

# Containers or Content?

There is an old Brazilian joke: *“Brazil is the country of the future – and always will be. E-books have been like that”*

Paul Krugman. Op-Ed column. NYT June 6, 2008

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We are being told, from a variety of sources, that this is the year of the eBook. At the same time you could go back over the past 5 years and find the same declaration being promoted by a range of entities: publishers, commentators, media consultants and some libraries.

We are all undoubtedly reading more information in a digital format:

- ✚ Email
- ✚ Online journals and databases
- ✚ PDF documents posted online – which could be of conference proceedings, such as this one
- ✚ Material from the Internet



So Daniel Chudnov is right when he declares *‘We’ve passed the point where debating whether we’ll ever read online makes sense; we’re already doing it.’*

Daniel Chudnov, 2010

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When I first wrote this paper in May 2010 I noted school libraries were waiting to see if the latest developments in eBook delivery would provide solutions for school libraries.

I think what is important that we recognize clearly from the start is what are libraries about? Is it containers or is it content?

Dead trees, treated with chemicals and bound in covers have been a durable and indeed functional basis of a library’s core business for centuries. Regardless of format, hardback or paperback, regardless of editions, and with translation regardless of language, we have seamlessly delivered content to our patrons.

An eBook (or electronic book) is no more or no less the digital version of this printed paper stalwart. Ted Nelson would ask: *‘what’s so electronic about an electronic book?’* (Nelson, Ted, 2010). If you are looking at a direct copy ... *‘something that looks utterly familiar’*, it is probably fair to ask is this an electronic book?

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## The Containers

There is no doubt much of current expansion in the market is due to the reading devices, the containers, rather than the content.

Amazon leads the field with the **Kindle**. It is the largest online seller of printed books and the biggest eBook seller in the United States. (Rich and Stone, March 17 2010) After having such a large proportion of the market in 2010 Amazon threatened to stop selling the books of some publishers online unless they agreed to a list of concessions regarding the sale of electronic books. This is seen as an attempt to negate the impact of Apple's storming of the marketplace, with its latest must have toy for all Apple aficionados, the **iPad**.



These E-Readers are comparatively new onto the scene, but it should be remembered eBooks can be download and read on a variety of devices, including your PC, notebook or smartphone. What is different in many ways is the proprietary hold over the content you download onto devices, such as the Kindle and iPad.

The biggest advantage is probably portability and convenience. They are a boon for the long-distance traveler. No more lugging around heavy tomes and battered paperbacks. You may be one to discard books as you go. However, I fall into the "sad" category of hugging nearly every book I purchase to my chest. If I love the story I am reluctant to leave the container behind even if the content is now embedded in my brain and soul.

If you are still locked into the idea that you want the containers ... that is an eBook reader, it would appear for libraries ... the smart money from our ever-stretched budgets ... would be better spent on multi-purpose devices that can accept content from a variety of sources.

## The Content

*Can a library go online and download an ebook for use by their clients?*

For libraries, in particular, there are a variety of other important issues to be dealt with before they can efficiently offer eBooks alongside their other off-the-shelf and online indexes and databases.



What are some of the issues?

- 📚 **Variety of formats.** Not all the devices now seeking your attention and your dollar support every available format. Therefore your choice of format is limited to what your device supports. Alternatively of course you can buy a device that best suits the format you will use in your library. The most common formats are: Mobipocket, eReader, Adobe ePub and Microsoft Reader. (Carroll and Whipp, October 2009)



- 📖 **Digital Rights Management (DRM).** Some formats are protected by DRM which means they are locked by publishers and copyright holders so stop contents being copied or distributed illegally.
- 📖 If you are attempting to download from a US site, with an Australian IP address, anything only published in the US will not be available for download here until they have an Australian release.

### *Can I lend a Kindle to my students or staff?*

To quote directly from the Amazon.com Kindle Help License Agreement:

**Restrictions.** Unless specifically indicated otherwise, you may not sell, rent, lease, distribute, broadcast, sublicense or otherwise assign any rights to Digital Content or any portion of it to a third party..."

[I did send an email directly to Amazon re this restriction and never received a response. On the same matter I have sent an email to the Copyright Officer of the Australian Library and Information Association who essentially said while Kindle would probably not act, they may be eager to have a test case here in Australia if I went ahead. No thanks!!!]

**Oregon State University** has been lending Kindles with downloaded books to students, who pay to borrow these devices. The University owns the content, and once the item is "returned" it is added to their Digital Library.

On contacting the University I found that they and other libraries in the United States, after ambivalent responses from Amazon about the use of the Kindle, have concluded:

*"Since the license is silent there appears to be no reason a library can't lend Kindles".*  
Loretta Rielly, Associate Professor, Interim Head of Collection Development, Oregon State University Libraries.

