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WEBMEDIATED GENRES – A CHALLENGE
TO TRADITIONAL GENRE THEORY

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Web-Mediated Genres

– A Challenge to Traditional Genre Theory

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This paper explores the possibility of extending the functional genre model to account for non-linear, multi-modal, web-mediated documents. It adds a two-dimensional perspective to the genre analysis model in order to account for the fact that web documents not only act as text but also as medium. A substantial part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the function of *links*; mainly because functional approaches to links are scarce and because regarding links as constituents in the genre analysis model marks a significant departure from traditional genre analysis. Most exemplary material for the theoretical discussion is the homepage (the first, introductory page on a website) and so the paper also provides a tentative characterisation of the homepage as a web genre.

1. Introduction

Since its introduction in the 1980s, the concept of genre has been a matter of considerable discussion in research communities throughout the world. In Australia systemic functional linguists such as Martin (1992) and Eggins (1994) have used the concept to complement the hallidayan notion of register, in America Swales (1990) has developed his seminal model for genre analysis which discourse analysts have welcomed with open arms and not only used as a tool for analysing genres but certainly also criticised and fine-tuned in order to make it even more fit for covering the

complexities of genres. And finally, in Hong Kong Bhatia (1993) has paved the way for the practical application of genre theory by suggesting a comprehensive framework for analysing non-literary genres – especially ESP texts. While these genre studies offer important insights into the notion of genre, it is also a well-known fact that the theoretical discussions and the practical genre analyses tend to focus on genres transmitted through speech or print whereas little has been done to use the genre model on genres transmitted through one of the most significant digital media of today: the World Wide Web. Recent years have seen a virtual explosion of web-mediated communication, not least due to the immense popularity of the Internet among businesses and organisations worldwide, and if researchers want to account for the discursive practices in which people engage in our society (which is the very idea behind the concept of genre), digital genres must obviously be included in the analyses as well. Consequently, we shall apply the genre model, pioneered by Swales (1990) and developed by Bhatia (1993), to one of the newly emerged genres on the World Wide Web: the homepage.

The aim of the paper is two-fold. First the paper serves as a theoretical exploration of the genre model in general. It attempts to establish whether the model is suitable for capturing the essence of web-mediated genres or whether the digital context of web genres may call for a reconsideration of – or at least provide new insights into – the constituents of the genre model. Second, even though a systematic characterization of web-mediated genres is outside the scope of this paper, we use the homepage as exemplary material in our theoretical discussion and in that way provide a tentative characterisation of the homepage as a genre. The reasons for choosing the homepage are (i) it is a web-generated genre in the sense that it came into existence with the advent of the WWW and has no direct parallel outside the Web (as opposed to other texts on websites such as extracts from annual reports, corporate brochures, etc.) and (ii) it is among the first web-generated texts to have reached genre status which means that the form and content of the homepage is now becoming conventionalised after more than 10 years of “rhetorical anarchy”.

2. The Concept of Genre in Functional Genre Theory

As mentioned in the introduction, the concept of genre has been a matter of considerable discussion and research in recent years. Ever since the “new”, functional genre movement began to gather momentum in the early 1980s, there has been a widely-shared view that genres are best conceptualised as goal-directed or purposive. This emphasis on functionality is clearly reflected in the definitions of genre provided through the years – perhaps most eloquently expressed in the words of the systemic functional linguist, J.R. Martin: “Genres are how things get done, when language is used to accomplish them” (1985: 250). One of the most extensive definitional discussions of the concept of genre, however, remains that of Swales (1990):

A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style. (Swales 1990: 58)

2.1 The Traditional Genre Model

The above definition does not only emphasise the purposive nature of genres, it also makes an interesting claim concerning the way genres “look”. The communicative purpose constitutes the *rationale* for the genre which means that the purpose of a genre (what we try to accomplish) triggers a particular text structure and – more often than not - a host of conventionalised verbal and visual rhetorical strategies. To conceptualise this interdependency, Swales suggests the following three-level genre model whose three constituents capture the essence of what we call “genres”:

Communicative purpose

Realised by

Move structure

Realised by

Rhetorical strategies

We shall now take a closer look at the constituents in the model as they form the basis of our two-dimensional genre model in section 5.

2.1.1 Communicative Purpose

As appears from the definition above, genres are purposeful activities and the functional genre movement suggests that the primary criterion for classifying certain communicative events as a “genre” is a set of shared communicative purposes¹. In other words if we want to claim that the homepage constitutes a “proper” genre, we obviously need to look for a shared communicative purpose (or purposes) which the communicative events (in this case the homepages) are intended to fulfil². The communicative purpose of a genre-text (i.e. a typical representative example of a genre) cannot be determined by looking at the text in isolation. If we want to establish what people accomplish by means of a particular text, we have to turn to the context, the discourse community, in which the text is used. If the researcher is a novice to this community, i.e. have no previous experience and background knowledge of the community activities, s/he obviously needs to talk to the expert members of the discourse community who use the genre in question.

¹ Though critical voices have been raised concerning the difficulty of using communicative purpose as a privileged criterion (Askehave & Swales 2001).

² This purpose should be recognised by the members of the discourse communities – that is the companies who produce the homepage and the receivers of the homepage.

2.1.2 Move Structure

Genres are not only characterised by shared set of communicative purposes, they are also highly structured and conventionalised in the sense that the genres represent or lay down the way to go about accomplishing particular communicative purposes. In other words when we use language to perform a communicative event, we do so systematically; we go from A to B - and draw on the conventionalised internal structure as recognised by our discourse community. Thus the major linguistic reflex of communicative purpose is in the *staging structure* by which a text of a particular genre unfolds (referred to as the “schematic structure” or “move structure”)³. The move structure of a genre typically consists of several functionally distinct stages or steps, the reason being:

[...] we cannot make all the meanings we want to at once. Each stage in the genre contributes a part of the overall meanings that must be made for the genre to be accomplished successfully. (Eggins 1994: 36 after Martin 1985)

Even though the structure of a genre is highly conventionalised, there is obviously room for rhetorical variation and through the years researchers have tried to incorporate this flexibility in the genre model, thereby modifying the claim of a “fixed” staging structure with a specific number of moves and a predetermined sequence. Today most researchers in fact agree that instances of genres do not necessarily contain a fixed set of obligatory moves. Instead the genre-texts select their structural elements from a common move repertoire (see for example Ventola, 1989).

The notion of moves is particularly useful for displaying generic conventions in terms of text organisation. However, the “utility value” of the concept is somewhat hampered by the fact that strong disagreement exists as to which criteria should be used for identifying move structure (see Paltridge 1994). Swales (1990) appears to base his criteria on two different systems namely lexicogrammar and rhetorical function (though

³ Lexical and syntactic choices are of course also constrained by the communicative purpose (Swales 1990: 53).

most often the latter), Eggins (1994) relies solely on lexicogrammar, Martin focuses on the layout of a text, suggesting that “titles, sub-titles, headings and subheadings are commonly deployed to keep track of the composition structure [of the texts]” (1992: 443), while Bhatia (1993) concludes that “the ultimate criteria for assigning discourse values to various moves is functional rather than formal” (1993: 87). In the analysis of the homepage in section 6.2.1 we shall get back to the problem of move identification.

2.1.3 Rhetorical Strategies

As suggested by Swales (1990) the communicative purpose of a genre not only shapes the schematic structure of the discourse, it also influences and constrains choices of *content and style*. Therefore, the next step in the genre analysis model is to explore the level of *form* – more specifically the rhetorical strategies (verbal as well as visual) used to realise a particular communicative intention. Generally, there is no one-to-one correlation between a particular move and the verbal and non-verbal strategies used to instantiate a move. However, texts belonging to the same genre often deploy identical or at least very similar rhetorical features. For example when we hear expressions like “mix well for approx. 5 minutes” or “sections 35 to 46 of this Act do not apply to a tenancy”, we intuitively presume that we are dealing with genres such as recipes and legal Acts because the lexicogrammatical choices are extremely genre-specific. The aim of the rhetorical analysis is to look for such regularities or standard practices in the actual formulations of genres. This does not mean, however, that there is no room for variation when writing a genre-text. In the same way as writers may choose between moves from a “common repertoire” when structuring their texts, writers choose between rhetorical strategies from a whole network of linguistic/non-linguistic strategies and end up with their (more or less) personalised versions of a particular genre. As Bhatia says in his extension of Swales’ genre definition:

Most often it [the genre] is highly structured and conventionalised with constraint on allowable contributions in terms of their intent, positioning, form and functional value. These constraint, however, are often exploited by the expert members of the discourse community to achieve private intentions within the framework of socially recognized purpose(s). (Bhatia 1993: 13)

In the actual genre analysis, one of the most interesting findings is to explore the “common repertoire” of rhetorical strategies, i.e. all the different possibilities which exist for saying practically the same thing (realising the same move), and equally important - to establish whether some expressions are more preferred, and therefore more genre-specific, than others.

