E-Books: Revolutionizing Book Culture

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Digitized books, or e-books, are increasingly taking hold as a consumer product in the book publishing industry, offering the promise of new forms of content delivery that exceed the limitations of print text. At the same time, e-books challenge the book culture that has been established by print books, which have long been understood by society to be the prototype of “books.” Drawing on theories from the fields of reading psychology, digital humanities, and publishing, this thesis explores the ways in which e-books will change how people read, perceive the book as a cultural artifact, and approach publishing as consumers. Based on a survey of people’s usage and perspectives of e-books and interviews with publishing industry professionals who produce e-books, this thesis explores the dual potential of e-books: to contest society’s essential understanding of the book, and to offer a reading experience superior to what has ever been possible with print books.
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Chapter 1. Introduction

In the mid-fifteenth century Johannes Gutenberg ignited a cultural revolution by inventing the printing press. Making the reproduction of texts easier and faster, the printing press enabled a much broader dissemination of knowledge through the written word than had ever before been possible. This forever changed society, impacting education, religion, science, language, and business. But only in hindsight could this extensive influence be apparent. In his history of print culture, *Five Hundred Years of Printing*, Steinberg reflected “The history of printing is an integral part of the general history of civilization” (1955, p. 7). Now, five centuries after Gutenberg’s invention, a new revolution in the written word is changing the production and consumption of texts, and revolutionary cultural effects are already taking hold.

Digitalization will transform reading more significantly than any technological innovation has since the invention of the printing press, and its evolution has recently accelerated. In just the past year, two new mass-market e-book reading devices have debuted. Increasing numbers of books are being offered in e-book format. The digital revolution is underway, and with society just beginning to adopt mass-market e-books at a significant rate, now is a fertile moment for studying the effects.

As books—particularly narrative fiction—are increasingly read in digital formats on computers, smart phones, and designated e-readers like the Kindle, the reader’s experience changes. The physical act of reading shifts from turning the pages of a bound print book—the codex—to pressing the buttons or touchscreen of an electronic device to make text materialize onscreen. E-reader devices emulate, but are critically different
from, print books, thus their use alters the physical activity and cognition that has traditionally been understood as reading. Furthermore, e-readers are now moving beyond print book emulation to offer more functions. This conflation of functions under the umbrella of “reading” necessarily influences society’s understanding of bookishness and all that it affects. Books are now largely purchased over the Internet, rather than in-person at a bookstore. The book as record, once an enduring history of dog-eared pages and notes in the margins, may be threatened by the fragility of digital e-book files. And the digital nature of e-books inevitably connects them to their vendor and publisher, obscuring the sense of ownership readers feel over their personal libraries. Defining the experience of the e-book reader and consumer under these conditions is essential to taking advantage of these new technologies.

This study intends to capture reader attitudes and publishing industry strategies to better understand how the two will meet to articulate the e-book as a cultural artifact and define the effects of digital reading on society. To explore how the physical, cognitive, and emotional experience of reading is changing, as well as what role the e-book is securing in society’s cultural consciousness, I administered a survey to readers on their use of and attitudes toward e-books and e-book reading devices. I also interviewed professionals from the publishing industry about their response to the growing digital culture. Though it is impossible to anticipate the long-term cultural effects of the digitalization of books, especially because the technology will continue to evolve, it is essential to contextualize the book-reader relationship in the digital age to begin to understand the impact of e-books.
Chapter 2. Literature Review

Elizabeth Eisenstein (1995) contends the book is not becoming extinct. Citing previous evolutions in textual media as proof that the emergence of electronic text will coexist with persistent print media, Eisenstein writes, “Premature obituaries on the death of the sermon and the end of the book are themselves testimony to long-enduring habits of mind” (p. 555). If print books do persist alongside e-books well into the future, then each medium will influence the other, affecting its definition and purpose within culture.

In this chapter I will explore the ways in which the emergence of e-books is beginning to shape book culture. Understanding what constitutes book culture is a multidisciplinary task, and this chapter will accordingly focus on selected contributions to the fields of reading psychology, the humanities, and the book business, each of which is critical to contextualizing the book and reading within digital culture. I will begin by reviewing theories of reading psychology that explore why and how people read, which will be fundamental to understanding how textual materiality affects the reading process. These issues inform the publishing industry, which I will examine for the ways that books are created, marketed, and sold on the basis of their content and form. Finally I will examine prior studies of e-book usage, which analyze reading, textuality, and book consumerism. Together these fields define the influence e-books will have on the book as a cultural artifact. A critical review of reading psychology, textual studies, and book publishing, pursued thematically, will highlight the interdisciplinary connections that create book culture, as well as the gaps and inconsistencies among previous studies, which my research intends to address.
Theories of Reading Psychology

Reading psychologists study the cognitive processes that constitute “reading” text. Thus scholarship in this field should illuminate points of comparison between reading print text and reading digital text, such as where differences in cognition might exist when reading across different media. Reading psychologists agree that certain mental processes take place during “reading” to transform text into concepts represented in the reader’s mind, and these processes are generally acknowledged as attention, processing, and memory. Yet the conditions deemed necessary for these processes vary by scholar.

Nell’s landmark study (1988) of the psychology of reading for pleasure—or ludic reading—explores how readers get “lost in a book.” Nell posits that readers can become absorbed in a novel because processing the simple concepts of fiction demands more attention from the reader than reading complex texts, like informational articles, does. Reading a text comprised of simple concepts requires less effort, but more attention, from the reader for him to internally transform the textual material, like dialogue, character, and storyline, into mental images and emotional reactions. Because character and plot are constant factors throughout fictional stories, the cognitive activity of the reader is ongoing and creates a continuous draw on the reader’s attention. Thus Nell claims ludic reading usually demands more attention from the reader than educational or informational texts do. Likewise Elfenbein (2006) explains reading as cognitive activity that transforms text into concepts to be secured in the reader’s memory, and he notes that a reader’s degree of comprehension varies based on how intensely one reads since readers have limited working memory capacity to process information and support
comprehension. But while Nell prioritizes the genre of text as a factor in absorption, Elfenbein attributes more importance to the individual reader’s personal culture, background knowledge, and physical setting as modifying the cognitive processes undertaken and enabling intensive reading or not. Elfenbein also says the level of reading intensity depends on the reader’s ability to appropriately direct her attention to the text, as “the more attention that is engaged with one process, the less that is available for others” (p. 487). Thus Elfenbein presents reading as routinized processes that shift with each individual’s personal background and reading strategies, leading to varied levels of comprehension for each reader and reading session. Similarly Wolf and Barzillai (2009) agree that reading requires the active construction of meaning by coupling the reader’s attention to the text with analysis based on prior knowledge and experience. Yet, they claim that the reading processes described by Nell and Elfenbein are not innately mechanized but rather that reading is a learned process for humans, as well as a process by which the human brain is shaped. As such, new reading formats like the Internet or e-reader will create new forms of reading in future generations who learn to read using digital text. Furthermore, Wolf and Barzillai see potential for deeper immersion in digital text than in print text, though they admit readers are not yet trained in the comprehension-monitoring skills and self-awareness needed to achieve this.

These scholars may represent only a minority of the reading psychology field, but their theories on the cognitive processing that takes place during reading speak to a major factor in e-books’ potential to change reading: attentional allocation to text. Though Nell’s work predates modern e-books, his findings would create an interesting study to
project onto readers who use e-book reading devices to read for pleasure, as the technical interface might be distracting to the attention Nell claims is required for becoming engrossed in a novel. And while Elfenbein does not discuss e-books, his theories of comprehension suggest factors external to the text can affect the level of comprehension a reader achieves, a potential problem for the ubiquitous reading enabled by portable e-book reading devices. Literary critic Birkerts (2010) takes up the claims of Wolf and Barzillai to argue that ludic reading will suffer from the Internet-molded brain, which lacks the attentional capacity required to engage with literature. He says a novel’s purpose is less to communicate themes and more to engage the mind in a process of inward reflection and imaginative projection: “In this way, and for this reason, the novel is the vital antidote to the mentality that the Internet promotes.”

**History of Reading**

Many literary scholars have asserted that text constitutes communicative activity, wherein authors produce text from which readers create meaning. These scholars (Iser, 1974; Fish, 1972) prioritize the reader in creating literary meaning, over the text, and have established the school of reader-response criticism. But time has obscured most documentation of what the average reader experience was centuries ago, and by limiting the importance attributed to the text, reader-response scholars neglect the fact that readers themselves have had varied experiences due to the fact that textual formats and the way they are consumed are not unchanging. For instance, Engelsing (1974) establishes an important theory of reading revolution, suggesting that until about 1800 Europeans generally read a small selection of primarily religious texts intensively—that is, closely
and repeatedly—aloud, and then shifted to primarily read privately and extensively—
consuming many secular texts without spending much time on any one. Darnton (1982)
questions whether this theory may be oversimplified. He acknowledges that reading has
varied in how, where, and why it was done, with each different form of consuming text
impacting the reader’s experience of the text. Hence he contends we should not “view
cultural change as a linear or trickle-down movement of influences” (p. 20) as Engelsing
does. Reading trends have varied, but each mode of reading—from extensive to
intensive, and reading aloud in groups to silently in solitude—was pursued for different
purposes often in the same era. In his study of the representation of British libraries in
the 1700s, Raven (1996) confirms these claims by determining that in eighteenth century
England, reading had been both a social activity performed aloud as well as a silent,
personal activity. Darnton is correct in maintaining that reading studies must account for
this diversity of cultural trends that have been present at any given time; Engelsing is
incorrect in isolating intensive reading as a direct precursor to extensive reading.

The study of books as objects reflects a similar history. Through the study of
marginalia—annotations written by readers in the margin of text—Jackson (1992) finds
that certain qualities characterize nearly all marginalia: specifically that it is anonymous,
responsive, and critical. Marginalia is a form of response to the antecedent text that
expresses the reader’s personality as a critic. Moreover, Jackson says that marginalia was
also a form of communication between readers, wherein they lent their books to one
another to be annotated and returned for review. Though Jackson notes that some
marginalia extends or does not quite fit the conventions, in general marginalia is evidence
of readers’ emotional investment in their books and provides proof that different kinds of reading and reader reactions have been pursued throughout history.

The pictorial representation of libraries and hand-scribbled marginalia are some of the limited records documenting the average reader experience throughout history. Though details of how different, coexisting types of reading may have affected the reader’s inner experience and processing of text largely eludes researchers, awareness of the significance of such research makes it possible to study how the inner experience of today’s readers is affected by switching from reading text in print form to digital form.

**Digital Humanities: Form Affects Meaning**

While reader-response critics were early proponents of prioritizing the reader over the text, yet another school of literary criticism deems emphasis on the text’s meaning, or the “linguistic code,” to be simplistic. The basis for debate is a concept in language studies called the Conduit Metaphor, which assumes that text is a neutral container for meaning. The Conduit Metaphor claims that language carries inherent meaning, which the reader passively receives from the text during reading. Scholars who have rightly questioned the Conduit Metaphor argue that even when the same word or alleged textual “container” is used, communication is not identical among different parties (Reddy, 1979) and that words convey different meanings in different contexts (Becker, 1995; Friedrich, 1986). The Conduit Metaphor neglects to consider the context of text as influencing its meaning. Since the Conduit Metaphor was initially contested, subsequent scholars have claimed the physical appearance of text carries meaning as a form of context—a concept called the bibliographic code. McGann (1991) claims the
bibliographic code and linguistic code form a double helix of meaning to be perceived by the reader (p. 77). Shillingsburg (2007) details how bibliographic codes can actually determine meaning:

By bibliographic codes it is usually meant that the appearance of a document—the type fonts, the formatting, the deployment of white space, the binding, and perhaps also the pricing and the distribution method—all affect a reader’s sense of what kind of text is ‘contained’ in the document. It is said that the bibliographic elements telegraph to readers the ways in which they should read the lexical text. (p. 16)

McGann and Shillingsburg’s theories contend that text is not simply a container for meaning and that factors such as the physical form in which text is presented, or the bibliographic code, are significant in a reader’s experience of the text. This is a key perspective in research on digital text, which is drastically different from print in form.

