



Technically Speaking

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(Incoming)

E-books: Love 'em or Hate 'em?

By Stephen Ingram

The other day I taught an engaging class on e-book readers to a group of 34 patrons. The next day, I wondered if I would ever see any of them in the library again.

The e-book format has been around for some time, but the recent introduction of affordable portable readers and the advent of relatively easy distribution channels have brought them to the forefront of our attention. They are one of the hottest topics in the media business and librarianship. E-books have created an upheaval in the publishing industry, changed how we look at privacy, and will most certainly have an impact on the future of libraries.

Traditionally, the printed book business model has consisted of three things: acquiring, editing, and marketing. Books are acquired through submissions and agents, they are edited to improve them for public

consumption, and then they are marketed to the public in hopes of turning a profit. The actual creation of the book is the last step in a process that ultimately places an item in a bookstore or on a library shelf. There are high fixed costs, such as editorial staff and technical expertise, in this process. It takes money to make a book and, sometimes, sheer guesswork to make a book successful. Usually, attention is focused on a select group of popular

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Technically Speaking's Featured Quotation

“The most important thing is to be involved in a profession that you absolutely love, and that you look forward to going to work every day.”

—Interviewee in the Cornell Legacy Project, in which over 1,000 older Americans were asked what mattered most in life (NYT, 1/10/12).

From the President

By Danielle Zubiller

As we close the year for CATS, I would like to thank all of our members and especially our current board. Each of you has brought special skills and talents to this board and in return, our programs have reflected that. I would like to give an extra special thank you to June Zinsley, Sue Ketcham and Tom Cohn. I would like to recognize all of

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their dedicated long years of service to the CATS division of SCLA. June Zinsley has been our dedicated treasurer for years and helps keep us on track. Sue Ketcham has served on various positions and has always given insight to the academic side of CATS and has helped bridge the gap between the public libraries and the academic libraries, specifically when it comes to our programs. Tom Cohn has been our newsletter editor and has spent many hours and dedication to the CATS division and we would not have the newsletter we have without him. All of you will be greatly missed and I wish you success in whatever the future holds for all of you. I hope all

the members of the CATS division had a healthy and happy holiday season and I look forward to what CATS has in store for the next coming year. Please join me in welcoming incoming President James Clemens and our 2012 board:
Vice President/President-Elect: Steve Ingram
Treasurer: James Matias
Secretary: Eileen Keller
Laura Giuliani
Bob Johnson
Min Liu
Dana Mottola
Xibe Solis
Nicole Turzillo

**To our readers:
With this issue I will be stepping down as Editor of *Technically Speaking* after eight years. We who work in libraries value new and relevant information about our profession, and it is my sincere hope that the readers of this newsletter have here found a little inspiration, obtained some useful ideas, and become spurred to involvement with the division. I'm confident *Technically Speaking* will be in capable hands with James Griffin III as its new Editor.**

—Tom Cohn

—E-books (continued)

authors to assure a profit. These costs determine what price a book will command in the marketplace.

The e-books business model, on the other hand, is different because of its emphasis on creation, distribution, and expectation. Most books, whether physical or electronic, start in a digital format. Anyone can write an e-book and, with a small investment, get it to the marketplace. The transition to distribution is relatively simple. There are companies and services that will bring an e-book to an accessible market, and there are editors who will offer their services to polish a product. Unlike a physical store or library, there is no need for shelf space in the e-book market. Books are stored on servers in multiple locations, and can be available in a matter of minutes. Since consumers expect to pay less for an e-book, publishers impose the artificial constraint of the “agency” model, where a price is decided and online retailers sell a publisher’s e-books in return for 30% of the gross.

E-books have already begun to have an impact on libraries. Ask any library staff member how much time they’ve spent working with patrons who want to know how to utilize library services with their newly-purchased e-reader. Take note of how

many purchase requests have been made recently for books that are strictly digital and only available online, and take note of the reduction of bookstores on a massive scale (though this may be attributed, in some part, to bad business sense). Library downloads may be a small portion of the e-book market, but it is growing as our statistics indicate that Overdrive downloads are increasing.

The escalating technology race to bring affordable e-readers and tablets to the marketplace will put the purchase price for such devices within reach of a large part of the population. The progression will go like this—the more e-readers and tablets, the more e-books sold, the more titles entering the market. The physical book industry is trying to adapt to this new electronic format, but they are having difficulty competing, as Amazon is entering the publishing market and giving authors a reason to question the traditional way of doing business. Those who love physical books may eventually surrender to e-books because convenience usually trumps format. Your reading library stored in one location, distributed to any device, at any time, will be a difficult convenience to deny. According to this model, E-books will be the format of choice for casual reading, and libraries, who base their service models on

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Below (l to r) : James Matias, Bob Johnson, James Clemens, guest speaker and “library and technology “trend spotter” Joe Murphy, Danielle Zubiller, Eileen Keller, Nicole Turzillo at Dec. 7th Annual Meeting. Clockwise from left: Board members emeriti Susan Ketcham, Tom Cohn, June Zinsley.



Computer and Technical Services Division
Suffolk County Library Association
c/o SCLS
627 N. Sunrise Highway
Bellport, NY 11713
E-mail: cats@suffolk.lib.ny.us

—*e-books (continued)*

lending physical books, will have to rethink their services. There can be little doubt we are seeing changes that will affect the publishing industry, patrons, and library services. It is currently impacting the circulation statistics of reading materials in a hard copy format. It is making us question our policies in regard to privacy, and it has modified staff time through patron outreach and training. We have started to change our purchasing choices for our collections, and we will be forced to question the physical book model of distribution when we find that we have no copies of the “hottest” e-book titles on our

physical shelves. Will libraries be electronic lending libraries or distribution centers for a short time as “books” transition to the cloud for access? We will have to decide what we will do with our empty library shelves and we may have to do it much sooner than we think. ●

**Upcoming CATS
Board Meetings**

Tuesday, February 7th

Tuesday, March 13th

Tuesday, April 10th