

about

The use of the preposition 'about' on web pages has led to the term becoming a space for creators and/or authors to state their aims, intentions and how they would like the following work to be perceived. Visitors might find phrases like, we are 'a multi-disciplinary, award winning design team', 'we create useful, beautiful and successful products' or 'simplicity is at the heart of everything we do'. It is an opportunity to set the terms of the author and in this spirit, this entry sets out to explain how this resource has come about and might be used.

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At present, design dictionaries exist online and in print, for example, design dictionary.co.uk, *The Conran Dictionary of Design* [1985] and the *Oxford Dictionary of Modern Design* [2004]. Dictionaries presented in the two formats provide both in-depth definitions and brief statements to be used as reference tools by users; and most of the dictionaries point to further reading or examples for the user to refer to and develop their understanding of a term being defined.

Printed dictionaries can represent a certain period in design theory and practice but become dated rapidly as no new terms can be added or changed as design evolves. Dictionaries or similar platforms that appear online such as the Design Museum's library and the Chicago School of Media Theory's 'Media Keywords Glossary' can be supplemented or revised easily. Dictionaries like these can keep up with the rate of change in the industry, however, the use of hyperlinks on their web pages can often either expire or offer too much diversion and distraction from the term being read about. A *Limited Language* article by Colin Davies and Monika Parrinder titled, 'This page is no longer on this server...' [2010] suggests that, 'perhaps the link on the webpage is today's mini explosion? Each click takes us into a new realm; a new page, image or sonic experience.' Another disadvantage of online dictionaries is that if a user chooses to print a definition or information, the printed document often lacks the aesthetic qualities that are appreciated and valued in a printed book. Annamaria Carusi 2006 study, 'Textual Practitioners, A comparison of hypertext theory and phenomenology of reading' [2006], states that, 'Readers still prefer to print texts that are available online and to read hard copy, even after they have done their searches and browsed through texts online.' The print-off might have the website address in its longest form across the bottom or top, unwanted images, oversized margins and hyperlinks as 'buttons' throughout the text that are often underlined and in blue. It is from observations like those mentioned above that I have attempted to address the kind of interaction offered by a dictionary that can exist online and in print.

A Dictionary of Design Now is an online platform that allows its users to select-and-read or select-and-print texts to suit their interests. It encourages users to compile, edit and personalise their own dictionary. DDN is primarily aimed at BA design students but also at those who are interested in reading about contemporary design debates, themes and trends. Each dictionary entry has a short statement that introduces a concept, theme or term. Some DDN entries also include a longer text that accompanies the short statement. For these, the variation of text

formats are an opportunity for users to interact with the dictionary beyond simply reading a page from left to right. The playful text formats; the diverse range of both conventional and unconventional terms; and the option to compile and edit your own dictionary make DDN an engaging design platform.

Lastly, this version of DDN, 'published' on 1st May 2012, maps the design of objects with some crossovers to other design practices, such as, architecture, fashion and graphic. In the future, the concept of DDN has the potential to be implemented fully across these areas.

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about {see also audience, author}