2.2 Genre Development

The homepage is a fairly new genre and, therefore, before we move on to the actual analysis of the homepage, we should like to briefly address the dynamic nature of genres, i.e. how genres evolve and mature. Already in 1968 Bitzer commented on this dynamism suggesting that:

From day to day, year to year, comparable situations occur, prompting comparable responses; hence rhetorical forms are born and a special vocabulary, grammar, and style are established... The situation recurs and, because we experience situations and the rhetorical responses to them, a form of discourse is not only established but comes to have a power of its own – the tradition itself tend to function as a constraint upon any new response in the form. (Bitzer 1968: 13 in Berkenkotter & Huckin 1995)

In other words genres and genre rules do not appear overnight. As a matter of fact it may take years before members of a discourse community agree on a “conventional response” to a recurrent situation (and even then, conventions are “open to negotiation” in the sense that genres undergo constant change because the users perpetually shape the genres to better

serve their needs). The homepage is an interesting example in this respect. Twenty years ago, homepages did not exist, the obvious reason being that there was no need for a genre which could introduce the contents of a website because the Internet had not taken on the role as a world-wide distributor of digital information yet. However, as the world changed – not least spurred by the enormous potential of the new technology – and as the possibilities for communicating via the WWW arose, the need for web-mediated genres emerged too. As with most genres, the homepage developed gradually. In the beginning genre conventions for homepages were almost non-existent. Even though the technological properties of the Net, the choice of software programmes for website design, etc. had an impact on the way texts on the Internet were presented, it was still up to the individual web writer to exploit the potential of the Net and do what s/he found best to fulfil the communicative purpose of a homepage. However, as the use of web communication gained ground, and more and more companies and organisations began to go on-line, genre patterns for homepages gradually emerged. Two important methods were used for generating and disseminating these genre conventions: (a) web writers (unconsciously) “copied” the form and content of existing homepages when making their own homepage or (2) they consulted the extensive range of handbooks on web design and web writing, which began to swamp the market. So today, we have not only reached a stage where we can talk about the homepage as a genre in its own right, we also begin to see the immediate generic effects: a standardisation of homepages where genre conventions to a certain extent constrain the content, structural design and rhetorical strategies of the homepage – no matter whether the communicators/web writers are multinational corporations, public institutions, private companies, societies, organisations or individuals.

3. The Homepage as a Web-Mediated Genre

The homepage can be defined as the top-level document of a website⁴ which performs two overall functions. First it introduces the user to the general content of the site by presenting “informative” tables of contents and providing “enticing” text bits. Secondly, it functions as the official gateway of the website as it enables the reader to access and navigate the site by providing navigational tools or links that branch off into the website as a whole. This duality inherent in homepages may best be described by conceptualising the homepage as a front door with a door sign. The door sign indicates the name of the residents (i.e. the “content” of the house) while the door itself is the gateway (the medium) which enables guests to enter the house and visit the residents inside. Having said this, one must of course bear in mind that there are other ways of accessing a site. In the same way as people may choose the back door of a house, one may also access the website through “unofficial” gates and need not be “let in” at the main URL address.

Even though the homepage is a *new* genre, it would be wrong to suggest that we have never seen anything like it. In fact some of its main characteristics are replicates of well-established discourses from the world outside the Net. Most prominent are its affinity with promotional and news texts of which two stand out; namely the exordium and the newspaper front page. The exordium is a promotional genre which goes back to Aristotle and classical rhetoric. The exordium is the introductory part of an oral speech which indicates the content and structure of the presentation which is about to come, while at the same time serves as an appetiser that identifies and promotes the speaker and his/her speech. Thus in the exordium attention is drawn not only to the subject of the speech (including its relevance and importance) but also to the speaker him/herself. Being the first part of the speech, the exordium plays a very significant role as the initial “meeting point” of the speaker and his/her audience; it is here the speaker’s credibility is established and his/her

⁴ The use of the term “top-level” presupposes, however, that the website content is organised hierarchically, which may not always be the case.

ability to captivate the audience is tested. Although the exordium originates from oration, its properties have been transferred to the written mode and can be seen in a wide range of promotional/introductory genres such as *prefaces*, *introductions* and *forewords*. Now, with the advent of the Net, the exordium has found its digital realisation and the similarity between the homepage and the exordium is obvious: the homepage also displays an interesting mixture of promotional features intertwined with content information where for example pictures, sound, music and animation are combined with enticing summaries of website contents to make the user stay and explore the site.

The other genre elements, which homepages seem to imitate, are those of newspaper front pages. The newspaper front page also serves as a promoter and content indicator (like the exordium) but where the similarity between the exordium and the homepage lies mainly in terms of similar purposes, the similarity between the front page and the homepage concerns other elements as well, such as content, form, and lay-out. Thus we often see the following characteristics of newspaper discourse on the homepage as well: small summaries, key words, catchy headlines, tables, frames, attention-seeking photos, and information value attached to the placement of elements (e.g. the inverted pyramid format and given information on the left and new information on the right)⁵.

So far we can conclude that even though we have presented the homepage as a new genre born with the Net, it shares several features with already existing genres and discourses from printed and oral media. This does not mean, however, that the homepage is simply a digital version of already existing genres. As we shall see in the sections to come, the fact that the homepage draws on a new kind of medium, namely the WWW, adds to it a distinctiveness hitherto unseen in “traditional” genres. Thus the WWW as a *medium* conveys unique properties to the homepage as a *genre* and this co-existence of genre and medium, which seems to be ignored in traditional genre theory, is fundamental to web communication and must

⁵ See Kress & Van Leuwen (1998) for a description of given and new information in newspaper front pages.

not be overlooked with trying to determine the genre characteristics of the homepage.

4. The World Wide Web as a Medium – Properties and Characteristics

Due to the importance of the interplay between genre and medium when dealing with web-mediated texts we shall now account for the properties and characteristics of the medium through which the homepage is distributed.

The World Wide Web provides a public space in which anyone with access to the Internet is free to search for information and establish virtual presence in cyberspace. The technology of the WWW allows for the mediation of different software or media genres, such as chat, mail, Usenet, and websites. It is well-known in media studies that “the medium is the message”, as pointed out by McLuhan (1962) in the sixties. Therefore, the World Wide Web should not be seen *only* as an important contextual feature of web genres; rather the WWW is an *integrated* part of web genres. This means that, although many web genres have printed counterparts (e.g. an annual report may be published in print and on the Net), the medium adds unique properties to the web genre in terms of production, function, and reception which cannot be ignored in the genre characterisation.

4.1 General Properties of the WWW

One of the most important properties of the World Wide Web is the overt *intertextuality* where various virtual texts are connected by links allowing the reader to move from one text to another in a very simple manner. The embedded intertextuality of web texts gives them a particular property compared to printed texts: the conceptualisation of one text depends on its relation with other texts. I.e. the isolated text has no meaning in itself in the overall textual system but must be seen in relation to the texts to which it is

linked (Mitra & Cohen 1999). Another property of the World Wide Web is its *global reach*; authors of web texts may use the medium to reach a global audience, and Internet users have immediate access to information irrespective of distance and time. *Immateriality* is a third property of the WWW. Web texts are not always “materialised” in a printed version - and contrary to their printed counterpart, web texts tend to be of an extremely dynamic nature; being changed, replaced or withdrawn within hours or days. Finally, as the users of the WWW take active part in linking web texts (thus creating their own “story”), the Web is also subject to vivid discussions of where the limit between the reader and the author goes.

Authors of websites have no monopoly on the information on their websites in the sense that a site is immediately accessible to all web users throughout the world. And even though web authors might insert instructions on how to use the site and how to navigate it, the users are not obliged to follow the path thought out by the authors.

4.2 Properties of the WWW Influencing Web Text Production and Reception

We shall now take a closer look at two media properties, namely *multi-mediality* and *hypertext/hyper-reading*, which are of course also part of the general properties of the WWW but whose characteristics have a significant influence on the nature of web-mediated texts and therefore become valuable concepts in our genre characterisation of the homepage in section 6.