Hayles (2002, 2003) asserts that texts essentially have no reality independent of their material platform. Even for digital texts, which can only be accessed through a technological platform, materiality is still important: “Literature was never only words, never merely immaterial verbal constructions. Literary texts, like us, have bodies, an actuality necessitating that their materialities and meanings are deeply interwoven into each other” (2002; p. 107). Hayles thus considers the technological devices used to read e-books as an aspect of the text’s meaning and as distinguishing an e-book from its print counterpart. Hayles explains that electronic text does not exist outside of its onscreen display; an e-book’s text constitutes a process of pixel formation that begins when the user clicks a button to load text on an e-reading device. That a process is necessary to
create this display incurs different meaning than the print text existing independent of reader use; when a reader shuts a book, the words remain on the page. And Hayles claims that certain aspects of digital texts, such as time lags in loading content, or the inconsistencies between distinct viewings, make it impossible to conceive of them in the same way as print texts: “This aspect of electronic textuality—along with many others—cannot be separated from the delivery vehicles that produce it as a process with which the user can interact” (2003, p. 276).

Some scholars critique the e-reading device as not affecting the meaning of e-books but as interfering with the reading process. Mangen (2008) discusses the human-technology relation, explaining that the reading experience with e-books differs from print books due to the difference between their material supports. The print book integrates text with its material support (pages) explains Mangen: “…the technological artifact—the book, the pages—partly withdraws, so that our intentionality is primarily directed towards the narrative fiction itself, and not to the technological object as such” (p. 415). In the case of digital text, the electronic device is always an obstacle, no matter how print-like the quality of the text. The text’s inherent separation from the device prohibits the immersion readers experience with print text. Mangen claims the technological interface changes the reader’s haptic interaction with text, with e-books demanding the reader to click or scroll buttons on a device to proceed through the text in contrast to print books calling for the reader to handle the material substrate of the text itself (p. 405). E-books make the technical features of the text’s material support more apparent to the reader and produces a more shallow reading experience, says Mangen:
“When afforded the possibility to click… our attentional allocation is already partly directed towards the haptic intending of clicking, rather than fully directed towards the contents of the text itself, and hence the potentially immersive impact of the narrative fiction” (p. 413). Liu and Wolf (qtd. in “Does the Brain Like E-books?,” 2009) agree that reader distraction is likely while reading e-books, due to the peripheral distraction of readily accessible ancillary information and the absent sense of entirety that characterizes e-books. Wolf, a reading specialist, admits the risk this poses for reading comprehension: “For my greatest concern is that the young brain will never have the time (in milliseconds or in hours or in years) to learn to go deeper into the text after the first decoding, but rather will be pulled by the medium to ever more distracting information, sidebars, and now, perhaps, videos (in the new vooks).”

Still, if the technological interface of e-books makes them unsuitable for the immersive reading experience, they offer other advantages in turn. Harroff and Johnson (2003) applaud the search feature, interactive ancillary contents, and currency of content as qualities of e-books that make them good for organizing and interacting with text. But the fragility of e-book reading devices and the tendency for software to become outdated quickly also make e-books unreliable as a means for preservation or archiving (Harroff & Johnson; Frost, 2004).

Dealing with bibliographic code more generally as it affects the cultural meaning of the word “book,” Chartier (2004) cites three formatting innovations that define the notion of “book” for modern society and are at risk of extinction in the digital age: the codex, the unitary book, and the printing press. These innovations have rooted the
written culture in immediate, material distinctions between books, which electronic text obscures due to digital production’s creation and display of all text in virtually unvarying forms within a single medium (p. 142). The distinction between texts that materiality imposes is thus replaced in e-books by a continuity of form in which fonts are unvarying, book covers do not exist, and all pages are the size of the device’s screen. As a result readers of e-books may lose the perception of each work individually, and, Chartier concludes, the digitalization of books will alter the basic cultural notion of textuality and affect how readers read.

Though materiality is a general concern of reading, e-books must be distinguished from hypertext. Hypertext has been widely studied and charged with prompting fragmented, non-linear, individualized, and interactive reading tendencies (Coover, 1992; Landow, 1997; Douglas, 2000; Sloane, 2000; McGann, 2001). In contrast, e-book reading devices generally offer text in linear formats that mimic the codex. And yet, despite this major distinction, the shared digital nature of e-books and hypertext yield some common principles. Much like hypertext, e-book reading devices offer the possibility of clicking away from the text, whether to define a word using the built-in dictionary or to return to the homepage menu. Also, the virtual nature of pagination in both formats obscures the reader’s orientation within the text. Together these qualities evoke hypertext’s blurring of the reader-author dynamic and afford the reader more personal control over the text (Landow; Sloane). These intrinsic features of digital text may also contribute to the different reading experience with print books versus with e-books.
Digital Copyright

Books in digital form also confuse what has previously been understood as copyright protection. Digital copyright expert Lessig (2006) explains:

…copyright has always been at war with technology. Before the printing press, there was not much need to protect an author’s interest in his creative work. Copying was so expensive that nature itself protected that interest. But as the cost of copying decreased, and the spread of technologies for copying increased, the threat to the author’s control increased. As each generation has delivered a technology better than the last, the ability of the copyright holder to protect her intellectual property has been weakened. (p. 172)

Because digital texts can be produced and manipulated by users more easily than print texts can, copyrighted works are not only easier to share freely, but they also reflect a commingling of authorial rights with reader rights (Landow, 1997; Chartier, 2004; Lessig, 2006). Many contend that copyright law is too limiting in the digital age and should be updated to reflect the evolution in technology (Lessig, 2004, 2006; Barlow, n.d.). Lessig (2006) calls for a narrower scope of copyright protection as well as reduced legislative regulation in lieu of more behavioral regulation: what he calls “code.” Barlow suggests a paradigm shift regarding information: it is to be experienced, not owned. He contends that the future economy “will be based on relationship rather than possession,” and thus control of intellectual property will be rooted in the access of information that comes with expertise (par. 130). Non-authorities will have limited access unless they seek expert assistance in using the information in unrestricted ways.
However copyright ultimately changes, its tenets are already shifting with the growing popularity of digital books. The landmark lawsuit against Google Books proves that copyright standards surrounding digital books are malleable, and the ultimate decision will likely lay the foundation for new notions of the meaning and reach of copyright in publishing.¹

**Publishing**

The production, marketing, and sale of books has evolved throughout book publishing history, and marketing experts recognize that the digital age calls for another evolution—even if they have not yet articulated a response for booksellers. The digital evolution began with the creation of Amazon.com, or “Amazon,” in 1995. It signified

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¹ In 2004, Google began a project to build a digital library of scanned texts that would make every book available and searchable online. In 2005, the Authors Guild, as advocacy group for writers, and the Association of American Publishers sued Google Books for copyright infringement based on its digitalization and dissemination of books without obtaining permission from rights holders. A class-action settlement was reached in 2008, with an amendment made in 2009, and now Google has been freed from liability for its past and future scanning and indexing of books. But Google Books must share profits with rights holders and obtain permission of use from rights holders of books currently in copyright, though out-of-print works can be included in the library unless the rights holder actively opts out. Copyright supporters feel Google is infringing copyright, as Marybeth Peters (2009) of the U.S. Copyright Office states, “Google should conduct itself according to the same options available to other users of copyrighted works: secure permission; forego the use; use the work subject to risk of liability; or use the work in accordance with fair use or another limitation or exception.” This resolution is unprecedented in copyright law: “This is where class action law and copyright law collide headlong. The opt-out, of course, is standard under class action law. But no one has ever used an opt-out to sidestep copyright law, which requires a rights seeker to affirmatively ask for permission to use a work” (Hallman, 2009). Even representatives for Amazon, which has a vested interest in the digital book business, objected to the settlement (Lefkow, 2010).
the transition from large-scale retail bookselling at chains like Barnes & Noble, which had existed in their modern form since the 1950s, to the “large-scale, direct-to-consumer warehouse bookseller whose interface happens to be the World Wide Web” (Striphas, 2009b, p. 101). But the interface is not all that has changed.

This Internet-based interface has been essential in enabling the networking trends that have encouraged publishing professionals to recognize the reader as a commodity along with the book itself (Gardiner, 2002; Vershbow, 2006; Striphas, 2009b; Ratcliffe, 2009a; Ratcliffe, 2010). Particularly for books, the transition to e-commerce has been revolutionary in encouraging product marketing that is hyper-targeted to the individual customer. Gardiner claims a marketing focus moving from mass-market to the individual consumer has been building since the 1980s: “It is no longer the product that has to be marketed, but consumer needs that require to be identified” (p. 162). But more recently, Gardiner explains, the Internet has accelerated the fragmentation of book markets into communities of interests by enabling marketers to efficiently utilize searches, ratings, and purchases logged by consumers as market research. A consequence of tracking book-related behaviors so closely, and targeting marketing from them, is that the consumer becomes identified through his purchases, both constructing a reader-identity and commodifying reading (Gardiner; Striphas). Amazon, for instance, targets its advertisements, web page settings, and suggested products to individual users based on their prior searches and purchases—their reader-identity.

The hyper-fragmentation of book consumers into communities of interest also links readers together in a powerful network. The technological representation of a book
on a website is built not only through cover images and page previews, but also through customer reviews, recommendations, and keywords. Even though online book shoppers cannot physically hold a book or flip through its pages, the Internet enables a world of information to be built around each book by other customers. As Amazon founder Jeff Bezos noted in Amazon’s early days: in the real world, an unhappy customer can complain to a few friends, but online an unhappy customer can complain to thousands of friends (Spector, 2000). This abundance of ancillary content shifts the value of books in part away from the text itself to the activity surrounding it, changing how they are marketed and sold. Anderson (2004), Vershbow (2006), Liu (2009), and Ratcliffe (2009a, 2010) see potential in Web 2.0 for adding value to a book in a way distinct from the book value chain that had been established by the linear publisher-bookseller-reader model. Publishers, retailers, and readers are now being vertically integrated. Networked websites like Amazon established a condition in book culture where “no one entity or person can/needs to control the flow of knowledge when everyone can do their little part by tagging, rating, reviewing and commenting on parts of the data flow” (Ratcliffe, 2009a). These interactive features of retail websites afford readers the power to designate value to books, and in this way readers have appropriated the role of publishers, retailers, and other gatekeepers. And beyond book retail websites, online book communities that blog, annotate, and chat about a book collectively amplify the book’s value to readers through this supplementary information. As such, Vershbow contends that e-books offered in the proprietary formats of print books offer no added value over their predecessors: “Why should readers pay for these compromised creations when physical
books are still, by comparison, much more versatile?” (p. 70). What advantage does a
digital replication of print text offer, besides portability, if multidimensional use of it by
readers is not enabled? Ratcliffe (2009b) agrees that success in the e-book market
“requires that publishers reject the idea of a finished and closed product that exists
between the covers of a book so that the work can be freed to interact with readers in a
networked marketplace.” In this way, publishers could create potential for books to be
the nexus around which a community is built, connected, and renewed, with booksellers
becoming service-based by offering an online shopping experience rife with interactivity,
like commentary from other readers, page browsing, and connections with other readers.

But this ubiquitous interconnectivity necessarily links not just readers to readers,
but readers to vendors. Striphas (2009a) cites this phenomenon in the Kindle, which he
terms a “tethered appliance” because the device continues to be controlled by Amazon
after it is in a customer’s hands. The notion of a tethered device raises questions about
propriety in reading: that which has traditionally been private—reading habits, selections,
and marginalia—can now be monitored by an outside entity. Indeed, Amazon gathers
this data on all Kindle users for the express purpose of backing up Kindle content, but as
laws stand now, the information can be repurposed beyond the reader’s control. Striphas
explains that because Amazon can theoretically repurpose this data without readers’
consent or notice, this data-gathering practice puts readers at risk of privacy abuses.
Though it should have a chilling effect on Kindle users, it remains to be seen whether this
data mining will affect the principles of reading and book culture.
Many publishing and marketing experts agree that the Internet has changed bookselling, and the digitalization of books has changed what constitutes the value of a book. Connectivity and interaction with other readers are important by virtue of being possible. But these changes also spur some concern over the loss of propriety in reading.

**E-Book Usage**

Many studies have been done on the use of e-books in libraries and classrooms, but few studies have been done on the use of e-books for pleasure reading. Yet any prior studies of e-books, though not direct predecessors to my research of e-books’ influence on book culture, can inform my approach to more specific questions.

In one study, Clark (2009) tracks the genres requested by e-book readers via Kindles lent out by libraries, finding that light fiction, children’s titles, and fantasy literature are the most popular e-books. A study of scholarly e-book usage (van der Veld & Ernst, 2009) shows academics praise e-books for their search capacity but believe print books will persist as the most comfortable means of reading a text cover-to-cover. A study by Shelburne (2009) explores e-book user attitudes and behaviors in an academic library, finding the most commonly listed (27%) advantage of e-books to be instant access. The most cited disadvantage is difficulty reading from the screen (33%). Also, while respondents find e-books superior to print books for searches, accessibility, and research, most cite print books as better for ease of reading and leisure reading.

