

# Fantasies of the Library

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# Reading Rooms Reading Machines

A visual essay curated and annotated  
by Anna-Sophie Springer

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?", 1925

In a recent reflection on the conceptual impetus behind his publishing ventures in the early 1980s, 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."<sup>1</sup> The book and the city—two environments in conjunction.

By configuring an associative sequence of artworks, idiosyncratic libraries, and unique bibliological apparatuses, the following visual essay—*Reading Rooms Reading Machines*—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.

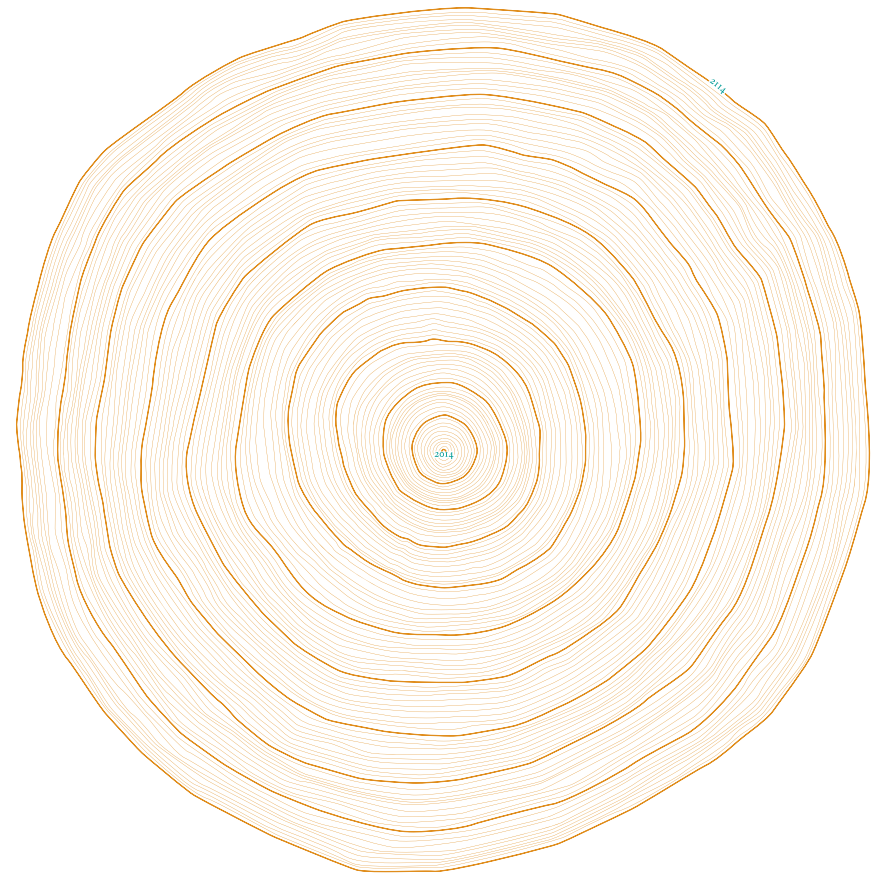
1 Sanford Kwinter, "Inside the Urban Azimuth (at the End of the Age of the Book)," *Harvard Design Magazine* 38, Summer 2014, [www.harvarddesignmagazine.org/issues/38/plumbing-the-urban-azimuth-at-the-end-of-the-age-of-the-book](http://www.harvarddesignmagazine.org/issues/38/plumbing-the-urban-azimuth-at-the-end-of-the-age-of-the-book).

In the deserted room the silent  
Book still journeys into time. And leaves  
Behind it—dawns, night-watching hours,  
My own life too, this quickening dream.

— from Jorge Luis Borges, "Ariosto and the Arabs"

The discourses referencing the Anthropocene inescapably implicate concepts of time, existence, presence, and disappearance by eliciting notions of deep time that stretch backward into an unimaginably long-gone past, as well as projecting into futures still tens of thousands of years away. We ask: What is the planet going to reveal of the human when humankind no longer remains? And how should we act in the face of finitude, not only of our own individual existence, but of the species itself? Indeed, many scientists currently argue that due to extreme weather events we are facing an "apocalyptic" future well before the end of this century.

With her latest project *Future Library* (2014–2114), Scottish artist Katie Paterson embraces the book as a true time machine able to help us fathom beyond our own lifetime and sense of self, while affirming that readers will persevere into the next century. Unfolding over the coming 100 years, Paterson's highly conceptual Norway-based project consists of the establishment of a library whose texts will not become available to its users until in 2114. Until then, a forest of 1,000 newly planted trees is hoped to have grown big enough to provide the material for the library's paper and each year one commissioned author will have contributed a new text to the growing archive of 100 pieces. While the literary works thus remain a gift for future generations of readers yet-to-come, in 2018 a special room will be inaugurated in the Deichmanske Public Library in Oslo where visitors can linger and contemplate. Fittingly, the first author to create a piece for the library is acclaimed Canadian writer and environmental activist Margaret Atwood, known for her speculative and often dystopian scenarios. Images: Katie Paterson, *Future Library*, 2014–2114. Top: Photograph © Bjørvika Utvikling by Kristin von Hirsch. Bottom: © Katie Paterson. The project is commissioned by Bjorvika Utvikling and produced by Situations. Images courtesy of the artist.



**Melancholies of the Paginated Mind:  
The Library as Curatorial Space**  
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*Megan Shaw Prelinger & Rick Prelinger  
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**Andrew Norman Wilson: ScanOps**

**Intensive Geographies of the Archive**  
*Hammad Nasar in conversation  
with Anna-Sophie Springer  
& Etienne Turpin*

**Reading Rooms Reading Machines**  
*curated by Anna-Sophie Springer*

**Building Blocks for Books:  
After the Proprietary Model**  
*Adam Hyde in conversation  
with Charles Stankievech*

**The Ethics of the Book  
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