4.2.1 Multi-mediality

The WWW may be characterised as a *main* medium which integrate various sub-mediums into one common format. Most web texts exploit this huge potential of combining text, images, sound, and animations and the result is a “text” (a screen page) which has more in common with a

television/video screen than with a text in its traditional sense⁶. As pointed out by Mitra & Cohen (1999):

Improved technologies of video compression, developments in better data transmission technology, and speedier processors in computers are making it possible to supplement the written text of the World Wide Web with streaming video and audio. Thus the written word is not only hyperactive in the World Wide Web text, but its meaning is constantly implicated by the multimedia images that accompany the text. (op. cit: 188)

Not all web designers exploit the multi-media potential generated by the WWW. But those who do, provide the web users with the possibility of *reading* a text, *listening* to a piece of music or a speech, or *watching* a movie – either separately or in combination, as we shall see in section 6.3 on rhetorical strategies. The multi-mediality of the web tends to promote the tabular and non-sequential reading process of web text. The reading process is not only interrupted because of the graphical frame structure of homepages (similar to newspaper front pages), but also by the users' modal shifts – where they either read, listen, or watch depending on the nature of the media. What is more, the multimediality of web texts supplies the texts with a rich polysemous potential where the web user is “invited” to participate actively in assigning meaning in the process of text consumption (Landow, 1997, Bolter, 2001).

4.2.2 Hypertext and Hyper-reading

Hypertext is the key medium used on the WWW to present information on the Web. Hypertexts relate web texts to each other; thus enabling a non-linear transmission of information. The general characteristics of hypertext

⁶ Obviously, we also find multi-modal features in printed text genres (e.g. a combination of verbal and visual strategies), but what is peculiar to web-mediated genres is the possibility of combining these strategies with other media e.g. sound and moving images/flash films.

influence and constrain text production and reception on the Web and the concept is therefore extremely relevant to consider when trying to characterise web texts as genres. Hypertext is a system of non-hierarchical text blocks where the textual elements (nodes) are connected by links. For hypertext technologists dealing with hypertexts from a content-oriented perspective, focus is on the textual structure formed as a “network” (a term used to emphasise the non-linearity of hypertexts (Fritz 1998)). According to many hypertext experts, hypertext is characterised as a non-sequential *text system*. However, for many literary hypertext researchers, who apply a more receiver-oriented perspective (for instance Landow and Bolter (ibid.)), the definition of hypertext is not based on how hypertexts are structured but on how they are *accessed* by the reader. Thus according to Landow and Bolter (ibid.) there is no clear distinction between text production and text reception on the Internet. They argue that the readers can choose where to begin their reading and where to end it. They choose their own path and thereby create their “own” text in the hypertext system – becoming a kind of web author. So rather than basing their definition of hypertext on the *structural patterns*, the literary approach tends to base its definition on the *reading process* associated with hypertext.

So what is the effect of hypertext on the web-users and their approach to web-mediated texts? Compared to traditional text, the hypertext system places certain constraints on the reading pattern, which result in a new kind of reading referred to as *hyper-reading* (Sosnoski 1999: 135). The most obvious difference between “traditional reading” and hyper-reading boils down to that of linearity; with hypertext reading being regarded as non-linear (where the reader filters, skims and scans the text), and traditional text reading being regarded as linear. Nevertheless, many researchers have started questioning whether hyper-reading can be considered a new reading technique that is born with and peculiar to the WWW. In fact, some literary hypertext researchers consider hyper-reading a particular *reading mode*, which can be found *both* in printed *as well as* in web-mediated text. Finnemann (1999) suggests for example that the reading process of web texts is in fact very similar to that of traditional texts; in printed texts we also filter, skim and fragment the information (thus performing a non-linear reading) and in web texts our reading process may also be

characterised as linear because the user cannot connect to five nodes at a time but must make each connection in turn:

In an ordinary text you are supposed to move from chapter 1 to chapter 2 while in a hypertext you are supposed to choose your own serial order at various stages on the journey. But even so, you still have to choose, you have to determine the order in which you will read the text and this order will always have to be sequential. The optional freedom in hypertext systems is not a freedom from sequentialized linearity, since the user cannot make more than one choice at a time. (op. cit: 25)⁷

4.2.2.1 Reading Mode and Navigating mode

Instead of operating with the linear/non-linear dichotomy, Finnemann suggests that we regard hypertext as a text system which has the capacity of activating at least two *modal shifts* in the reading process (1) the “reading-as-such” being one mode (the reading mode) and (2) the navigating mode (or linking mode) being the other⁸. The “reading mode” leaves the user in a traditional reader position with sequential reading as the guiding principle (similar to traditional reading, no matter whether the actual reading is strictly linear or not). The “navigating mode” allows the reader to navigate the site and actively construct his/her own reading path through one or several sites. So when consuming web texts, the web user employs two different cognitive capacities and demonstrates two different types of behaviour when s/he shifts from the reading to the navigating mode and vice versa.

The concept of “modal shifts” in hypertext reading offers an interesting perspective on web genres and seems to be an extremely useful

⁷ For more on hypertext reading see for instance Landow (1997) or Bolter (2001).

⁸ In his paper Finnemann (2001) distinguishes between three modes, viz. reading, browsing/navigating and editing modes. We have left out the editing mode, as this mode is concerned with user-generated pages and other interactive processes which are outside the scope of our analysis.

tool for a refinement of the traditional genre analysis model. We suggest that the analysis of web genres should be centred round the two modes. Thus when we consider the use of the text in the reading mode, the traditional genre analysis model seems to be an appropriate tool for a genre description (because in this mode, text consumption is in fact not very different from traditional texts). What we need then is an extension of the genre model to account for the fact that a web text also functions in the navigating mode where the text, due to its media constraints, becomes an interactive medium, used actively to navigate the website.

5. The Traditional Genre Model – Revisited

As mentioned above the genre model has proven quite useful for describing the characteristics of one-dimensional genres or genres in which media properties play a less significant role. However, due to the fact that the hypertextual nature of web documents forms an integral part of the generic properties and communicative purposes of these texts, one must not overlook the media characteristics when describing web-mediated texts as genres. As mentioned above we need to introduce a genre model which captures the essence of text and medium simultaneously and thereby provides a more complete picture of genres. To return to our door metaphor, we need to consider both the characteristics of the *door sign* (the text) and the *door itself* (the medium). Our solution is to reconsider the genre model; keep the basic premises of the model (the three-level analysis of communication purpose, move structure, and rhetorical strategies), but add the hypertextual mode (i.e. Finnemann's concept of navigating mode) to all levels of analysis⁹, thus producing a two-dimensional genre model. Schematically it looks like this:

⁹ Apart from introducing a two-dimensional perspective on genres, the model also enables the analyst to consider the roles of both text producer and text receiver. Swales and Bhatia's genre analysis model is sender-oriented, i.e. the communicative purpose and the functional moves are tokens of what the sender wants to achieve with the genre in question. However, in spite of the fact that our model also considers the functional properties of the text and the medium from the point of view of the text producer, it also considers the role of the receiver. Thus the introduction of modal shifts in our two-

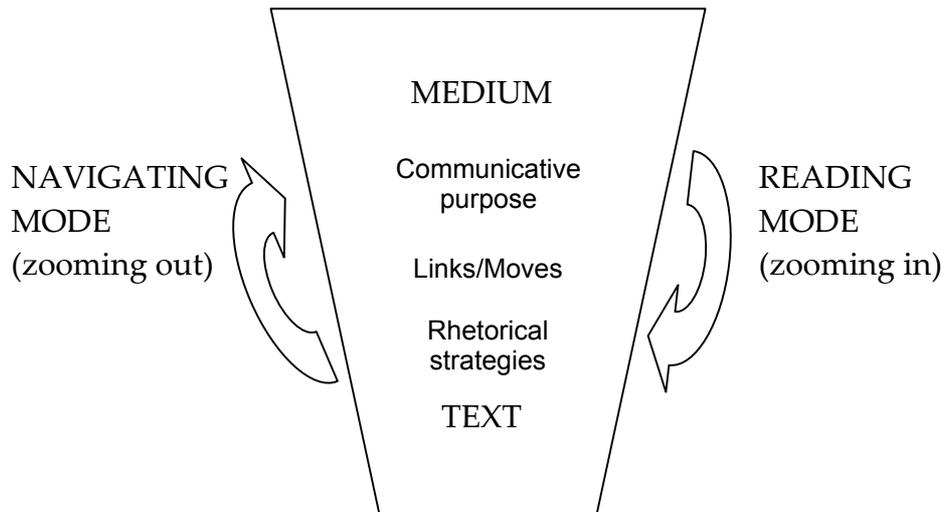


Fig 1: *The two-dimensional genre model*

The model above is supposed to signify that web documents are two-dimensional:

- Users of web documents carry out modal shifts – shifts between acting as a reader and acting as a navigator.
- Shifts are circular – there is a constant change between reading and navigating.
- When in the reading mode, the *reader* zooms in on the text and uses the web document as if it was a “printed” text (basically *reads* the text).
- When in the navigating mode, the *navigator* zooms out of the text and uses the web document as a medium (exploiting its navigation possibilities).
- an account of the *generic properties* of genres on the web involves a three-level analysis of *both modes*:
 - in the reading mode, the *text* must be characterised in terms of its communicative purpose, moves, and rhetorical strategies.

dimensional model opens up for the discussion of the roles of receivers and provides a broader perspective, and perhaps also more realistic view, on the communication process and the complexities of communication as a whole.

