



ARDITH'S NOTEBOOK

THE FREEDOM TO PUBLISH

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Ebooks

What are ebooks and should you be scared of them?

Recently Amazon announced that on Christmas day, the sale of ebooks outstripped the sale of print books. So what does this mean? (<http://phx.corporate-ir.net/phoenix.zhtml?c=176060&p=irol-newsArticle&ID=1369429&highlight=>)

Ebooks (short for electronic books) are digital versions of traditional books. Over the last couple of years a number of file formats have been used to create ebooks (XML, PDF, ePub), each of them with their own advantages and disadvantages. While you can read ebooks off of any computer, dedicated readers trying to replicate the experience of reading a book have recently come onto the market. Some cell phones are also able to read PDFs, as can be seen with the iPhone's popular Stanza application. Ebook publishing began by scanning print books and creating digital files, however, as the ebook market develops, electronic publishing is beginning to happen alongside traditional print publishing.

So should you be scared of ebooks? Well, it depends on how you look at it. In the early days of ebooks, many publishers feared that ebooks would take away from traditional book sales. While this attitude is still present, a lot of authors and publishers have started to look at ebooks as promotional tools, rather than as product. In the age of the Internet, where people are becoming use to the iTunes model of instantly being able to download entertainment, it has never been easier to find an audience for writing. Science-fiction writer Cory Doctorow has been giving away electronic versions of his books throughout his writing career. He has since become outspoken about his belief that ebooks should be free. Here is what he had to say in an article he wrote for *Forbes*:

Most people who download the book don't end up buying it, but they wouldn't have bought it in any event, so I haven't lost any sales, I've just won an audience. A tiny minority of downloaders treat the free e-book as a substitute for the printed book—those are the lost sales. But a much larger minority treat the e-book as an enticement to buy the printed book. They're gained sales. As long as gained sales outnumber lost sales, I'm ahead of the game. After all, distributing nearly a million copies of my book has cost me nothing.

http://www.forbes.com/2006/11/30/cory-doctorow-copyright-tec-media_cz_cd_books06_1201doctorow.html

Whether or not you decide to publish in an electronic format, give your book away for free or not, there is a new model emerging that sees people reading more than they ever have in the past. How scary can that be?

Design

Form for your content: notes on typefaces

At one time, printing technology meant that changing the **typeface** (the name for a set of designs for printed characters) and the size of the type took effort. There was a limit to the number of **fonts** (the size and style of a particular face) that could be used at one time. Desktop publishing means that this is no longer the case, but just because you *can* use a lot of different kinds of letters at once, it doesn't mean that you *should*.

Publishing convention says that generally you should use a **serif** face ("serifs" are the little feet on the ends of letters in some styles of type, like this one) for the body of your work and if you are going to use a **sans serif** face ("sans" is French for "without" and indicates a typeface like `this` without the little feet on the letters), save it for titles. If you are writing only for the computer screen, however, you can use a sans serif face such as **Arial**.

The most important thing to consider when choosing a typeface for your book is how easy it is to read. You want something clear, and you want it big enough and spaced widely enough, that your readers' eyes don't get tired and confused. If they do, they'll give up no matter how great your story is. On the other hand, you don't want your type so big and widely spaced that your book ends up being twice as many pages as it needs to be. Most books are set at about 9 or 10 on 12 to 14 leading.

Think about the subject of your book: what kind of type will fit the tone and mood you are trying to set?

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Marketing: Social networking for authors

Social networking websites such as Facebook and Twitter are among the most popular sites on the Internet, as they empower people with the ability to connect to and communicate with each other in unprecedented ways.

Authors—and especially self-published authors—can benefit greatly from using social networking, where they can establish a far-reaching audience to which they can promote themselves and their books.

Facebook

Facebook is the current king of social networking. People both young and old have caught on to this popular social trend. With over 350 million users worldwide, this site is a good place for an author to start promoting books.

Facebook users set up personal profiles that contain users' interests, contact information, and photo albums. The site also allows users to add "friends" to profiles, which is a list of confirmed contacts, whether they are real-life friends, family, or other acquaintances. The Facebook experience is shared between friends, as they view each others' profiles and share status updates, photos, and more.

The ability to set up events and fan pages makes Facebook a particularly important tool for authors. The events tool is a quick yet powerful way to garner interest amongst friends for such things as book launches and readings. However, setting up a fan page provides the long-term benefit of keeping fans up to date on much more, including upcoming publications, ongoing projects, or interviews, reviews, and other media events.

Twitter

Like Facebook, Twitter is a top social networking website. Within the last year, Twitter has experienced explosive growth and now boasts 6 million unique monthly visitors and 55 million monthly visits. There is a big difference between two, however. While Facebook allows users to post a great amount of content such as photos, interests, status updates, etc., Twitter focuses purely on status updates, which are called "tweets" on the site.

Since Twitter's start, individual tweets have been limited to 140 characters. Although this might seem like a limitation, it has actually spawned a culture around it, including its own kind of shorthand notation and slang terminology, in addition to the usage of URL-shortening services such as bit.ly.

The benefits Twitter offers are similar to those of Facebook. Users connect to other users by becoming "followers." When users post tweets, they appear on the Twitter "feed" on following users' main pages. It might seem simple, but the capacity for authors to promote themselves and their work is great and can easily be done on a daily basis.

Design

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Traditional faces for books include Times New Roman, Garamond, and Palatino. Titles might be set in **Helvetica Black** or a more "creative" font such as **Lucida Sans**. If your book contains letters or emails from one character to another, you could indicate that using *Courier* or another "typewriter" face. Avoid novelty faces like *ᄒᄒᄒᄒᄒ* except for very small sections, such as chapter titles. (Avoid this particular face altogether unless you've written a Western....) Avoid large sections in *italic*, keeping that style for emphasis or to set a word apart.

Finally, consider what a block of your chosen text will look like. Will it be dense and "serious" or lighter and more airy? When we read, we don't look at each individual letter: we recognise whole words at a time. Serif faces make this easier, mostly because that's how we are used to reading. We are used to reading them because they are the most common, because they are seen as easy to read. It's like the chicken and the egg, but "experimental" typesetting can just be annoying, like someone constantly interrupting an interesting conversation.

If you need ideas, visit a bookstore or library and take a look at the books you find attractive. Check the "colophon" or printer's page. There you will find information about what typeface, and sometimes the size and "leading" or line spacing" used in the book.

Choosing the right typeface is part of good design. And through good design, you will be able to speak directly to your readers, without interruption or distraction.