

EPublishing talk

National Library of Australia

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This week, as I contemplated what I'd like to say about epubliishing, I thought the first thing I should do is to define what I mean by this term. So as one does, I googled 'epublishing' and these are the two definitions I could find:

1. epubliishing means to produce an electronic document that is created, archived, maintained and distributed by means of computers. It may or may not have a printed parallel version
2. epubliishing means to issue and prepare a publication for distribution in electronic form. Also called: Web Publishing, and Online Publishing.

As these terms sound rather dry, I decided to look for another way to illustrate what I mean by epubliishing, so I've written a couple of scenarios to help us review traditional publishing and perhaps to form an opinion on epubliishing.

This evening I'm going to tell you two stories, one about David and another about Michael. Both are scholars and both have published a book, but their experiences are separated by a long period of time and large innovations brought about by technology.

This first story takes place in 1976:

David Bryant is a scientist working in the area of livestock production. He's written a book, *A new approach to livestock production*, which he thinks will fill a gap in the market. This is his passage to publishing fame:

It was a cold Cape morning when David posted his manuscript to National Publishers. As he watched the truck drive off with the morning's postal bag, he wondered how long it would be before he heard from the publishers.

About six weeks later a letter arrived from Charles Fry, the non-fiction editor at National Publishers. 'Dear Mr Bryant,' it said, 'it gives me pleasure to inform you that our reader has positively reviewed your manuscript and that consequently National Publishers has accepted *A new approach for livestock production* for publication'. David whooped with delight and immediately starting planning how he was going to spend his royalty payment.

At the publisher's office, Charles chewed the end of his pencil as he worked through David's draft text. He'd been at it for a month already but was at a point when he could hand over to Tracey in the typing pool. That was a relief as he really was a bit weary of reading about cow's innards – and he was getting tired of overhearing Tracey's long phone calls to her boyfriend; it was time to give her something else to think about. However, Charles was rather pleased with himself for having persuaded the author, David – over a convivial cup of coffee – to accept Charles' editorial changes, and to sign the contract.

Two weeks later, Linda, the typographer had received the clean, edited text and was paging through the manuscript. As she worked her way through the text, she marked in pencil the layout instructions: indicating the typeface, the heading styles, the chapter openers and the preliminary page layout, in order to send the manuscript to the setters. She was rushing to catch the afternoon courier as parcels were only collected twice a day and if she missed that afternoon's messenger, she'd be in trouble.

About twenty kilometers away, the setters had started experimenting with a phototypesetting process. Up till then they'd worked in hot metal, but times were changing and George, the setter, wanted to trial the process with this new

manuscript. He was working to a schedule and had to supply the galleys to the publisher within two weeks.

Back at the publisher, Charles had lined up Emma, a junior editor, to read the proofs. The author, David, would get a set as well, but Charles wanted an additional eye to catch any inconsistencies he might have missed. Charles' thoughts were already on other matters: a few days earlier he and Linda had met to discuss the illustrations and had commissioned Peter, an illustrator, to produce the drawings. Peter's deadline was to have everything ready by the time Emma, Linda and David were finished checking the text and Charles was conscious of time ticking by.

Once the proofreading and illustrations were complete, Linda had to match and fit the images to the text. She had to cut up all the text galleys as well as proofs of the illustrations, and paste everything down in page form, fitting the illustrations to the text. She had to measure all the lines, making sure that all the pages were exactly the right depth in terms of the number of text lines and that the text lines all lined up with their backing page.

Once the proofs were returned to the setters, George had to follow these rough proofs. He had the text captured electronically so all he had to do to was type in the text corrections and then make up the pages, leaving spaces for where the illustrations would be placed at a later stage.

David was unaware of all these processes and was impatient to see the final proofs of his book, but Linda still had to have the illustrations reproduced by Keith at the reproduction house and she had to check the accuracy of the labels and verify the sizes of the illustrations. These were a bit gory – all those cow diseases – but luckily the book was to be printed in black-and-white only and not in full colour.

Talking of colour, someone had to produce a cover and Lorraine, the sales and marketing manager, was anxious about this. She'd devised a promotion campaign, written a marketing brochure, lined up media interviews for David and arranged a signing session at a specialist bookshop as well as a lecture series at appropriate venues so she *urgently* needed a cover proof to include in her brochures.

Eventually all the pieces came together, and six months to the day after David had submitted his manuscript to National Publishers, the advance copies of *A new approach to livestock production*, were delivered at their offices. There was a little party. David was a bit reserved initially at the function to celebrate the publication of his book, but after a couple of glasses of champagne, he soon adapted to his new role as a published author.

Unfortunately this story has a sad ending: of the 3000 copies which were printed, only about 1500 books were sold. Lorraine's marketing didn't quite hit the mark: David was an unknown author, and the sales never quite took off. National Publishers lost out financially – poor Charles was demoted – and David retreated into his shell, never quite having the courage to attempt another book.

