

and the artist's book, in all their diversity, are positive cultural forces for the printed book. The future of the book is explicitly woven into the tapestry of its own history, and looking forward we will see our stories told in every media conceivable, with the printed book an icon for our collective imaginations.

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↳ George A. Walker is a book artist, associate professor at the Ontario College of Art & Design University, creative director at Firefly Books Ltd. and graphics editor at the Porcupine's Quill. This is an abridged version of the address he gave at Library and Archives Canada in June 2011.



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*George Walker's Book of Hours (2010),
a wordless graphic novel in
99 wood engravings.*

HARD VALUE

The enduring value of the printed word—not just text—was one of the points Toronto bookseller David Michaelides made during a talk at the Toronto ceremony honouring winners of the Alcuin Society Awards for Excellence in Book Design in Canada on October 4, 2010.

Many kinds of books will doubtless soon cease to be published in printed form. Others, better informed than I, have talked about the ethical and technical issues associated with replacing books with software. So I'll touch on the subject only briefly.

Canadian author Cory Doctorow, a former director of the Electronic Frontier Foundation and founder of the U.K.-based Open Rights Group, recently delivered a lecture entitled "Copyright vs. Universal Access" at the Perimeter Institute in Waterloo (it's available for viewing on TVO's Big Ideas website here: bit.ly/bVz0f9). One of the issues Doctorow explores is this: I can lend any of you my favourite book (knowing, of course, that there's a chance I'll never get it back). This is not typically possible with that book's new electronic equivalent.

Format conventions, operating system issues, media durability, copy-protection, rights limitations and device dependence—

just look at the video industry to see how the glorious durability of the book would be undermined. How long will a \$30 Kindle e-book really survive as a functional entity? I have books on my shelves that are four centuries old. They boot without difficulty and, unlike my three-month-old Kobo, they've never needed a firmware update to keep working.

And, Aldus Manutius didn't have to outsource technical support to Zen Desk.

As a related aside, my friend Steven Fowler owns a truly innovative antiquarian bookstore in Toronto called the Monkey's Paw. Steven used to write a column on Word.com called something like "The Archive of Endangered Ephemera." He essentially presented PDFs of obscure printed pieces (tracts and pamphlets) with a contemporary, often ironic perspective.

The ultimate irony, however, is that when Word.com folded, all the digital files were lost when the server was wiped. Steven, of course, still has the original printed pieces and could lay his hands on duplicate original copies of most of them within a week, if asked.

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↳ David Michaelides is the former proprietor of the Toronto bookshop Swiipe.