



CONCEPT

The Future of Publishing

The Future of Publishing

The Future of Publishing

MediaLAB Amsterdam
Create-IT Applied Research
University of Amsterdam

Version 1
Concept document

Monday 19 March 2012

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RESEARCH
MEDIA, FASHION, IT



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1. Introduction

In the concept phase we will use our creativity and our research document to come up with three different concepts for digital magazines on tablets. We have seen a lot of digital magazines that we can use as an inspiration: we already looked at their strengths and weaknesses in the research phase. In this phase, it is important to figure out which features we would like to see in our digital magazine format. There are of course some absolutely necessary features and buttons, but other than that there are a lot of choices to be made. This is why we came up with three concepts; together with the assigner we will choose one that suits all of us best when it comes to the look and feel and the functionalities.

Other than looking at existing digital magazines, we also use print magazines, books, newspapers and websites as an inspiration to broaden our horizon. Our digital magazine format doesn't necessarily have to be like the digital magazines we've already seen, we are reconsidering the choices that their creators have made for their product. This way we can try to come up with something new and innovative instead of just improving what's already out there. However, this doesn't mean our digital magazine format won't show any resemblance to existing ones. Although we saw in our research that some publishers just wanted to be one of the first to present a digital magazine, others have given their products a lot of thought and they made some choices for a good reason. We might end up making some of the same choices.

Our main goal is to create a product that is different from existing ones, offers good functionality, clear navigation and of course a nice design. With the assigner we agreed on a few key things during the debriefing we had in February.

Whichever concept we choose to continue with, it will be a content management system that is able to process text, images, video and other interactive content. This will be presented in a uniform, clear design.

In this document you will find the three concepts that we have been working on in order to create this digital magazine format.

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2. Methods

The methods we used to create our concepts are as following. First we thought of different possible metaphors for our digital magazine format. This means we looked at characteristics of different media and chose some that we would like to embed in our concepts. Then we used the MoSCoW method to subdivide those characteristics into things that are absolutely necessary in order for our product to function, and other features that we would like to add to that. The results of this brainstorming can be found below.

2.1 Metaphors

In order to make clear what each medium means for the reader and what connotations it brings to mind, we began the concept phase by breaking these media into pieces. We explored the different media by brainstorming. We noted which characteristics define the different media, and this resulted in finding the ‘ingredients’ of the print magazine, the book, the newspaper and the website metaphor.

The first medium metaphor we analysed was the print magazine. We used existing magazines as inspiration and tried to think of the main features that compose and signify a magazine in the reader’s mind. In short, the print magazine metaphor translates to the experience of reading a magazine. First seeing the cover, continuing to the table of contents, having some permanent columns and looking for other interesting articles or interviews. It has a certain look and feel that is conveyed to the reader by leafing through the colourful and glossy magazine pages. It is independent of technology, but has limited sharing possibilities. To make it clearer, figure one is a demonstration of the ideas we came up with (figure 1):

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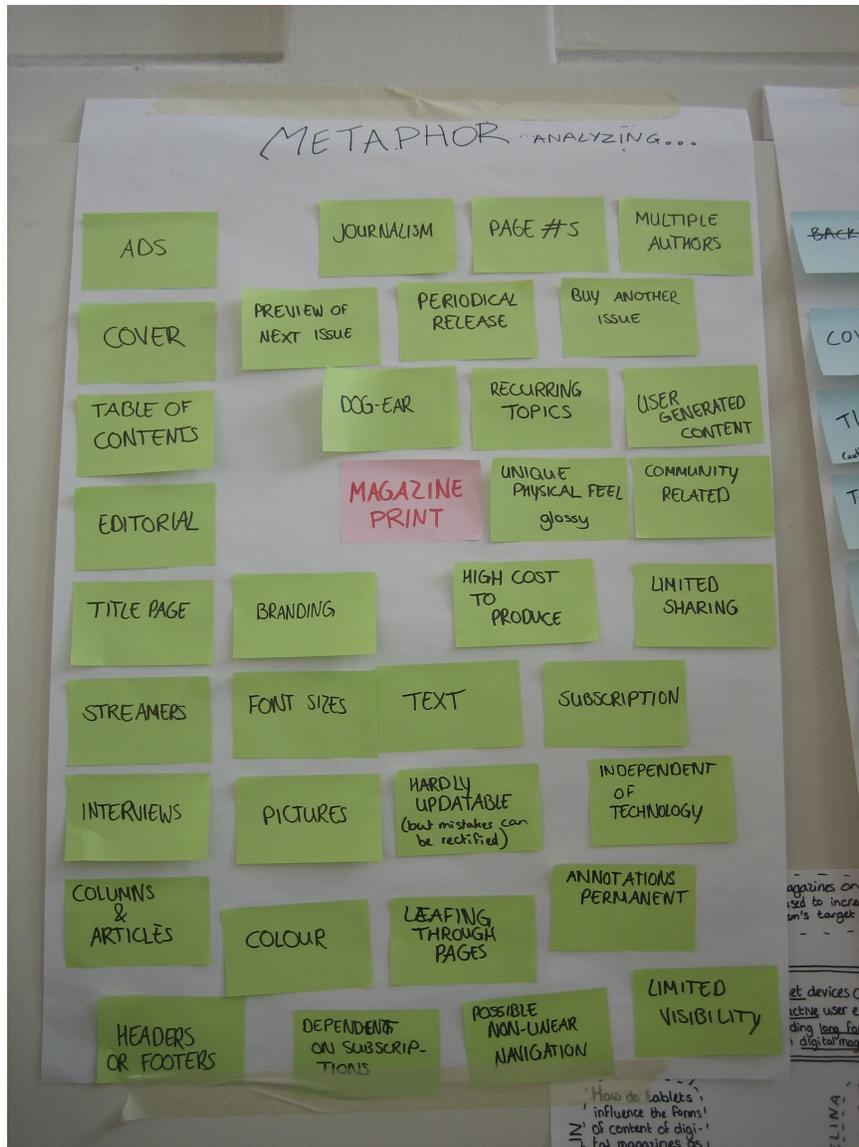


