flatscreen computers and Kindles. So, yes, the traditional book as a physical object with all of its dimensions (tactile, the reader's relationship to it, etc.) are being transformed. Traditional printers are now being called “legacy printers,” and as they start to lose business in the shadow of the internet and the electronic book, they will understand that the term is not premature. Perhaps trade books will co-exist with electronic books forever or perhaps they will be relegated to secondary status. Readers will decide what they will pay for various kinds of reading experiences and drive the market in that direction.

For limited edition fine books, the kind that Chad Pastotnik and I make, the future seems less complex. The interest in producing books that are printed letterpress on fine paper and hand-bound has not waned for lack of interest, but wavered instead, perhaps, because of the current economic environment. With degrees being offered in the field of book arts, and recognition through awards such as the Hertzog Award, the small press tradition seems to be holding its own. In fact, for every few bookstores closing I hear of another small press starting up. Perhaps one day in the not too distant future letterpress printers will be the ones, ink-smudged and harried from some seemingly impossible binding element, to hold up a book at a university or public seminar and declare, “this is what they used to look like.”

My sense is that as we become more immersed in the electronic culture there will be a sort of psychological counter-revolution as far as valuing the limited edition book, not so much as an object of art—although there are many beautiful examples of this genre—but as an appreciation for the unmatched experience of holding and reading a book in that form. It is fair to guess that had Gutenberg invented the e-book we might only have digitalized Bibles. But if in the midst of his digital printery someone had shown him a letterpressed Bible, that would be the one on his desk at home.

## BIOGRAPHY

### Chad Pastotnik

Chad Pastotnik has a BFA in printmaking and focuses on intaglio copper and relief wood engraving techniques which find their way into book forms as they are both highly detailed types of prints and lend themselves well to the smaller format. Chad has also had formal training in bookbinding as well as restoration and repair techniques; these skills led him to establish Deep Wood Press in 1992 along the banks of the Cedar River in northern Michigan's Antrim County. Within the first few years there was a determined need for text for these book forms and the first letterpress and a few scattered cases of type began the formal act of publishing for Deep Wood. Since then the equipment, the workplaces and the vision have continued to evolve and the ever continuing explorations of "the book as art" is at hand.

The primary focus of the press is, and always has been, the production of limited edition fine press books with a focus on the natural environment and humanity's interaction with nature. Another mainstay hallmark of the press is the inclusion of artwork printed from the original matrices of one or more of the following: intaglio, wood engraving, collagraphs and linoleum cuts. Great attention is paid to tradition and detail: books are composed in typeforms appropriate for the content and impressed into handmade or mouldmade sheets gathered from all points of the globe. Inks are often hand made from raw ingredients and all aspects of the finished book follow rigorous archival practices to insure that the volume will continue to exist in the centuries to come.

Over the past 18 years Deep Wood Press has produced over twenty five book titles and countless commissioned works and is present in some of the finest museums, libraries and university collections in the country including the Museum of Modern Art, the Newberry Library and the Art Institute of Chicago.

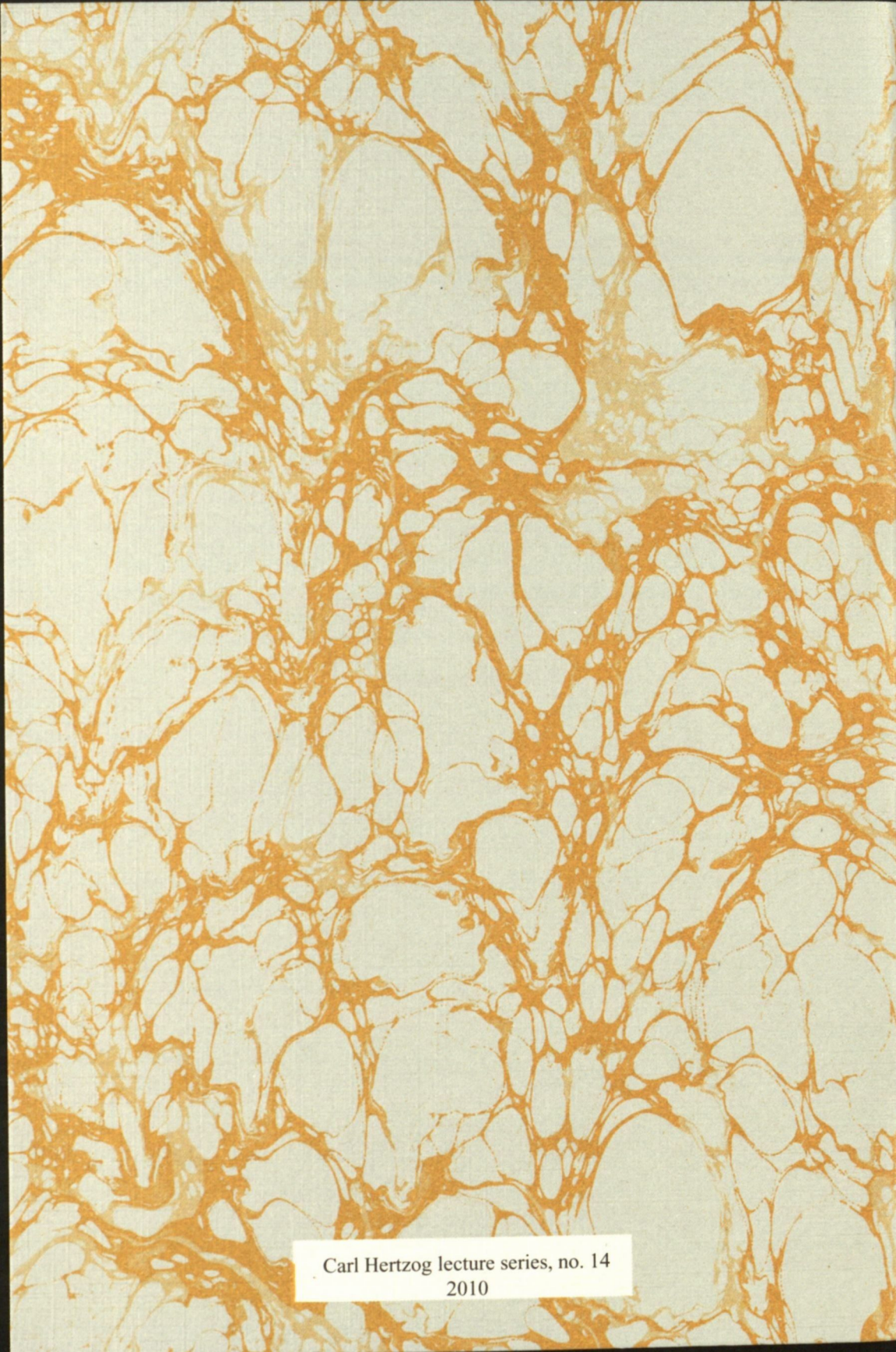
## BIOGRAPHY

### James Dissette

Originally from Maryland, with an undergraduate degree in English from Washington College and too many unfinished graduate schools to mention, I lived for twenty years in Oregon during which time I discovered letterpress printing and founded Songs Before Zero Press. Concurrently I was a regional newspaper publisher, columnist and graphic designer.

At this time I am a partner at Chester River Press in Chestertown, Maryland while maintaining a creative and printing affiliation with Deep Wood Press in Michigan. Following the publication of *Heart of Darkness* I have spent 18 months designing a two-volume set of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the Pope translation, in facing columns of Greek and English and including 53 commissioned drawings in the Greek vase style. Hopefully the presses will be running soon with another project.





Carl Hertzog lecture series, no. 14  
2010