- in the navigating mode, the *medium* must be characterised in terms of its communicative purpose, links, and rhetorical strategies.

6. Analysis of the Homepage – Using the Two-Dimensional Genre Model

In the sections which follow we shall put our two-dimensional genre model into practice and show how our extension of the traditional genre model may be used to account for the complexities of web-mediated genres. For practical purposes we have decided to make a rather “linear” presentation, which, unfortunately, does not do justice to our view of web-mediated genres as dynamic documents with constant modal shifts. Using the homepage as exemplary material, we shall perform the analysis in the following way:

(1) Analysis of “communicative purposes”

- a. First we shall consider the communicative purpose of the homepage in the *reading mode*. In other words what is the purpose of the homepage as a text genre? This analysis ignores the fact that the text is distributed through the web medium and it focuses only on the attributes of the text genre as “text” – similar to the approach in “traditional” genre analysis.
- b. Then we shall consider the communicative purpose of the homepage in the *navigating mode*. This analysis focuses on the purpose of the homepage as a medium.

(2) Analysis of “functional units” used to realise communicative purposes

- a. First we shall consider the functional units in the *reading mode*; i.e. the moves (cf. section 2.1.2) used to structure and organise the homepage in a suitable and conventional way – this analysis is similar to the analysis of “printed” text in traditional genre theory.
- b. Then we shall consider the functional units in the *navigating mode*. For this purpose we need to introduce a new concept which captures the essence of functional units of the homepage in the navigating mode. We

shall suggest that “links” are the functional and structural units of the homepage in the navigating mode. As this part of the analysis marks the most significant departure from traditional genre theory, this section not only accounts for the function of links on the homepage, but presents a rather detailed discussion of the functional nature of links.

(3) Analysis of “rhetorical strategies” used to realise moves and links

a. First we shall consider the verbal, visual, audio strategies used in the reading mode to realise functional moves of the homepage. This analysis is similar to traditional genre analysis.

b. Then we shall consider the rhetorical strategies used in the navigating mode to realise functional links. Here we shall attempt to come up with a catalogue of potential strategies used to mark a link on the homepage (change of colours, underlining, etc.).

6.1 Analysis of Communicative Purposes on the Homepage

Having defined web documents as two-dimensional, suggesting that an important functional feature of such documents is their ability to perform a communicative function in the reading *as well* as in the navigating mode, we obviously have to account for the communicative purpose of web documents in the both modes when making a genre analysis.

6.1.1 Analysis of Communicative Purpose in the Reading Mode

When the reader accesses the homepage s/he is usually in search of information. The aim of the homepage is to assist the reader in this search. Therefore, the homepage is a condensation of the most important information on the site and serves as a swift, brief, and scannable site introduction. The homepage does not provide the reader with a complete overview of the entire site (which is the purpose of the site map). Instead it presents a *selection* of topics – ranging from the names of very broad topic categories such as “help”, “careers”, “about us” to more elaborate summaries or leads (especially news summaries). The choice of topics

present on the homepage is governed by what the web author believes will satisfy the immediate information need of the reader (the default information) when the reader consults the web page. Thus from our knowledge of the social practice related to the production and consumption of homepages, we suggest that the primary communicative purpose of the homepage *in the reading mode* is:

- To introduce the site

However, as with many other “traditional” genres, the homepage fulfils secondary purposes as well. These purposes cannot be said to constitute the core function of the homepage, but seem to have emerged concurrently with the increase in web communication among companies/organisations and their publics. These secondary purposes are:

- To create/consolidate the image of the sender
- To present news (local or global news)

We have added the secondary purpose of image creation/consolidation because one would miss the point if suggesting that homepages play a purely informative role. To return to our “door metaphor”, and stretch it a bit further, one could add that the “look” of the front door, says something about the sender (is it the “shabby chick” look with patches of paint in pale colours, is it “high-tech” with steel, glass and charcoal colours, or perhaps the “past times” look with inlaid panels, glass panes and solid oak). In the same way, the choice of information as well as the design and layout of the homepage say something about the sender; i.e. play an image-creating role. The other secondary purpose (to present news) should be related to our discussion of the homepage as a kind of news genre. As mentioned above the sender of the homepage chooses to highlight some of the website content by relegating a “front page” position to part of the information. Some of this information is permanent, e.g. the headings such as “investor”, “press”, etc. which simply refer to the main content/topic categories of the web and look the same whenever you access the homepage. However, some of the information changes within the

hour/day, especially the information which takes the form of small news summaries. The news summaries provide the reader with a quick overview of the main news of the company/organisation or the daily news in general.

6.1.2 Analysis of Communicative Purpose in the Navigating Mode

Drawing on our discussion of hypertexts in section 4, we suggest that the purpose of all web documents in the navigating mode is to provide access to relevant web pages and websites, i.e. to act as a means of transportation allowing the reader to travel the WWW moving from one web page or website to another¹⁰. Thus in the navigating mode, the hypertext system of the homepage enables the navigator to use the links on the homepage to access the rest of the website. Therefore, the main purpose of the homepage *in the navigating mode* is:

- To provide access to the website

As a result, we suggest the concept of communicative purpose in traditional genre theory be broadened to account for communicative purposes in the two modes, which means that we end up with a double-edged purpose as well as a sub-division of one of the main purposes:

¹⁰ Before we address the question of communicative purpose in the navigating mode, we should like to point out that, unlike Swales, who uses the concept of communicative purpose as the primary tool for classifying genres, we consider the purpose of web documents in the navigating mode to be constant and not genre specific, owing to the fact that we are dealing with aspects of the WWW as a medium (more specifically that of hypertexts) and the characteristics of the medium are the same irrespective of the web documents with which we are concerned (be it a homepage, a company profile, a FAQ, etc.).

Mode	Reading		Navigating
Main purpose	To introduce the website		To provide access to the website
Sub-purpose	To consolidate/ create an image	To present news	

6.2 Analysis of Functional Units (Moves and Links) on the Homepage

Now let's turn to the way communicative purposes are realised in web documents. According to Swales' genre model (see section 2.1.2) a communicative purpose is realised by a functional staging structure which consists of a number of functional "chunks". In the previous section we concluded that the homepage has two parallel – yet distinct – communicative purposes (depending on its modality) and we, therefore, need to identify the functional "chunks" of each mode separately.

6.2.1 Analysis of Moves in the Reading Mode

The analysis of moves in the reading mode is straightforward and similar to that of traditional texts. The moves are clearly distinct with boundaries between them marked off by (i) changes in the type of information present in the different sections of the homepage (content) - often supported by (ii) changes in frames, empty space, shifts in colours, shifts in font size/type, etc.¹¹

Our analyses of several homepages suggest that the following moves are quite common on the homepage in the *reading mode*:

¹¹ However, to return to our discussion of move identification in section 2.1.2, it is important to note that the label given to a move is *functional* – rather than content-based – because the move is a functional unit whereas elements of content or layout are rhetorical strategies used to realise a move.

Attracting attention

This move is meant to attract the attention of the reader when entering the homepage.

Greeting

This move accentuates the door metaphor of the homepage; the purpose is to create a feeling of welcoming someone at your doorstep.

Identifying sender

This move serves to identify the web-owner. The identification is quite important from the point of view of both web user and web-owner; it enables the web user to orientate him/herself and keep track of his/her whereabouts on the Net, and it plays an important role as part of the web-owner's image creating strategy. This move is often realised by a logo.

Indicating content structure

This move, often referred to as *the main menu*, is one of the most fundamental characteristics of the homepage. It provides the web user with a clear overview of the content of the website.

Detailing (selected) content

This move provides more detailed information about the topics listed in the main menu in the form of small news summaries. Apart from detailing information, the move also realises the news presenting and image creating function of the homepage as news of various kinds seem to be the preferred content of this move (be it international/national news or news of the self-promotional kind (financial results, product news, latest events in the company or community, etc.)). However, it is extremely important for the web writer to strike a balance between presenting news which not only promote the web-owner but also seem relevant to the web user, to ensure that the user stays on the site.

Establishing credentials

This move is meant to establish a trustworthy image of the web-owner.

Establishing contact

This move enables the reader to contact the sender.

Establishing a (discourse) community

This move enables loyal or frequent web users to establish communities within the website (often realised by a login facility).

Promoting an external organisation

This move promotes another company, product, etc. It usually takes the form of a banner advertisement.