Figure 1 – Magazine characteristics

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The second medium we studied was books. Although they are very different from magazines and we are constantly talking about digital *magazines*, books usually offer longer texts and a totally different look and feel. They are often more black and white where magazines offer a lot of colour; they are more text-based and usually have one subject instead of different ones. This makes them interesting for our project; the students from the University of Amsterdam will be writing about one subject as well and the articles will be longer than what you usually read in magazines. Books offer a very different perspective on the reading experience. Their main characteristics can be seen in the picture below (figure 2).

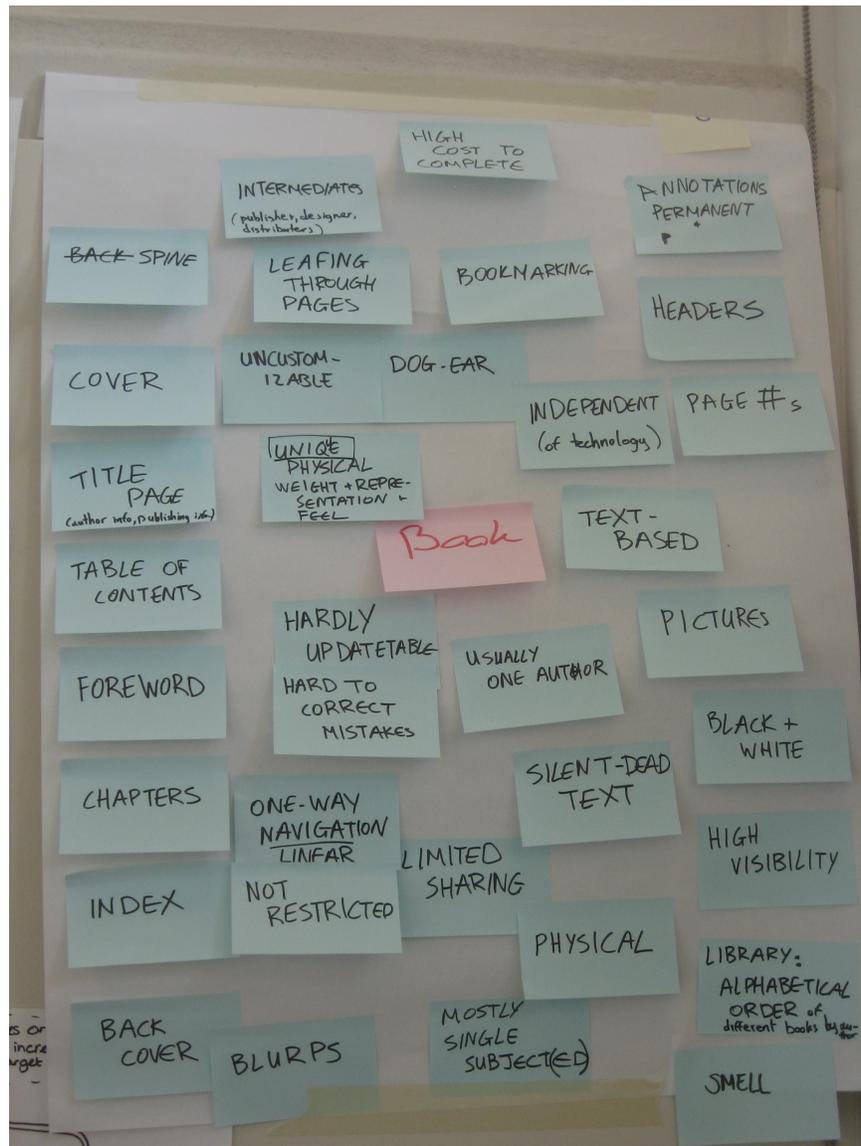


Figure 2 – Book characteristics

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The website metaphor was the one that we found was the most different. A website offers added possibilities like multimedia, sharing, archiving, search, commenting and high updateability. It is also characterized by a non-linear and mostly tree structure. However, it is of course dependent of technology and Internet connection. The main characteristics that define the website metaphor may be seen in figure 3.

