What English Profs Study

- The book as a material artifact
- Books in culture and society
- Who published what books where & when
- Copyright and the book trade
- Representations of books in literature and the other arts
- Books and changing technologies
Electronic Books (Many Platforms, Systems, Media, Devices, Formats)
This is not a book.
... it's a model of a book

(predictive)

(explanatory)

(prescriptive)
What are the Affordances of a Book?

- Random Access *and* Sequential
- Volumetric
- Bounded
- Comparative
- Writeable (as well as readable)
Random Access *and* Sequential
Volumetric

“The anxiety, which in this state of their attachment must be the portion of Henry and Catherine, and of all who loved either, as to its final event, can hardly extend, I fear, to the bosom of my readers, who will see in the tell-tale compression of the pages before them, that we are all hastening together to perfect felicity.”

–Jane Austen, near the conclusion of *Northanger Abbey*
Bounded
Comparative
Writeable
Random Access . . .
and Sequential
Or (of course) Both
Volumetric
Bounded
Comparative
I—DOWN THE RABBIT-HOLE

Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank, and of having nothing to do. Once or twice she had peeped into the book her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it, and what is the use of a book," thought Alice, "without pictures or conversations?"

So she was considering in her own mind (as well as she could, for the day made her feel very sleepy and stupid), whether the pleasure of making a daisy-chain would be worth the trouble of getting up and picking the daisies, when suddenly a White Rabbit with pink eyes ran close by her.

There was nothing so very remarkable in that; nor did Alice think it so very much out of the way to hear the Rabbit say to itself, 'Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be too late!' But when the Rabbit actually took a watch out of its waistcoat-pocket, and looked at it, and then hurried on, Alice started to her feet, for it flashed across her mind that she had never before seen a rabbit with either a waistcoat-pocket, or a watch to take out of it, and, burning with curiosity, she ran across the field after it and was just in time to see it pop down a large rabbit-hole under the hedge. In another moment, down went Alice after it.

[Illustration]

The rabbit-hole went straight on like a tunnel some way, and then dipped suddenly down, so suddenly that Alice had not a moment to think about stopping herself before she found herself falling down what seemed to be a very deep well.
**Bookscapes:**
*Different Affordances Modeled*

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Conclusion

• Most affordances will be important most of the time
• But our model-making is always constrained: time, labor, funding, bandwidth, etc.
• Choices and trade-offs are inevitable
• Awareness of the affordances of a bookscape can help us make better models of electronic books
• Different models (with different affordances) will serve different audiences and communities

A “book autopsy” by artist Brian Dettmer
Thank You!