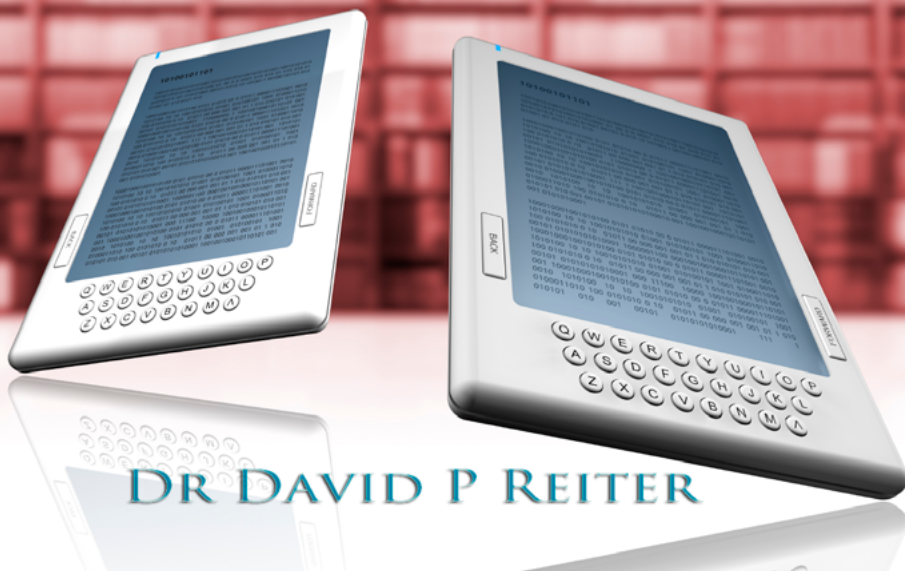


YOUR EBOOK SURVIVAL KIT



DR DAVID P REITER

Contents

Key Terms	vii
eMyths and eRealities	1
1. An eBook is an eBook is an eBook?	9
2. One eBook Reader is much the same as another?	17
3. Once you create a pdf, do you have an eBook?	23
4. Is Conversion a religious experience?	34
5. Keeping it Real: Quality Control	42
6. KISS and eBook Design	50
7. Can one size fit all?	82
8. What about Costs?	89
9. Once you publish an eBook, you just sit back and wait for the royalties to roll in, right?	97
10. Contracts and other legalities	106
Epilogue: Moving Forward	114

1. An eBook is an eBook is an eBook?

IT ISN'T. eBooks come in all shapes, sizes and capabilities. An eBook can comprise text on its own, or it can conspire with images, sound, animation and even interactivity. What you can do in composing your eBook is limited only by your imagination. Or, if you plan to publish yourself, by your technical expertise.

First, a bit of history. eBooks have actually been around for a long time. Ever since computers became as good at entering and saving text as punching numbers, people have been creating eBooks.

If you create a file and save it, you've made an electronic document. It may be a letter, a diary entry, a report, an essay, a story, or something even longer. The key difference between an electronic file and an eBook has to do with length and content. And more importantly what's done with it once it's created.

Few people would think a story five pages long would qualify as an eBook – unless it was very, *very* succinct – but a novella or a handbook of 32 pages might. And if the content can stand on its own and is of sufficient importance to be read as an independent document, it's probably an eBook if it remains in digital form – stored on a computer or floating around somewhere in cyberspace.

Does the act of printing change an eBook into something else? Probably. It's become *physical*, has claimed space on paper. It may be printed in quantity with a cover and sold in bookshops as a physical book. Does that spell the end of the digital file or eBook from

which the physical book was created? No. A book can have more than one life, and at least one of those lives can be in purely digital form. It may have more to say about the reader and their choice of reading channel. Old habits die hard!

But relax – we have nothing to fear from eBooks but fear itself. In their physical state, they've been around for quite a long time – wrinkled, torn, coffee-stained. And almost everyone who has a computer has authored digital text files and probably informal eBooks in the past. You may not have *published* an eBook yet, but that's what we're getting at here.

Let's talk about the shape of eBooks. First, consider the dimensions of the physical book. In theory, it can be any size, but there are practical limitations, like paper size and the capacity of presses to print on larger stock. If physical books are too large, bookshops and libraries may not be able to store them. And it rather defeats the romantic view of a book as something to curl up with in bed – even though some classical novels like *War and Peace* could qualify in their hard back version as lethal weapons by weight and bulk. So most publishers tend to publish using standard dimensions. Notable exceptions to this are picture books for kids and some 'coffee table' books intended for display rather than life in a bookcase.

eBooks in theory can also be of any size. As long as your eBook is set up to be viewed on a computer with a reasonable size monitor, it will be possible to view it, with scrolling, even if it doesn't fit the normal screen size.

Matters get complicated when publishers want to create eBooks from large format files using big fonts

and images. There are many types of eBook Readers out there, and many have small screen sizes, e.g. personal data assistants (PDAs) and older phones. It gets even more complicated when you want your eBook to be read – and legible – on the full range of eBook Readers.

The good news is that certain eBook formats allow your text to flow properly into the various screen sizes used by the readers. Viewers then can resize the text to suit their viewing preferences, and then text reflows into the available space. This, too, is a subject we'll look at in a later chapter – how we ensure the files we create will work on as many eBook readers as possible.

Many people think of eBooks as simply text on a screen. Early eBooks were just that, and the habit persists today with many publishers issuing eBooks versions of print books at the same time or even before the print versions are released. The viewing of digital text was, and still is, a problem. Few people want to read extended text on a backlit screen. Many people with vision problems simply couldn't read on the early devices. From an aesthetic point of view, people found it hard to curl up with a laptop or take it to the beach to read a novel.

