December 2001

The Shot Heard 'Round the Publishing World

Kelly Franklin

John Wiley & Sons, kfrankli@wiley.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg>

Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Franklin, Kelly (2001) "The Shot Heard 'Round the Publishing World," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 13: Iss. 6, Article 8.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.3641>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

The Shot Heard 'Round the Publishing World

by **Kelly Franklin** (Director, e-Business Development Professional & Trade Division, John Wiley & Sons, 605 Third Avenue, New York, New York 10158-0012) <kfrankli@wiley.com>

Stephen King's *Riding the Bullet* was the shot heard 'round the publishing world. It forced a generation of authors, editors, readers, and librarians who grew up loving the portable, reasonably permanent, and endlessly enriching world of physical books to confront the obstacles and promise of digital book creation, dissemination, and consumption.

As those in my generation, who grew up learning some of our American history from the **School House Rock**, know the "shot heard 'round the world" was the start of the revolution. But when it comes to eBooks, **Mr. King's** experiment is more akin to the beginning of an evolutionary process. It seems unlikely that eBooks will replace physical books in the foreseeable future. But over time, digital books may well develop into a new medium which complements and extends our existing modes of communicating knowledge, wisdom, entertainment, and inspiration. Most publishers, including **Wiley**, feel a sense of obligation to their authors and customers to support the development of this evolution — even though the costs, at present, far outweigh any potential return on investment.

Decades ago **Marshall McLuhan** raised questions of matching medium to message. Most of today's eBooks don't yet constitute a new medium; rather they offer a new delivery mechanism for a 500 year-old medium. But, by working together to clear the hurdles to delivery of today's print analog books through

digital channels, we are building the infrastructure and market necessary to support the eventual realization of the promise of interactive digital books. Among the challenges we must sort through:

- eBook file formats
- editorial and production workflow
- intellectual property protection, fair use and availability
- cost structure, author compensation, and pricing
- eBook and metadata delivery and distribution
- component packets and custom publishing
- archiving and evolving content

File Format

File format has been, perhaps, one of the most perplexing elements of the eBooks world. Despite the **Open Ebooks Initiative**, there is no one common file format that meets the promise of interoperability among the various hardware and software eBook readers. Instead, there are a variety of page-based and text reflow / XML formats, each of which present different reader benefits and obstacles. Page-based e-book readers (e.g. **Adobe eBook Reader**) have the benefit of preserving print book formatting, but they can force unacceptably small displays, which can be particularly problematic for double-column or triple-column works. Presenting images, tables, and scientific notation in structured reflow formats, such as XML, is generally quite labor intensive, and can be prohibitively costly. In short, choosing the right formats for the right content is no small matter.

In addition, publishers and eBook buyers would like to be assured that today's file formats will be readable in 5, 10, and 50 years from now, but no such guarantees can be offered. This poses significant archiving challenges for both publishers and librarians charged with maintaining access to a collection of content.

Editorial and Production Workflow

At **Wiley**, where we've committed to offering all of our frontlist professional and trade titles, and many of our scientific / technical frontlist books in eBook format, we've struggled not only with matching the right file format(s) to each book, but also with the high human resource demands of providing production oversight and quality assurance for each book in each format.

On the editorial side, the burden relates to permissions. Because many of our books are technical in nature, they incorporate tabular and illustrative material from a variety of sources; and securing permission to display this content in eBook form is a significant

hurdle. **Wiley** has recently changed its permission policy to grant print and eBook reprint rights simultaneously for content taken from our publications — we hope other publishers will soon follow suit in establishing dual "p" and "e" book permission grants.

Intellectual Property and Rights

In addition to the permissions puzzle, eBooks pose the "hot button" issue of secure file dissemination. Even in a post-Napster era, file swapping services such as **Gnutella** pose a significant threat to intellectual property. Most publishers feel a strong sense of obligation to protect their authors' intellectual rights. The appropriate degree of digital rights management is a more open question. There are a number of options relating to whether content from eBooks can be printed or copied, shared or passed along, archived for use by the purchaser on multiple devices, accessed by multiple users at an institution, etc. Publishers and librarians, both of whom must balance copy-right protection versus fair use, need to maintain a dialog in order to craft digital rights management guidelines that are workable for all parties.

