E-books

Simon Mahony
From an original document by Claire Warwick

This document is part of a collection of presentations with a focus on electronic publishing. For full details of this and the rest of the collection see the cover sheet at: http://ucloer.eprints-hosting.org/id/eprint/34

In today's chapter...

- E-Books and their history

- Their advantages and problems

- How they fit into the market

- Reading online and on paper

E-books

- What is an ebook?

Technology needed

- Web access
- Conventional computer
- PDA or Phone
- Specialist readers
– From rocket e-books to Sony e-book reader or Kindle

History and development

- Up to 2000.
  - Heavy investment by aggregators e.g. netLibrary
  - Individual book sellers like Barnes and Noble
  - Lots of hype
- Dot.com boom to crash
  - E-books suffered, uptake quite slow
- Consolidation
  - parallels with other dot.coms – netLibrary saved from Bankruptcy by OCLC
- Relaunch
  - specific sectors, complement to paper books

E-books 2.0

- Re-evaluation of ebooks
- Linked to improved reader hardware – Kindle, Sony and now Android e-book reader
–New devices promised from Microsoft and Mac
- Google Book Search and other mass digitisation projects
- What effect does this have on readers and users of technology?
- And on publishing models?

Advantages of e-books for individuals

- Anywhere, anytime access (24/7)
  - WifI access to online book store (Amazon/Kindle)
- full text searching – within an eBook – across a whole collection of eBooks
- Customisable interface
- Portable
- Storage capacity
  - Especially convenient for travel

Advantages for libraries

- No lost or missing books or torn or defaced copies
- No physical book storage required
- No late returns and as many copies as there are readers

–researchers and students no longer compete for copies

- Users expect online resources e.g. journals
- Good for distance learning

Problems

- Reading on screen still difficult
- Interoperability- huge number of different technical standards
- Can only use certain formats on certain readers
- Dedicated devices still quite costly
- Cataloguing - often hard to find in library catalogues
- Digital Rights Management
- What are users/libraries allowed to do?
- Much less flexible than print
- Long term access to books when reader is obsolete

Cost and pricing

- In theory e-books should be cheaper than print
  - No printing, warehousing or transport cost
- But...
  - Publishers concerned e-books will hurt sales of print copies
  - usually cost at least the price of a print copy *per user* in libraries.
  - Significant extra burden per student for libraries
- Individual e-book pricing very similar to printed books
  - Early releases have 'hard back' prices
  - Out of copyright texts cheaper
  - But for print you don't have to buy the reading device

Economic models

- Not achieved huge market share
  – Certain niches eg engineering
  – Student texts, may replace course packs and short loan
- Devices driving market, but need more content to be available for real success
- Add on to print
  – Oxford scholarship online
  – O'Reilly computer manuals
- Linked to devices or online shops, eg Amazon Kindle

Google booksearch

- Digitising 'a million books' in partnerships with libraries
- Enables online searching of 'real' books
– Partnership with publishers
– Marketing tool for physical books
– Don't envisage it replacing real books
- Sales of advertising
- Tie-up with hardware manufacturers
- Still huge problems about copyright and monopolistic behaviour

Future development

- E-paper and e-ink
  - Sound a good idea, but slow to be produced
- New and better reading devices
- Expectation of young adults is that material must be digital
- Academic libraries already in conflict with publishers as a result
  - Will universities cut out academic publishers for textbooks?