They are by no means alone in taking this stand as the article in the Library Journal by Norman Oder makes clear, *Mixed Answers to "Is it OK for a Library to Lend a Kindle?"*

### *Can a school use a product like Overdrive?*

I am sure you are all aware that Overdrive is the eBook product now being offered by Virtual Link eBook Plus through the State Library of Tasmania. Again there are problems using this product in an educational institution. The following statement is taken directly from Overdrive's Terms of Use.

#### **OverDrive School Download Library Service**

OverDrive is the creator and provider of the School Download Library Service and Website that permits users to select licensed and original digital materials ("Digital Content") for download and playback on a computer or compatible hardware device ("Device"). **The School Download Library Service is for remote use only (outside of the school). You may not download Digital Content to any school computers or devices.**



### ***Buying Content not Containers.***

What is more relevant to libraries are: common standards and publishing patterns that transcend the devices as they evolve. (Chednov, Daniel, January/February 2010)

In an ideal world school libraries want a product that can be downloaded onto a variety of hardware products, in a variety of formats and that also determines DRM and any copyright restrictions. It is also important of course that content meets the needs of children and young adults who make up our client base.



The stars are yet to align and those products are not yet being developed and sold into school libraries in Australia. I haven't even looked at the issues of textbooks, which raises another series of questions, including Australian content if they are to be offered in eBook format.

In March 2010, the **REDGroup** announced it would be offering eBooks online through companies such as Angus and Robertson and Borders.

*They 'acknowledged that availability of local content was an issue ... [but] the response from local publishers thus far had been positive.*

As we are all aware one year later Angus and Robertson and Borders found this solution did not protect their businesses from economic hard times.

### ***Australian Publishers and eBooks***

It is a common misconception that Australian publishers are restricting access to eBooks that are available for readers in other countries. eBooks are not able to be sold in Australia if the copyright holder (usually the author) has not explicitly granted the publisher rights to sell in Australia. For example a book could:

- Have a different publisher in each territory around the world
- Could be re-edited for a local language
- Have a different book cover/cover art, with copyright applying to the artist
- Be in a different format

As an example the popular Stieg Larsson's Millenium Trilogy is:

- Published in the U.K. by Querus
- Published in Australia by Murdoch (distributor)
- Published in the U.S. by Random House



### ***Facts-on-File eBooks***

St. Patrick's College has purchased 9 of these titles, marketed as eBooks, and placed them behind RPA access. These are essentially pdfs of print version of books. They are marketed by Sue Proud at Warner Books . Like all straight pdfs they are a bit clunky, but there has been a small uptake by staff and students. Statistics show they are being used, but probably not at a rate that makes the Library feel comfortable about purchasing many more; particularly when the price is 120% of the print-copy.

Warner Books are now marketing another Facts on File product eLearning Modules. Far more interactive and visually appealing, we will purchase a few of these in 2011. However, at \$350+ quantity will not only be limited by the small current offering of 17 titles, several of which are very U.S. centric.

In early 2011 the following developments indicate school libraries need to watch these developments as the year progresses:

#### ***Mike Matas: A next-generation digital book.***

Mike Matus, when working at Apple, helped to design user interfaces and artwork for the iPhone, the iPad and Mac OS X. He is now a co-founder of Push Pop Press where they have developed the first full-length interactive book for the iPad -- with clever, swipeable video and graphics and some amazing visualizations to play with.

To demonstrate this application, which they are hoping publishers will take-up, they have updated with Al Gore his book 'An Inconvenient Truth'.

You can see him demonstrate this product on TED – Talks in less than 6 minutes.

Go to: [http://www.ted.com/talks/mike\\_matas.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/mike_matas.html)

#### ***The future of the Book - @ vimeo***

While not as sophisticated as the Mike Matas offering you can see another three ways it has been suggest that eBooks may develop. Posted online about seven months ago they offer similar developments to the Push Pop Press release. <http://vimeo.com/15142335>

#### ***Local developments***

**Birchalls** are currently talking about offering eBooks online. They are also talking to an Australian eBook distributor about a method for 'loaning' eBooks.

**Readings**, from Melbourne, are now offering an eBook service using Booki.sh , still for individual purchase, but using a web browser. As they say: Booki.sh ebooks can be read on Macs, PCs, iPhones, iPads, the Kindle3, the latest Blackberry phones – in fact, on any device with a modern web browser. There's nothing to install. Readers can go from following a link on a webpage to buying a book to reading it in seconds. On most devices, you can read books whether you're online or offline

<http://www.readings.com.au/>

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## Some trials and observations

Department of Information Studies, University College, London.

### “National ebook observatory project”.

Within this project 26 scholarly ebooks were provided free to 127 UK universities for 14 months so study how they could be used.

Observations:

- 📖 Over seven million views were recorded during the study.
- 📖 A typical session saw 8-9 pages viewed in 17 minutes per session.
- 📖 Business titles were most popular.

However on a more disturbing note:

- 📖 85% of users spent less than 1 minute per page view.
- 📖 Users dwelled on the cover the most.
- 📖 Cutting and pasting surpassed downloading.

