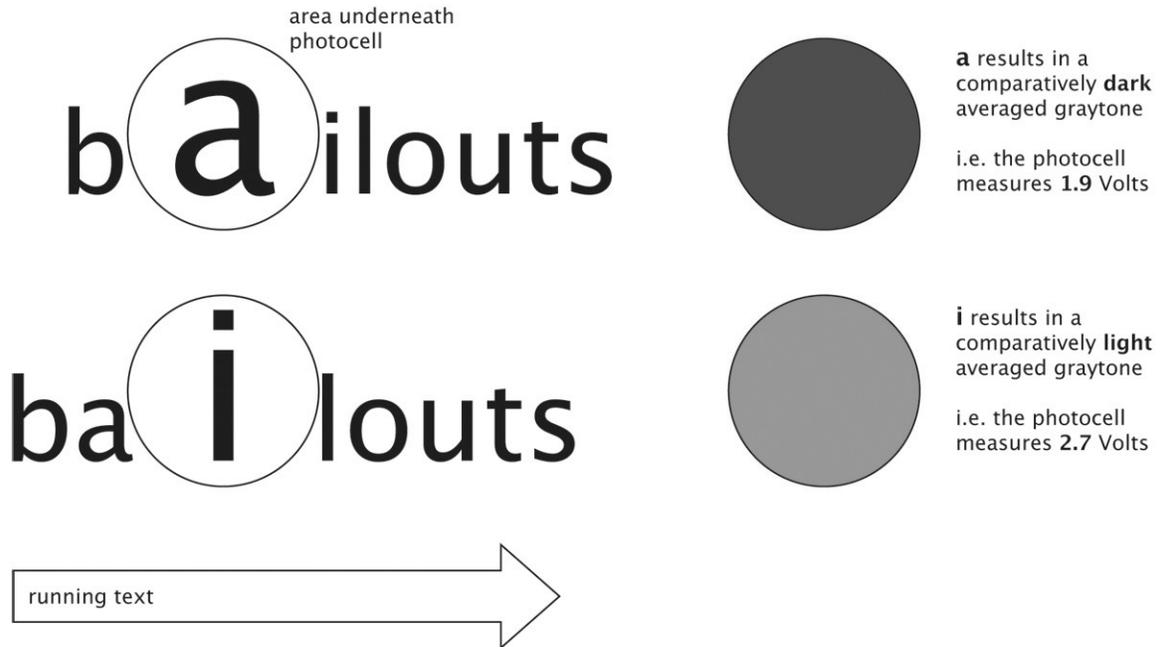


## The Elocuter: I must remind you we live in DADA times...

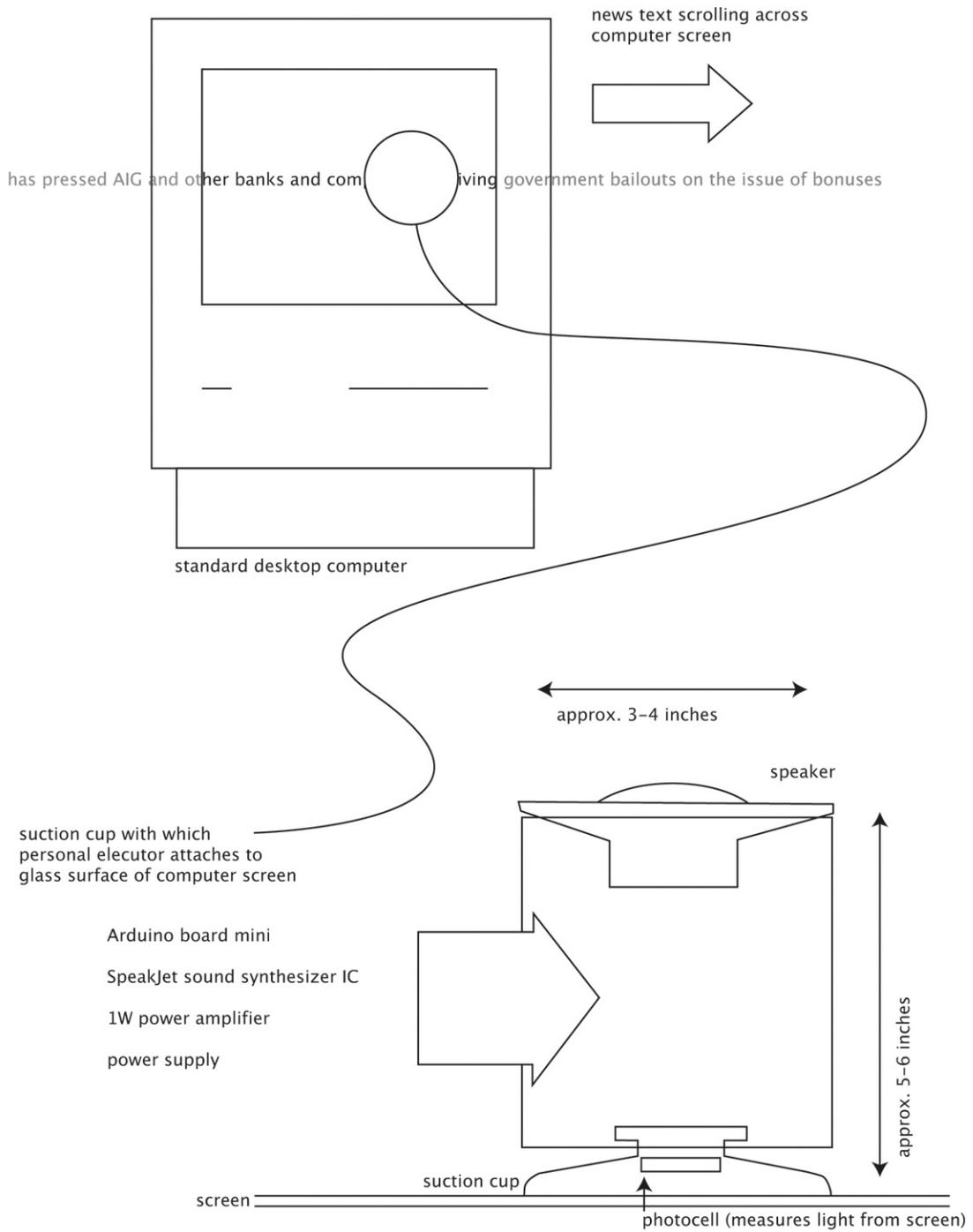
*The Elocuter* is a sonification device that attaches via suction cup to a computer screen. It translates large amounts of text data into spoken words, composed of impossible sequences of allophones similar to a Dada poem. We are consciously creating a paradoxical situation: mixing the extreme rationality of computers and the irrationality of dada language play. The project also references poetic experiments of the Dada movement of the 1910/20s, specifically the play with language as a way to respond to a seemingly irrational political and cultural context.