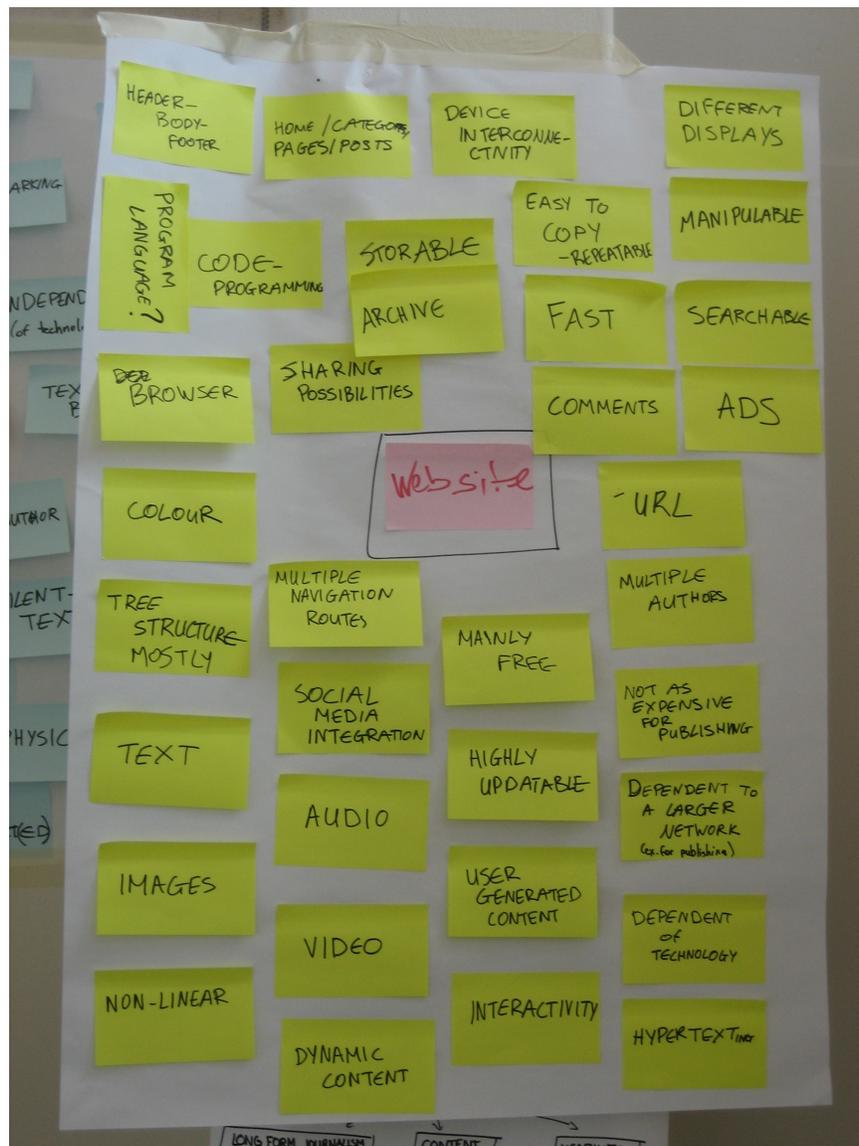


Figure 3 – Website characteristics

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The newspaper metaphor (figure 4) shares a number of characteristics with the magazine one. However, what makes the newspaper different is mainly that it has a distinctive look and feel (black and white, paper feeling) that defines it. Furthermore, with its daily release it serves a different goal than the magazine; the newspaper plays an important role in the public sphere, as its goal is to arise public affairs awareness.

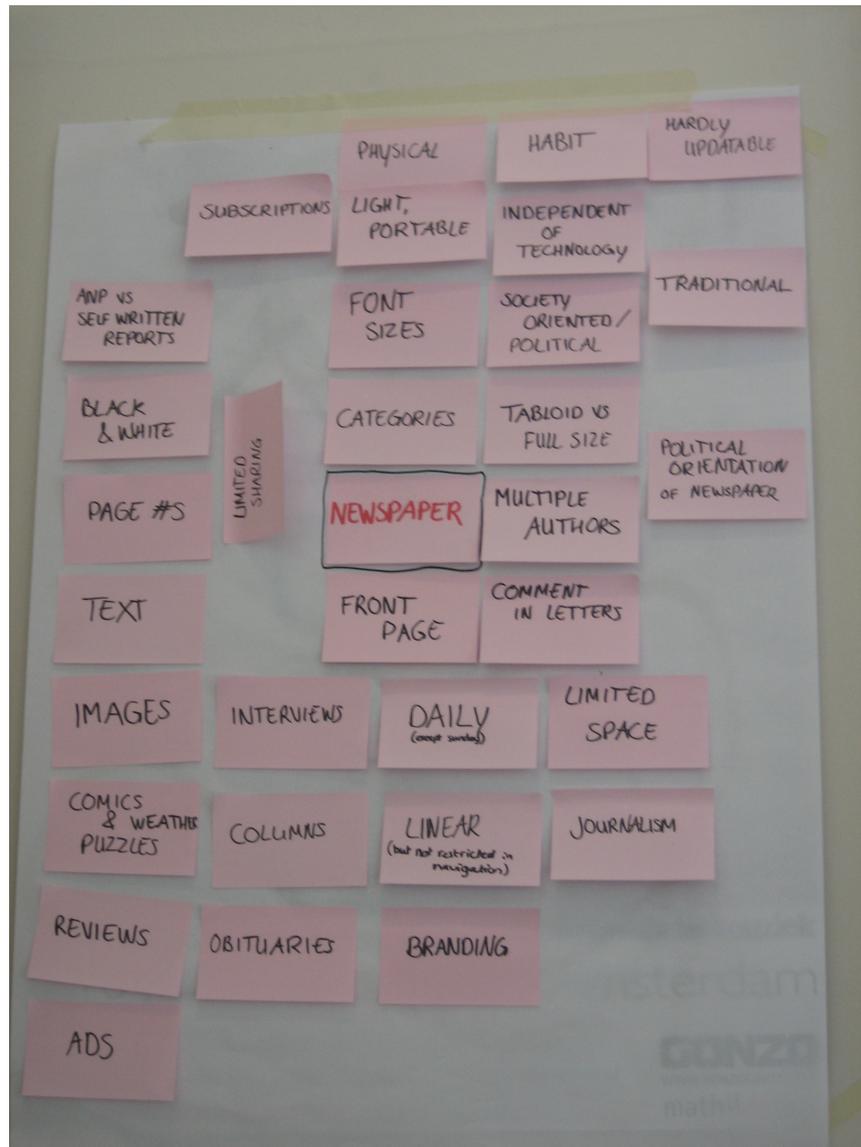


Figure 4 – Newspaper characteristics

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2.2 MoSCoW

The MoSCoW method is used to divide all the options into four categories: must have, should have, could have and won't have. It is a hierarchy of priorities. Must haves are core functionalities; without them the product wouldn't function properly. Should haves are functionalities that are highly appreciated, whereas could haves are nice extras that are not entirely necessary. Won't haves are self-explanatory.

