

The Study of Book Design in the Context of the Digital Age

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Abstract:

With the development of digital media technology, e-books and various online information resources have impacted the book market. The creation of diverse reading media has broken the popular position of traditional books in the reading field, and traditional paper books have encountered unprecedented challenges. The article analyses the current problems of book design and discusses the development trend of book design in terms of a complete design system, focus on the experience and interactivity of book design, and focus on book product promotion and marketing.

Keywords:

Book Design, Interactive, Experiential, Emotional

1. Introduction

Books symbolize the development of civilization and the culture that we should pass on together. Today, with the development of new media technology and the prevalence of e-books and the internet, digital reading has become a way of life and ordinary reading is gradually being replaced.

The creation of diverse reading media has broken the status of traditional books as the favored reading medium, and the form and means of expression of book design has an important influence on how paper books can continue to be loved and noticed. Books should no longer simply use text to convey content but should also cater to the reader's interest in reading, presenting it in a creative form and thinking about how to use innovative means to enrich the ideas and feelings conveyed in the book, creating a good atmosphere, capturing the emotional expression and stimulating the reader's desire to read.

2. Overview of Book Design

Books are defined in the *CiHai* as: “a work of authorship in which knowledge is recorded, ideas expressed, and volumes produced on certain materials by means of words, pictures, or other symbols”. Books are a hallmark of human civilization and they have been developed for at least three and a half thousand years. When paper was not yet invented, people began to use animal oracle bones and stones as materials for writing books, and later developed to use bamboo slips, wooden slips, bamboo

documents and wooden documents for writing (bamboo slip), and silk and silk as writing materials (silk book), and the invention of paper, the shape of the book gradually changed.

The rise of book design came after the New Culture Movement in 1915 [1], when bookbinding artists such as Xun Lu, Yuanqing Tao and Junzhen Qian brought foreign forms of book design to China and applied modern ideas to domestic book design, breaking away from the old forms of expression and creating the original look of modern book design.

Jingren Lv, a contemporary Chinese book designer of international renown and a professor at the Academy of Fine Arts of Tsinghua University, once said, "Book design should be a process of designing the cover, ring liner, title page, preface, bibliography, body of text, text, communication style, chapter hierarchy, as well as images, blanks, ornaments, lines, markings, page numbers and other intrinsic organizers under the thought of information editing, from "skin" to "flesh and blood" [2]. Therefore, for the expression of the concept of book design, it can be understood that book design refers to a process of transforming from a mere paper into a complete book, which is a process of presenting the content of a book in its entirety and thus arousing the readers' interest in reading it, according to different design purposes and readers' needs, through the selection of paper varieties and thicknesses, and then the design techniques of covers, fonts, typography and other aspects, with the purpose of disseminating information.

3. Problems in the development of book design

Due to the rapid pace of life, people are receiving increasing information. New book designs have changed the way people think about their choices. People no longer simply focus on the content of the book itself but place higher demands on the overall form and presentation of the book, and traditional paper books are increasingly challenged. Identifying problems, analyzing them and solving them is conducive to the healthy development of book design. Through research, it was found that traditional book design has a number of problems, such as the form being detached from the content, the form being too simple, and the impact of the current new media.

3.1. Formal expression detached from content

A good content and the corresponding form can be called a complete book. Some designers in the market at present create without fully understand the content of the book designed, in order to pursue "efficiency" and the commercial requirements. This results in book design form not matching the content, with a strong commercial flavor and lack of emotion. Some books are even overly decorated to meet the requirements of booksellers, thus losing their proper form and eventually leading to higher book costs and poor book sales.

3.2. Low awareness of "holistic" design

Many books are restricted by conditions and costs, and the choice of materials and page design are too simple and random, often focusing only on the transmission of textual information or the design of the book binding, with insufficient awareness of the overall design of the book and a lack of understanding of the concept of a "holistic" book design. Jingren Lv once put forward the idea of changing traditional book binding into book design, not limiting the expression of book design, focusing

on enhancing the reading experience, allowing readers to have a rich reading interest, and increasing the innovation of the overall book design. Lu's revolutionary idea of changing the concept from binding to book design [3] fully expresses the importance of the 'holistic' creative book design.

3.3. Traditional book design is impacted by new media

The development of new media technology has led to an increasing variety of ways for people to access information, and electronic media has gradually become an important choice for people to read with the advantages of lightness, environmental protection and portability, thus leading to a huge challenge for traditional paper books. According to statistics, almost half of the people have become more inclined to read with electronic products, and the market size of e-books is expected to reach 6 billion yuan in 2020 [4]. Therefore, the development as well as the continuity of traditional books in the new media era deserves our serious consideration.

4. Development Trends in Book Design

4.1. A complete design system

Although the design of books has been trying to change with the changing times, it has been relatively slow to develop for various reasons, and the form of book design has not been well broken through. It is only after the 21st century, with the popularity of e-books, that the development of book design has gained a greater pace. The book form is unconventional, and the concept of 'design with integrity' is gradually being emphasized and paid attention to by designers, especially in the production materials and forms of books, and a great breakthrough has been made, with all kinds of creativity coming to the fore. Secondly, books that used to be text-based alone are being replaced by 'form' books, while interactive design has been widely promoted as a craze over the past two years, and there is an abundance of forms of communication about book design.