Publishing industry surveys address customer behaviors and attitudes. A February 2010 survey of consumers about the Apple iPad (Carton & Crumrine, 2010) considers the prediction that this most interactive of all e-book reading devices was
poised to dominate the Kindle—and all other e-reader—sales. The survey asked self-designated “likely” iPad buyers which uses of the iPad they were most interested in: 68% said “Surfing the Internet,” 44% said “Checking email,” and 37% said “Reading e-books.” With the survey also finding that 40% of respondents intending to buy an e-reader within three months planned to buy the iPad and 28% still planned to buy the Kindle, it seems that the iPad caters to a market distinct from consumers primarily interested in reading e-books with a designated e-reader. Similar results were obtained through a survey in March (comScore releases, 2010), which shows only 37% of respondents are likely to read e-books on an iPad and about half are likely to browse the Internet or check email. Furthermore, 15% of the respondents identify as likely to buy an iPad within three months and 14% as likely to buy a Kindle. A survey by the Book Industry Study Group (Bole & Gallagher, 2010), or BISG, finds e-book usage to be growing quickly but in small numbers: just 2% of book buyers over age thirteen obtained an e-book or e-reader in the past year, and on average most have higher incomes than print book readers. The study also finds the personal computer to be the top device for reading e-books (47%), with the following devices trailing: Kindle (32%), iPhone (11%) iPod Touch (10%), other smart phones (9%), Netbooks (9%), Sony Reader (8%), and Nook (8%). The feature of e-book readers that respondents cite as most valuable is portability, followed by instant access to books and carrying multiple e-books on one device. Additional features are also ranked in order of value to the reader.
It is apparent that divisions are emerging to define the utility of e-books: scholarly research and carrying leisure books. As more studies emerge of what is being read digitally and on which e-reading devices, the potential for e-books may become clearer.
Chapter 3. A Short History of E-Books

E-Book Devices Debut: Kindle and Its Competition

E-books have roots in Internet-based hypertext but have evolved to offer something distinct. Laptops have long made it possible to read digitally while not seated at a computer desk, and multipurpose devices not specifically designed for reading—such as PDAs and cell phones—have made portable digital reading mainstream through first, person-to-person text messaging, and then the development of text-reading software and high-resolution screens. But the dedicated e-reader is increasing the popularity of full-length e-books and revolutionizing the publishing industry more than any other reading device has before. Though early models, like the Rocket E-book of the late 1990s, failed to take hold, since the debut of Amazon’s Kindle in 2007 e-books have begun to show notable sales in the book market. Overall, though, the e-book market claim is tempered: it comprises only 1.5% of all book sales (Mui, 2009).

One of the first e-book reading devices to secure success in mainstream sales was Sony’s Reader, which debuted in 2006. The Reader, which is currently priced from $199.99 to $399.99, offers titles for download through a Sony-owned e-store and additional participating websites, including Google Books. The Sony Reader touts popular features like E-Ink technology, a touchscreen interface, and a stylus pen for annotating, but the lower-end models must be connected to a computer by USB cable to download e-books. Still, PC World ranked it at the top of seven market leaders in a 2009 hands-on comparison (Arar, 2009). See Table 1 for a comparison of e-book readers.
Table 1

E-book reading device specs by brand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Amazon Kindle 2</th>
<th>Sony Reader PRS-600</th>
<th>Barnes &amp; Noble Nook</th>
<th>Apple iPad</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Price</strong></td>
<td>$259</td>
<td>$299</td>
<td>$259</td>
<td>$499</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Weight</strong></td>
<td>10.2 oz.</td>
<td>10.0 oz.</td>
<td>12.1 oz.</td>
<td>24.0 oz.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dimensions</strong></td>
<td>8 x 5.3 x .36”</td>
<td>6.9 x 4.9 x .5”</td>
<td>7.7 x 4.9 x .5”</td>
<td>9.6 x 7.5 x .5”</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Screen size (diag.)</strong></td>
<td>6.0”</td>
<td>6.0”</td>
<td>6.0”</td>
<td>9.7”</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Interface</strong></td>
<td>Manual buttons</td>
<td>Touchscreen</td>
<td>Touchscreen</td>
<td>Touchscreen</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Internet connection</strong></td>
<td>Global 3-G,</td>
<td>USB cable</td>
<td>3-G, Wi-Fi</td>
<td>Wi-Fi</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Whispernet (for all but the top model)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Storage capacity</strong></td>
<td>1,500 books</td>
<td>350 books</td>
<td>1,500 books</td>
<td>16 GB</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>(to be shared for all functions)</td>
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<td>or PDF files</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Unique features</strong></td>
<td>Text-to-speech</td>
<td>Stylus pen,</td>
<td>Color screen,</td>
<td>LED backlit</td>
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Amazon’s Kindle, introduced in 2007, has sold out of stock twice since then, the first time being within five hours after its release and the second following Oprah Winfrey’s peddling it on her talk show. Retailing from $259 to $489, the Kindle uses E-Ink and manual controls like page-turning buttons. It employs a Whispernet wireless connection to allow the downloading of e-books within seconds from many locations across the world. Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos explained of the Kindle, “Our vision is to have every book that has ever been in print available in less than sixty seconds” (“Bezos on Kindle,” 2008). While Amazon does not release official sales figures, it did announce that December 2009 had been its best month for Kindle sales yet (Furman).

Barnes & Noble was the first brick-and-mortar bookstore to develop its own e-reader: the Nook. Its release in October 2009 created overwhelming demand that led to sold-out inventory and two-month backorders through the holiday season of that year. Despite its troubled debut, the Nook has been praised for its touchscreen interface, wide selection of e-books, capacity for digitally sharing e-books with friends, and software that enables e-books to be read on mobile devices and computers. The Nook is unique in its e-book sharing feature, but it is restricted: an e-book can be shared with one person at a time for up to 14 days, and publishers can turn off the lending feature for titles.

In January 2010, Apple introduced its first e-reader: the iPad. iPads were not released to customers until April 3 of the same year—making it ineligible to be directly evaluated for this study. But the announcement alone altered the e-book industry. In the week prior to the iPad’s release, it was rumored that Apple had already sold out of the quantity produced for the device’s launch through pre-orders (Suarez, 2010). What made
the iPad so popular from the start? Though early reviews criticized the iPad’s mimicking of the design and functionality of Apple’s iPhone and iPod Touch, positive reviews describe the iPad as “infinitely better-looking and more responsive than the Kindle” (Pogue, 2010), “an attempt to blend all the recent advancements in modern computing into one product” (Kessler, 2010), and from Apple CEO Steve Jobs, “a magical and revolutionary device” (Hiltzik, 2010). It offers dynamic applications, from gaming applications to word processing, so its potential uses exceed digital reading. Though the versatile iPad has been positioned as a threat to the Kindle’s dominance (Bilton, 2010b; Hiltzik, 2010; Carton & Crumrine, 2010), the iPad is not a designated e-reader. It is a computing device that includes e-book reading as a feature.

The expanding market of e-book reading devices signifies that the e-book industry is growing. The Association of American Publishers reports that the first nine months of 2009 saw e-book sales increase 185.2% from the prior year (“More gains,” 2010). In late 2009, Amazon and Barnes & Noble were advertising their respective e-readers as their top-selling products (Versteegh, 2010). Industry experts estimate that by the end of 2010, ten million people will own e-readers (Mui, 2009). But what form will those e-readers take?

A Wall Street Journal online poll shows 41.9% of respondents “prefer to interact with technology” through touch—over keyboard, voice, gesture, or “another way” (“Laptops and netbooks,” 2010). This puts the Kindle, with its manual controls, at a design disadvantage. Also the emergence of color screens in newer e-readers makes them suited to media more interactive than digitized text (Bilton, 2010a). Thus the iPad’s
extensive functions, to be used in conjunction with reading, nears what some project is the ultimate potential of e-readers: “The true promise of the Kindle, and its inevitable descendants, is in creating a product that goes where the book cannot” (Klein, 2008). Yet it remains to be seen whether e-book users actually want their e-reading devices to have such broad functionality. The gap between the iPad’s features and other e-reading devices’ offerings means the iPad suits a different purpose. The Kindle, for instance, attempts to emulate the print book-reading experience and thus, “the Kindle (and other devices with e-ink screens) will continue to be the best device for lovers of long-form reading, period” (Stone, 2010). That the Kindle is a dedicated e-reader may permit more focused reading and thus suit book lovers more than gadget lovers.

There is a solution for readers who consider themselves somewhere in between: smartphones. Many mobile phones now enable complex functions like Internet browsing and offer bigger screens with higher resolution, making them suitable for downloading and reading long texts. In 2009 Amazon created a Kindle Store iPhone application and began developing other smartphone and computer software. Borders has partnered with e-reading service Kobo, Inc., to create an e-book store that provides content for multiple mobile devices. Publishers are even developing some books specifically for access via smartphones (Rich & Stone, 2009). Though cell phone screens are small and backlit, potentially causing eyestrain during long periods of reading, users claim this discomfort is outweighed by the convenience of having reading material available anytime and anyplace since cell phones are ubiquitously carried (Rich & Stone; “PCs, phones,” 2009). Indeed, many more readers are investing in e-reader software than e-reader devices,
reports technology market research company Forrester Research, with downloads of e-
reading applications for smart phones far exceeding the estimated number of Kindles sold
(“PCs, phones”). Furthermore one out of every five new applications introduced for the
iPhone in October 2009 was a book (Rich & Stone). While it is unclear still how
smartphone-based digital reading may be affecting the sales of dedicated e-readers, it is
apparent that this market sector is growing as cell phone users become comfortable
reading full-length text on electronic devices.

Though the e-book reading device market is developing, e-books themselves
constitute a growing area for research. It is important to review the issues among readers
and publishers that have already been spurred by e-books, in order to better understand
and contextualize the effect the growing industry is having on culture.

**E-Book Culture: Early Elements of Change**

As e-book reading devices have advanced technologically and become more
affordable, reading e-books has become more popular. In 2009, the book publishing
industry saw e-book sales increase by nearly 200% (“Wholesale eBook Sales,” n.d.).
Though less than 2% of books sold in 2009 were e-books (Korkki, 2010), their rapid
increase in popularity has influenced book culture. And with 20% of books now being
purchased online—second only to bookstore chains, which claim 27% of sales (Korkki,
2010)—readers increasingly associate books with digital technology.

A primary example of the merging of books with electronic content is the
introduction of the Vook in 2008. The Vook, a digital application accessible via Internet
browser or iPad, integrates written text with professional video content and social
networking tools for a new type of book. Book publisher Simon and Schuster has teamed with Vook to distribute its content, but the multi-dimensional “reading experiences” are also available through the Vook website for about the same price as a mass-market paperback. Though this multimedia platform is practical for instructional texts where visuals are useful—such as cookbooks or exercise manuals—what is its effect on readers of fiction? Sara Nelson, a publishing industry consultant, says the Vook creates a modern dilemma for publishers of novels: “Publishers are going to be confronted with the idea that either the words on the page have to be completely compelling on their own, or they have to figure out a way to create new sorts of subliminal draws in the new medium” (qtd. in Stone, 2009). It is possible that the potential for multimedia enhancements may eventually make video and hypertext links an expected feature of e-books or even that evolved reading habits will demand such content to engage the reader’s attention.

One resolution to maximize the integration of text with digital media has been creating digital supplements to the monograph. Book historian Robert Darnton believes the two forms can co-exist and together create something more meaningful than either could alone. “An e-book, unlike a printed codex, can contain many layers arranged in the shape of a pyramid,” explains Darnton of the many facets of information that an e-book offers (2009, p. 61). For a historian this might mean supplementing a monograph that discusses a historical event—World War II, for instance—with an Internet-based resource that offers primary source documents such as scanned personal letters, audio of FDR’s Fireside Chats, and scanned photographs. These resources create multiple layers of meaning, which the reader can more deeply penetrate for a deeper understanding of the
“In the end,” says Darnton, “[the reader] will make the subject theirs because they will find their own paths through it, reading horizontally, vertically or diagonally” (2009, p. 62). In contrast, in the fiction genre, enhanced e-books—which are reminiscent of extra features on DVD copies of movies—are being produced to utilize digital capabilities of e-book novels. In April 2010, bestselling novelist David Baldacci published the enhanced e-book *Deliver Us From Evil*, a novel released simultaneously in hardcover, e-book, and enhanced e-book, the last of which his publisher calls a “Writer’s Cut eBook.” The enhanced e-book is priced slightly higher than the regular e-book and includes audio, video, and photos that explain the author’s creative process, as well as an alternative ending for the novel (Milliot, 2010). Publishers will continue to experiment with how best to add value to e-books using the digital technology enabled by the format.

