

NAME	Title
Hartmut Abendschein Conceptual publishing and library practice	
Translated by Cadenza Academic Translations	
LIBRARY OF ARTISTIC PRINT ON DEMAND	690

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The author of this article is a publisher, author, and academic librarian in equal measure, so it is hardly surprising that there is interaction between these areas. The intersection lies in the production and publication, but also in the collection, cataloging, archiving, and sharing of idiosyncratic literary works that are published (by small presses) with a short print run, but are also classified as “gray literature.” As a publisher at the Bern-based independent publishing house edition taberna kritika, I use various means to make its program and its publications’ artistic and conceptual approaches transparent. As a subject librarian at the University Library of Bern, on the other hand, I am interested in how to make marginalized literature more valued, integrated, and institutionalized. An important element here is the cataloging process considered as an artistic practice that attempts to establish connections and communication between one’s own publisher’s catalogue and other catalogues, and thus extend these productively wherever possible.	
LIBRARY AND COLLECTION My bread-and-butter job as a librarian has proved to be a useful source of content and synergies for my publishing practice. A special collections area of contemporary fine press books (short-run books that are relief-printed using a hand press) and artist’s books, inherited when I took up my post (the collection had little relevance due to its small budget and consequently limited scope), led a few years ago to my initiating a profile shift. It had long been evident that the theme of “publishing as artistic practice” was gaining increasing attention in the world of experimental, low-budget publications (print-on-demand, zines, chapbooks, self-made books) in both academic and art theory contexts. While the objects in the fine press collection were very expensive (special materials, very limited print run or in some cases one-of-a-kind), production costs in these small presses fall within an affordable range. The same budget can thus be stretched to afford multiple titles, although this involves other challenges. The books are often supplied direct, rather than via the (wholesale) bookselling trade, and very soon go out of print. There is therefore a narrow time frame in which to select and purchase them, and moreover they must be bought via the publisher’s online store with Paypal checkout or using the shopping basket on print-on-demand platforms; these payment methods are not very well received by acquisitions departments in libraries, who are more used to dealing with B2B processes.¹ In addition, this segment is typically part of what is known as “gray literature,” which means it requires more working hours and it is unlikely that cataloging can be facilitated by automatic importing of metadata. Special media materials and formats may in addition incur increased archiving and storage costs. These books certainly have in their favor that most of them can be loaned out without major difficulties or restrictions. This ease of access guarantees that engaging with these materials is as straightforward as possible.	
AUTHORITY DATA AND METADATA, SUBJECT CATALOGING, DISSEMINATION The practice in many (academic) libraries is to use verbal cataloging in order to make content findable via specific catalog searches. It is recorded in rulebooks and databases and organized by editorial staff. Compared to classification, it offers more freedom to provide a pithy description of an object or book; in contrast, classification often as-	
1. Large libraries increasingly outsource their acquisitions processes to intermediaries and wholesalers, which can result in savings on labor costs. However, this happens at the expense of bookstores (demise of infrastructure), publishers, and in general the breadth and depth of the range available.	
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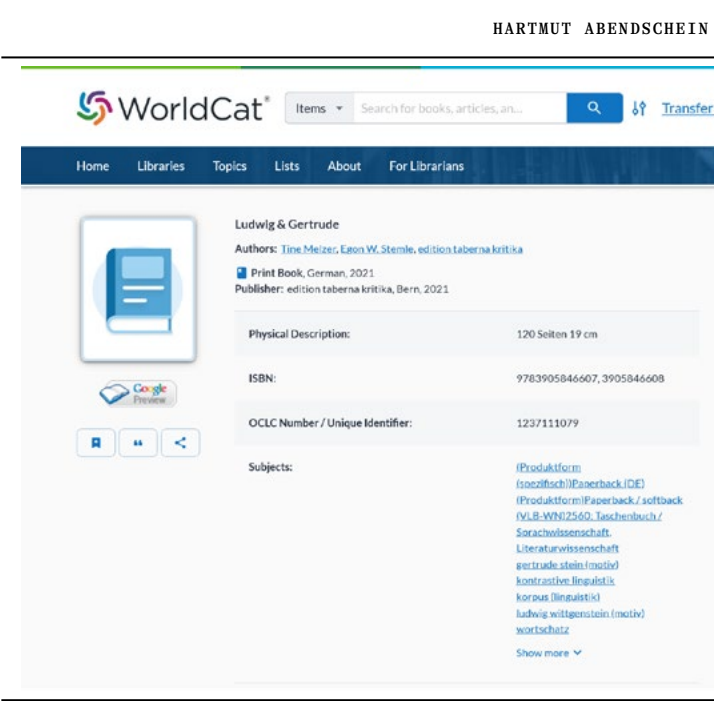
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signs an object to one or two classes, which means the definition is less precise. Verbal classes are, however, designed to correspond to the numbering system of the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC), enabling the derivation of notations like, for example, 020.2854678 for “Internet Libraries” (cf. Fig. 2)—an important tool for systematically cataloging or roughly structuring the inventory, although it is not always immediately accessible to outsiders.²

