

1984

by
George Orwell

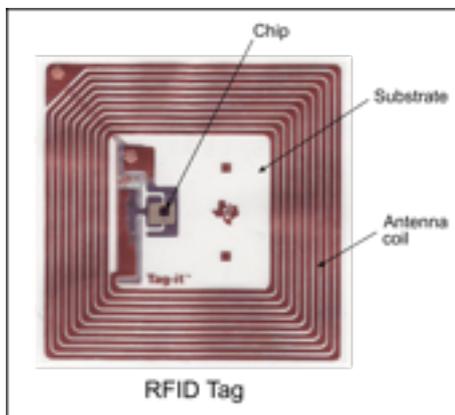
Andrew Berry, another Guild member and I have often discussed the possibility of incorporating technology into a traditionally bound book, we had no real idea what we wanted the technology to do, or how to achieve it and so it remained a vague thought.

However, when Designer Bookbinders selected “1984” as their competition book, it seemed to me to be the perfect book to incorporate hidden technology; in this book Orwell paints a picture of a world where the State controls everything and everybody, Room 101, The Thought Police and Big Brother control and manipulate by constant surveillance.

My initial plan was an extension of Book Crossing, the practice of leaving books in a public place for others to take and read, but my book would contain a hidden tracking device and not rely upon others having to record it’s journey; simples! However, I had a problem, me and technology, how could I actually achieve what in principle seemed so easy?

I discussed the proposed project with a number of people who are far more aware of the potential uses of technology than I am and entered a world of radio-

frequency identification (RFIDs), micro-processors, photovoltaic cells and miniaturised cameras. At the end of the discussions I was convinced that it would be possible to produce a fully automated tracking system that could fit within a book, it would, however cost and did I really want to release such a book into the big wide world?



I decided no, but still wanted technology to feature, so I dismantled an old computer to see if there were parts that could be incorporated into a book without actually operating in any way. Again I decided that this was not what I wanted and so the idea was

largely forgotten and other designs were considered.

Technology remained an itch that needed to be scratched and I thought of a quick response code (QR code), it could provide a surveillance-free form of technology that could also record the number of people using it, so in part it would fulfil my brief.

I decided to incorporate an onlay of the QR code into my design on a full leather binding, but it soon became apparent that my skill was insufficient to enable me to produce a reliably readable QR code and so I decided to produce a limp binding with a QR code incorporated into the printed design. After initial testing of the code

to ensure that it worked I thought that perhaps the significance of the code might be lost and that it should feature alone on the cover.

The cover of the book is meant to represent Winston Smith's attempt to hide his diary from prying eyes by wrapping it in some old paper from The Ministry of Truth and securing it with a piece of scarlet ribbon, emblem of the Junior Anti-Sex League, but he didn't realise that the fastener is in fact a functioning pet microchip!

Therefore my final design is not at all what I started out to produce and in fact even the QR code is located on the flyleaf rather than the cover, as the whole point of the design was to emphasise the bleak conditions in which people were expected to live.

The plan is still to "release" this book into the world of Book Crossing.

Phil Wilton