What is Code?
.epub proposal
the dot-commas

The .epub of *What is Code?* that our group, the dot-commas, plans to produce will optimally be as cross-platform compatible as possible, removing the interactivity and animation of the online version while maximizing readability and preserving the photography and textual elements (e.g. notes, pop-ups) of the original text. We will aim for a minimal and accessible design, which requires reflowability (as opposed to a fixed-layout design, which does not allow text to be resized) as well as general readability.

Making our .epub widely usable as well as consistently attractive compels us to keep in mind the requirements of a range of popular devices, which differ not only in performance and compatibility (i.e. with specific EPUB3 features) but also in their displays, from low- to high-resolution and featuring a variety of e-ink, e-paper, and LCD screens.

In particular, we need to look into whether the inclusion of colour images will be a problem for monochrome e-reader interfaces. Will the images be automatically converted to black-and-white? Will they disappear entirely? Will the result of this conversion still enhance the reader's experience, or will it be detrimental? We can potentially use the @media CSS rule to address any issues that arise. Our most likely course of action will simply be to test our work-in-progress (and final product) as thoroughly as possible.

We plan to include as many of the original pictures from BBW as possible; this includes the more "artistic"

photographs as well as informative graphs and maps. We will consider producing additional informative images (e.g. explanatory screenshots), to further supplement and break up the text, and finding alternative images for the animated .gifs and videos that we remove. It is important that all our images be formatted correctly; one potential solution is creating "responsive" images using CSS, but this might be a complex solution to a simple problem. Instead, we might simply resize each image using the "width=%" CSS selector.

We want to explore the possibility of including the supplementary information (i.e. pop-ups) and small images from the original text as side notes or (as a last resort) foot-notes. This seems possible using a "float" CSS property, but we will need to investigate further how this property can be applied. Since it is generally inadvisable to include text (i.e. captions) as image files, hopefully this approach can be used to format text as well as images.

A well-formatted stylesheet will be instrumental to our .epub. To ensure consistency, we will try to apply styles using CSS rather than HTML as often as possible.

Consistency of style is particularly important because of our chosen approach to constructing our .epub. We intend to use Calibre to edit the HTML and CSS of our .epub, working backwards from the original document rather than starting from scratch. Calibre will show a live preview of the .epub document and to check for formatting errors while we work. In particular, it will allow us to view every file contained in the .epub, such as image files, font files, navigation files, and each .xhtml file in the spine. This feature will be key to our work, since we can divide the HTML into individual chapters in order to work simultaneously and together.

Splitting up the document may present a problem when creating our table of contents, but the .ncx document itself can be created simply using Calibre, a final step once most other work is complete. We are undecided as to whether the inclusion of sub-headings will improve readability or make the text seem overwhelming; a possible solution to this is creating multiple levels within our table of contents, and thereby hide sub-headings unless desired.

Calibre also allows us to insert own cover for the .epub and to identify it specifically as such. The website's animated header is far too gaudy for our purposes, so we will create an original cover that is simple, attractive, and representative of the material. The image itself simply needs to be created in InDesign and exported as a .jpg.

We'd like to keep the "letter from Josh," a pop-up in the original web text, as an introduction/preface to the essay itself; it would be included as frontmatter, possibly formatted so as to distinguish it from the body of the text. Having designated frontmatter will require us to investigate the possibility of using page breaks to section our .epub, but might be solved by dividing the text into multiple HTML files.

Design-wise, we are interested in embedding specific fonts (particularly for headers and sidenotes) into the .epub, with the understanding that while these may not show up in all e-readers, they will nevertheless display on some. In addition, we will size fonts proportionally rather than use absolute values, as per this guide, since many e-readers allow the reader to increase or decrease font sizes.

To complete our .epub, we plan to work in the same space and together, so that we can get things done efficiently and help each other when needed.

Alanna will investigate the matter of the title page, including both design and file format requirements.

Katherine will look into creating the table of contents and how to create an .ncx document, compatibility issues, and how to include such a file in an .epub. She will also embed title fonts, split the main text into separate HTML documents, and research responsive images.

Once the HTML is converted to .epub using pandoc, Zoë will comb through it to remove remnants of interactive elements and animations.

David will look specifically into how to format and size grids for images (with the intention of creating relatively unobtrusive sidenotes). Will also compile list of potentially-useful HTML tags for sizing images and document elements.

Sarah will look into colour compatibility issues as well as different methods of testing the completed (or in-progress) .epub.

All team members will work on sections of HTML.

the dot-commas

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