After a few years’ publishing practice, I attempted to systematize my own publishing production using tools like these so as to make it slightly more transparent. I therefore use controlled cataloging vocabulary in the form of tags and descriptors based on the Integrated Authority File (GND), the largest set of authority data for cultural and academic data in the German-speaking world (cf. Fig. 1); otherwise I work with an academic classification system based on the DDC (cf. Fig. 2) in order to better portray the range of differentiation in my publishing house’s publications and also to facilitate alternative cataloging approaches or virtual classifications.

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used by the book trade—e.g., into the numerous online store databases and the catalog of the German National Library. These data are in turn automatically imported into the catalog used by academic libraries in Switzerland, where a software program compares the cataloging vocabulary with a concordance file and immediately generates tags in the library catalog, which initially remain unseen until they are noted by the librarians responsible for subject cataloging. As well as facilitating the indexing and findability of titles in library and bookshops, the cataloging rules for authority data and their principal application also prove useful in other ways: it allows official, but also unofficial (although formulated according to the rules) content-related cataloging vocabulary to be incorporated into academic library systems that automatically import data from sources such as the VLB database or the German National Library. A publication cataloged in one’s own words is thus visible and searchable in other catalogs (e.g., Worldcat, the German Digital Library, VLB database, Swissbib, (†)⁴), or at the very least appears in backend cataloging records (special input screens for information specialists) that are awaiting further processing (cf. Fig. 3). This is also significant insofar as I have consciously interpreted several library rules rather broadly. Thus, <i>primary</i> literature is only indexed in <i>academic</i> library systems in exceptional cases. In certain circumstances I take a more flexible approach to the basic rules and word corpora of the GND and adapt them to the requirements of my own concepts, for example by supplementing existing GND tags such as “literature (german)” with words like “therefore” that do not yet exist, but that can be pre-formed based on a set of rules for cataloging (RSWK) (cf. Fig. 2 above). For example, in the case of Tine Melzer’s <i>Ludwig & Gertrude</i>, an artist’s book that combines the vocabulary of Gertrude Stein and Ludwig Wittgenstein in a specific manner, in addition to the tags “corpus (linguistic),” “contrastive linguistics,” and “vocabulary,” I applied the tags “ludwig wittgenstein (motif)” and “gertrude stein (motif)” (cf. Fig. 3), which is actually an inadmissible shortening, but which seemed to me to be helpful on pragmatic grounds for imparting information to the general reading public.⁵ For these reasons, I use narrow as well as broad tags, whereas in strict library cataloging the preference is always for precise vocabulary. These chosen tags appear on the back cover of all the books published by edition taberna kritika; the quantity per book is therefore limited.	Fig. 3: The cataloging vocabulary is stored in the system ready for export, as shown in this extract from the MARC 21 catalog entry⁶ for Tine Melzer’s <i>Ludwig & Gertrude</i> in the German National Library, URL: http://d-nb.info/1226169880/about/marcxml, opened with a basic text editor...
<pre><datafield tag="653" ind1=" " ind2=" "> <subfield code="a">korpus (linguistik)</subfield> </datafield> <datafield tag="653" ind1=" " ind2=" "> <subfield code="a">ludwig wittgenstein (motiv)</subfield> </datafield> <datafield tag="653" ind1=" " ind2=" "> <subfield code="a">kontrastive linguistik</subfield> </datafield> <datafield tag="653" ind1=" " ind2=" "> <subfield code="a">gertrude stein (motiv)</subfield> </datafield> <datafield tag="653" ind1=" " ind2=" "> <subfield code="a">wortschatz</subfield> </datafield></pre>	However, the cataloging vocabulary is currently only stored in hidden files (e.g., in the German National Library or VLB database) and is imported at the same time as the title is transferred to international catalogs such as Worldcat or Swissbib (cf. Fig. 4).
4. The Swissbib catalog was regrettably discontinued in 2020 and replaced by Swisscovery. From the point of view of cataloging, this is a serious setback, as the new catalog has dispensed with a great number of options in the areas of information transfer and information retrieval.	5. Tine Melzer and Egon Stemle, <i>Ludwig & Gertrude</i> (Bern: edition taberna kritika (etkbooks 060), 2021). 6. MARC 21 is a general format that can be read and processed by a wide range of applications. Its main purpose is for transferring bibliographical data between libraries.
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PUBLICATION SERIES AS A (COMPLETE) CONCEPTUAL WORK