2.2.1 General idea

Must have

- Multiple authors must be able to edit, access and publish on the platform at the same time.
- The content must be of a journalistic nature.
- There will be a table of contents, easily accessible from every page.
- The user must have the ability to leaf through pages.
- Text publishing functionalities.
- Image publishing functionalities.
- Video publishing functionalities.
- Audio publishing functionalities.
- Ability to publish interactive content.
- Several pre-sets for publishing interactive content must be available.
- Hyper texting functionalities.
- Sharing options.
- Searchability for the publisher, as well as the end user.
- Searching should be possible on individual articles as well as the magazine as a whole.
- Colophon page.
- Ability to display images full screen.
- Minimum loading times.
- Room for 'asides' in page interface design.
- There must be a form of branding (static or dynamic).

Should have

- Cover or a front-page (headlines).
- Editorial.

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- Page numbers should be visible while browsing the magazine.
- Each article should specify the amount of words and the time it takes to read the article.
- The user should be able to change font sizes and types.

Could have

- Dog-ear style bookmarking and regular bookmarking.
- The platform could include an archive to view older issues.
- Independent of internet connection.
- The user could be made able to make annotations in the articles.
- Said annotations could be made sharable.
- Index (not the table of contents, but a register).
- Back cover.
- Headers and footers.
- A way to subscribe to future editions (free).

Will not have

- In-app payment system.
- User-generated content.
- Active social media features.
- Space will not be limited.

2.2.2 Functionalities

Must have

- Pinching.
- Expanding.
- Swiping.
- Tapping.
- Scrolling.
- Discoverability (inform the user where to find content).
- Clear indication of content.
- Feedback (Back and home functionalities).
- Reliability (Prevent accidental activation of functions, make use of click zones).
- Table of contents.
- Search box.
- Popover content.

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- Home redirection button.
- Back button.

Should have

- Double tap.
- Changing tablet orientation (portrait/landscape).
- Splash screen.
- Top navigational bar.
- Page viewer style navigation.
- Instruction page.
- Scalability.

Could have

- Press and hold.
- Undo button.

Will not have

- Carousel scrolling.
- Page slider navigation.



Figure 5 – Characteristics from other media that we want in our concept

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Figure 6 – Navigational possibilities

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3. Concepts

3.1 Concept #1: Magazine metaphor

3.1.1 Description

The first concept we came up with uses the magazine metaphor. Our product will resemble existing digital magazines for the tablet, such as Esquire and Wired, and multimedia and interactive content will be embedded in the magazine. The main difference with the digital magazines mentioned above is that we aim for improved functionality and navigation. For example, we want to reduce the reader's confusion while using the app and make the latter more reliable. The table of contents will resemble a newspaper front page, while we will not use a slide bar but the reader will be redirected to the table of contents.

3.1.2 Functionality

In this concept, we have used magazines as a metaphor. This means that visually speaking, it is a bit more challenging and dynamic than our second concept that uses the metaphor of a book. Using magazines as a metaphor does not mean that our concept is as much as a magazine as possible, it means that we used magazines as our main inspiration. But of course we are working with a different medium, the tablet device, and that means a new way of reading.

The screen with the table of contents would look like this (figure 7):

The table of contents in this magazine looks a bit like the table of contents of a real magazine and like the front page of a newspaper: the most important articles are taking up more space than the less important ones. They are also placed on top to attract attention. Although their sizes are different, all the articles are visible within one screen in order to give an immediate overview of all the contents. Of course the title will be displayed, as well as a picture from the article and an excerpt to show what the article is about exactly.