4.2. A focus on the experience and interactivity of book design

Interactivity refers to the connection and impact between a person and a book. Currently, book design is focusing more on the reader's experience and interactivity. Experience is the process of perception from body to mind [5], and interactive experiences can break the perception of traditional books for some readers. In the past, people simply read books to satisfy their reading needs, but as people's emotional thinking changes, the awareness of experiential and spiritual needs gradually increases. There is now an increasing variety of book forms, genres and means of expression on the market, taking book design to a new level.

In an interview, Jingren Lv once said, "Books have their own 'aura' and are not static objects but living beings that can influence their surroundings [6]." Lu fully expresses the influence of the book on the person reading it. Therefore, every book designer should treat the book as a living object, and if the "object" that the designer re-creates can communicate with it mentally and emotionally, then the reader must also be able to feel it.

The most important feature that distinguishes paper books from electronic books is that they are tangible objects that can be touched. We can feel its thickness and the way it is framed with our hands alone. Although people rely mainly on their vision in

the process of reading, they can also use other organs of the body, such as touch and smell, to perceive books. In the book *Chinese Embroidery* designed by Yarong Wang (Figure 1), for example, the author not only puts the textual content of Hunan embroidery into the book, but also inlays the physical objects of Hunan embroidery into the book, so that the reader can both appreciate the style of Hunan embroidery and touch the craft in a real way.



Figure 1. Chinese Embroidery form Yarong Wang.

In the book *Designing Design*, the famous Japanese designer Kenya Hara mentions the notion that “the formation of information-constructing activities is accomplished through the sensory organs receiving material from the outside and processing memory, that every part of the body has the ability to think, and that the so-called senses interpenetrate and interconnect in an indefinable way [7].” Kenya Hara’s concept can be understood as the selection of paper and materials and the handling of form in book design are all part of the process of sensory experience that people have when reading, or what we call interactive design. The information in a book is no longer presented in a one-sided way but can be used in different ways to interact with the reader, thus deepening the experience of reading. In contrast to e-books, the interactive design of paper books can make a strong impression on the reader during the reading process, thus achieving the designer’s intentions.

In the current market, interactive book design is widely used in children’s books. Designers usually consider adding interactive forms of design in order to attract children’s interest, for example, through some flip-close effects, interactive inside pages (Figure 2) to make children finish reading in a state of curiosity, thus increasing the sales of books.



Figure 2. Hole in the wall book: The Circus

A book named “*Bu Cai*” in Figure 3 designed by Yingchun Zhu was rated as one of the "World's Most Beautiful Books" in 2007. The biggest highlight of his design is that it is a book that needs to be cut manually, and readers must interact with the book to continue reading. The book is deliberately designed to be uncut; readers need to cut

while reading, and a paper knife is attached to the inside of the book. This kind of design is a typical interactive design, which has a strong sense of reading experience and interest, and brings a sense of mystery, expectation and rhythm to reading. Readers will be curious to know the content of each page that follows, creating a sense of anticipation. Each reader cuts in a different way, and the final effect is different, providing readers with different interactive senses.



Figure 3. "Bu Cai" form Yingchun Zhu

4.3. Focus on book product promotion and marketing

The promotion and marketing of a book product includes the overall design of the book and the design of the promotional campaign. Nowadays there are so many different types and forms of books that a single book is not enough to attract the reader's attention, and good promotional design is gradually coming into focus. The content of a book can not only be presented through the book but can also be derived from other related products.

In the past, little attention was paid to the promotion of books and only a few derivatives were available, such as book covers, bookmarks and postcards. However, with the development of book design, diverse forms of promotion are now receiving attention from designers. For example, posters, organ folders, cards, packaging, and book collateral can all be used as book promotion. In the design of these derivatives, the elements, visual images and ideas intended to be conveyed in the book are fully utilized in the design extension, thus enabling a better presentation of the contents of the book and making it clear to the reader at a glance, so that the reader has a deeper impression emotionally and psychologically. The design and promotion of book derivatives enhances the publicity of the book while also improving the economic benefits.

5. Conclusions

With the rapid development of electronic books, the lack of creativity in paper books is deeply rooted in people's impressions. How can we break the bottleneck of traditional books and add more creative elements is a direction that every designer is trying to explore.

As a traditional form of reading culture handed down through the centuries, there are still many designers and scholars exploring this aspect, and the core idea of the exploration is how to go beyond mere paper and bring a series of emotional experiences and interactions. Instead of being a mere recipient of information, the reader becomes the center and participates in the book together, leading to new experiences and reflections. Book design that uses more accessible, acceptable and

interesting design techniques and goes beyond print presentation is bound to create more emotional and spiritual communication for the reader.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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