An example of a conceptual publishing production is the / aaaa press series comprising one hundred titles (2020–2022) from my publishing house, edition taberna kritika. This project was conceived as a small, provocative allegory: it puts a Foucauldian concept into practice, namely the question of what would happen if it were impossible to organize literary or art markets around (authors’) names or provenance labels, due to this information simply being withheld:

I will propose a game: the year without names. For one year books will be published without the author’s name. The critics will have to manage with an entirely anonymous production. But I suspect that perhaps they will have nothing to say: all the authors will wait until the next years to publish their books.⁷

The recipients of the new releases had to approach the publications with no publisher or author information, which is virtually unimaginable nowadays.

The titles in the / aaaa press series include a wide range of conceptual, visual, and literary works, photobooks, documentation, concept sketches, etc. In principle, there are no acceptance restrictions with regard to content; there are however several less formal ones. Each publication is issued as a PDF and as a print-on-demand item. The page format is set at DIN A4⁸ and the content at 60–800 pages, which corresponds to the minimum and maximum print production range (softcover) of the print-on-demand company Lulu. A very simple series aesthetic was established for covers and endpapers, and there was a challenging publication frequency target of one title per week, which was always announced on a Monday on the publisher’s Twitter account (@etkbooks). At least two copies of each title were printed for a physical exhibition and subsequent acceptance of the corpus by a library. In addition, each (anonymous) author received a printed specimen copy. Legal deposit copies for libraries were not provided for, as libraries already have the digital version at their disposal. The sales price corresponds to the production price charged by the print-on-demand company: the publisher makes no money from this production.

7. Michel Foucault, “The Masked Philosopher,” in *Foucault Live: Collected Interviews, 1961–1984*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer (New York: Semiotext(e), 1996), 302—307, 302.

Fig. 4: ...and imported into Worldcat, where the tags I assigned are transferred in their entirety at the same time, www.worldcat.org/title/ludwig-gertrude/oclc/1237111079.

8. The name of the series, “aaaa,” alluded to this aspect. It incidentally pushed it virtually to the top of alphabetized indices of lists of series titles.

Intensive metadata work also plays an important part in this series, with a further effect being the possible subsequent outsourcing of its distribution to the digital web archive of the Swiss National Library. The digital objects are currently all freely accessible in my Google Drive cloud storage (accessible at aaaa.etkbooks.com) and are linked to specific folder deeplinks in the cloud via a web document there. The links to the print-on-demand ordering options for all the individual works are also listed (cf. Fig. 5). However, the series may be withdrawn from the internet at any time, with the original URL and the cloud storage relinquished, in which case the Swiss National Library (where the digital objects are stored) would—without its explicit consent—take over the publisher’s role, at least in terms of distribution.