One particular aspect of the Vook’s platform has demonstrated potential: the integration of books with social media. Popular social networking tool Facebook offers a Visual Bookshelf application to review and share books with Facebook friends, and 700,000 Facebook users access this application on a monthly basis. Entire websites exist for this same purpose, the largest one being Goodreads. Started in 2006 and now claiming nearly three million members, Goodreads states its mission to be, “to improve the process of reading and learning throughout the world” (“About us”). The site attempts to do so through a platform on which members can build a personal profile, take literature quizzes, join discussion groups like “Obsessed with Harry Potter,” and connect with friends as well as authors who are members. Goodreads offers a space to celebrate reading and books, but another 2006 startup called BookGlutton actually provides a new
way to read collaboratively. BookGlutton enables users to buy e-books, read them on the website, and comment or live chat within the e-book pages. The reading activities of others—like, “Someone opened *Pride and Prejudice*”—are publicly shared on the homepage, but users can also join private reading groups. BookGlutton encourages collaborative reading similar to the social reading aloud that Raven (1996) found was done in the eighteenth century, but it engages dispersed readers through an online platform rather than readers congregated for recitation. Importantly, the popularity of these digital social reading platforms—perhaps rooted in the revived popularity of book clubs in recent years\(^2\)—implies a trend towards publicizing the more private reading experience.

The launch of e-books has also had other notable effects on book culture. For example, it re-introduced serialization and free sampling as strategies of modern bookselling. Suited to the subscription model enabled by wireless e-book readers, serialized titles have been emerging as experiments with delivery: story portions are accessible through digital downloads, email, even Podcasts and Google Maps. Another

\(^2\) In the late 1990s, a book club phenomenon emerged, wherein many people were forming book clubs as a hobby. A spokesperson for the American Booksellers Association said, “Although we don’t have hard data on the number of book clubs, conservative estimates go from a quarter of a million book clubs nationwide, and new ones are forming constantly” (qtd. in Singer, 1998). Trade paperback publishers began to include reading guides and discussion questions for book clubs in the last pages of books (Singer). The increased interest in book clubs came, in part, from media’s increased interest in books: leading talk show host Oprah Winfrey inaugurated her popular book club in 1996, and the bestselling *Harry Potter* book series was made into a popular movie series. Events like these not only brought reading into the public’s everyday lexicon but also encouraged people to treat reading as a form of social engagement (Scharber, 2009; Striphas, 2009b). With the emerging Internet, the rise of in-person book clubs was followed by the establishment of web-based message boards, discussion groups, and polls for bibliophiles. One study (Fister & Trott, 2005) found that engaging with other readers online prompts deeper understanding and more critical reading of books. Online book clubs enable users to enhance their discussions with relevant websites, background information, and occasionally input from the author. Structured collaborative reading, especially pursued online, may yield a richer reading experience.
form of digital storytelling is short-form text, which existed in the print world as either pamphlets or sections of a comprehensive text. Scholarly publisher Pearson Education offers digital downloads of 1000-5000 word shorts, which are unified informative texts addressing a single topic, priced at $1.99-$2.99 each. And perhaps because e-books make it impossible to flip through a book before purchasing it, many book vendors now enable consumers to read portions of books for free—under the assumption that consumers will base purchasing decisions on samples. In fact, it has demonstrated effectiveness as a marketing technique: in 2008 American Gods by Neil Gaiman was offered as a free digital download for four weeks, which boosted sales of all his books in independent bookstores by 40% and promoted the seven year-old novel to the bestseller list (Anderson, 2009).

However, experimental pricing of books has become a contentious point in the publishing industry. While free content is an effective publicity tactic, more than half of Amazon’s most downloaded e-books are free ones; this prompted CEO of HarperCollins, Brian Murray, to protest, “Free is not a business model” (Rich, 2010). The debate flared when Apple’s iPad debuted, with Apple touting an agency model—a contract that allows publishers to set prices for their books. Other e-book vendors, like Amazon, had been selling new books for $9.99, and following Apple’s announcement, publisher Macmillan demanded that Amazon give publishers more control over pricing. In retaliation, Amazon pulled all Macmillan titles from its Kindle store. The two have since settled on an agency model that satisfied Macmillan, but not without Amazon making clear its dissatisfaction. Publishers have maintained their primary concern with standardizing e-
book prices lower than print books’ prices is that consumers will come to expect new books to be worth $9.99, not the average hardcover price of $25 or even the average paperback price of $13 (Rich, 2010; Cendrowski, 2010). To offset the loss of revenue anticipated with cheaper, new release e-books, some publishers employ a digital blackout window for new books wherein e-book versions are not released until hardcover versions have been on the market for some time. Yet, customers are willing to wait: 30% said they would wait three months to buy an e-book rather than immediately buy a print book (Bole & Gallagher, 2010).

Amazon’s pulling of Macmillan titles and publishers’ use of digital blackout windows are examples of the effect of pricing and copyright disputes on readers. But the iconic instance of these issues coming to bear upon readers is that of Justin Gawronski, a Michigan high school senior whose copy of Nineteen Eighty-Four was deleted from his Kindle, along with his notes on the text, during a copyright dispute over the novel in 2009 (Fowler, 2009). Though his purchase was automatically refunded and the content was eventually restored to his Kindle, Gawronski’s family sued Amazon. Within months the lawsuit was settled with Amazon outlining specific extenuating circumstances under which removing Kindle content without notifying the Kindle owner will be allowed, like under a court order. Ironically, a court order to do so could emerge from any copyright dispute settled in court. Heavily covered by news media, the incident had a chilling effect on Kindle consumers.

For all the issues the new technology of e-books has spurred in book culture, the market is poised to grow more still. Market research shows e-readers will generate $1.3
billion in revenue in 2010 ("New research," 2010), and one book industry consultant predicts 40% of e-book readers will stop buying print books altogether by 2011 (Cendrowski, 2010). Emerging digital technologies in the book industry reduce the need for print books in certain cases, such as publishers’ deep backlists. Rather than storing older titles in a warehouse and hoping to sell them, publishers are taking advantage of print-on-demand resources, in which books are stored digitally and printed in small quantities as needed. In 2008, the number of titles classified as print-on-demand more than doubled from the previous year (Wright, 2009). In cases like this e-book technology can be more convenient than printing for publishers. But will e-books ever supplant the five hundred year-old medium of print books in the mind of book consumers? That depends on how book consumers perceive and experience e-books, which will be explored through the results of a survey, “What do you think of e-books?”
Chapter 4. Methodology

Surveying the E-book Landscape

A survey was administered to capture a representation of the public’s current attitudes toward e-books and what will condition future attitudes. The specific goals of the survey included determining the scope of e-book reading device ownership and which devices are most popular, the factors that drive readers to purchase an e-book reader or not, and the perceived status of e-books in book culture as compared to print books. The research was expected to yield data that describes the sampled population, with inferences to be drawn about the larger population. I am interested in describing how people in the United States have come to view the cultural artifact of the “book” since the emergence of e-books, which I approached with social constructionist theory: assuming conceptual frameworks exist but people develop and reproduce the concepts together over time (Burr, p. 8). Specifically, the reading experience shapes the individual perception of books, and the marketing messages conveyed by the publishing industry influence all consumers. Determining the answers to these questions by means of a survey imposes certain obstacles. First, with limited time and funding to support the research, it is difficult to reach a pool of survey subjects (or “respondents”) that is representative of the population. Second, the subjects that can be reached by an online survey administered by an unfunded researcher like myself are thus conditioned by sampling bias, which skews the data if not taken into account. Third, being unable to anticipate all possible experiences with and attitudes about e-books, I may have omitted
questions from the survey that could potentially capture a certain aspect of subjects’
thoughts about e-books.

Titled “What do you think of e-books?,” the survey was comprised of twelve
questions between two sections: “Your experience with e-books” and “Your thoughts on
e-books.” It was in the field for two weeks—from February 19, 2010 to March 5, 2010.
The survey was administered and analyzed using SurveyMonkey software to overcome
geographic limitations as well as to avoid the low completion rate predicted to occur with
a paper survey. A recruitment email was sent to students, professors, and staff in the
Communication, Culture, and Technology graduate program at Georgetown University,
as well as to personal friends, family, and colleagues. At the end of the recruitment
email, each prospective subject was encouraged to pass the survey on to other people, and
several survey responses noted that this had been done. No demographic data was
solicited through the survey, to ensure anonymity and encourage subjects to answer
without concern of exposure. Furthermore, the goal of the survey to determine general
attitudes toward e-books is not incumbent upon tracking trends by age, occupation,
gender, and so forth. Those aims are both beyond the scope of this study and appropriate
to different research goals. The relatively controlled distribution of the survey, however,
enables certain conclusions to be drawn about the subjects. The sampling is limited to
individuals with Internet access, and it is biased toward graduate students and middle to
upper class individuals living in the Northeastern United States. Several subjects who
directly contacted the researcher confirmed this generalization by revealing their identity.
The sampling frame was a result of the limitations the researcher experienced in
distributing a survey, and thus the survey constitutes a convenience sampling not representative of the entire population. However, the average e-book reader belongs to a higher income bracket than print book readers do (Bole & Gallagher, 2010), so the convenience sampling is also biased toward subjects that use or are at least familiar with e-books. This offers rich data for analysis but skews the data, a condition that must be taken into account during analysis.

The first survey section, “Your experience with e-books,” asked subjects about their direct experience with e-books. First, whether they owned an e-book reader or knew someone who did. If they answered yes, they were then prompted for the name of their device. The subsequent questions asked for further details:

- If you own, or plan to buy, an e-book reader, what prompted you to do so?
  Multiple-choice answers were given for this question: convenience, book storage, book selection, additional features, subscriptions to blogs or newspapers, and other.

- If you own an e-book reader, which feature of e-book reading or the device itself are you least satisfied with?

- If you do not own an e-book reading device, what prevents you from doing so?
  Multiple-choice answers were given for this question: device expense, device appearance, anticipation of better models emerging, ability to read e-books through other means, preference of print books, and not understanding the functionality. Survey subjects were then asked to consider how likely they would be to purchase an e-book reading device at given price points ranging from $100 to $300: would likely buy, would consider buying,
or would not buy. Subjects were also asked for which type of reading they believed e-
book readers would be most useful: pleasure, school or work, newspapers or magazines, or blogs.

The second section, “Your thoughts on e-books,” solicited more general perceptions of e-books. Subjects were asked the following multiple-choice questions:

- How do you think the price of e-books should compare to the price of print books?

The following choices were given, with respondents limited to choosing one: more, less, or the same.

- Do you consider e-books to be the same thing as print books?

After responding affirmatively or negatively, subjects were given an opportunity to explain why or why not. Subjects were also prompted to predict the impact of e-books: they were asked whether they think e-books will ever be more widely read than print books, and they were asked to characterize the impact of e-books and e-book readers on the book market as very positive, probably positive, no impact, probably negative, or very negative. The survey concluded with the opportunity for subjects to offer any additional thoughts on e-books or e-book readers, in part to offset the gap the survey creates in not including every possible question to address all aspects of subjects’ thoughts about e-books. The open forum allowed subjects to volunteer any ideas that had not been addressed by the survey questions.

The questions of these two sections were expected to yield some quantitative results that would describe the convenience sample’s attitudes towards e-books.
Publishing Professionals Speak

In this study, understanding public attitudes toward e-books assumes a social constructionist approach. One aspect of the public’s construction of opinions about e-books is the response to messages the public receives about e-books from other sources. Thus it was important to this study to capture the attitudes in the publishing industry about e-books, to understand what messages are sent through the production and marketing of books and e-books as well as what the professionals who produce those messages think about e-books.

Interviews were undertaken with two publishing industry professionals: Richard Brown, PhD, director of Georgetown University Press, and a digital marketing professional from a large trade book publisher, who preferred to remain anonymous. The interviews were limited to two, because in this type of qualitative research it is more beneficial to study a focused sample than to obtain a large statistical sample. In this research the survey responses reflected a clear divide in the understanding of e-books for scholarly versus leisure reading; thus it was important to speak with representatives from both the scholarly and the commercial book publishing industry. In doing so, I had the benefit of asking questions appropriate to the theoretical grounding of my study and to the patterns that emerged in my survey research. The interview subjects were initially contacted by email, and once their consent was given, an interview was scheduled. The interview with Brown was conducted in person and digitally recorded. The interview with the digital marketing professional was conducted over the phone due to geographic limitations.
Chapter 5. Analysis

Who Took the Survey?

