

En *The Book: 101 Definitions*. Montreal (Canadá): Antheism.

What is a Book?.

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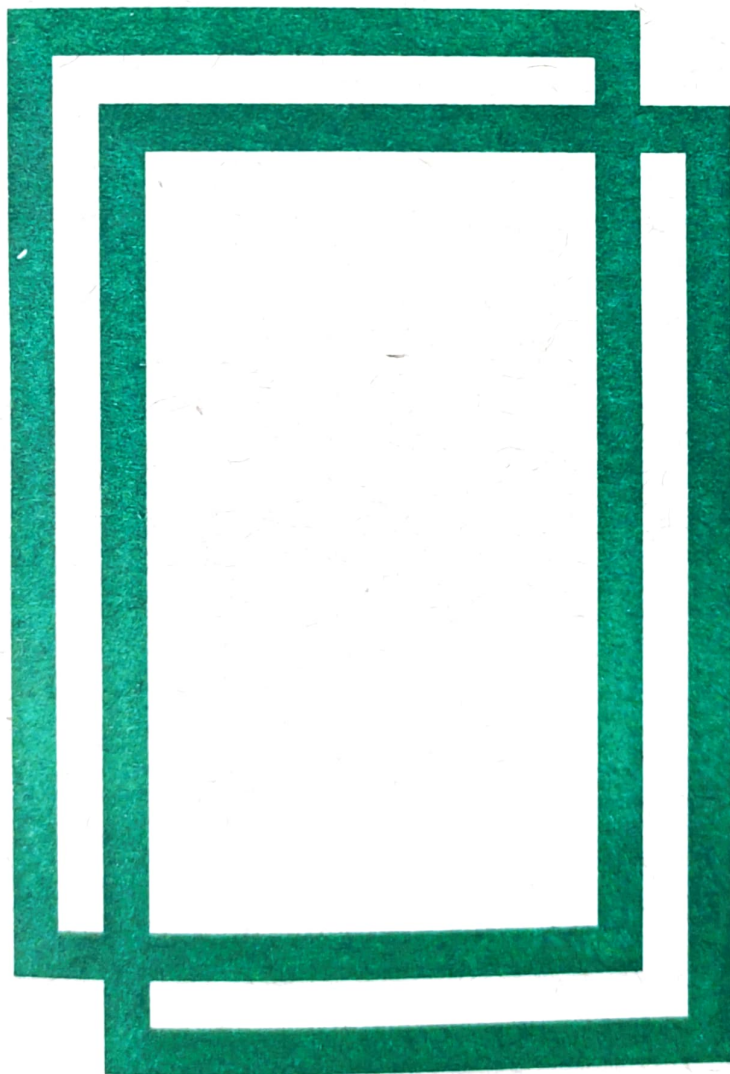


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The Book: 101 Definitions

Edited by Amaranth Borsuk



**THE BOOK:
101 DEFINITIONS**

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What exactly is a book? In *The Book* (MIT Press, 2018) I tried to define it with respect to its status as object, content, idea, and interface. Drawing on its history of changing material forms, *The Book* grapples with an object that is by nature slippery—a portable information storage and retrieval technology—a material form for the dissemination of text. I believe that just as the book's material form shifts over time with the needs of writers and readers and the materials ready to hand, "the book" is a protean idea that shifts with our desires and capacities. Its definition comes, in part, through dialogue, experimentation, and creative reinterpretation. *The Book* is peppered with quotes from the thinkers and makers of books who inspired my research, but I knew as I assembled it that there were many more people I would have liked to ask for their definitions of the book, given world enough, time, and ample space.

In April 2018, I began contacting writers, artists, bookbinders, publishers, librarians, and scholars I admired to ask *What is the/a book?* I shared their responses at t-h-e-b-o-o-k.com to decenter my voice and draw attention to the many other formulations of what the book is and can be. The following are their answers.

I want to express my deep gratitude to all of you for inspiring my continued interest and belief in books, for the ways your work has challenged and stretched my understanding of what books can be and do, and for your generosity in sharing your words with me.

AGUSTÍN BERTI

We think of very different, incomparable, devices as 'books,' just as we deem entities that pump water, spin washing machine drums or move cars forward as 'engines.' And yet there is a distinctive trait in the many things a book may be: a differed, potential existence, waiting to be triggered by reading. Also, printing is a form of ghost binding. Books are silent capture devices oriented to hold in finite linear renderings, line after line, page after page, the infinite experiences, material constraints and whimsical synapses of known and unknown authors. Or, put differently, the replicable existence of the unique time of the mind displayed in an orderly array of words, figures (and images) in the narrow space of folded papers. And thus, books are traps as much as they are maps.

Agustín Berti is a researcher at CONICET, head professor in the National University of Córdoba and member of *Dedalus*. His work on the digitization of literature and audiovisual arts was published in *From Digital to Analog* (2015). He also co-authored *La Biblioteca Roja* (2015), a book-art project on the destruction of libraries.