



[ABOUT](#) [COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICIES](#) [GIFTS](#) [TOPIC TALKS](#)

The Fine Art of App Preservation

The Fine Art of App Preservation / *Melissa Goertzen, E-Book Program Development Librarian (mjg2227@columbia.edu)*

In 1963 Josef Albers published the *Interaction of Color*, which revolutionized the way scholars and students study relationships between colors. Albers developed the text to serve as a hands-on kit that provides an interactive environment to conduct silkscreen color studies. However, there are limits to interactivity, as the book was originally published in print format. Now, fifty years after its original publication the text has been released in a digital format that brings Albers' original vision to life. Yale University Press released the *Interaction of Color* app, which includes over 125 color plates, 60 interactive studies, and commentary from Albers. This is a landmark publication and won the George Wittenborn Memorial Book Award for excellence in art publishing from the Art Libraries Society of North America earlier this year.

Librarians are facing challenges because the app is sold exclusively through the iTunes Store and is only compatible with the latest iPad. Currently, Columbia University Libraries does not provide access to public tablets and there is not an existing framework regarding how to “lend” these devices to users.

A second challenge involves preservation of the app. Because its value to the scholarly community is tied to its interactive learning environment, librarians searched for a means to purchase a preservation copy that guarantees long-term access to both content and functionality. They discovered that because the app can only be licensed through iTunes (currently, there is not a business model that supports a flat out purchase of the app), there is no way to capture and archive content. Even if it was, there are no benchmarks that estimate the costs of long-term app maintenance and storage.

During the Fall semester, several of us at Columbia Libraries had an opportunity to discuss access and preservation challenges with the New Business & Product Manager at Yale University Press. We learned that academic publishers are also grappling with these issues, and there are opportunities to work together and discuss strategies related to the preservation of enhanced e-books. One idea is to begin with the preservation of underlying images and text. While this excludes functionality, it provides a starting point that may better acquaint information professionals and publishers with preservation challenges at hand.

It will be interesting to see how preservation discussions develop in the coming months and years. For now, partnerships are developing with the collective goals of providing access and preserving scholarly content for generations of researchers and students to come.