In total, 109 respondents completed the survey: “What do you think of e-books?” While just 14% of the respondents, 15 respondents total, owned designated e-book reading devices (or “e-readers”), 75% personally knew someone else who owned an e-reader. This high proportion of respondents who have been exposed to digital reading through second parties confirms that the convenience sample was biased toward a population of higher-income people, whose acquaintances—at least—have the disposable income to purchase an expensive e-book reader. This confirms the finding by the BISG (Bole & Gallagher, 2010) survey that e-book users generally belong to a higher income tax bracket than print book readers. Consequently the sample may not represent the general population, but it is comprised of respondents with above average awareness of e-books.

Respondents’ Use of E-Books

Among the 15 respondents who identified themselves as e-reader owners, the Kindle was undoubtedly the most popular e-book reading device. Just one respondent each listed Sony’s Reader and Barnes & Nobles’ Nook as their e-reader brand, with the other 13 respondents citing some version of Amazon’s Kindle. Though Amazon refuses to release Kindle sales figures, it is apparent that the device dominates the e-reader market, at least prior to the iPad’s availability.
Portability rules.

A survey question that was directed toward those who either own or plan to buy an e-book reading device was answered by nearly half of all survey respondents (31% of which own an e-reader; 69% of which plan to buy an e-reader), indicating that many consumers intend to purchase an e-reader in the future and confirming market research predictions that the e-reader market will continue to grow. The most important factor in these respondents’ decision to buy an e-reader is “To store/carry more reading material compactly.” Though 67% of e-reader owners and future owners cited this reason, they were also permitted to select more than one answer: 43% selected “Digital reading is convenient”—a term meant to encompass the capacity of e-readers to access e-books instantly and through wireless download, 37% selected “The additional features (i.e. web browser, dictionary),” 25% each selected “To subscribe to blogs, newspapers, etc.” and “Other,” and just 6% selected “E-books offer greater book selection than print books.” Similar to the results obtained by the BISG survey, these varied responses show that there are many reasons consumers may choose to purchase an e-reader, but the compactness of reading material that is facilitated by e-readers is one of the leading reasons. One survey respondent appreciates the fact that “one can carry a whole library in a briefcase.” Valuing the compact, portable quality of digital reading reflects a disregard on behalf of the reader for the unitary book—each comprehensive work presented as an individual

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3 The term “convenient” was perhaps too vague for this survey, and this question may have suffered a research design flaw due to it. However, at least one e-reader owner felt strongly about the convenience of digital reading, even attributing an increase in reading to it. The respondent’s comment read: “I’m a strange case in that I didn’t read many books until I was given an e-reader (would likely never have bought one on my own). I’ve found that the conveniences of purchasing a book at any time from anywhere, and to have it available immediately has really contributed to my likelihood of reading.”
codex—which Chartier (2004) claims is one of the defining features of print book culture. Interestingly, users of e-books seek to overcome the material distinction between books, at least temporarily, to make travel lighter and benefit the environment, as evidenced in the open comment section of this survey. Several comments echoed the sentiment of this response, “I think this is a great way to cut down on paper usage.” But e-book users’ growing disregard for the material distinction between unitary books also reflects a cultural shift away from print society, leaving readers more open to reading books that lack covers and are stored as files on electronic devices.

Of course, portability cannot be the only attraction for e-reader owners, because if it were, most people would exclusively read on their smartphones or iPods with e-book reading applications. Some survey respondents did acknowledge that certain existing devices reduce their personal need for a designated e-reader. A student applauded the Netbook computer for convenient access to school-assigned readings, commenting, “Since I can already get my assigned texts online (as PDFs) and work on them on my notebook, an e-book reader offers no value.” Another respondent suggested the best format for digital reading would be the e-reader converged with another device, such as a cell phone. The Kindle application for the iPhone is an example of this format in practice, and the BISG survey (Bole & Gallagher, 2010) found that 20% of e-book reading is done on smartphones. But to integrate e-books into a communication device is perhaps the most potentially distracting format for readers—perhaps this is why the iPad was designed to have nearly all the capabilities of an iPhone except telephonic communications. As both Hayles (2003) and Mangen (2008) contended regarding digital
reading, interfacing with technology to navigate e-books and accessing text alongside supplemental content, such as an email application or Internet browsers, distracts the reader from the text. That a person’s e-reader may ring or vibrate with each incoming phone call or text message creates an even more significant distraction. However, informational reading—particularly with shorter texts such as news articles—may be an exception to this scenario. Reading psychologist Nell (1988), who maintains that reading fiction requires dedicated attention from the reader, also notes that reference reading demands less attention for comprehension. More distraction can be tolerated in reading and understanding a reference text. Accordingly, while dedicated e-readers offer the advantage of less distraction and are especially valuable for travelers who need a compact reading device, similarly compact multipurpose devices like cell phones may be more suitable for informational reading.

Yet what benefit do e-readers offer to people who do not travel often, and thus do not require the convenience of compact reading material? The digital marketing expert with whom I spoke for this research said that while portability and accessibility may be desirable features to a certain sector of the reading public, but for others, the attraction of e-readers may be as simple as the adjustable font size. He noted that some research shows that readers of e-books tend to be older consumers, a market sector whose deteriorating eyesight makes adjustable font desirable. Furthermore, he said, “We’re seeing that the format does bring new readers.” Some authors at his publishing house have experienced a spike in e-book sales when print versions of the same title remain
stable, though more research is needed for scholars and market researchers to grasp precisely what advantages e-books are offering these new audiences.

Dedicated e-book reading devices do offer unique advantages: compact portability, convenient reading, adjustable font size, and no distracting communication capabilities. The exact appeal of e-readers likely varies from reader to reader, but the market is so new that it is possible that producers of e-readers are also still grappling with what purpose these devices will serve in the reading market. In this respect, early adopters of e-readers suffer the drawbacks of design experimentation.

What e-books lack.

Because e-reader technology and design are still in experimental states, e-reader owners cited various features when asked to name the aspect of digital reading with which they were least satisfied. Just one respondent cited the battery life of e-book reading devices as dissatisfying because of its inconvenience: “It drains (albeit slowly) while it is not in use. So often I will leave it uncharged in my briefcase and then go to travel with it and it will be dead (which means that I can’t read when I would most appreciate it… like on the plane).” This user finds a tension between the battery-enabled portability of e-readers and their electric, battery-draining features. The Nook user said the software has defects that interfere with reading: “For example, sometimes words are improperly italicized, or question marks appear where they aren’t supposed to be.” Both these issues are technical and will likely be resolved as the technology matures. But the text’s appearance onscreen was also criticized for being limited to black and white—which is true only on the Kindle and the Reader—and the contrast was called
“disappointing.” Though when it was developed, E-Ink was considered innovative for its emulation of print ink, users do not necessarily want e-book text to look like print book text. E-book users’ demonstrated desire for bold, color text might suggest that electronic text is expected to be more dynamic than print text. Perhaps the high quality of computer and cell phone graphics leads e-book users to expect the same from an e-book reading device. It is now rumored that Amazon, whose e-reader does not offer color text or graphics, plans to release a new Kindle with color and animation (Bilton, 2010a).

Of survey respondents who reported not owning an e-book reader, nearly three-quarters selected as a reason, “I prefer print books.” Respondents were permitted to choose multiple answers, however, and 34% cited the expense of e-readers, 30% admitted to be waiting for superior models to become available, 16% claimed to read e-books through other means such as a computer or iPhone, 9% dislike the physical appearance of the devices, and 5% said they do not understand how e-readers work. These numbers indicate that the majority of people who have not purchased e-book reading devices are not necessarily reading e-books by other means. That smart phones and iPods are not being widely used as e-book reading devices implies that a sector of the reading market simply is not interested in reading digitally, no matter whether a smart phone, dedicated e-reader, or computer is used. But there also exists a significant segment of consumers who do not yet own e-readers and are waiting for either the price to decrease or the technology to improve before purchasing one. Since Kindle’s debut in 2007, its price has dropped from $399 to $259, and several competitors have emerged in the market. The respondents who are awaiting an improvement in price or technology
rightly expect to see it happen; such improvements are the trend in a growing market. But with three-quarters of e-reader non-owners simply preferring print books, this preference warrants further analysis.

**The “feel” of a book: effects of the bibliographic code.**

In the open comment section of the survey a majority of respondents elaborated on why they prefer print books to e-books, which suggests that for the reading public, this is an important issue in the adoption of e-books. In their comments many respondents referred to print books as “real books” in contrast to e-books, though few responses defined what was meant by “real” in this context. It is possible this distinction stems from a sense of e-books as virtual, since for many respondents the difference between the two media is a tactile one, which also elicits many differences in the reading experience.

That a print book is a unitary and tangible object, while an e-book is a file that can be accessed only by using an electronic device, is a very important difference. Among the respondents who identified themselves as owners of e-book reading devices, a variety of dissatisfying features of digital reading were named in consideration of what e-books lack, but the one most frequently cited was the absence of the physical book. And the most common commentary in the open response section of the survey discussed liking the way a “physical” book “feels” in one’s hands. Though most comments omitted any explanation for what a book “feels” like, some more detailed responses mentioned the turning of pages by hand and the sensory experience provoked by print books. People regard the reading of a print book as an experience—thumbing through the pages, annotating it by hand, even smelling the paper—which is absent in the reading of an e-
book. Even the digital marketing professional who was interviewed for this study said of reading: “It’s not quite the same as music, where the actual experience is the same no matter how you do it.” When music is digitized, the location where and the means through which it is listened to does not change the experience of the music as much as accessing digitized books through electronic devices affects the reading experience. But why? As Hayles (2002) claims, the experience of literature is intertwined with its material support, and therefore reading text with an electronic device differs profoundly from the experience of reading a print book. Mangen (2008) explains that manually handling a print book engages the reader in direct interaction with the text, but reading an e-book requires manual interaction with the “delivery vehicle” and thus distances the reader from the text. As more e-readers adopt touchscreen technology, though, a reader’s manual interaction with the delivery vehicle becomes more like the direct interaction with the text experienced in print book reading. It is possible that touchscreens may somewhat resolve the materiality issue readers cite in the reading experience. Yet for the technology represented in my survey, primarily the Kindle’s manual interface, the e-book reading device acts as an obstacle between the reader and the text, making the text intangible and yielding unfocused reading.

Similarly, the bibliographic code of a book is a factor in the “feel” of a book, but in this case the physical appearance of a book affects the text’s meaning. McGann (1991) explains that in literary works, “the distinction between physical medium and conceptual message breaks down completely” (p. 77). Reading an e-book on an e-reader alters the meaning of the text, somewhat changing what would have been conveyed by the print
book version. As of this writing, e-books do not have bindings or tangible covers, nor do they offer any variety in font type or formatting. In this way e-book reading devices attribute identical bibliographic codes to distinct texts, essentially removing some aspects of the text’s meaning and yielding a reading experience that is less rich than with print books—which usually offer book-specific cover art, differing physical size, various fonts, and a variety of formatting. Shillingsburg (2007) notes that these physical characteristics of books act as the bibliographic codes, conditioning the reading of a text by conveying to the reader what type of text is contained in the document. Within the text, formatting serves the same purpose. In the survey one respondent observed, “How would e-books elicit a response equivalent to the turning of blank pages in a book? The intent of including blank pages between pages of text would be lost or cheapened by any attempt or absence thereof to similarly connect the book to the physical actions of the reader.” This comment reflects an example of the importance of bibliographic code: blank pages are intentionally placed in print books to prompt the reader to pause, perhaps for reflection or preparation for a new section of text. This intention is lost in an e-book, which removes most formatting to present digital replication of a print book’s textual content. Further research is needed for us to grasp how this conditions the reading experience, but most of the respondents surveyed are keenly aware that while the linguistic meaning of text does not change as we move from print books to e-books, the reading experience becomes less rich due to the reduction of the meaning-imparting bibliographic code.
To consider further the effects of changing the medium of books, survey subjects were asked whether they consider e-books “to be the same thing as books.” Sixty-five percent said no. Though the Merriam-Webster Dictionary separately defines “book” as “a set of written, printed, or blank sheets bound together into a volume” and “e-book” as “a book composed in or converted to digital format for display on a computer screen or handheld device,” the perception of readers in this case is more important than formal definitions (“book,” 2010; “e-book,” 2010). The 35% of respondents who said they do consider e-books to be the same thing as books generally stated that content remains the same no matter how it is delivered, reflecting high regard for the linguistic code. One respondent explained, “To me, a book is about content, not about the physical object. I consider a traditional book to be a reading device much as an e-book reader is a reading device. Either way, I’m still reading a book.” Another said of print books and e-books, “They are both collections of somebody else’s imagination, intelligence, inspiration collected into words to be shared with the world.” But only to this minority of respondents is the e-book perceived as simply a print book presented in a different, but neutral, medium. Nearly twice as many respondents agree that a text’s meaning and the reading experience are affected by a book’s medium and bibliographic code.