As the name suggests the move *structure* of a text indicates a preferred way of organising the text in order to realise a particular communicative purpose – most notably obtained by creating a sequence of moves through which to go when writing and later reading the text (Bhatia 1993: 30). However, this view is only partly applicable to homepages. The homepage is a genre which exploits the entire spectrum of rhetorical creativity – also in terms of text structuring. There is a vague tendency towards a preferred text organisation which is similar to that of newspaper front pages: the most important information first and the least important last. However, to suggest a conventional or prototypical *move structure* of the moves on the homepage is not particularly relevant. As mentioned in section 4.3, web documents (including the homepage) are texts in which sequence and linearity seem to be suspended. The web text is not intended to be read in its entirety but rather scanned by the reader before s/he finally decides which elements to read. Thus the author of the homepage may have decided on a particular path for the reader to follow when entering the homepage but in the scanning process the reader selects the element which will be read first, second, third etc. thus making his/her own personalised move structure.

6.2.2 Analysis of Links in the Navigating Mode

The next step in our genre analysis is to analyse the *realisation* of the communicative purpose in the navigating mode. In the reading mode, and within traditional genre analysis, communicative purposes are realised by moves, as we saw in 2.1.2. However, in the navigating mode we cannot use

this unit as a structural/functional criterion. The communicative purpose of providing access to the website is not realised by moves, but by *hyperlinks* which tie together the text chunks into a web structure. And since hyperlinks are an inherent property of the web medium as such - and not related to specific text genres - we suggest an investigation into the functional value of links on the web in general.

A link may be defined as a clickable object (for example appearing as an icon or as underlined/highlighted text as in “read more”) which allows the navigator to go from one place to another on a webpage or a website. Present day research into the functional value of links seems to focus on how one (mostly the text producer) links documents on the website in terms of two variables: (1) “what should come first and what should come last” i.e. using *structural links* to organise the information on the website hierarchically, or (2) “what would the reader like to know more about”, i.e. organising the documents in an associative manner, adding *associative links* which allow the navigator to go from e.g. a site containing *cooking recipes* to a site with information on *food ingredients* (i.e. information which may be related semantically, but is not organised in terms of one document being more general or specific than the other).

However, our notion of the functional value of links is concerned with the *relationship* established *between* the two chunks of information being connected; i.e. what is *text B* (the textual point of destination) doing in relation to *text A* (the textual point of entry)? Links do more than simply guide the navigator from one place to another. Links add meaning to the chunks of information which they connect, as they postulate a *relationship* between the two information units connected by the link. As Tosca (2000: 3) suggests: “every link communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance. [...] Links don’t interrupt the flow of meaning; on the contrary, they enliven it”. In other words – if there is a link, it is because the information, which the navigator gets access to through the link, is relevant to the information which has just been read. It is this notion of links as meaningful, functional units that allows us to regard links as equivalent to “moves” in printed text.

When we want to assign functional values to a link such as “read more”, we need to broaden our research object and include *both* node

(textual point of entry or “text A”) and anchor (textual point of destination or “text B”) and investigate the way in which the anchor is related to the node i.e. to consider the information we get “here” in relation to the information we get “there”. For example does B *identify* the information in A (describe what A is) or does B *elaborate* on the information in A by explaining, narrating, exemplifying aspects of A?¹² So we intend to set up a framework (based on theories of text typology) which accounts for the function of links by considering the links (or rather the node and the anchor in combination) as functional text types.

6.2.2.1 Functional Text Typology

Within text linguistics, researchers have for years been trying to assign functional values to linear texts (text types) in order to investigate semantic and pragmatic aspects of language in a textual perspective. Many approaches to functional text typologies exist and we shall not go into a detailed discussion of text typology research. Instead we shall focus on the work of the French linguist, *Jean-Michel Adam*, (Adam 1992) whose text type model draws on speech act theory and functional linguistics. For Adam a text type is a text unit composed of text sequences appearing in structural configurations of a semantic relational network. The text sequences are autonomous text units composed of propositions forming semantic patterns of macro speech acts or *macro-propositions*. The macro-propositions can be defined as the basic units which combine pieces of text into specific semantic configurations of text sequences which in turn fulfil specific pragmatic functions. Adam (op.cit.: 33) operates with five different text types (descriptive, narrative, argumentative, explicative, and

¹² It goes without saying that the functional relationship which may exist between two chunks of information is open to interpretation, and research also shows that people often assign different types of functional relations to the same chunks of text (Harrison 2002: 3). However, if we can account for functional relations between chunks of information in linear texts, we may also be able to explain the functional value of the relational structure of links in hypertext.

dialogical) which reflect the prototypical forms of linguistic, structural patterns we use when describing, narrating, arguing, etc.

In the following we shall take a brief look at each of the basic text types in Adam's text typology model.

The descriptive text type

The most important text type is *description*, because description is a basic element in all the other text types. Adam operates with two main types of description: *explorative* and *expository* description where the former is concerned with description of state of being and the latter with description of acts.

Explorative description describes an object, person or event by going into a detailed account of its properties and parts and answers the question: "What/who/where is x?" The explorative/descriptive text type contains two main macro-propositions namely *topic anchoring* and *aspectualisation*. The function of the topic is to set the scene, anchor the topic, and tell the reader what the text is about. Aspectualisation is where the actual description takes place. This macro-proposition often involves two things, *properties* and *parts*, which means that a particular topic is described in terms of its general properties (i.e. attributes) or by dividing the topic into parts (sub-topics), which again are situated in time and space. The following text from www.danfoss.dk is a prototypical descriptive sequence:

Topic anchoring	Danfoss
Aspectualisation:	
Property 1	Danfoss is a global enterprise,
Property 2	created by the efforts of dedicated people with a reputation for using advanced technology in products and processes and for awareness of environmental problems.
Part	All Danfoss factories are or will be certified according to ISO 14001 . [...]

Expository description describes the development of a procedure rather than identifying an object, a person or an event. Therefore, this particular form of description is often found in recipes, manuals, etc. Expository description answers questions like: “how to proceed” or “how to go about doing something” and contains the following macro-propositions *introduction* and *procedural steps*. Here is an example from www.movabletype.org.

Introduction	Creating a New Weblog When creating a new weblog, you will need to perform the following steps:
Step 1	1. Create the directory where your weblog will be stored. If you wish to store your archive files in a directory other than your main weblog directory, create a directory to hold your archives, as well. Set the permissions (CHMOD) of both directories to 777 (unless you are running Movable Type under cgiwrap or suexec).
Step 2	2. In the Main Menu, click Create New Weblog; then configure the required settings in the weblog creation screen--name your weblog, set up the paths and URLs, and select a timezone for the weblog. When you are done with your weblog configuration, press SAVE.
Step 3	3. [...]

The narrative text type

The narrative text type is based on the structure of the fairy tale in which we have an initial situation (*orientation*) forming the beginning of a frame of action in which an event representing a conflict takes place (*complication*). It is followed by a chain of acts (*action*) and/or an evaluation procedure calling for a solution (*resolution*) which eliminates the problem, puts an end to the conflict, and brings us back to the original situation or a new series of acts. Moral implications of the story (*moral*) may round off the sequence. Here is an example of a narrative sequence from scholastic.com/harrypotter.

Orientation	The Dursleys were so mean and hideous that summer that all Harry Potter wanted was to get back to the Hogwarts School for Witchcraft and Wizardry.
Complication	But just as he's packing his bags, Harry receives a warning from a strange, impish creature named Dobby who says that if Harry Potter returns to Hogwarts, disaster will strike.
Action	And strike it does. For in Harry's second year at Hogwarts, fresh torments and horrors arise, including an outrageously stuck-up new professor, Gilderoy Lockhart, a spirit named Moaning Myrtle who haunts the girls' bathroom, and the unwanted attentions of Ron Weasley's younger sister, Ginny [...]
Resolution	[not present here]
Moral	[not present here]

The argumentative text type

Argumentation is structured in terms of macro-propositions representing a *datum* as an argument, a *claim* as a conclusion and a *warrant* as the inferential link between the two. The prototype of argumentation follows a causal structure including a judgement component, which may not explicitly visible in the structure, as in the following example from www.danisco.com.

Claim	We create value for the societies in which we operate
Datum	by acting as a responsible neighbour, by integrating sustainability into our operations, and by being a good employer.
Warrant	(implicit) responsible neighbours etc. create value for societies

The explicative text type

The explicative prototype is a causal text unit composed of two macro-propositions, *effect* and *cause* representing a why-because relation in a successive semantic scheme. It differs from the argumentative prototype in that it does not articulate any judgement. It simply states that A causes B to exist. It does not leave any traces of the pro's and con's of the writer or the reader for that matter. Here is an example from www.caregiver.org.