Enter the dedicated eBook Reader. The first generation models solved the problem of portability but their displays were either too dim or too bright for people to feel comfortable reading for a long time. They could generally only display text in one colour (black) and their storage space was very small. They didn't sell very well, weren't very robust, the market for eBooks

took a dive and many companies that had invested in eBook technology went bust.

Quite a few traditional publishers heaved a sigh of relief – the world had been saved from the dreaded eBook! Problem was, physical book sales continued to slump worldwide except for notable exceptions like the *Harry Potter* series and vampire blockbusters. And the general cultural shift from the printed page to the screen for leisure and educational content continued. People were spending their time as viewers more often than as readers, and children – subject to dazzling multimedia content everywhere in their daily lives – were demanding more than text on a page from their reading experience. (If you could get them to pick up a book at all.)

It looked as if eBooks would have to have a second life if only to allow publishers to defend their market share against screen-based content. Second generation eBook readers were released, but they still suffered from limited storage, irritating back lighting and the difficulty of accessing and storing content. Sales continued to be very slow.

Several recent innovations have turned the tide. In November 2007, Amazon released the first generation of their Kindle Reader, which supposedly sold out in five and a half hours. Clearly Amazon had done their research: sales confirmed there was a market for a more sophisticated Reader whose only purpose was to display text on a screen. The Kindle had addressed the readability problem with an 'eInk' display that emulated the experience of reading a newspaper. It could handle pdf files natively, and it had direct

access to Kindle books and the content supplied by Amazon partners like newspapers, who could download material to subscribers automatically from the internet.

Publishers sat up and took notice. At its release date, the Kindle Store claimed to have close to 90,000 titles onboard. At last count, the Store boasts close to 3,000,000 titles. Statistics like that can't be ignored. Publishers now factor eBooks into their production and marketing plans for titles, even releasing the eBook versions before the hardback of titles they expect to be best sellers.

Other companies entered the fray. Tech companies like Sony produced dedicated Readers, Kobo/Rakuten released their Kobo Reader, and 'open-source' multi-function devices like the iPad and Nook competed for market share. Smartphones like the iPhone and Blackberry also could download and display eBooks.

Feeling the heat, Amazon not only released new generations of dedicated Readers but also Kindle for PC and Mac, software for Kindle-less customers to download Kindle books for reading on their PC and Mac computers, tablets and smartphones. And Amazon has kept pace with the competition with their latest Fire tablets and smartphones.

Apple still leads the tablet market with the iPad, which accesses content from Apple's iTunes Store. But the tablet market is getting crowded with competition from Google's Nexus, Samsung's Galaxy, Sony's Xperia and Microsoft's Surface. Which brings us back to the original question of what an eBook is, or rather what it will shape-change to become.

Despite recent strides in technology, two factors hold back current dedicated eBook Readers from delivering enhancements to the viewer. The ideal Reader should be able to play audio and video files while the viewer is reading text and offer at least basic interactivity like the ability to mark up content, add notes or even provide feedback to the publisher. (Imagine how the reading of *Moby Dick* could be enhanced by the sound of ocean or the blood-curdling cries of spearmen in the background.) While the Kindle Fire has some mark-up capabilities and interactivity (passages can be emailed by the viewer to friends), it stumbles with multimedia, which can be frustrating for viewers who try to play enhanced pdfs.

The iPad can play multimedia elements in full colour, as long as the files it downloads have those features on board. But Apple continues to rule out the pdf as a preferred format for delivering content to the iTunes Store. Why? Probably because pdf files are significantly larger than other formats, even without multimedia. They take more space to store on servers, take longer to download and quickly eat up space on portable devices, especially on space-challenged smartphones.

The good news is that hardware companies like Sony and Samsung have opened up their devices to accept pdfs and open source formats like ePub. Essentially a compressed file in a web-based format similar to html, ePub will work on almost all readers, with the notable exception of the Kindle family. No wonder it's the delivery packaging preferred by Apple and other major eBook aggregators and distributors.

The latest incarnation of ePub, *ePub3*, allows for multimedia enhancements such as audio and video. It even offers flexibility in the way pages are set up in *fixed layout format*, or flePub. This is ideal for books that rely on two page spreads, such as art books, children's picture books and text books. But it can complicate the production process for those unfamiliar with how flePubs need to be constructed.

While multimedia elements do add bulk to eBook files, acceptable quality can be had using compressed formats. For audio, mp3 and mp4 files have been used for some time, while in video there is Flash, and Quicktime, with its H.264 format. The trick is convincing big distributors of content to accept these larger files.

Apple has consistently led the way in accepting enhanced ePub content, most recently through its *iBook Author* format. Publisher Simon and Schuster has spearheaded the development of technology of its own – the *Vook* (rhymes with 'book') to deliver enhanced files to the iPhone and iPad platforms, or via a browser that streams the content from the internet to personal computers. The Vook ups the ante even further by allowing the viewer to connect to their favourite social networking sites to chat about the title without leaving the Vook title. In short, what an eBook can be is probably less important for individual and small publishers at present than what can be efficiently and economically delivered to market.

Publishers with titles they expect to have a reasonable shelf life could decide to develop and archive enhanced files in the hope that the big distributors will accept

and distribute them, eventually. Alternatively, in the short term, they can offer enhanced titles directly to customers from their online Store, or they can segment their titles by selling audio to stores like iTunes and Napster, and video via Vimeo or YouTube.

You've Just Finished your Free Sample

Enjoyed the preview?

Buy: <http://www.ebooks2go.com>