E-books and print books: different forms of interactivity.

The tangible qualities of print books lead many people to perceive them as a richer medium than e-books—with one survey respondent decrying the e-book as “merely an electronic file,” another saying, “e-books are the equivalent of food pills vs. actual food,” and yet another explaining, “Although the same text is appearing on the e-
book as it would in the print book, really, you are just reading a copy of the print.” To define the e-book as merely a digital copy of print text implies that value is lost in the translation of print text to digital. Of course, the invention of the printing press meant all printed books were themselves copies. The comments of these survey respondents speak to their sense that, while an e-book constitutes print text converted to a digital display, the e-book is an unequal, even inferior, textual form when compared to print books. Partly this stems from the physicality of print books enabling much more reader-text interaction. As Vershbow (2006) says, print books are more versatile than their “compromised” counterparts: e-books. What are the advantages of reading print books? To use the theory of Mangen (2008) once again, the integration of the material support of print books—that is, the pages and cover—with the text offers readers direct physical interaction with the text, allowing them to act on the text itself in highlighting passages and flipping between pages. E-books limit the action a reader can take with their text because the e-book reading device acts as an obstacle to the text. Thus the print book is a more versatile reading tool in many ways. Yet e-books do have potential to become more versatile than print books in some respects, particularly in enabling reader-to-reader interaction. First I will examine the ways in which e-books are deemed inferior and then, where applicable, will address the manner in which e-books may surpass print books’ utility on that point.

According to survey respondents, an e-book’s lack of paper pages has disadvantages for the reader, including disorientation within the text and the inability to page through content while previewing or reading e-books. E-books accessed on e-
readers lack page numbers because the adjustability of font sizes makes it impossible for pagination to correspond consistently with the text represented on the screen. Instead of page numbers the Kindle uses numbered “locations” that, while consecutive, seem arbitrary in that the numbering does not begin at one. And other e-readers, like the Nook, use page numbers that do not correspond with the “turning” of a page—that is, pressing the “next page” button does not necessarily bring the reader to a new page number. Importantly, the lack of accurate page numbers, and the absence of volumetric pages, together obscure a reader’s progress in an e-book, which can affect the reader’s expectations of a literary text. It is possible that if a reader does not know how his reading progress relates to the entirety of the chapter or book, he cannot accurately orient himself within the storyline, and he will be less able to put events and characters in context. Survey respondents also lamented the inability to flip through an e-book’s pages before and after purchase. Despite Internet booksellers offering digital page previews and the number of pages in a book, many survey responses echoed one respondent’s comment, “Books are more tactile than a reader. It’s easier to flip back and forth within a book. I like turning the pages.” When browsing e-books, readers can order free samples to their e-book reading devices; but without the reader having any control over which limited section of the text will be sent for preview, their sampling experience is not as unbounded as, for instance, a consumer flipping through a print book. And following purchase, the lack of volumetric pages in e-books actually affects their utility. One survey respondent recalled the difficulty of referring back to content in a page-less e-book: “For example, I purchased Daniel Pink’s Drive as an e-book, and he devotes a full
third of this book to helping the reader develop a functional reference to motivational science. It is much more difficult to refer to this piece of the book as an e-book than it would be if it were sitting on my shelf and I could open up to it.” This suggests that print books’ numbered, volumetric pages are useful for readers in reading, previewing, and referring back to text.

Many other respondents also criticized e-books as reference tools, because of the devices’ incapability for readers to annotate their text by highlighting, underlining, or taking notes in the margins. However, typing or writing (with a stylus) notes in an e-book is, in fact, a feature of all the devices represented in the survey: Kindle, Reader, and Nook. This indicates that either the survey respondents were unaware of the notation features of e-readers, or that their responses referred to the form of taking notes rather than the ability to do so. From the survey responses we can assume that annotating one’s books makes the books more meaningful to the reader. One respondent said, “I have the impression of an e-book as being impersonal and a non-tangible item. The action of dog-earring or highlighting in an e-book is not the same as doing so in a ‘real book.’” As Jackson (1992) determines through the study of marginalia, the act of writing notes in the margins of a book constitutes a response to the text—one that is personal and evaluative or critical. We can infer from the survey responses, particularly where e-reader owners call for “markup and notes on books” and the ability “to take notes in margins,” that typed marginalia or cursor-sized highlighting feels less personal, perhaps, and thus means less to the reader. And while the Sony Reader attempts to resolve this issue by including a stylus for freehand annotation, these notes can either be hidden or deleted very easily.
The fact that e-book annotations on any e-reader are conditioned by this potential to be erased with the click of a button may make them seem less enduring to readers than notes written in print books. In any case, readers value the note-taking format enabled by print books. For e-books to lack this or fail reader expectations in this regard means print books allow for the reader to respond to, or interact with, the text more directly than e-books do.

There is a way, however, that e-books could make annotating a text interactive in a new way: rather than promoting a reader-text relationship, e-book annotations could promote reader-reader relationships. The connectivity of e-books to the Internet means reading them need not be an individual process. Scholars such as Vershbow (2006) and Ratcliffe (2009a, 2010) view social networking as an important value-adding aspect of digital reading. Ratcliffe envisions e-books could one day be an interactive nexus around which networked readers collaborate, and websites such as BookGlutton are already carrying out this vision. E-books’ connectivity enables readers to share commentary and notes on a text with one another through such websites, or even perhaps one day through email. The ease with which digital annotations could be shared would quickly link readers around texts and reinforce the communities of interest that Gardiner (2002) and Striphas (2009b) claim are already being built through Internet booksellers. These scholars contend that the utilization of market research and hyper-networking done by Internet booksellers defines consumers as readers of specific genres, authors, or titles. E-books could assume such communities and enhance the interactivity around a text by encouraging its reader community to network by sharing their individual annotations.
Several survey respondents also cited the inability to share e-books as a feature that distinguishes them from print books. In fact it was the second most frequent reason that the two were deemed different things (recall the first being “the ‘feel’ of a book is different”). To lend a print book directly to others allows the text to be interacted with by multiple people, making it a more dynamic reading tool than keeping it to oneself. While the readers may choose never to discuss the text they shared, the fact that they can share it is alone enough to make print books more interactive than e-books. Survey respondents commented on sharing as a valuable feature, noting, “It would be a great idea to be able to share e-books,” and “There is one significant piece of e-book reading that I’d like to see, and that’s the ability to ‘share’ a book. If I read something compelling and want to pass it on to my father friend, etc., I can do so at no charge with a book.” With the e-book reading devices being so expensive and offering multiple-book storage capacity, we can assume people would be less comfortable directly lending out a Kindle, for example, than they would be with lending a used book. Barnes & Noble’s Nook offers a feature that allows person-to-person sharing of individual e-books, but it is restricted. An e-book can be shared with one person at a time for a maximum of 14 days, and publishers can turn off the lending feature for their titles. During our interview the digital marketing expert, whose industry stands to rise or fall on the profitability of e-books, said of the sharing issue: “We are paying very close attention to it. The issue of sharing books is an important one. But there comes a point where if you can share the book without having to actually meet the person, then does it mean you’re buying five books for the price of one? Maybe sharing does become part of the e-book, but maybe it
also then affects the price of an e-book.” This indirect, or non person-to-person, sharing makes

As the marketing expert said, digital technology makes it possible to share e-books with just the click of a button, even indirectly to mass audiences. This would constitute to illegal file-sharing. Though Digital Rights Management—technological restrictions limiting access to digital content—prohibit this, if the laws were to change, e-books could easily be shared through email or open websites. Thus the potential for sharing e-books exceeds the extent of possible sharing with print books, which is limited by geography. In fact, in our interview, Richard Brown of Georgetown University Press noted that sharing digital resources is vital to the future of scholarly publishing. He predicts the future role of scholarly publishers will include providing research resources for communities of scholars and a service through which they can contact one another and interact. Said Brown, “Social media and digital technologies can marry and provide some sort of added value for this community of scholars.” In this way the sharing of e-books would enable interpersonal connections to form that might not have otherwise, particularly not through the sharing of a print book. If e-books become shareable, it could make them a more versatile reading tool than print books.

Some survey respondents referred to the emotional connection that develops with a print book as a quality lacking in e-books. They claimed that annotations, dog-eared pages, and other traces of reading capture a reader’s experience and deepen one’s connection with a text. For instance, one respondent noted of print books, “I can memorize its pages and remember when I spilled tea on page 136.” Said another
respondent of the e-book, “It does not work as a snapshot of your life and thought process at the time you read it as a book does. There is a connection that occurs with books and an e-book doesn’t allow it. Yeah, e-books have the words, but they lack everything else a book carries with it.” Digital bookmarks and annotations are features enabled by e-books, but they can be erased as easily as they can be produced—with the click of a button on the e-reader. Undoing reader-added marks from print books is less feasible, meaning that print books reflect a sort of history that the reader relives each time he opens a book. Furthermore, that a print book can serve as a document of reading history also deepens the reader’s memory of the text and its contents.

Print books, with their tactility and reflection of reading history, also feel more enduring to readers. One survey respondent said that print books, in and of themselves, “carry sentimental value through their rarity and/or quality,” which introduces the notion that the endurance of print books over time is valuable. Many survey respondents implied that the ability to display print books on shelves serves a purpose beyond storage, saying of e-books, “You can’t admire them,” and “It’s not the same as having the book physically in front of you. I like books in my bookshelf.” One respondent contrasted work-related documents with print books, which are enjoyable and thus valuable to own for future use: “I like the actual book on the bookshelf for things that I like, versus for work I can live with the electronic document.” Furthermore, the digital marketing expert who was interviewed maintained that print books will never completely disappear because of the unique sentimental and historical value they offer: “Unlike some entertainment properties, books are something that people have a library for… people
want to own the books and pass them down through families.” Readers develop emotional connections with print books that are impossible with e-books, and it makes readers want to preserve, display, and eventually pass along, the books.

However, e-books are also enduring. While digital files of e-books can become obsolete as technology evolves, they can also be stored as multiple copies. For instance, Amazon saves all the data from each Kindle owner’s device on both the user’s Amazon account and Amazon’s internal server. As we have already seen Striphas (2009b) argue, this collection of data introduces concerns about the privacy of what is read and how it is read. Kindle users have no control over the data mined on what e-books they searched for, purchased, or even how they read the e-books—including the notations they make on the digital text. That Amazon stores this information reduces readers’ choice over whether they wish to share details of their reading, as well as their control over the intended use of the information—data can be repurposed. But despite the privacy concerns, if a person’s Kindle was lost or damaged, their e-books would remain accessible for their replacement Kindle. A lost or damaged print book is forever lost or damaged. The sense of durability is a qualitative one.

Through the print book’s physical qualities—volumetric pages, preferable annotation formats, potential for person-to-person sharing, and the ability to preserve and pass on valued texts—readers are able to interact more directly with the text than is possible with e-books. One survey respondent even said that this interactivity is important to reader satisfaction, commenting that, in contrast to reading a print book, it is “less gratifying after you finish the e-book.” However, e-books have the potential to
recreate some of this reader-text interactivity and surpass print books’ capacity for reader-reader interactivity, if certain aspects are re-designed. As Vershbow (2006) contends, exact digital replications of print text are less versatile than print books themselves. Ratcliffe (2009b) claims e-books must operate on a more open format, so as to engage readers in the “networked marketplace” around the text. This would enable greater sharing and reader community-building possibilities. Yet there is a second form of interactivity in which e-books are already superior to print books, though my research shows that there is still potential for e-readers to evolve in order to offer a better interactive product.

**Interactive features of e-books.**

E-book reading devices offer interactive electronic functions alongside the otherwise static text, such as built-in dictionaries, Internet browsers, and in the case of the iPad, video content. But when the survey asked e-reader owners and those who plan to buy an e-reader their reasons for purchasing e-readers, only 37% cited the additional features available on the e-reader. These results imply that the e-book and e-book reading device are not being widely used as interactive, networked products. While the e-book reading device may have a great search capacity and built-in ancillary references to complement text, users may not be engaging with these features or even interested in doing so. One survey respondent applauded the search feature of digital text but insinuated that the e-reader design should better enable its use, saying, “If the e-book is designed properly, it makes it much easier to capture and share excerpts for research, fun, and business.” Others echoed this sentiment that the potential for e-readers to provide
interactive reading experiences should be applauded but that the technology has not yet achieved its potential for interactive multimedia-enhanced reading. The iPad, however, approximates this capability. Commented one respondent: “There is also a unique opportunity for a services company that translates the books from static material into live, interactive content (on an iPad for instance).” The iPad offers interactive features more akin to those of the iPhone than to features of other e-readers: iPad users can access their email, iTunes, Google maps, YouTube, and more. The survey respondent correctly recognized the opportunity the iPad offers for reading an e-book and watching integrated video content (as with a Vook) or navigating to a complementary website (as with Robert Darnton’s layered books), all on a single device. As of this writing, the Nook, Kindle, and Sony Reader do not enable video content but do offer MP3 players. Internet is accessible through these devices, but it is limited. Under a menu item titled, “Experimental,” the Kindle offers basic Internet browsing capabilities, though the browser link cautions, “Works best with web sites that are mostly text.”