Problem (why)	we were the first to know that the HD gene actually mapped to chromosome 4.
Solution (because)	Because we were the first to see the results off the computer,
Conclusion	[not present here]

The dialogical text type

Dialogue is based on a conversational scheme reflecting the turn-taking of participants interacting with each other. The dialogue is a complex structure divided into sequences covering phatic components of conversation (e.g. opening and closing scenes of conversation) and the transactional sequences representing the core element of the conversation. Here is an example of a dialogical text with the core elements question and answer from www.ikea.co.uk.

Question	Who can apply for an IKEA Home Card?
Answer	Anyone who is over 18 years of age and a permanent resident in the UK

6.2.2.2 A Functional Typology of Links

In the following section we shall use Adam's notion of "text types" to establish a functional link typology. As mentioned above we suggest that the two text units (A and B) act as units (macro-propositions) in a text sequence. This text sequence forms a certain semantic pattern, which in turn correlates with a particular function/macro speech act (such as describing, explaining, etc.) In text A we identify a link and interpret the link as the first macro-proposition of a given text type sequence. Then we click on the link and reach text B where we "complete" the text type sequence by identifying the remaining macro-propositions of the text type. For example the link "who can apply for an IKEA Home Card" in text A equals the first macro-proposition in the dialogical text type. And when we click on the link and move to text B, the next macro-proposition in the

sequence appears, namely an answer: “Anyone who is over 18 years...”. Thus on the basis of the text sequence – constituted by texts A and B - we conclude that the link “who can apply for an IKEA Home Card” not only provides access to text B but does so simulating dialogue with the web user and thus performs a dialoguing function.

6.2.2.2.1 Generic and Specific Links

We claimed above that a functional typology of links requires an investigation into the semantic relation between the two texts connected by the link. Nevertheless, as text analysts, we adopt a “linear” approach in our analysis and take *our point of departure* in the link itself, i.e. the clickable objects on the homepage in *text A*. We shall, therefore, begin our analysis by investigating the link types in text A and introduce a division of links into two main categories which account for the nature of links in very broad terms; namely: *Generic links* and *Specific links*.

Generic Links

Generic links correspond to an entry in a traditional library catalogue where the entry takes the form of subject terms. In this sense they provide access to the main topics on a website and they often appear at upper levels on a website. Due to their general, topical status, generic links are also frequently inserted in the top section of a web document (e.g. in the navigation bar or a hyperlinked table of contents) where they provide shortcuts to the main subject areas of the website as in the example below from www.danisco.com.

home ¹³ products about us sustainability people press investor contact

¹³ For practical reasons we underline the actual links (the clickable objects) in our examples.

This placement leaves the generic link with a particular high information value as ideal and salient information¹⁴ which is in line with the above-mentioned pragmatic relevance value of links in general. Many of the generic links are static – in the sense that they act as navigation bars on the entire site; and not only on the homepage. Generic links are always of a *descriptive nature* as the function of a generic link is to bring the navigator on to an information chunk which identifies a general topic. In other words the link brings the user from a point of entry of the topic (A) to the topic itself (B). The link is a kind of “empty” content category – waiting to be “filled out”; which also means that the generic link is thematically “decontextualised” in the sense that it points to nothing but its own topic at a “deeper” level on the website (hierarchically speaking) and contains no explanation of its relevance besides the one given to it by its status as link. Linguistically, generic links are often realised by a noun phrase (as e.g. the term “investor” in the navigation bar above) and if the link is accompanied by a text, the text is usually a meta-discoursal text providing navigational information, not information about the topic, as in the example below:

You can also [download the report](#) as a PDF file.

Specific Links

The homepage is more than a table of contents; it is also meant to evoke curiosity in the navigator, making him/her want to enter the site. For this particular purpose the web producer provides his/her homepage with *specific* links which function as appetizers or previews of what is to come. Specific links are thematically contextualised – they are usually introduced by “leads” which explain the relevance of the link and which, together with

¹⁴ According to Kress & Leeuwen (1998: 193) *ideal information* is usually placed at the top of a front page and is defined as information “presented as the idealised or generalized essence of the information, and therefore also as having ideologically one kind of salience”. Elements placed at the bottom are identified as *real information* presenting “more specific information (e.g. details) and/or more ‘down to earth’ information ... and/or more practical information (e.g. practical consequences, directions for action, etc.)” (op. cit.).

the link itself, constitute the first macro-proposition in a particular text type sequence (cf. section 6.2.2.2 above). In other words where the link in generic links was an “empty” category, specific links (not least because of their leads or “paratexts”) not only introduce the topic itself, but provide us with information about the topic and show the relevance of the link. The link takes the navigator to B where s/he may find a text chunk with a more elaborate description, a causal explanation, an argument or a brief story, etc. in support of the topic in A. Specific links are often inserted further down the homepage primarily containing real information and the links are of a changeable nature; text connected by specific links change by the hour, day or week which helps accentuate the dynamic nature of web texts as opposed to printed text. Here is an example of a specific link from the danisco.com homepage:

Press release

**Danisco Venture invests in
Dutch biotech company**

Dutch biotechnology company
CatchMabs BV announces the
closing of its second round of
Financing including Danisco
Venture.

[read more](#)

The specific link, as we define it here, consists of the lead and the clickable object. The lead presents the topic – sets the scene, so to speak, and gives the navigator an idea of what type of information to find behind the link whereas the link is the actual “gateway”. In the example above the link and the lead constitute the first macro-sequence in a narrative sequence – i.e. the orientation stage. It sets the scene, but to complete the story, the navigator has to click on “read more” and be transferred to text B where the entire news report - the press release - can be found. In other words the

specific link functions as a “reading guide” suggesting the relevance of a link and acts as an appetizer, a taste of what is to come.

Now if we relate the notion of generic and specific links to the text types introduced in section 6.2.2.1, it appears that generic links only sets the scene for a topic (e.g. a link such as “products” does not include any information about the topic apart from the topic itself). This explains why generic links must be of a descriptive/explorative type. They anchor the topic as in “products” but they don’t start explaining what “products” is. Specific links, on the other hand, embrace all text types. This is due to the fact that specific links call for more than a direct “repetition” of what has already been said. Specific links suggest to us why a particular link is relevant and how we should conceptualise the information we get in text A and B (as a description, a story, an explanation, an argument, etc.). Thus when adding the concept of text types to our two main link types we end up with the following combinations – and a functional link typology has appeared.

Function	Generic Links	Specific Links
Descriptive – explorative	x	x
Descriptive – expository		x
Narrative		x
Argumentative		x
Explicative		x
Dialogical		x

The table reads as follows: In web documents, the structural units (which we have defined as “links”) perform the following functions: Generic links describe something (descriptive/explorative). Specific links perform a number of functions such as describing, arguing, narrating, explaining, etc. We shall now exemplify our link typology and consider the functional use of links on a number of different websites¹⁵.

¹⁵ Although a description of the entire website is outside the scope of this paper, we need to consider other web pages apart from the homepage because specific links are more common at lower levels on the website.

6.2.2.2.1.1 Analyses of Generic and Specific Links¹⁶

Generic Links: descriptive/explorative

A substantial number of links on the homepage are generic links. For example the links in the navigation bar below from www.danisco.com are all of the generic type, as they do nothing except for pointing to their own topic at a “deeper” level on the website (hierarchically speaking).

TEXT A

[home](#) [products](#) [about us](#) [sustainability](#) [people](#) [press](#) [investor](#) [contact](#)

If we click on one of the generic links – for example “products”, we are immediately transferred to text B which provides us with a descriptive list of Danisco’s product range and a brief description of the company product-wise.

TEXT B

Choose a path to our products

Danisco is the world's leading supplier of food ingredients and one of the largest and most efficient sugar producers in Europe. We are also a significant supplier of speciality sweeteners and a leading global supplier of enzymes, betaine and flavours to the animal nutrition industry.

Emulsifiers

Distilled monoglycerides

Mono and diglycerides

Esters

Flavours

Fruit flavours

Essences, extracts and oleoresins

Fragrance raw material

Thus the link inserted here in text A performs a descriptive function: Topic is “products” introduced in text A, and the aspectualisation - i.e. the list of different product types (i.e. “parts” of products) - are dealt with in text B.

¹⁶ The actual link, the clickable object in text A, will be underlined in the actual analyses.

Text A (Topic anchoring)	Text B (Aspectualisation)
<u>Products</u>	<p>(Aspectualisation: parts)</p> <p><u>Emulsifiers</u></p> <p><u>Distilled monoglycerides</u></p> <p><u>Mono and diglycerides</u></p> <p><u>Esters</u></p> <p>[...]</p>

Here is another prototypical example of the generic/descriptive/explorative link. The link in text A indicates the topic, “sustainability”, and the text which we arrive at when clicking the link (text B) describes what “sustainability” is.

