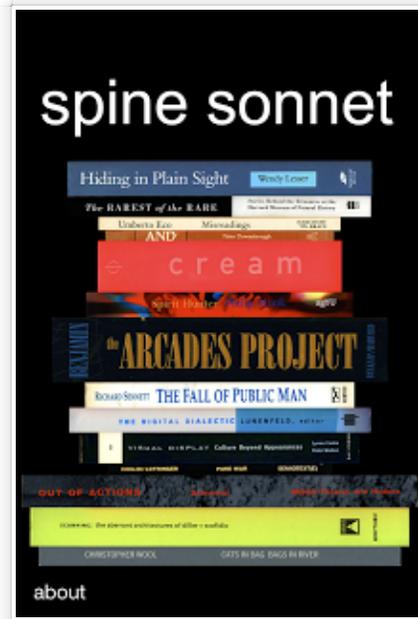


1st June Computers and Lit #2: Spine Sonnets, Apps, and Beyond with Jody Zellen



[http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-tOG8XK1_Rvg/UaleB4j3gLI/AAAAAAAAADJK/e1NGxf5AjtQ/s1600/spine+sonnet.PNG]

For those of you out there with limited attention spans, here is the latest and by far the greatest app to hit the streets... Spine Sonnets, by Jody Zellen. You can generate poetry right before your very eyes, and the lines are all book titles. However, beyond the flash of the new, there is a serious purpose. Here's Jody to tell you about it.

Interview by Josh Medsker

This is such a unique idea! What was the impetus for it?

The project began as an artist's respond project for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art . I was invited to make an offsite project that responded to an exhibition at the museum. I chose a show by an artist named Steve Wolfe. His works on paper depicted old books and album covers. I created a website project I called Spine Sonnet in which a different stack of 14 book spines (all scans of books in my library) appears on the screen each time the browser is refreshed. I realized this would be a great project to turn into an app. For the app version I typed in the titles of all the art, architecture and theory books in my library and then also used the inventory of D.A.P. and Art Catalogues (LACMA's book store) creating an archive of over 3000 titles. In a way the project stems from over the years having thought about the relationship between the titles of books in my library.

Had you done any other type of found poetry before?

I use found images and texts in much of my work net art and photo based works. Often the texts and images come from the newspaper. I have always been interested in random juxtapositions so many of my projects are in the tradition of concrete poetry.

I am really curious about the inner workings of the app... Can you explain how it functions?

The app has an archive of 3000 titles. It is programmed to display 14 titles at a time to create a poem. I wanted it to be simple and straightforward in its design. Each tap on the screen creates a new poem. There are two versions, one is basic white type on black, the other displays random colors and different font styles.

How has the response been so far?

The response has been good and its very satisfying to know people have my art in their pocket to peruse at their leisure. The satisfaction of this has led me to make other apps and embrace the medium as a viable platform for art projects. Since launching my first app I have had over 20,000 total downloads. the most popular, not surprisingly is 4 Square.

I was wondering, when people create a poem from the titles, the content belongs to them? Correct me if I am wrong, but titles can't be copyrighted, right?

People can make a screen capture and save any of the poems they create. It is doubtful any poem would ever repeat. As far as copyright, I do not believe titles are copyrighted as they are just words. This is actually something that has never occurred to me.

Do you have any other writing/text related apps you are working on (or have already published)?

I have created 5 apps. They are all available for free in the iTunes store. Each app does something slightly different.

Art Swipe is a type of exquisite corpse game that juxtaposes people's own images with 100 works of art from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art's image bank.

Urban Rhythms uses generative algorithms to explore how figures move in urban spaces.

4 Square, like Spine Sonnet draws from a fixed data base of images and words and explores the random juxtaposition of four different elements. The four squares can be repositioned.

Episodic my newest app allows users to resize and reposition short animated video clips making their own arrangements and new narrative relationships.

I am committed to making apps and am already conceptualizing the next project. It is my hope that this one will have a sound component.

For Further Reading:

[SteveWolfe \[http://lacma.wordpress.com/2011/02/01/spine-sonnet-jody-zellen-on-steve-wolfe/\]](http://lacma.wordpress.com/2011/02/01/spine-sonnet-jody-zellen-on-steve-wolfe/)

[SpineSonnets \[http://jodyzellen.com/spine_project/\]](http://jodyzellen.com/spine_project/)

[JodyZellen's App Work \[http://www.jodyzellen.com/apps\]](http://www.jodyzellen.com/apps)

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