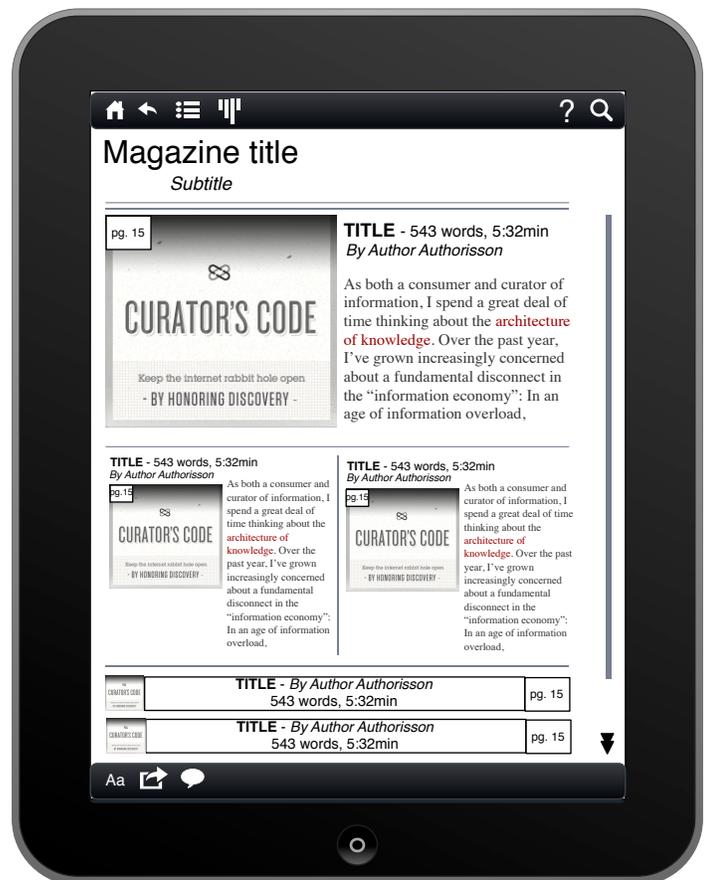
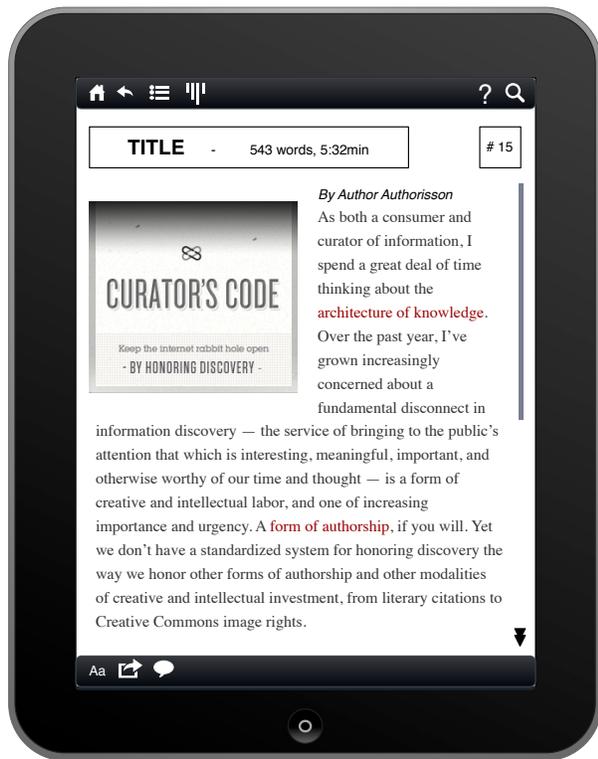


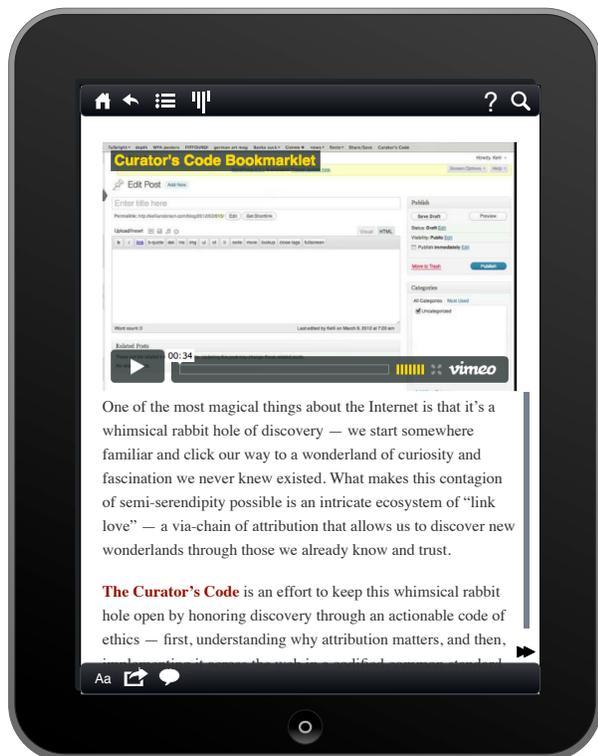
Figure 7 – Magazine metaphor: table of contents page

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As for the content, this is what a content page could look like (figure 8):



This concept uses embedded interactive content: the images, videos and interactive maps, timelines or data visualisations are visible within the text. There will be a page number, which will signify the article number, instead of the page since each article is in one page, no matter how long it is. The number will be located in the upper right corner and will stay visible when scrolling down to read the rest of the article. We chose for scrolling instead of going to a next screen in order to give the reader a clear overview of where he or she is in the article. This is also why the scroll bar will always be visible. As an extra feature we added very small arrows that point you to the rest of the information; if the article continues below what you're viewing now, the arrows point down, if you're at the end of the article, the arrows will point to the right to make clear that the next article is visible if you swipe to the right.



Other navigation options are visible in the bars on top and on the bottom of the screen. If you tap the screen once, this menu will appear. On top we have the home button that takes you to the first screen that you saw when you opened the issue: the cover. The button next to it is the 'back' or 'undo' button: it takes you to the page you last visited before the current page. Next to that is the button that takes you directly to the table of contents that you have seen above. The fourth button is the 'overview' button that shows you all the articles in the magazine and their length. On the right, there are only two buttons: the help button that will show you instructions for the

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navigation, and the looking glass that gives you the opportunity to search within either the article you're reading or the full magazine. Mainly, the bar on top gives you all the buttons needed for navigation. The bar on the bottom shows you the buttons for interacting with the content: the one on the left is intended to change the font and the font size, the one next to it will give you the opportunity to share the article or your thoughts on it on Facebook, Twitter et cetera. The third button allows you to make annotations for yourself.

During the concept phase we met with Robbert Ritmeester and discussed our ideas, while he made some suggestions and recommendations. The most important outcome from this meeting was this different idea for a contents page that could be embedded either in the magazine or the book metaphor concept.