Text A (Topic anchoring)	Text B (Property)
<u>Sustainability</u>	<p>Sustainable development is</p> <p>...development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. [...]</p>

Even though generic links are always of the explorative type, the two examples above clearly demonstrate that the linguistic strategies for realising the description may vary. In the first example we find a descriptive list; in the second example the description constitutes a “running text”. However both linguistic strategies answer the typical descriptive question “*what/who/where is x?*”.

Specific Links

Specific Link: descriptive/explorative

The specific descriptive link connects two texts where *both* texts contribute to a description of a particular topic. The difference between generic

descriptive links and specific descriptive links lies in the fact that the aspectualisation in specific links is anticipated in text A. Thus instead of simply stating the topic (as is the case in generic links), the actual description of properties or parts (the aspectualisation) begins in text A. Here is an example from the homepage of danisco.com. On the homepage the reader is being introduced to the concept of “partnerweb” and the description (in terms of an aspectualisation) begins in text A. The reason why the web producer may choose a specific descriptive link here – as opposed to a generic descriptive link, which simply states the topic, may be that s/he is unsure whether the term “partnerweb” is familiar to the reader.

Text A	Text B (Aspectualisation: of property 1)
<p>(Topic) What is: partnerweb</p>	<p>Danisco e-business services</p> <p>Danisco's e-business services are exclusively for <i>existing Danisco customers</i>. Presently our services are open to <i>European, African, Middle Eastern, Australian and New Zealand customers</i>. This source of online food industry information shows a way for improved efficiency and more profitable product development and purchasing.</p>
<p>(Aspectualisation: property 1) A service for customers</p>	
<p>(Aspectualisation: of property 1) Our e-business services are for existing Danisco customers. It is a source to knowledge and news about food ingredients as well as a centre for managing all your food ingredients purchases. Want to know more? read more</p>	

Specific Link: descriptive/expository

The link below originates from the danisco.com homepage. It is a specific/descriptive/expository link because the link (text A) constitutes the first macro-proposition in the expository text type, the *introduction*, and it transfers the navigator to a text (in this case a downloadable video) which describes the procedures (*steps*) used when working with dialogue in the company (rather than simply describing what dialogue is).

Text A (introduction)	Text B (Steps)
<p>We believe in dialogue View our video presentation on what dialogue means to Danisco and how we work with dialogue.</p>  <p>view English version view Danish version</p>	<p>[Text B is a video which describes <i>how</i> Danisco works with dialogue – i.e. the procedures involved].</p>

The descriptive/expository link plays an important pedagogic and persuasive role on the webpage. Rather than simply describing something (e.g. “what is dialogue”), it enables the navigator to actually *see* how Danisco works with dialogue. Thus the expository link becomes a valuable pedagogic tool which is likely to evoke interest and persuade the navigator to click on the link and enter the site.

Specific Link: narrative

Here is an example of a narrative link from www.ikea.com (from the section called “about ikea”). As it appears the narrative sequence is quite short as a number of macro-propositions (complication, resolution, and coda) has been left out. Thus text A introduces the navigator to the story and the link transfers him/her to the story itself – which centres on the chronological actions performed by the founder of the company. This sequence is hardly surprising as Ikea wants to present the uncomplicated version of the company history to the navigator.

Text A (Orientation)	Text B (Actions)
<p>It's been six decades since IKEA began in a small farming village in Sweden. This is a history of how IKEA went from the woods of southern Sweden to 31 countries around the world.</p> <p><u>The full story</u></p>	<p>1926 The founder of IKEA, Ingvar Kamprad, is born in Småland, in the south of Sweden. He was raised on a farm called Elmtaryd, near the small village of Agunnaryd. Even as a young boy, Ingvar knew that he wanted to develop a business. He started by selling matches to neighbours from his bicycle. He found that he could buy matches in bulk very cheaply from Stockholm and sell them individually at a very low price but still make a good profit. From matches, he expanded to selling fish, Christmas tree decorations, seeds and later ball-point pens and pencils.</p>

Specific Link: argumentative

Our next example is the specific/argumentative link. Text A is from grundfos.com. It is not from the actual homepage but from the first page in the products and solutions section.

Text A (claim)	Text B (data)
<p>COMMERCIAL BUILDING SERVICES</p> <p>One reliable partner...</p> <p><u>Providing the right pump systems for commercial buildings</u></p>	<p>Grundfos Commercial Building Services (CBS) is ready to become your professional partner</p> <p>We are a team of highly educated people with many years of experience of pump systems, technical as well as commercial. We aim to help you make the best choice for your customers.</p>

The specific link (and lead) on page A contains the following propositions:

1. Grundfos is a reliable partner
2. Grundfos provides the right pump systems for commercial buildings

1 and 2 can be considered *claims* in an argumentative sequence. When clicking on the link in A, the screen page, text B, appears. In B we get a reformulation and an elaboration of the claim in A. More importantly, however, we also get the items which help us complete the argument, namely the macro-proposition *data*:

3. We are a team of highly educated people with many years of experience of pump systems, technical as well as commercial.
4. We aim to help you make the best choice for your customers.

Thus 3 and 4 follow up on the claims in A suggesting that Grundfos is a reliable partner who provides the right pump systems because it has a team of highly educated/experienced people and because it actively assists the customer in making the right choice. The implicit *warrant* of this argument is something like: “highly educated, experienced, and service-minded people are more reliable and likely to provide the right solutions than people with no education and experience”.

Specific Link: explicative

Here is an example of a specific/explicative link from the website www.faced.ufba.br where the link has been added to explain something to the navigator¹⁷.

Text A (Problem/why)	Text B (Solution/because)
<u>Why I Authored this Site</u>	Why did I author this site? Because I get it! By that I mean that I recognize the profound implication of the WEB, not just on the Internet, but on society itself.

¹⁷ Example from: Guay (1995):“WEB Publishing Paradigms”, <http://www.faced.ufba.br/~edc708/biblioteca/interatividade/web%20paradigma/Paradigm.html>

Text A is formulated as a question and realise the problem of the explicative text sequence. When clicking the link, the navigator is provided with the explanation (in this case formulated as an answer). The explicative link is again used here to “activate” the navigator – to catch his/her interest and make him/her enter the site. What is more, the question/answer formulation (which is also a dialogical feature) makes the text more interactive and informal.

Specific Link: dialogical

The web medium is an interactive medium which, in some cases, allows for direct contact between web producer and web user. Therefore, traces of dialogue are quite common on the website – even though the direct address, as in the example below from www.my-siemens.com, may only simulate dialogue between web producer and user. In text A the rhetorical question “fun with new ring tones?” is posed. When clicking on the link the ‘dialogue’ continues with yet another question: “How about being rung up by the tune of your favourite pop song?” and the answer: “Here you can get it!”

Text A (question)	Text B (question/answer)
Fun with new ring tones? Download your favourite... More	<p>Monophonic Ring tones</p> <p>You want to have more entertainment in the range of your ring tones. How about being rung up by the tune of your favourite pop song? Here you can get it! Explore the world of ring tones for mobiles and download your favourite.</p> <p>[link to country- specific information]</p>

It is of course quite clear that the dialogical link has not only been placed here to create dialogue, because in text B the web user also gets important information, namely access to a list of links with country-specific

information on ring tones. However, the semantic relation between text A and text B is that of asking a question and providing the answer.

The Distribution of Generic and Specific Links on the Homepage

After having analysed different link types from various web pages, we should like to return to the homepage and comment on the distribution of link types on the homepage itself. As mentioned in section 6.1.2 the purpose of the homepage in the navigating mode is to provide access to the website. Both generic and specific links fulfil this purpose – though in rather different ways. Generic links give an overview of the main topics covered on the website, which is quite important considering the fact that the navigator tends to use the homepage as a gateway to the “real stuff” and so the “serious” navigator needs generic links as a sort of navigational map to work his/her way through the website in a systematic way. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that generic links are more frequent on the homepage compared to specific links. Specific links, on the other hand, function as appetizers, they are previews of what the website contains; their primary function is not to provide an overview of the website content but rather to “lure” the navigator into accessing the site. The links have been placed here to make the homepage more interesting and relevant to the “daring” or perhaps “hesitant”, navigator, whose way into the website is not guided by a particular route, but who is more prone to act on specific links with enticing leads.

