

## Reading Rooms Reading Machines: Some Fantasies of the Library as Curatorial Space

Lunchtime talk by Anna-Sophie Springer, Craig-Kade Visiting Scholar in Residence, 2014



The imaginary is not formed in opposition to reality as its denial or compensation; it grows among signs, from book to book, in the interstice of repetitions and commentaries; it is born and takes shape in the intervals between books. It is a phenomenon of the library.

—Michel Foucault, “Fantasia of the Library”

To admit authorities, however heavily furred and gowned, into our libraries and let them tell us how to read, what to read, what value to place upon what we read, is to destroy the spirit of freedom which is the breath of those sanctuaries. Everywhere else we may be bound by laws and conventions—there we have none.

—Virginia Woolf, “How Should One Read a Book?”

In a recent reflection on the conceptual impetus behind his publishing ventures in the early eighties, Sanford Kwinter, the cofounder of *ZONE* and Zone Books, underscored a conceptual continuation between a book and the City as the guiding principle of his work on the threshold of editing and design. The publications were not, he writes, “to operate ... as a composition that referred to, or represented, the city beyond, but as a system of matter and force that would operate, whenever and however possible, in an unbroken continuity with, and as consubstantial to, the extended city itself.” The book and the city—two environments in conjunction.

As part of the curatorial expanding beyond traditional museological responsibilities and conflating roles once clearly defined, the book as exhibition space has claimed its territory since the 1960s. In her second lunchtime talk our current Craig-Kade Visiting Scholar in Residence, Anna-Sophie Springer, addresses the potential of publications and libraries as reading machines producing a unique platform for curatorial experimentation. As a founding co-director of the Berlin-based art press K. Verlag, in her talk Anna-Sophie will first discuss the historical context of the book-as-exhibition. She will then present two of her recent K. projects, one of which is the first volume of her new book-as-exhibition series *intercalations*, entitled *Fantasies of the Library*, realized in part during her time at Rutgers and published in the framework of the “The Anthropocene Project” at the Berlin Haus der Kulturen der Welt. Focusing on an associative sequence of artworks, idiosyncratic libraries, and unique bibliological apparatuses this presentation underscores the act of the book as both situation and practice, pushing it beyond the threshold of pagination into the prismatic realm of dimensionality and movement.

**Anna-Sophie Springer** is a curator, writer, and co-director, with Charles Stankieveh, of K. Verlag. Her practice merges curatorial, editorial, and artistic commitments by stimulating fluid relations among images, artifacts, and texts in order to produce new geographical, physical, and cognitive proximities, often in relation to historical archives and the book-as-exhibition. She is Associate Editor of publications for the 8th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art. Before launching K. in 2011, she was an editor for the pioneering German theory publisher Merve Verlag. As a member of the *SYNAPSE* International Curators’ Network of the Haus der Kulturen der Welt, she co-edits their *intercalations: a paginated exhibition* series. Her previous projects as curator include *EX LIBRIS* at Galerie Wien Lukatsch, Berlin, and other venues exploring various libraries as curatorial spaces. Her forthcoming exhibition *125,660 Specimens of Natural History* will open at Komunitas Salihara, in Jakarta, Indonesia, in August 2015. She received her M.A. in Contemporary Art Theory from Goldsmiths College, University of London, and her M.A. in Curatorial Studies from the Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst, Leipzig. In 2014 Anna-Sophie is the Craig-Kade Visiting Scholar in Residence at Rutgers University, NJ.

Image: A photograph from installing *EX LIBRIS: Books are for Use*, Anna-Sophie’s first instantiation of a series of exhibitions developed inside various libraries, in this case, at the Academy Library of the Hochschule für Graphik und Buchkunst Leipzig, June 2013.