The iPad, with its many multimedia capabilities, seems to represent a new era of e-book readers that align with the concerns of Mangen, Liu, and Wolf—scholars who fear digital reading creates a less immersive reading experience. These scholars criticize the ready availability of multimedia content as distracting to a reader of e-books. Perhaps this is a reason that the majority of respondents did not cite “additional features” as a reason for desiring an e-book reader, or perhaps the survey responses reflect the fact that the most widely used device is the Kindle, which does not offer highly interactive features like the iPad. In fact, as surveys of consumers about the iPad have shown,
markets for the iPad and Kindle are splitting: for just as many people who planned to buy the iPad in the near future, nearly as many others planned to buy the Kindle in the near future (Carton & Crumrine, 2010; comScore releases, 2010). And with “reading e-books” emerging in the survey as only the third-ranked use of the iPad in which prospective users are most interested, it is apparent that purchasers of the iPad are seeking a more interactive experience with the device, not just a digital reading experience. Consumers who wish primarily to read e-books leisurely are more likely to purchase a less feature-heavy device, like the Kindle. Yet new iterations of e-book readers continue to introduce additional interactive features, and my survey results indicate that some interest in interactive reading experiences exists. This trend yields the question: how can interactive functions be employed to add value to the e-book reading experience for readers?

Professionals in the publishing industry suggest that the interactive features enabled by digital reading must improve technologically in order to add value to the text, and perhaps at that point may engage more readers. Richard Brown, director of the scholarly Georgetown University Press, believes the interactive potential of e-books offers the unique opportunity to provide scholars with more content, in forms that are easier to use for research. Brown said of e-books, “It’s an opportunity to disseminate more information in more useful ways. It’s not simply a static delivery of a three hundred page-long argument. You have opportunities now to have more interactive material, to have images, to give people links.” Whereas readers of print books who want more information are limited to checking the bibliography and following up with external
sources for supplemental information, readers of e-books can access supplemental material immediately, which will enrich the research process. Darnton (2009) alludes to this with his layered book concept, in which he envisions primary source documents and footage accompanying a monograph through links made possible by the digital, connected nature of e-books. And reading psychologist Nell (1988) contends that reading informational texts demands less attention than reading texts for pleasure, so integrating multimedia features into scholarly works may not be problematic for the reader’s comprehension of concepts in the way Mangen, Liu, and Wolf imagine.

But for readers of fiction, multimedia content—or any additional information—external to the text is not necessary to understand the storyline, characters, or setting better. Again, as Liu and Wolf contend, the availability of such ancillary content can, in fact, be distracting to the reader’s immersion in the linear narrative. One survey respondent cited this tendency, saying, “I can be more involved with reading an actual book and less distracted than reading on a screen.” This comment likely speaks to Liu and Wolf’s concerns, as well as to the argument of Hayles (2003) and Mangen (2008) that, again, interacting with the electronic device removes the reader from immersion in the e-book. And reading psychologist Elfenbein (2006) notes that readers have limited working memory, which “provides resources for processing information” (p. 487). In reading e-books this would mean that the reader paying attention to things external to the text—such as clicking a button to access video on an e-reader—draws attention away from the text and yields a shallower reading. Therefore, whether my survey respondents realize it or not, reading linear, text-based e-books for pleasure leaves the reader
vulnerable to peripheral distraction by ancillary content or the technological interface. In order for the multimedia content enabled by e-books to add value to a fictional narrative, rather than distract from it, “You’re going to see more creative uses of the book structure,” explained the digital marketing professional who was interviewed for this study. “[The e-book] gives a new life to content that would not necessarily be possible with a printed book.” Simply converting traditional linear print text to a digital format, as is now the most common e-book structure, does not lend itself to maximizing multimedia content in fiction. In fact, integrating multimedia content with the text of novels concerns our expert. He says, “I do not know if that removes some of the imagination that makes fiction so wonderful.” Nell (1988) argues that fiction is the most immersive type of literature because it creates a constant draw on the reader’s attention to transform characters and plot into concepts—hence to be provided with video of fictional characters interacting, for instance, would likely make a reader more passive and less immersed. Thus within the linear structure of novels, said the marketing expert, it may be more fitting to add multimedia content supplemental to the reading experience rather than to the text itself—like including isolated content in the same way DVDs offer extra features. The enhanced e-book model, which we saw David Baldacci experiment with in his April 2010 novel Deliver Us From Evil, offers added value to the reading experience by making author notes, photos, and plot alternatives available to readers for optional viewing. While some readers may be drawn to access this material while reading the narrative, the isolation of the features intends for access to take place as a bonus after reading has concluded.
As has been noted, another option for utilizing e-books’ digital capabilities in
fiction books could be integrating social networking capabilities into the e-book reading
device. With the demonstrated popularity of websites like Goodreads and BookGlutton,
readers might appreciate a feature that allows them to use these websites in conjunction
with reading on an e-reader. Or publishers could utilize the connectivity of digital
reading and, as defined by Gardiner (2002), Striphas (2009b), and other scholars, the
communities of interest that emerge from constructed reader-identities created by online
book buying behavior. Publishers or booksellers could provide access to a social network
with a book purchase; for instance, by purchasing a Harry Potter e-book, a consumer
may also be purchasing the knowledge of and access to an exclusive social network for
Harry Potter fans. It is in such ancillary multimedia content that e-books intended for
pleasure reading can actually provide more value than print books. More research is
necessary, however, to understand the level of interest on the part of readers.4 My
research reflects that access to supplementary multimedia content while reading for
pleasure is currently neither enabled by most e-book reading devices nor sought out by
most readers. The responses to this survey reflect a greater desire on the part of readers
to have digital texts readily available whenever and wherever they go. We must therefore
ask whether e-books are suited to pleasure reading.

4 Fan culture has been proven to be a thriving society. Jenkins (1992, 2006) presents media audiences as
creatively participatory, in that they appropriate the content of mass media to create their own culture.
Lynch (2000) tracks the history fan culture around Jane Austen, exploring the celebration and adaptation of
Austen content starting as early as the nineteenth century and in settings as diverse as Hollywood and local
book clubs. It seems, then, that utilizing the networked nature of e-books to connect readers in a discussion
group or club, for instance, would appeal to the groups of people who identify as members of fan culture.
Respondents’ Perception of E-Books

What Kind of Reading Is Suited to E-Books?

When asked for what type of reading e-readers are most useful, 48% of survey respondents selected “Reading books for pleasure.” Other respondents selected, at a nearly equal rate, “Reading for school or work” (24%) and “Reading newspapers/magazines” (22%). Only 7% of respondents selected “Reading blogs.” Despite opinions that emerged elsewhere in the survey from those who regard the “feeling”—the tangible qualities and sensory experience—of a book as conducive to a better reading experience than is possible with e-books, nearly half the survey respondents still view e-readers as more suitable for pleasure reading than any other type of reading. It is important that so many respondents said e-book reading devices are most suitable for reading books for pleasure, because this response indicates that they believe e-readers enable the immersive reading Nell (1988) describes as a feature of literature. Recall that Nell finds that fiction read for pleasure creates a constant draw on the reader’s attention, making this type of reading more immersive than informational or educational reading. Even with scholars like Hayles (2002), Mangen (2008), Wolf and Liu (both qtd. in “Does the brain like e-books,” 2009) contending that e-book reading devices have features and ancillary content that distracts readers from the narrative fiction, half of survey respondents envision the best use of an e-reader to be reading books leisurely.

The remaining survey respondents—slightly more than half of all respondents—think e-readers are more suited to reading shorter texts, as when one researches or reads articles. These respondents maintain that e-book reading devices are more suited to
reading material that does not require, for instance, the extended attentional allocation that Nell (1988) claims is required to read novels. However, other concerns may factor into these responses, as well. Throughout the survey several respondents acknowledged the environmental benefits of e-readers’ reducing paper usage, with one respondent singling out the paper waste of daily and weekly publications: “The e-reader would be an excellent alternative for items like magazines and newspapers that are printed on a very regular basis and often discarded after use.” Other survey respondents cited the convenience of maintaining subscriptions via the e-book reader, in that the content would be automatically delivered. One respondent projected that her interest in digital reading would increase if newspapers, already decreasing in print circulation, moved entirely online: “I would definitely buy an e-reader if the traditional newspaper is defunct. I would rather read my newspaper (if the ‘paper’ is defunct) on an e-book reading device as opposed to the computer… the e-reader at least can be transported to various ‘comfy’ reading spaces.” With emerging technology making flexible e-readers with larger, color screens a future possibility, it is possible that even more people will come to view the e-reader as suited to magazines and newspapers, for in these publications art and page layout are essential to the textual content. For this reason, the transition to digital presentation of content for newspapers and magazines may feel more natural to readers than the transition of print books to e-books does.

Publishing professionals are grappling with this question, as well. Richard Brown said his scholarly publishing office selects books to digitize that already have broad appeal in print form, as well as titles that demonstrate potential for access outside of print
Genres that can utilize multimedia components, like language instruction books and international affairs projects, are the focus of their e-book initiatives. He said, “Why go back and digitize every book on our backlist when we have no idea if people really want that?” The commercial publishing professional who was interviewed said the industry is experimenting with digital content. From cookbooks that include instructional videos to self-updating scholarly texts, e-books can be the perfect vehicle for certain things, he said. But the publishing professional admitted, “It’s going to take some time to determine which books people prefer to read in e-book format.”

The nearly even divide between survey respondents who believe e-book readers are more useful for reading longer, immersive texts and those who believe they are more useful for reading shorter, informational texts is inconclusive in determining which type of reading is best suited to e-readers. However this indicates that the e-book reader market is still forming: there is no consensus among consumers about what they expect from e-reader technology, and there may also be potential in the e-reader market for both types of reading. In fact, Elfenbein’s theory of reading considers reading comprehension as dependent on the reader’s “ability to control attention,” not the type of text (2006, p. 487). Therefore, perhaps what kind of reading is suited to e-readers is more dependent on how the e-reader is designed for human use and less dependent on what genre is read on it. Furthermore, Darnton (1982) and Raven (1996) discuss how the history of reading proves different types of reading have been undertaken for different purposes throughout time. Perhaps the e-reader is, in fact, suitable for different kinds of reading depending on the reader’s intention. We have seen that e-readers may be useful for multimedia-
enhanced researching as well as transporting a surplus of novels while traveling, and even uniting readers around a common interest. Thus, the divided survey responses may indicate that e-readers can be appropriate for either pleasure reading or informational reading.

**The value of digital content.**

As e-books have become mass-market products, pricing has become a point of contention in the market. Survey responses about the pricing of e-books and e-readers conveyed a perception that digital content is less valuable than print content. Eighty-six percent of respondents agreed that downloading e-books should cost less than buying print books. Of the remaining respondents, 12% thought they should cost the same, and 2% said e-books should cost more than print books. A few respondents noted that e-books are cheaper to manufacture than print books, and as such, the price of e-books should be lower. This logic is valid to an extent, but e-book publishers, who do not pay for material manufacturing, still pay for title rights, publicity, and other aspects of book production. If consumers ignore that fact, the prices for e-books will remain in dispute. But for readers the value of books is determined by more than just their production price: as we have begun to suggest, the functionality of the print book makes it worth more than the e-book. One survey respondent noted, “Can be frustrating to pay nearly cover price for a book that, at the end of the day, you don’t have a hard copy of, can’t lend, and can’t keep on your shelf.” This implies an assumption that the physical codex offers more value than the e-book through its versatility, such as the ability to share books amongst readers, which we discussed earlier in this section as an advantage of print books.
Some survey responses reflected a shifting ownership paradigm that has consequences not only for the price of e-books but also for consumer understanding of them. Recall that Barlow (n.d.) predicts that copyright protection is evolving to apply to the use of information instead of ownership. Not surprisingly some respondents said the difference between e-books and print books lies in the issue of content ownership. One respondent wrote, “E-books are licenses to content. Books are physical objects that provide a secondary use - decoration.” Owned books can be repurposed beyond reading—used as a doorstop, gifted, or resold. E-books cannot be used for anything except reading—not even lending to friends, in most cases—thus purchasing one represents buying the right to read it. Other respondents noted that purchasing an e-book does not necessarily mean it will be accessible to the customer forever, as formatting and file types will evolve as technology advances and digital files are susceptible to corruption. One respondent wrote:

To me, an e-book is like a rental… my understanding is that purchasing an e-book is more like purchasing a copyright rather than, as before, a tangible thing. [With the e-book] the copyright may be revoked and money renewed due to some conflict between author, publisher, and distributor, but the book cannot be removed from our shelves.