In addition to content protection, eBooks raise questions related to territorial rights that are firmly ingrained in the print book world, but which are rendered less distinct when content can be delivered to anyone anywhere on the planet with access to the Internet. This issue has yet to be resolved, but cannot be ignored as eBooks become more commonplace and online retailing grows around the globe. The complications this raises are underscored by **Rolf Janke**, Vice President and Publisher, **Sage Publications**, "Just when we thought we had the domestic market figured out as far as electronic rights are concerned, we now look at the global market as a tremendous challenge that presents a different set of issues."

Pricing and Cost Structure

Publishers, authors, agents, and online book retailers have puzzled over fair pricing and compensation for eBooks. In some arenas, readers point to potential paper, printing, and warehousing savings, and expect that eBooks should be priced lower than related print books (of course, at this stage, these savings are theoretical — the eBook market is too narrow at this point in time to have any impact on print runs, and in fact, conversion and eBook fulfillment systems have added significant new costs for publishers). In other genres, multimedia and embedded tools and links could endow eBooks with greater utility than "p" books — the question is when and if readers would be willing to defray the cost of enhanced content creation. Time will tell.

continued on page 22

eBooks ex machina? from page 18

Fischer of R2 Consulting. Thompson focuses on concerns particular to health sciences content and the suitability of eBook formats for its delivery. Finally, **Lugg and Fischer** in their felicitously titled "The Host with the Most" offer a thorough review of hosting and distribution by the "new" eBook aggregators and the "traditional" book vendors, including co-operation between them.

Our dispatches from the new digital information order demonstrate that there is service, potentially profit, and, yes, real virtue to be had in our emerging virtual reality. With the turbulence in this year's eBook market, there is plenty of drama, as well. But dramatic or not, "the sky is not falling" and none of us expect the perfect eBook scheme to descend miraculously from the heavens. However, if we continue to work together, we can expect a solution to our drama more satisfying, if not more elegant, than that afforded the Romans and Greeks by a costumed god lowered from above by a bit of creaky stage machinery. 🐼

The Shot Heard 'Round from page 20

Another issue of pricing, of significant interest in the library market, relates to simultaneous use. Says **Jonathan Weiss**, Senior Vice President for Business Development at **Oxford University Press**, "to realize the potential benefits of eBooks, including simultaneous use, significant issues need to be addressed. These issues include contracts on existing books, royalties, and overall, a publishing model that needs to account for the still unknown balance of costs and revenues associated with the sales of both print and electronic editions of a work. It's a new world."

eBook Metadata and File Delivery

As an industry, publishing has had hundreds of years to develop effective systems for promoting and distributing physical books. In the space of just a few years, we are being challenged to develop effective mechanisms for distributing eBooks to wholesalers and retailers, and for receiving sales accounting to facilitate royalty payment. Some might liken this challenge to changing a tire while the car is moving. Evolving standards such as **ONIX 2.0**, which contains guidelines for describing e-publications, and the potential to extend **Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs)** from the scholarly journal arena into eBook delivery, hold the promise to help smooth this transition.

Component Packages and Custom Publishing

Several publishers, largely in technical areas, are experimenting with offering readers the option of purchasing individual chapters or eBook components, or creating custom print or eBooks from a collection of content. These forays into component publishing present a host of e-commerce, royalty accounting, and archiving challenges, but offer buyers a heretofore unavailable option of purchasing just what they want in the format in which they want it.