In our proposed project a continuously updated stream of text from newspaper headlines and internet conversations about the current economic crisis is scrolling across a computer screen. Individual letters pass in front of a light sensitive photocell, affecting the amount of light (or grayscale value) on that spot on the screen:

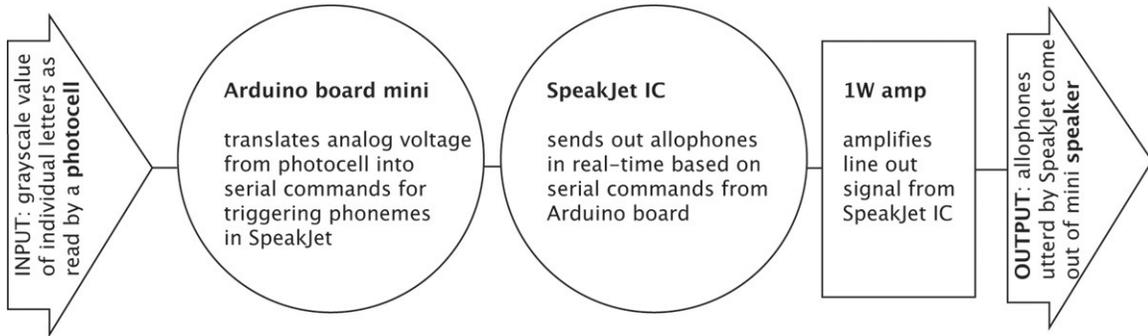


Based on the grayscale value of a letter, a SpeakJet sound synthesizer IC utters an allophone based on phonemes, the smallest contrastive unit in the sound system of language. These allophones articulated in sequence form new impossible spoken words that are created in real-time by reading written words. The irrational nature of the content of the texts on the computer screen manifests itself in the sounds generated by the SpeakJet IC, composed of the units of human language but impossible to make sense of when listened to.

A possible setup of this work could look like this:



In the following is a system diagram of how this process works technically:



Reference: Comstock, Andrew. Elocution taught, stammering cured : Dr. Comstock's vocal gymnasium. Philadelphia : Andrew Comstock, 1855.

**ELOCUTION TAUGHT—STAMMERING CURED.**

**DR. COMSTOCK'S  
VOCAL GYMNASIUM,**  
No. 102 ARCH STREET, PHILADELPHIA. *(Scale over)*

THIS INSTITUTION, which has been in successful operation since 1828, is designed for the PROMOTION OF HEALTH, the CURE OF STAMMERING and DEFECTIVE ARTICULATION, for INSTRUCTION IN ELOCUTION AND PHONETICS, and for the ACQUISITION OF ANCIENT AND MODERN LANGUAGES.

In this Institution, Elocution is treated as a *science*, as well as an *art*. The various movements of the voice, both in speech and song, are illustrated by original diagrams and by oral instruction. The exercises give the pupil *complete* command of the muscles of articulation, extend the compass of the voice, and render it smooth, powerful, and melodious. They not only call forth all the energies of the vocal organs, correct stammering, lisping, and other impediments of speech, but they *invigorate the lungs*, and, consequently, fortify them against the invasion of disease. The vocal exercises are not unfrequently accompanied by gesticulation, or the use of the dumb-bells. Hence, to a certain extent, general gymnastics are associated with those of the voice; and awkwardness of manner and posture is removed by the substitution of rhetorical grace. In other words, all the voluntary muscles of the trunk and limbs are so trained as to move in the order required by the will, synchronously and harmoniously with those of the voice.

TICKETS PER COURSE.

For Instructing the Dumb to Speak.....	1 year.....	\$1000
Instruction for the Cure of Stammering.....	10 weeks.....	100
Correction of Defective Articulation.....	50 private lessons.....	50
Private Instruction in Elocution.....	30 lessons, each 1 hour.....	30
Instruction in Elocution, in a class.....	60 lessons, each 1 h. 30 min....	30
Instruction in Elocution, in the evening class..	30 lessons, each 1 h. 30 min....	15
Instruction in Languages.....	30 lessons, in a class.....	15

*℞* The ticket, in each case, to be paid for in advance. Board, in the Institution, from \$5 to \$10 per week, in advance.

*℞* No one can become a pupil in the Vocal Gymnasium, who spits on the floor, or is not otherwise cleanly in his habit—no member of the Institution is allowed to use tobacco in any form.

ANDREW COMSTOCK, M.D., PRINCIPAL,  
No. 102 Arch Street, Philadelphia, Pa.

Project pictures, June 2009



the knob on the elocuter is for volume adjustment, the push button is for calibration purposes (to accommodate brightness differences between different screens).