This response expresses the current relationship e-book “owners” have with their e-book content: buying it means access, not possession. Supporting these sentiments, two respondents recalled the previously noted incident of Amazon’s removing Nineteen Eighty-Four from high school senior Justin D. Gawronski’s Kindle in response to a
copyright dispute while he was using the e-book for schoolwork (Fowler, 2009). Though Amazon admitted its mistake in removing content from Kindles without consulting users and limited its right to do so to specific extenuating circumstances, the fact remains that Kindle users do not wholly own their e-books. Barlow envisions the reframing of copyright to restrict access rather than ownership, and now his predictions are permeating the book market. This copyright evolution is being enabled by “tethered devices,” in the words of Striphas (2009a), like the Kindle. Purchasing an e-reader does not give the consumer full control over the device; through Internet connectivity, the manufacturer retains ultimate control over the device and its contents. The survey responses convey wariness about how this structure permits e-books to be taken away—either by technology or the publisher—from those who have bought them. The constant threat of e-books being removed or corrupted even after they have been paid for in full may be problematic for readers’ willingness to partake in the book market, unless the paradigm adjusts for readers. If more readers come to understand e-books as licenses to use content, as is the case with computer software, consumers’ relationship with books will evolve. It will take time and discomfort, however, for book consumers to reach that point; perhaps their suspicion of e-books as ephemeral will ensure the enduring print book’s persistence in book culture.

The survey also considered the price of e-book reading devices, which most respondents feel are overpriced at their current sales price of roughly $250-$350. Only 18% of them would buy an e-book reader for $200 or more. The price point at which the most respondents would definitely buy or would be likely to buy an e-reader was the
lowest price point listed in the multiple choice answers: $100. A few respondents noted that prices are likely to decrease—which has already been the case with the Kindle—and they plan to purchase an e-book reader when they become less expensive. There is interest in e-book readers, but the current high price of e-book readers inhibits the mass consumers who may wish to experience digital reading by purchasing an e-reader.

**The future of e-books.**

Asked whether they predict e-books will someday be more widely read than print books, 62% of respondents think they will; 38% think they will not. Some respondents likened e-books to digital music files. Just as digital MP3 music players are making CDs obsolete, some respondents worry that e-books may reduce the demand for print books. The respondents who maintain that print books will dominate the book market into the future perhaps believe the unique reading experience and permanence of print books cannot be replaced. One respondent suggests that e-books and print books will coexist, calling e-books “a great option to have,” and explaining, “There’s room in the market for both books and e-books… as long as the industry puts an emphasis on the advantages of each medium.” Indeed, Eisenstein (1995) maintains that in the history of the book technologies have always overlapped (p. 555). Now, just as written manuscripts persisted well after the invention of the printing press, print books will not disappear with the mass adoption of e-books. As has been noted, many survey respondents and scholars like Harroff, Johnson (2003) and Frost (2004) observe that the searchability and currency of information enabled by e-books make them useful for research and academic use, but as e-book design stands, print books are a superior medium for immersive reading.
Although we have noted that ancillary digital features may be isolated, as in the enhanced e-book model, the current integration of distracting features into the text make e-book features distracting to the reading. The publishing industry recognizes the differences between informational and pleasure reading, and it is working towards maximizing the benefits of digital reading for each type.

Director of Georgetown University Press Richard Brown views e-books as just one point on the spectrum of publishing. If print books are near one end of the modern book spectrum, and the e-book is simply a digital replication of a print book, then there is much on the spectrum that has not yet been developed. Says Brown, “E-books are a necessary part of the evolution. It is interesting, but it is not the end.” For scholarly publishing he envisions moving away from the linear monograph: offering apportioned content and adding pictures, links, and even real-time interaction with an authoritative source. For instance, many of the language instruction titles published by Georgetown University Press include writing or vocabulary exercises accessible online, which enables users to get instant feedback from teachers. Says Brown, “Publishers that want to do publishing in a very traditional, print-oriented way are going to have a very hard time surviving.” Having personally used a Kindle, Brown also believes e-book reading devices in their current form are the “stepping stone” to a more sophisticated e-reader that will converge with other portable electronic tools into a single device. Brown’s speculation on the ways in which e-books will continue to evolve is rooted in the proven success of digital initiatives: In the 2010 fiscal year 1-2% of revenue at Brown’s press will come from digital products, up from .02% in the 2009 fiscal year. Brown estimates
that within decades digital revenue may surpass print revenue in scholarly publishing, but the business models of publishing will also evolve.

The digital marketing expert from commercial publishing is also excited by the growth that e-books have demonstrated in trade book publishing and says, “The e-book market is only going to increase.” But commercial publishers are still cautiously waiting to see whether e-books will eventually cannibalize print books; as of now, e-books’ growth level is not drastic enough to imply this. The expert attributes this in part to e-book access being device-specific: consumers must buy an e-reader or e-reader application in order to use e-books. The more that e-readers converge with devices that consumers already use, such as cell phones, the faster digital reading will grow. At the same time, the market is in an experimental stage right now, with new e-readers emerging every few months and each one debuting different features. So while no single e-reader exhibits the ideal device design yet, it is not due to a shortage of creative ideas. Our expert says, “It’s going to take some time for the devices to catch up with everyone’s ideas.” As e-books and e-readers evolve, the digital marketing professional predicts print books will never disappear, but he can envision a future where they comprise less than 50% of the book market. He maintains, though, that the distinction of print books being enduring while e-books are files subject to technological obsolescence or corruption is an important one—e-books may never be able to serve the purpose of archiving or legacy. As has been noted, however, print books are susceptible to loss or damage over time—making them vulnerable in different ways than e-books.
Survey respondents were asked to predict the impact of e-books and e-readers on the book market. Responses varied, with 50% of respondents saying the impact would probably be positive, 29% predicting it would probably be negative, 13% predicting the impact would be very positive, 7% predicting no impact, and 2% predicting very negative. Worry that e-books will contribute to bookstores’ going out of business was expressed in several answers. Interestingly, it is not just sentimental attachment that inspires concern over potential bookstore closings; consumers appreciate the in-store shopping experience. For instance, one respondent noted, “I like being able to browse bookshelves of titles.” Another said, “I still enjoy going to the bookstore and being able to physically pick up different books and read the first few pages.” Though scholars such as Gardiner (2002) and Striphas (2009b) say websites like Amazon have attempted to recreate and even surpass the book browsing experience with virtual page previews and book reviews, some consumers still want the physical—and personal—experience. And on e-book reading devices, the virtual browsing experience is even less inviting. One Kindle user complained: “Do not like how the Kindle is preset at the buy icon, making it too easy to buy before you decide to buy.” This simulated book shopping experience may be a factor for readers who predict that e-books will have a negative impact on the book market.

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5In the second half of the twentieth century, chain bookstores grew in both presence and size. Superstore chains, such as Borders and Barnes & Noble, expanded from urban flagship stores to include suburban and small town sites. In addition to extensive book selections, all share the common features of tens of thousands of square feet of space, discounted books, music and movie products, extended hours, lounging areas, and coffee counters (Horvath 1997). The competitive pricing, welcoming setting, and vast title offerings had chain bookstores virtually driving out independent competitors wherever they opened, hailed by many bibliophiles as a crisis. Indeed, membership in the American Booksellers Association dropped from a high of roughly 5,000 members in the mid-1990s to a low of about 3,000 in 2000 (Allen 2001, Striphas 2009).
That nearly two-thirds of the survey respondents believe e-books will definitely or probably have a positive effect on the book market indicates that despite their reservations about e-books, respondents see potential in them to become a medium of reading supplemental to print books that creates new opportunities for content-distribution in the market. The same respondents who lamented that e-books do not have the same “feel” as print books also noted e-books’ convenience for traveling and the promise for e-books to be dynamic research tools. Yet the responses also implied that the respondents surveyed primarily uphold leisure reading as better experienced with print books. At least one respondent commented that the adoption of e-books is inevitable, explaining, “I think e-books will take hold on a generational basis. For me, there is something about holding a book and turning pages that is magical. But, if you grow up with e-books, that will be your preference.” The integration of e-books into everyday book culture will only continue and accelerate. But the future of e-books will depend on the technological advances that have the potential to make them offer some value in the reading experience that print books cannot. E-books have taken hold in book culture but will undergo much evolution in their future.
Chapter 6. Conclusion

E-books are poised to revolutionize book culture. To better understand what the effects will be, I have explored the fields of reading psychology, reading history, digital humanities, and publishing. It has become clear that e-books will not make print books suddenly obsolete, because print books offer unique advantages that e-books cannot yet exceed. The effect of e-books’ growing popularity will be, rather, a slower, more nuanced undoing of tenets that have upheld book culture for five centuries.

At this juncture, e-books are primitive in their sharing functionality. This research showed readers lament that they cannot directly lend e-books to friends—at least without restriction—but the digital connectivity of e-books ascribes them with potential for a different kind of sharing. If the copyright protection of digital books were to change, an e-book file could easily be distributed electronically and shared with mass audiences. Or it could serve as a common text for collective reading, by merging social media with digital reading. These sharing possibilities of e-books are far more versatile and influential than lending a used print book to another individual.

As survey and interview responses showed, e-books also have the potential to become dynamic research tools. But in e-books’ current design, multimedia content is integrated into the fictional, or non-informational, text in a way that is intrusive to the reading experience. For the multimedia content that is enabled by digital technologies to be used in a way not distracting to the reader, such content may need to be isolated, as in the enhanced e-book. In this way e-books may ultimately offer reading experiences superior to those of print books, though as of yet this potential has not been reached.
Beyond facilitating the reading experience, print books have long served as a record documenting both personal and public history. This research shows that consumers value such endurance and thus criticize e-books as fragile or ephemeral, but the sense of durability is somewhat qualitative. Rare book libraries, for instance, take extreme measures to preserve deteriorating print books, whereas efforts to digitally scan ancient texts preserve them and make them accessible to more people than is possible with a single copy. As such, e-books challenge the notion of what is lasting in book culture.

E-books have also caused readers to re-examine their proprietary relationship with books. Because e-books are viewed as more technologically corruptible and beyond the reader’s control, as evidenced by the survey responses, readers are developing a purchasing paradigm of access rather than of ownership. While bookshelves of print books have property value for readers, they feel that an e-reader full of e-books offers value only in the reading experiences it can offer. This impression that e-books cannot be owned in the same sense as print books will likely influence future copyright law and bookselling.

It is impossible to predict precisely how the technology of e-books will evolve, but it is apparent that today’s e-books are just a stage—and likely an early one—on the spectrum of digital reading. My research enables me to speculate on the future of e-books, and, from my findings I envision the future to involve a progression away from dedicated e-readers toward integrated devices that include e-book reading as a feature. This would accommodate consumer resistance to buying expensive dedicated e-readers
and take advantage of the convenience of digital reading. I expect e-books to become absorbed into book culture as a convenient mode of reading and a new form of content delivery. Though digital book innovations, like Vooks and enhanced e-books, are products of this era of rampant experimentation that strives to capitalize on new digital technology, I believe with time the models that best add value to the linear print book will be the e-book formats that persist to ultimately change how we articulate “books.” In general, depending on how e-books advance technologically, the roots of change in book culture that have been documented by this research are bound to deepen and have more concrete impact.

This research also yielded questions that demand more research to be answered. Further research is needed on the attitudes towards e-books within today’s youngest generation, which is the first to be taught to read using digital texts. It would also be useful to research how the cognition of reading specifically changes when a person reads with the features of different devices, like the iPad or the Kindle. And more research is needed to determine whether readers even appreciate ancillary multimedia content in their e-books or whether it will remain somewhat distracting to readers no matter the form of its integration with the text. Focused studies like these would clarify the long-term effects e-books will have on book culture and society in general. Based on my research, we can now assert the effects of e-books to include challenging the book culture that has been long established by print books, and at the same time, offering potential for a uniquely rich reading experience that could only be possible with digital reading.
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