Archiving and Evolving Content

One challenge for those committed to eBooks is sorting out which file formats are likely to survive as new technologies surface. A related challenge is one of static versus evolving content. In the print world, once a book is published, it is fixed in terms of content. The eBook world affords authors a new opportunity to interact with readers, gather their input, and update books post-publication. For publishers, retailers, and librarians, this necessitates version control and poses archiving challenges; it could also entail a fundamental rethinking of business models, as the author's work would never be fully complete. Last, but not least, it raises questions of which entities in the publishing value chain are in the best position to archive – publishers, aggregators, wholesalers, retailers, libraries, or dedicated public repositories? At **Wiley**, we are committed to offering our digital content to end users through a variety of outlets, including both publisher-hosted forums and

KELLY FRANKLIN BIO

Kelly A. Franklin has been with **John Wiley & Sons** since 1987, where she has held a series of editorial and management positions, most recently as Publisher for professional periodicals and behavioral sciences. In that capacity, she published books, reference works, journals, and software applications, and integrated professional magazines and newsletters into Wiley's online publishing service, **Wiley InterScience**.

In 1999, Kelly was appointed Director, Electronic Business Development for Wiley's Professional & Trade Division. She is responsible for Wiley's eBook's program, as well as online and electronic publishing initiatives.

She also handles strategic planning and web alliances.

Her complete address is: Kelly Franklin, John Wiley & Sons, 605 Third Avenue, New York, New York 10158-0012. Email: <kfrankli@wiley.com>.

third-party eBook retailers and wholesalers; we want to allow each consumer and librarian to choose the medium and archiving mechanism that best meets their needs.

A Look to the Future

Some of the speedbumps described here can be addressed in the short term. Others will take years to fully evolve. It is critical that authors, publishers, eBook retailers, and librarians realistically assess the opportunities and challenges posed by this exciting new media, and work together to evolve new models and systems to disseminate and preserve human knowledge and literature in digital formats.

Once the infrastructure to support today's print analog eBooks is fully built-out, we will position ourselves to begin taking better advantage of the promise of digital media as a publishing tool. Among the possibilities afforded by this new media:

- the creation of "living" books, which evolve over time
- integration of audio and video as an inherent component of the reading experience
- inclusion of tools in instructional books (e.g. calculators, assessments, etc.)

An example of an attempt to evolve new models in the e-publishing arena is **Wiley's**

launch of its **Wiley InterScienceOnlineBooks** product. A next step in the evolution of digital information resources, the complete contents of print works are re-purposed for the online environment. The product is a fully searchable and browseable database of scientific, technical, and medical book content that is integrated with the online journals and reference works in the **Wiley InterScience** online service. For users, **OnlineBooks** offers flexibility and efficiency of fully searchable and integrated online content. For libraries, the product offers the opportunity to license the content for unlimited online access by authorized users. As well, they will receive usage statistics that will help in managing their collection management decisions. The important point is that both the product and the sales model will evolve with customer input and feedback to take advantage of the unique capabilities of electronic technology.

Of course, all of the possibilities listed can be brought to fruition with today's technology. The rub is training readers to expect and value these enhancements and re-training authors to create them. This process will take time, patience, and ongoing investment in creating and distributing and archiving rich content. 🐼

eBooks Two Years Later: The North Carolina State University Perspective

by **Nancy J. Gibbs** (Acquisitions Librarian and Associate Head of Technical Services, Perkins Library, Duke University, Box 90187, Durham, NC 27708-0187; Phone: 919-660-5894) <Nancy.Gibbs@Duke.edu>

Two years ago publishers, librarians, writers, critics, and customers very much doubted that eBooks would be an alternative or an addition to print books, let alone a viable product. Perhaps not in the form we view them at this moment, but eBooks are here, are part of our academic collections, and fill a need for our patrons in this Internet-accessed world. We have opened the bottle and we can't put the genie back in – and would we want to?

At **North Carolina State University** we investigated, initiated, and introduced both eBooks and hand-held readers to our patrons. Initially, many in the academic community questioned those decisions based on untested products. But librarians on our staff saw this new venture as a viable alternative to bring online access of some of our monographs collection to our patrons, much as we had done

continued on page 24