Title / Full Text	p	DOI, Permalink*	meta data	Free
		10.17436/etk.a.078	md	Print PDF
Dein Herz ist hart wie Samt	076	10.17436/etk.a.077	md	Print PDF
close up maps	060	10.17436/etk.a.076	md	Print PDF
709.04075	202	10.17436/etk.a.075	md	Print PDF
Reading Your World of Texts	098	10.17436/etk.a.074	md	Print PDF
nyckeln till goda inkop	076	10.17436/etk.a.073	md	Print PDF
100X_200X	204	10.17436/etk.a.072	md	Print PDF
Wasserleichen riechen nicht	060	10.17436/etk.a.071	md	Print PDF
How to make sonic poems	074	10.17436/etk.a.070	md	Print PDF

Fig. 5: / aaaa press title list indicating the number of pages and the DOI as well as the link to the metadata, the Lulu print-on-demand edition, and the free PDFs (extract from the cloud document at aaaa.etkbooks.com)

The use of DOIs should ensure a certain level of durability and permalink stability, especially in the event that the series is ever actually “withdrawn” and the document’s DOI-linked save location can exist in any cloud storage or repository. The publications will continue to require a stable identifier in order to be directly accessible, e.g., after moving to the digital archive of a different library.

Also in this series, the publishing house used a variant of the cataloging concept explained above, although not based on the GND. As the series comprises mainly experimental, hybrid, and innovative objects, it cannot be described accurately and with enough differentiation by the more traditional lexica of established standard dictionaries. Instead, an *in progress* thesaurus was set up (cf. Figs. 6 and 7), drawing on my experience in dealing with other specialized publications, but also conceptually oriented to existing Wikipedia English-language article titles. The concepts are, strictly speaking, not (yet) at the level of tags, so I prefer to call them “descriptors.”

Thesaurus / Präkoordinierende Facettenklassifikation					
Notation	Signaturstruktur	HA	AA	AA	AA
		Hauptaspekt HA	Anderer Aspekt	Anderer Aspekt	Anderer Aspekt
		Prio1	Prio2 (oder 0)	Prio2 (oder 0)	Prio2 (oder 0)
Bildung einer Merkmalskette					
präkoordinierend	Gruppe 1	Gruppe 2	Gruppe 3	Gruppe 4	Nebengruppen
Marc Felder Koordinanz	850 T	850 M	850 F	850 S	850 W
Merkmale	Methode, Technik	Material, Basis	Form, Gestaltung, Medium, Textsorte	Thema, Motiv, "Über"	Allg. Vorkarakter
basis keyword kopiert: apod 8	annotation	ACL search	artist book	art	1 = poetry, concrete
eigenfindungen mit etkboks	appropriation	bioblography	book	authorship	2 = fiction, comic
kursiv = benutzt in aaaa	book cut	bot	calendar	blank page	3 = nondiction
	collage	censorship	code (morse -)	canon	4 = visual, multimedia
	colouring	classification	conversation	chance	5 = theory, meta
	combinatorics	coat of arms	cookbook	collectivity	6 = how-to
	conceptual writing	collection	diary	communication	0 = other, combinations
	constant	corpus	digital literature	copyright	
	contextualization	drawing	documentation	disa	
	critique	email	ebook reader	head	
	crowdfunding	emoji	game	gaming	
	crowdsourcing	found material	herbarium	glitch art	
	cutting / leaving	generative	interface	grief	
	distribution	google	intervention	habitus	
	enlarging	google mail	letter	hand gesture	
	erasure / deletion	homography	manifesto	handwriting	
	extraction	google maps	manual	help	
	formatting	map / floor plan	musical note	institutional critique	
	google search	microfiche	performance	language	
	hand writing	ms paint	photo book	literature	
	iteration	ms word	print-on-demand	loss	
	layout	music	reenactment	material reflection	
	listing	number	seminar work	materiality	
	loop	operating system	sharing	media	

Fig. 6: Screenshot /aaaa press, Thesaurus under construction. Groups 1-4 imitate the structure of the fields in a library catalog with subject cataloging data, but I have adapted and fully differentiated them for this project: the “Main Aspect (HA),” “Method, Technique,” which forms Group 1, is supplemented by Groups 2-4, which tag the publications according to “Other Aspects (AA),” such as “Material,” “Form, Medium, Text Type,” and “Theme, Motif.” The italic key-words are already in use to describe the / aaaa press titles. Another aspect is provided by a further subsidiary group in the last column, which describes the “General character of the work.” The special thesaurus will also be published, after editing, as part of this series.