Figure 9 demonstrates an indicative format as what this content page would look like. The main extra feature is the option to have two extra 'boxes' while reading the article. The first one (at the top right corner) functions as a mini browser within the app. This will be particularly useful for looking up words in the encyclopaedia like for example Wikipedia, and in the dictionary. It can also be used to transfer to the hyperlinks stated in the article, without having to completely exit the page in order to access a browser. The second box will be used for annotation. The user may

take down notes and also link them to particular parts of the article. He or she will also be able to compile an overview of the notes, from all the articles.

Furthermore, the frames that surround the sidebar will be adjustable. The separate boxes are scalable depending on how the reader chooses to use them, while he or she has the option to hide the sidebar. The sidebar will not cover the article's content, but the content will rescale according to the movement of the sidebar.

The rest of the navigation, i.e. navigation bars, movement from article to article, will remain the same.

Overall, this concept is visually appealing and there are a lot of options for navigation as well as 'doing something' with the content.

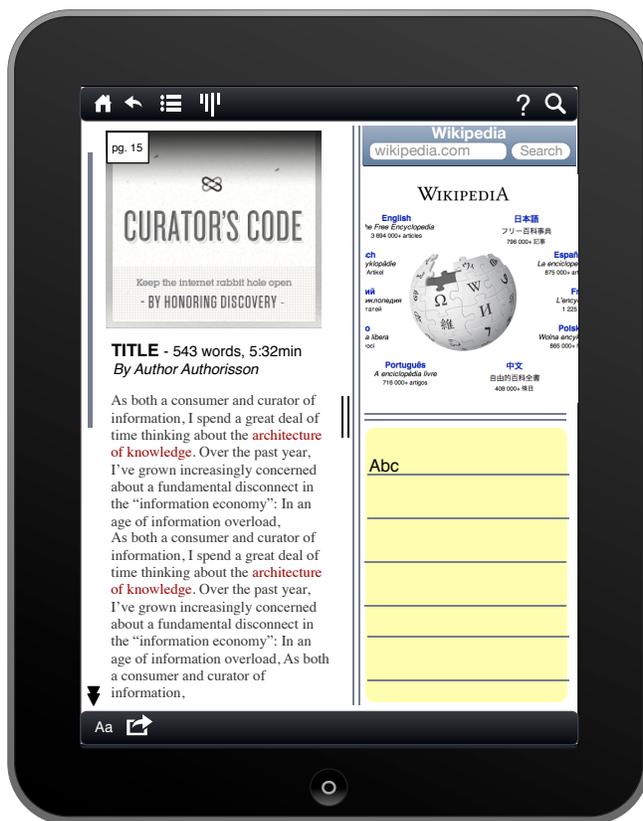


Figure 9 – Magazine metaphor: extra options for content page

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3.1.3 Challenge

In this concept, the challenge lies in making sure that even though all the content is visible, it shouldn't become distracting from the actual story. There are more buttons for navigation and interaction than in the other two concepts, but we have to make sure this adds to the reading experience instead of distracting from it.

3.1.4 Added value

In the magazine metaphor, the added value lies in the visual attractiveness: all types of content are visible and easy to access. Because the buttons for navigation and other options are visible with only one tap on the screen, it is easy to navigate and interact with the content.

3.1.5 Necessary content

The content in this concept could be text, images, video, audio and interactive maps, timelines or data visualisations.

3.1.6 Persona and scenario

Marlon van Rijn

Age: 35

Sex: Female

Education: MSc in Biology

Profession: Biologist Researcher

Marlon is a biologist and commutes by train to her work daily and she has developed the habit of reading a magazine on her iPad during that time. Her favourite subject is technology so she has a monthly subscription to a magazine.

Before she starts reading she puts on her headphones because except for reading she enjoys the embedded video or audio in the articles and she does not want to annoy the other passengers.

Today she found a very interesting article that she wants to share with her friends so she uses the share feature and tweets about the article. Also she is currently looking to buy a new laptop. When she comes across various reviews in the magazine she likes to keep notes, in order to know what she liked and what not.

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3.2 Concept #2: Book metaphor

3.2.1 Description

The guideline for the second concept is the book/magazine metaphor. This means that multimedia and interactivity, while embedded in the magazine will be less visible and apparent to the reader; it will be more of his or her choice to use that content. It will have a clean and simple look and feel, and will focus more on text, hyperlinks and asides. An example of what we have in mind is the digital magazine The Atavist.

3.2.2 Functionality

In this concept we use the book metaphor as a guideline. Our goal is for the reader to feel the same comfort as reading a book. However, the metaphor should not be taken literally as we are still focusing on long form journalism articles. Overall this digital magazine format will be simple and minimal in design, and with less visible distractions content-wise.

