

Colophon

Edie Freedman designed the first covers of O'Reilly Media's "Animal" books in 1986 using 19th-century engravings of animals from the Dover Pictorial Archive. The cover layout was produced with Quark XPress 3.32 using the ITC Garamond font. Her format for the series pairing an animal, a color and a typeface with a program or programming language remains remarkably unchanged to this day, only recently being noticeably tweaked (the font) since its first title was published. The series' iconic covers complement O'Reilly's distinctive approach to technical topics, breathing personality and life into potentially dry subjects, animating what is effectively Silicon Valley's industry standard guide series.

Since the 19th-century a few animals documented by the Dover Pictorial Archive have become extinct or endangered. Similarly, some of the "Animal" books' technological subjects have become obsolete (like the guide to Windows 98 or, more recently, the one to Windows XP). Accordingly not all of the books remain in print. If a machine could empathize with and relate itself to organic life, it might see in these extinctions or slow deaths of publishing metaphors for its own product cycle and the fungible infrastructural languages threading its operations.

Sharing with the "Animal" books an orientation toward antiquation and an analogy to the skeuomorphism of user interface design, the imitation stone countertop material Solid Surface was invented in 1967 by DuPont. Originally one of the company's innovative "space age plastics", Solid Surface is now manufactured throughout the world for utterly banal commercial use. Buying an "Animal" book from a chain store, for instance, will likely bring the book to rest on a Solid Surface counter at the point of sale. Meanwhile online, "Add to cart" and "Proceed to checkout" serve virtually the same function.

In publishing, a colophon is a brief statement containing information about the publication of a book such as the place of publication, the publisher and the date of publication. This colophon was written by Joshua Caleb Weibley in conjunction with the 2015 exhibition "Colophon" at Veronica, a project space in Seattle, WA which is nearby to the headquarters of the software company Microsoft and the eCommerce bookseller Amazon.com. "Colophon" includes drawings in Solid Surface frames of a climbing Frog, a Dodo, a European common Frog, a Hare, a Harpy Eagle, a Hook-Lipped Rhinoceros, a Javanese Rhinoceros, Owls, a Paradise Flycatcher, a Reinwardt's Gliding Frog, Sea Turtles, Slender Lorises, a Tarsier, Victoria Crowned Pigeons and a Woodpecker alongside representations of early and more recent logos of Microsoft Windows.

Once employed producing Solid Surface countertops for retail chains like Sephora, Motherhood Maternity and The Children's Place, Joshua Caleb Weibley was born the year the first "Animal" book ("Learning the vi Editor") was published. He lives in Brooklyn, NY and works for the online hand-made goods marketplace Etsy.