Titel	DOI	HA	AA	AA	AA	.	N	_	T	Signatur	Keyword1	Keyword2	Keyword3	Keyword4
Dein Herz ist hart wie Saft	a.077	2	1	2	3	.	1			D3	2123.1 D3	photography	timeline	twitter
close up maps	a.076	2	1	3	1	.	4			O5	2131.4 O5	map	enlargement	photo book
709.04075	a.075	2	3	3	2	.	5			S4	2332.5 S4	bibliography	avantgarde	artist book
Reading Your World of Texts	a.074	1	1	2	4	.	2			R2	1124.2 R2	web navigation	collaborative writing	ascii art
nyckeln till goda inkop	a.073	4	2	1	1	.	4			N9	4211.4 N9	livea catalogue	corpus	timeline
100X_200X	a.072	2	1	3	1	.	4			H9	2131.4 H9	x	repetition	back side
Wasserelechen rechnen nicht	a.071	4	1	4	3	.	2			W3	4143.2 W3	crime fiction	narration	literature
How to make sonic poems	a.070	2	2	1	3	.	6			H9	2213.6 H9	sound poetry	music box	notation
Innovations	a.069	2	3	3	4	.	0			B	2334.0 B	stuff (music)	musical note	film (document)
glitcho studies	a.068	4	2	1	2	.	4			G5	4212.4 G5	glitch art	photography	smartphone app
Periodic Table (alphabetized)	a.067	1	2	1	3	.	4			P4	1213.4 P4	alphabetical orde	periodic table	colouring
Charles & Kate	a.066	3	1	1	4	.	5			C4	3114.5 C4	table	notation	cutting
Zürnböck	a.065	1	1	1	0	.	2			Z8	1116.2 Z8	appropriation	montage	annotation
Seuchenblatt (2020)	a.064	1	2	3	4	.	3			S4	1234.3 S4	montage	found material	diary
a.a.O.	a.063	4	1	1	1	.	0			A1	4111.0 A1	abbreviation	conceptual writing	layout
Frishe Prosa	a.062	4	4	1	3	.	0			F9	4413.0 F9	handsetting	typesetting	remix
The Intersection	a.061	3	3	4	3	.	4			T3	3343.4 T3	artist book	documentation	sculpture
Bless Dictionary	a.060	2	2	4	3	.	0			B6	2243.0 B6	blissymbols	dictionary	constructed langua
The Questionable	a.059	1	4	2	1	.	4			T3	1421.4 T3	erasure	literature	mis word
Erfolgsbots	a.058	2	2	2	4	.	3			E6	2224.3 E6	bot	wikipedia	spam
bad photos	a.057	2	2	3	3	.	4			B1	2233.4 B1	lomography	collection	documentation
eternos stl	a.056	2	1	1	0	.	1			E9	2115.1 E9	sound poetry	imersion	translation
_l_o_e__e__e__	a.055	1	1	3	2	.	1			10	1132.1 10	black out	conceptual writing	visualization

9. It cannot, therefore, be ruled out that series yet to be created may answer new aspects of these questions, or at least provide material in support of them. Various considerations play a part here. For example, one might consider the potential use of non-fungible-tokens (NFTs), or whether certain effects might not also be possible with DOI. However, at the date of this article, I have not devoted much time to such ideas. There does not yet seem to be a solid relation between them and energy balance, dependence on third party software and hardware, sustainability, etc.

Fig. 7: This will be used to produce a working table with a notations matrix, in which all the / aaaa press titles will be listed and described along with their DOIs and main and supplementary tags.