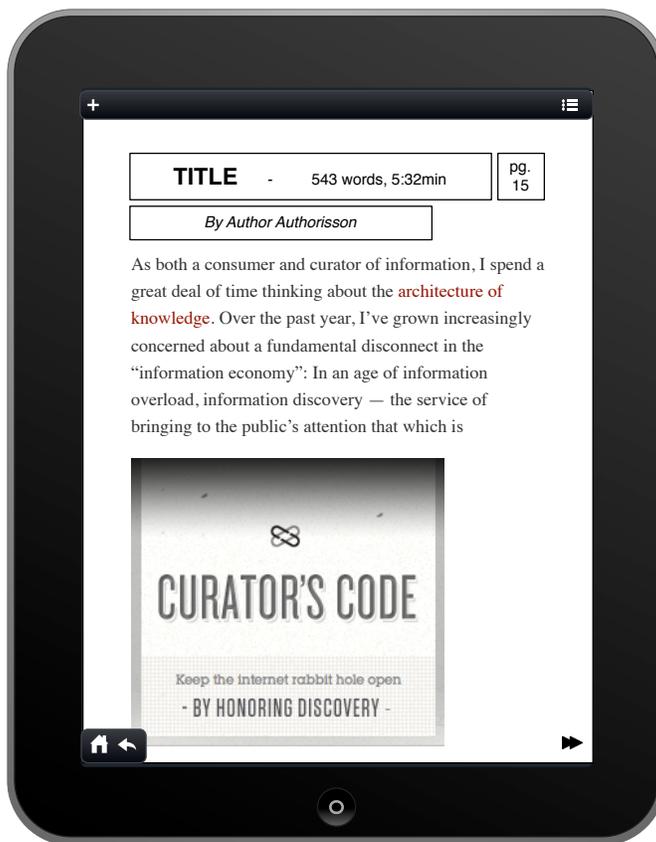


Figure 10 – Book metaphor: content page

The content screens (figure 10) will be navigated only horizontally, with a leafing through pages effect (similar to Flipboard). The user will know that there is more content in one article by the indication of little arrows as part of the content in the end of each page. On the contrary, in the end of an article there would be a bullet (like in magazine articles). The gesture to be used when going from one page to the next will be swiping. This means that there will be no scrolling down. Also, in landscape orientation the same content (as in portrait) will be arranged in two columns.

Images will be visible in the text,

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and the user will be able to enlarge them by pinching them. Other multimedia content, such as video, maps and audio will be embedded in the text in the form of hypertext. Words of the text will serve as buttons and the extra content will become visible. The extra content, for example a video, will appear in front of the text, while the later becomes darker and functions as a background.

Also each page will have a navigation bar, visible at all times, on the top of the screen with a button at each side. The button on the left will be an 'options' button that break down to the following buttons: font size, annotation, search and share button. On the right corner there will be a list button. When the user taps on list button there will be a dropdown that will show the titles included in the magazine, along with an image, their page number, the word count of each article and an indicative reading time. In addition, on the bottom left part of the screen there will be a 'home' and an 'undo' button.

Our aim with the table of contents is to fit all article titles in one screen (figure 11). Therefore, title articles and there page numbers will be displayed in the form of a 'tab'. This means that when the user taps on an article title, then an image and a part of the content will appear in some space reserved on the a part of the side of the screen. If the user then taps on another title the previous content will be replaced with the 'ingredients' of the new one. In addition, the navigation buttons (home, undo, options, list) that exist in the content pages will still be visible.



Figure 11 – Book metaphor: table of contents page

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3.2.3 Challenge

In this concept, there is a challenge in making sure that the reader is not only aware of the interactive content but that he or she also actively engages with it. Although not visible instantly, the multimedia content should be easy to access. And whereas the look and feel of this concept is clean and simple, it should definitely not be boring.

3.2.4 Added value

The added value of the book concept is that it has a very clean and clear design. By not putting too much buttons in the navigation bar and hiding the navigation when the reader is just reading, the reader will be able to fully engage with the story and forget about the medium itself.

3.2.5 Necessary content

The content in this concept could be text, images, video, audio and interactive maps, timelines or data visualisations.

3.2.6 Persona and scenario

Rick Wijker

Age: 34

Sex: Male

Education: HBO

Profession: Programmer

Rick comes home after a long day of work. His wife is already home, he greets her and they prepare dinner. After dinner Rick retreats to the living room, he sits down on the couch. He picks up his iPad from the table; meanwhile Manon turns on the TV. The Voice of Holland is on. Rick doesn't really feel like watching TV after such a long day, especially when The Voice of Holland is on. He decides to read his favourite politics-related digital magazine. The nice thing about this magazine is the lack of distraction, there is extra content available but it isn't forced upon the reader. He spends about 2.5 hours reading various articles, marks the articles he would like to read tomorrow, and goes to bed.

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3.3 Concept #3: Canvas metaphor

3.3.1 Description

The main goal of the third concept is that it does not resemble any existing digital magazine. It follows the metaphor of a canvas. This means that it will focus on offering a non-linear reading experience, as opposed to the two above concept that follow a more linear logic. It is our opportunity to feel free to improvise and create an app that functions well, but does not feel like a magazine so that the reader revises his or her reading experience.

3.3.2 Functionality

The third concept was our chance to come up with something entirely new, where we haven't used one of the existing media for reading as a metaphor. Our metaphor for this concept is a painter's canvas; Prezi may have inspired it a little as well.

For the page with the table of contents (figure 12), we have come up with four options: it can look like a map with different articles pinned to certain locations, it can look like a timeline with the articles pinned to certain dates or years and it can be fully random, with the articles organized in whichever way the publisher wants. With this last option, some kind of background pattern or colour would be available to make it look less like random titles on a white space, or the publisher

