

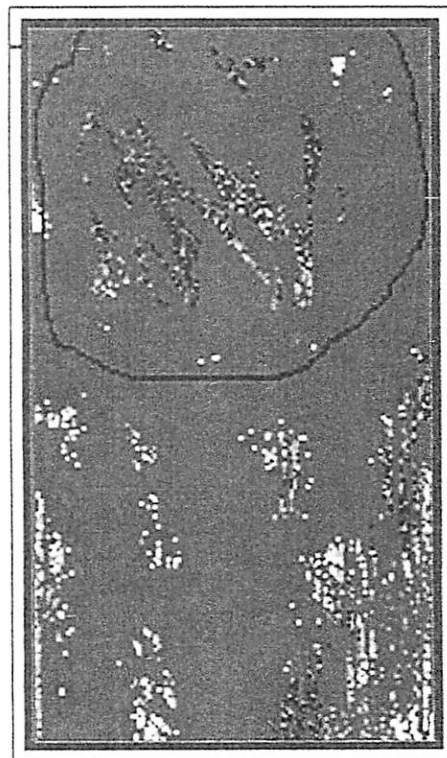
978 0 313 6923 3



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Edit Publications, 2010 | Series Editor: Danny Snelson

*Seven Controlled Vocabularies and Obituary 2004. The Joy of Cooking*

Tan Lin

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Danielle Aubert  
Lee Ann Brown  
Marie Buck  
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Sara Wintz



# Selected Essays About a Bibliography

*Edit: Processing Network Publishing,*  
organized by Danny Snelson.

Tan Lin's Seven Controlled Vocabularies and  
Obituary. 2004. *The Joy of Cooking*

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## Editorial Note

Many of the selected essays were composed in advance of the Edit event, though several were written on-site, and some after the fact. Contributors were asked to respond to dozens of suggested topics or "selected essays," each of which concerned a writing/translating/publishing/editorial technology involved in *Seven Controlled Vocabularies* (7CV), the Edit event, or related practices. One or more essays could be submitted, so long as no single essay exceeded six-hundred words. Contributions were collected and edited by a team of seven at the event, and printed as an on-site publication. Later edits were made on the "Network Publishing with Tan Lin" section of the Edit Wiki ([http://aphasic-letters.com/edit-wiki/index.php?title=Network\\_Publishing\\_with\\_Tan\\_Lin](http://aphasic-letters.com/edit-wiki/index.php?title=Network_Publishing_with_Tan_Lin)), in preparation for a lulu POD edition and a PDF download from Wesleyan University Press. The essays were thus nominally self-selecting in the way that a search engine's results are. In this sense, the "general idea" becomes the "author" of a sequence known as "selected essays." Because much material was produced via web-based searches of shared information, there is considerable duplication, shallow appropriation, as well as mild customization of skimmed or lightly read material. Benjamin Disraeli remarked that when he wanted to read a good book, he wrote one. Today, it might be said that to read a good book, you first have to edit it, and to edit it, you have to search and tag it.

Several complications are implicated in the data transfer between event, wiki platform, and the POD distribution method. Lack of an authoritative list of essays/essayists by event's end, absence of a wiki style sheet, and non-codified editorial practices rendered the history of publication Just Good Enough, as attested by its principal formats: the wiki and lulu edition. Taken together these overlapping publishing horizons (see Malik) punctuate *Selected Essays on a Bibliography* regarded as a communications event or medium. Because, at any given moment, the "finished" book and the on-going wiki editing procedure may or may not coincide, the relation between published book and wiki is a set of communicative probabilities altered by a "selection." The *Selected Essays* might be regarded as performance-based publishing event, wiki, POD mechanism, social network, archive of search results, and tag collection. Genres are social agreements, as are search terms, and they produce highly selective group readings, bibliographic controls, tags, editing standards, and style sheets, for which reading (information + relevance) is produced by and customized to a group's user habits, much as it was with private libraries in the nineteenth century. In this sense, literature, or more specifically written literariness, becomes visible as a medium for communication.

As such, *Selected Essays* is mostly chronological—that is to say, the essays proceed in the order that the editorial team received them from a wider network of participants, each of whom was edited in the process of extending *Seven Controlled Vocabularies*. Later entries respect this initial order and suggest the expanding framework of the selected essays themselves, where decreasing the probability for direct or singular attribution is a modus of selection and increasing relevance in a digital reading environment.

(Initially adapted from J. Gordon Faylor's Editorial Note —Danny Snelson 08:43, 5 May 2010 (UTC) —TL 21:29, 11 May 2010 (UTC))

## Seminar

Commercial entities run what they call *seminars*. You can attend them at corporate headquarters, in the "seminar room," or in meeting rooms at hotels specializing in hosting such professionalizing gatherings. Perhaps the term came into use in this context because its progenitors sought to yield some of the academic connotation from the university. In the early years of the twenty-first century, the word in its business context has come to mean a commercial event. Most people, when using the term, mean a recurring meeting, a series. At American universities it has come to mean something of the opposite of "the lecture." Here there is an expectation that learners will participate in the making of the lesson. Often this counter-intuitive methodology is never explained; the reversal of expected roles is simply assumed. When a teacher lectures in a seminar, it is deemed inappropriate.

Business-school pedagogy has positioned the seminar exactly halfway between its new corporate and its traditional academic connotations. Here the learner is expected to think "out of the box," while the pedagogy is said to be both "open" and "Socratic." But the so-called Socratic method (favored by law schools) leads learners through a discussion in which freely volunteered answers to questions lead inexorably to the lesson the teacher had in mind from the start. Thus it can be said that the seminar has become the perfect tool of hegemony: open by process, closed by content. It is easier to lecture than to lead a truly open discussion (in which the endpoint topic cannot be predicted at the outset). It is easier to transfer the power of certain knowledge by the open-closed method than by the closed method.

The word *seminar* is derived from the Latin *seminarium*, a seed plot. In the post-agricultural economy of the United States, an era rung in by Berkeley chancellor Clark Kerr as the time of the university as "Knowledge Factory," idioms making use of the seed plot have withered and died. Essentially the only remaining idiom in this connotative family is "sewing seeds of destruction."

In some European countries, the seminar is not at all what it is in the U.S. It is a lecture class (often "given" by a super-eminent figure) in which there is no discussion, but a synthesizing paper (a seminar paper) is due at the end of the course of meetings. The eminence sows a seed; the learner, silently gathered around, is the relatively fertile or infertile furrow set to receive it. In this the trope makes clear sense: the lecture is given and (as certified more or less by the term-ending paper) it is received. The seminar in Europe continues to be associated with old concepts of authority (gone to seed, we might say). But in the U.S., while it would seem that the seminar augurs a new kind of authority in which listener can be talker and talker listener, the seed is gone from the scene.

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