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Track Changes:  
A Literary History of  
Word Processing ■

screen: “print the document, put into an envelope or something similar [*sic*] which can contain the document. Go to post office and weigh it and buy stamps”—and so on, for another hundred words, including further typos and blemishes.

And then there is Joel Swanson’s *Spacebar*, a 24-by-32-inch print that was exhibited at the University of Colorado Boulder’s Media Archaeology Lab in 2013. *Spacebar* depicts a plain white unadorned Apple spacebar (set against a white background). “In some ways the spacebar is the only accurate key,” notes one commentator on the piece. “Rarely do the typefaces of the letters appearing on your keyboard match the typefaces of the letters appearing on your screen, except in the case of the spacebar. You push the space bar and a blank appears between words, an icon of breath, of vacancy.”<sup>89</sup>

By extracting this single element of the computer keyboard—fundamental to language as well as to technology, as scholars such as Paul Saenger have shown<sup>90</sup>—the artifice of texts and their technologies is underscored in a visually striking composition possessed of its own strong aesthetic. The gesture becomes emblematic of many of the works we have discussed in this chapter, each of them in their own way striving to reveal the perennial artifice of the literary, now deeply imprinted by a postmodern poetics of word processing—copying and pasting, finding and replacing, deleting and overwriting.<sup>91</sup>

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