As it appears from the examples above it is possible, and fruitful, to add a functional dimension to links. Our findings show that adding links to the homepage is not simply a question of enabling the navigator to “move on” but rather a question of connecting items on the web page in a meaningful and sensible way, setting up a semantic relation between text A and text B. The notion of functional links may thus prove useful for the text producer when designing his/her homepage as it provides him/her with an idea of which information warrants a generic and a specific link. And, if choosing a specific link, what kind of semantic relation works best. I.e. should s/he introduce a topic such as “sustainability” by using a generic link which suggests to the navigator that “on this site you can find

information on sustainability” or should s/he anticipate a discussion of the topic already in text A and use a specific link which already presents the information from a particular angle? By approaching links from this perspective they come to play the exact same role as moves (or stages) in traditional genre analysis:

[...] we cannot make all the meanings we want to at once. Each stage in the genre contributes a part of the overall meanings that must be made for the genre to be accomplished successfully. (Eggins 1994: 36 after Martin 1985)

In the same way we cannot (or it does not make sense to) enter the website by means of one link or one link type on the homepage. We need a variety of links, with different functions (describing, explaining, arguing, etc.), which ensure that the communicative purpose of the homepage in the navigating mode is accomplished.

6.3 Analysis of Rhetorical Strategies Used to Realise Moves and Links

We have now reached the final stage in our extended genre analysis model – i.e. the way moves and links are realised in web documents. Here we need to consider the rhetorical strategies (verbal and visual) available to the web user in each mode. However, we do not intend to account for the plethora of strategies which web producers may use to express themselves when for example “detailing selected content” or “indicating content structure” in the reading mode or “providing explanatory information” in the navigating mode. Instead we shall make general observations about the most characteristic strategies available to the web writer in the two modes, leaving detailed analyses for later research.

6.3.1 Analysis of Rhetorical Strategies in the Reading mode

In order to account for possible rhetorical strategies in the reading mode we shall take a closer look at homepage of the Danish Sugar and Distillery Company, Danisco, www.danisco.com. Limits of space do not allow us to make an in-depth analysis of all the rhetorical strategies on the homepage. Therefore we shall restrict our analysis to the rhetorical realisation of two moves, namely: “attracting attention” and “establishing credentials”.

6.3.1.1. Analysis of Rhetorical Strategies Used in the Move: “Attracting Attention”

The “attracting attention move” is usually realised by a combination of verbal, visual and/or audiovisual elements. Pictures with extraordinary vibrant colours, flash effect, and particular typographical elements etc. are commonly used to attract the reader and make him/her stay on the homepage. However, strong verbal elements such as catchy slogans, jingles, puns, news vocabulary such as “new”, “recent”, “today”, etc. sometimes replace or complete visual design elements in the realisation of the attracting attention move. The attracting attention move, placed in the top frame of the Danisco homepage, is one of the most important moves on the homepage, from the web designer’s point of view, as it may determine whether the reader leaves or stays on the site. Maybe as a result of its key role, the attracting attention move on Danisco’s homepage has chosen to exploit the media potential of the WWW to its full. Here the flash technique is cleverly used to combine video, text and graphics and thereby create an optimal, attention-grabbing effect. The flash sequence begins when four cups of coffee, representing four different flavours, enters the “scene” (by means of the flash technique). A text appears saying that “*Today coffee is not just coffee*” and a bottom text adds: “*you can enjoy it with many tasty flavours*”. A smaller picture appears on top of the first illustrating two female researchers in a laboratory, dressed in white coats, one of them holding a bottle of liquid. A new text appears saying: “*It takes human knowledge to produce*”, followed by another text saying: “*A variety of flavours*”

for a variety of people". A second picture pops up which shows a man lying on a patio working on a lab top with a cup of coffee beside him. The sequence ends with a final flashing text: "We are proud of adding flavour to your day". It is also relevant to notice that the choice of type size in the text is also used to attract the attention of the reader; e.g. key words are highlighted by an increase in type size.

6.3.1.2. Analysis of Rhetorical Strategies Used in the Move: "Identifying Web-Owner"

The purpose of the "identifying web-owner" move is of course to reveal the identity of the sender using verbal and/or visual design elements which can be associated with the sender. For organisations and companies, such as Danisco, the logotype serves as an obvious rhetorical strategy for identification, sometimes complemented by a picture of the company, its buildings, the founder and/or its staff. Apart from logotype and pictures, colours and typographical elements are also used as a means of identification and recognition because websites often adopt the conventions of the design programme of the company in general and thereby create a familiar and identifiable look. On the Danisco homepage logo, colours and typographical elements are used to identify the web-owner. Thus in the top frame of the page, next to the "attracting attention" move, we find the Danisco logo followed by its slogan "First you add knowledge...". What is more, the page employs the fonts and colours of Danisco's design programme which again leads to an easy identification of the sender.

6.3.2. Analysis of Rhetorical Strategies in the Navigating Mode

The realisation of a link lies in the technological properties of the Net; in order to establish a link between page A and B, the author has to encode the document. The codes are not immediately visible to the user but may be accessed if required. However, obviously, links also need an "external"

realisation which indicates to the navigator that a gateway is available. In “traditional” genre analysis, moves are realised by both verbal and visual strategies. In the navigating mode the “external” realisation of links is almost exclusively realised by visual strategies, which may be (a) *implicit* – i.e. hidden at first sight¹⁸ or (b) *explicit* – i.e. readily visible to the reader.

Implicit link realisation

The implicit realisation is not visible to the web user when s/he enters the web page. The user has to navigate the document using the mouse – more specifically the curser. When the curser “hits” a gateway, it transforms itself into the “pointed hand” icon. Apart from the pointed hand we may also see a transformation of other elements when the curser hits a gateway such as a change in colour or shape of (1) a text, (2) a picture or (3) a navigation button box, and/or in combination with a mouse-over effect which reveals a sub-menu or a brief link text indicating the content of the menu. But the realisation is still implicit because movements are needed to disclose the link.

Explicit link realisation

To produce more reader-friendly websites, the author often adds an extra *explicit* dimension to the realisation where the link indication is immediately visible to the navigator. Concomitant with the increase in web-mediated communication, a “common repertoire” of explicit rhetorical strategies has gradually emerged and the following strategies are more or less universal on the website:

- Icons:
 - iconic icons (e.g. envelope icon (indicating link to mail facilities) or pictures/photos in general (e.g. 
 - symbolic icons (e.g. the house icon – indicating link to homepage)

¹⁸ Though it should of course be added that the implicit and explicit rhetorical strategies simply indicate that a link is available; the actual activation of the link requires a mouse click.

- Underlining of text (e.g. “introduction”)
- Colour shifts in text
- Meta-text (e.g. “read more” - combined with colour shifts or underlining)

In the present analysis we have not looked into the relationship between link type and rhetorical strategy. But it may be worth exploring whether generic and specific links (and the sub-categories descriptive, argumentative, narrative, etc.) differ in their choice of rhetorical strategy.

7. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to “up-grade” the genre model and suggest ways in which the traditional model could be extended to account for web-mediated texts. It appeared that the web medium forms an integral part of web documents and this fact calls for a solution which incorporates medium-related features into the genre model. Therefore, the notion of modal shifts - where the web user alternates between reading the text and navigating the medium - was introduced. The notion of modal shifts led to the development of a two-dimensional genre model whose constituents are more or less similar to the traditional genre model but which accounts for the characteristics of web documents in two modes – first as traditional texts and then as a medium providing access to the entire website. The most significant addition to the traditional genre model was the introduction of links as functional constituents in web documents. Our findings suggest that adding links to the homepage is not simply a question of enabling the navigator to “move on” but rather a question of connecting items on the web page in a meaningful and sensible way, setting up a semantic relation between text A and text B. Our analyses showed that there are indeed different ways of fulfilling the communicative purpose of web documents in the navigating mode, in the same ways as a whole list of moves may be used to realise the communicative purpose of web documents in the reading mode.

A systematic characterization of web-mediated genres was outside the scope of this paper, but we used the homepage as exemplary material in our theoretical discussion and ended up with a tentative characterisation of the homepage as a genre in our analysis. Due to an “innate obsession” with linearity when performing text analysis, our exemplary analysis did not do justice to our dynamic conceptualisation of web genres. From the way we chose to present our analysis, one might get the impression that we see a sharp division between web documents in the reading and in the navigating mode. However, this is not the case. The homepage, as a hypertext, provides two reading modes which are present simultaneously in the production and consumption of web documents and their functional realisations (communicative purposes, moves/links and rhetorical strategies) are, therefore, also present at the same time – though not necessarily “activated” at the same time by the web user¹⁹. This conflation of text and media may not be obvious from our analysis, but it is in fact the most significant contribution to the extension of the genre model and that which now enables us to account for the new genres brought about by the WWW medium.

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¹⁹ For example links in the navigating mode tend to be *conflated* with moves in the reading mode; e.g. elements in the move, “indicating content structure” are more often than not encoded as links.

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