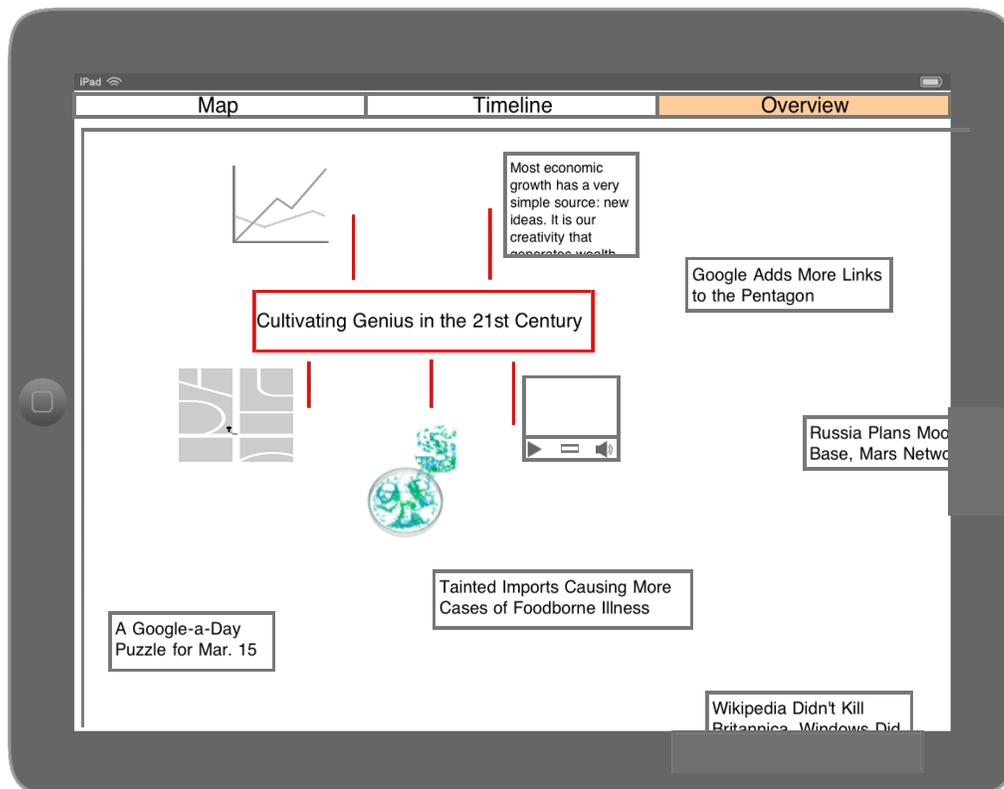


Figure 12. Canvas metaphor overview of content

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could insert another background image from his own files. The fourth option would be the ability to create a network of articles and link the articles to each other, for example with tags.

If you tap the title of an article, you would zoom into this title and some tiles would appear around it, showing you an excerpt of the text, the icon of a video, the images, etc. You can choose to view one of those different types of content by tapping them, or choose to read the article that will also enable you to see the other content within the text, so you can interact with it. If you tap the title of the article again, you will go back to the overview of all the articles.

The page with the content would be very similar like that in the concept with the magazine metaphor. The images, video and other types of content would be visible within the text; the difference is in the navigation. With the canvas metaphor, there are no buttons for navigation. You can just scroll down to see the rest of the article – when you do this, a scroll bar will be visible. If you want to go back to the overview of the contents of one article, you pinch the whole article together like in Al Gore's Our Choice iPad application. Since there is no defined order in the articles, you always go back to the screen with table of contents to access another article; you can't go directly from one article to the next.

We chose not to embed navigation buttons because the canvas is more or less non-linear, or maybe multi-linear since you can choose your own path to follow from article to article. Without navigation buttons the metaphor of the canvas is clearer, it offers a certain freedom to both the publisher and the reader.

3.3.3 Challenge

In the third concept the challenge is in offering the reader some freedom, but also not losing the overview of which articles are available. Because this concept is very new and can not really be compared with other reading media, we have to be very careful in order to make sure that the design is not overwhelming or distracting from the stories.

3.3.4 Added value

The added value of the canvas concept obviously is the fact that it is unlike any reading application that we have seen so far. This makes it very innovative and unique.

3.3.5 Necessary content

The content in this concept could be text, images, video, audio and interactive maps, timelines or data visualisations.

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3.3.6 Persona and scenario

Arjen de Haas

Age: 43

Sex: Male

Education: HBO

Profession: Media professional

Arjen is sitting in the usual café waiting for his friend Julia. He just finished work and wanted to catch up with Julia but she is always late! Sitting now alone he is thinking of what to do. He remembers that article he wanted to read before but he did not have time for because he was working. He takes his iPad out and opens his favourite digital art related magazine. It is easy for him to find the article he was looking for because he has saved it with the drag & copy feature. It was a gallery opening story. When he is finished reading he goes back to the map overview option to find more stories (since Julia is not there yet!). He likes this feature because this way he can find art stories connected to the city's cultural life. So, he notices an article that also has a video about a new street artist that made a piece of art near his house, and he chooses only to see the video. While watching Julia actually walks in!

He is happy to see her, but he also wanted to continue reading. He saves the article for later and puts his iPad back in his bag.

4. Conclusion

After finishing our research document we started working on the concept phase. Our initial approach was to start analysing characteristics of different kinds of media. We chose to limit this method to 4 subjects: magazine, book, website and newspaper. We used flipovers and a lot of post-its to create a summary of the characteristics. When we were done putting them up on the walls, we summarized them into a final flipover containing characteristics we would like to see in our final product. Next to that we put up a flipover containing navigational aspects available on the iPad. We proceeded by using the MoSCoW-method to define every subject's position in the hierarchy of importance. From here on we went to describe and visualize the three concepts composed from our research. To finish the concept phase's first stage we pitched our ideas to the other teams and met concepting expert Robbert Ritmeester in order to discuss our concepts and for him to make some suggestions.

We completed this phase by conducting scenarios, personas and by creating the final (indicative) visualisations of the three different concepts.

The next phase of the project is the design phase. What must be done before starting to design is more research. More specifically, we need to focus on the functional and technical design by conducting extensive user research. For example, annotation functionality, navigation, editorial and colophon possibilities and various indexes and their functionality and usability are all aspects we will research further. Finally, we need to think more about the back end and explore our options of content management systems.

5. Attachments