It could be argued that:

- 📖 The viewing patterns may point to the future of reading behaviour as we move to ereading.
- 📖 Quick reading in chunks, just enough to convey the necessary information for an assignment may not be new behaviour at all; it is just easier for students to do now and easier for researchers to measure. (Tenopir, Carol, 15/2/2010)

### The iPod Touch @ St Patrick's

At commencement of 2010 classes and teachers of Grade 7 began trialing the use of the iPod Touch in the classroom. This was conducted with the view that they could be added to the Book/Stationery list for every Grade 7 student in 2011. Alternatively, they may have been considered for students in the separate Grade 9 campus opening in 2012.

In 2011 the use of iPod is stalled. Take-up was poor and observations on use included:

- 📖 The size of the screen is an issue.
- 📖 The size of the keypad is an issue.
- 📖 Downloading apps from the Apple store needs to be synchronized by one computer (via the teacher's laptop???). When this happens in the future to devices owned by the students, on which they or their parents may have purchased other apps (it is their personal device) from home, these will be wiped by the ones downloaded by the College.
- 📖 Our eLearning Coordinator is attempted to clarify issues with Apple but this has proved problematic.



## Conclusion

The majority of eBook content that is currently available is marketed for individual purchase and download. While there is an obvious market for an online media library for schools, there is no such “animal” currently available in Australia

This original discussion paper was prepared for: ASLA State Conference, Friday 7<sup>th</sup> May – Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> May.

The revised edition was updated for : The Children’s Book Council of Australia (Tasmanian Branch) 2011 State Conference ‘*Books to Keep Kids Reading*’ held in Hobart on Friday 13 May and in Launceston on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> May.

## References

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Carroll, Pam, Whipp, Kimberley 9<sup>th</sup> October, 2009. eBook readers: a guide to the world of digital books and how to read them. Cnet Australia  
<http://www.cnet.com.au/ebook-readers-a-guide-to-theworld-ofdigital-books-and-how-to-read-them-339298241.htm>  
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Chudnov, Daniel. (January/February 2010) *Three things to watch for in 2010.* Computers and Libraries; p. 24-26.

Nelson, Ted, 2010 *Whatever Happened to the Book?* The Human Network.  
<http://blog.futurestreetconsulting.com/?p=282> Downloaded 3/5/2010

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<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/18/technology/internet/18amazon.html>  
Downloaded 17/3/2010

Tenopir, Carol. "Usage and Functionality." *Library Journal* 3(2010):21. *eLibrary.* Web. 02 May. 2010. Downloaded 31/3/2010

## Links to the Products mentioned in the paper:

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Adobe eReader

<http://www.ereader.com/>

Apple iPad

<http://www.apple.com/ipad/>

Amazon Kindle

<http://www.amazon.com/Kindle-Amazons-Original-Wireless-generation/dp/B000FI73MA>

Birchalls

<http://www.birchalls.com.au/>

Booki.sh

<http://booki.sh/>

eReader

<http://www.ereader.com/>

Facts-on-File Infobase eBooks

<http://factsonfile.infobasepublishing.com/Ebooks.asp>

Google Android

<http://www.google.com/mobile/android/>

Microsoft Reader

<http://www.microsoft.com/reader/>

Mobipocket

<http://www.mobipocket.com/en/HomePage/default.asp?Language=EN>

Overdrive

<http://www.overdrive.com/>

Push Pop Press

<http://pushpoppress.com/ourchoice/>

REDGroup Retail

<http://www.redgroupretail.com/>

Sony eReader and Digital Books

<http://www.sonystyle.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/CategoryDisplay?catalogId=10551&storeId=10151&langId=-1&categoryId=8198552921644523779&N=4294954529&Name=All+Reader+Digital+Books>

#### **Additional and Informative Reading**

Colorado Independent Publishers Association (CIPA)

<http://chronicle.com/article/5-Myths-About-the-Information/127105/>

*Electronic Books: time-to-adoption Horizon: one year or less.* 2011 Horizon Report.

<http://www.educause.edu/Resources/2011HorizonReport/223122>

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Darnton, Robert, April 17, 2011. 5 Myths about the Information age. The Chronicle of Higher Education. Download 19<sup>th</sup> April, 2011. <http://chronicle.com/article/5-Myths-About-the-Information/127105/>

### **Libraries and Information Agencies**

JISC National eBook Observatory Project  
<http://www.jiscebooksproject.org/reports/finalreport>

Oregon State University Libraries  
<http://osulibrary.oregonstate.edu/>

Queens Borough Public Library  
<http://www.queenslibrary.org/>

St Patrick's College, Mary MacKillop Library  
<http://library.stpatricks.tas.edu.au/>

State Library of Tasmania  
<http://www.statelibrary.tas.gov.au/>

University College, London  
<http://www.slais.ucl.ac.uk/>