Flash forward to 2006 and my second story:

Michael has recently been awarded a doctorate for his thesis entitled, *Comparative talk: from Morse Code to MP3*. As he writes quite well, and as he's discovered there's very little in the market available on this topic, he thinks it would be a good idea to have his book published, but he knows it's very difficult to attract a publisher so he decides to give it a bash himself. These are his steps to success:

- Michael's text is already captured in Word, so all he has to do is edit and rewrite it a little to lighten the academic tone of his book, making the appeal more to a broader audience.

- He creates a small website and uploads the book in pdf form – both individual chapters and the whole text – as well as in HTML format. As a funky afterthought, he also offers the text for downloading to a personal digital assistant or a mobile phone.
- Best of all, the book is freely available for download; there is no charge.
- But he knows that users still want print books so Michael emails the digital files to a digital printer, who specializes in print-on-demand.
- The printer can deliver individual copies of Michael's book as and when required. This means there is no stock and no overheads. Michael sells the books at a market-related price, with no discount given to an intermediary like a bookshop.
- Michael has a good relationship with his bank manager whom he texts with a request for credit card merchant status, which is quickly approved. (Obviously this is a fairy tale; you'd never get such quick approval from a bank.) He can now conduct ecommerce transactions online.
- He sets up an email list to a wide circle of colleagues whom he knows might be interested in the book and sends them a promotional newsletter.
- As time goes by he decides to blog his experiences.
- The orders for the print book trickle through, but more importantly, fellow academics from around the world are able to access Michael's work on his website; consequently the number of citations grows tremendously.
- He gets so much feedback that he creates a wiki to which colleagues can contribute their comments.
- He discovers academics are writing on related topics: someone at University of Tasmania loves typography; another colleague at University of Western Australia is exploring digital capture of oral history, and someone at the University of Sydney is examining the effect of SMS on syntax and spelling. What these academics would like is to air their research and have it available to a global community. Michael and his colleagues decide to form a journal. But who is to publish it? All the

contributors come from different disciplines and different institutions and not one of these institutions can afford to develop a journal.

- So Michael googles open access journals and comes across a site called Open Journal Systems. This free, open source software enables journal publishers to deliver, present and publish refereed scholarly journals themselves.
- Michael reinvents himself as a journal publisher and develops a portal for other likeminded independent scholars to publish their own research. He operates from a home office and is much in demand both for his consulting services and his epubliishing know-how – and unlike David, he makes quite a bit of money.

So what have we learnt from these stories?

Some of the things which strike me about David's 1976 story:

- The writing style is long and languid, reflecting the times
- He handed over the responsibility for his work to a contractor (the publisher)
- There was a large group of people involved in the production process
- The tasks were very labour intensive and time consuming
- The book was accurately and professionally produced
- The publisher carried a high financial risk
- The audience reached by the book was very small
- The whole process took a very long time

Michael's experience in 2006 highlights the following:

- Michael's story is written staccato form, rather like his processes: fast and furious

- Michael managed and took responsibility for his own book production process
- It's questionable whether there was a reduction in quality due to the lack of professional input
- Michael pioneered the dissemination process, making the book available in a variety of formats
- Michael produced the book in both electronic and print format
- He engaged a wide variety of users, many from a great distance
- His overhead costs were small
- He produced his book very quickly and had it on the market immediately

Would you say that Michael has an edge on David? Is it epubliishing which has provided this edge? What's happened in the 30 years since David's book was published to give Michael that edge?

Since 1976, we've seen the following innovations:

- Personal computers were introduced into the workplace
- Fax and mobile phones took over from telex and letter writing
- Software applications allowed any and everyone to become an instant publisher
- Email spawned quick communication of various kinds: correspondence, enewsletters, e-adverts.
- The world is managed via the internet

So what have been the gains in terms of epubliishing:

- Low cost products
- Variety of products
- Quick turnaround
- Wider dissemination

- Large audiences

And what have been the losses?

- A lessening of the notion of publishing as an authority. In some quarters, publishing now means uploading electronic documents into an electronic holding pen. In a sense we need a new terminology to describe professionally published works to distinguish them from documents which are simply aired for viewing. The added value brought about by a publisher – design, editing, proofreading, costing, marketing, sales and promotion – should not be undermined. But having said that, I believe that writers and publishers need to adapt to the New Economy.

I see challenges and opportunity from the following:

- Digital publishing workflows
- Blogs
- Wikis
- SMS

At the National Library of Australia, we're currently trialling an open source, free to air software called Open Journal Systems – to which I alluded in Michael's story.

Open Journal Systems, or OJS, is a journal management and publishing system that assists with every stage of the refereed publishing process, from submissions by an author through to online publication and indexing, all easily managed by one editor.

Through its management systems, its finely grained indexing of research, and the context it provides for research, OJS seeks to improve both the scholarly and public quality of referred research. OJS is open source software made freely

available to journals worldwide for the purpose of making open access publishing a viable option for more journals, as open access can increase a journal's readership as well as its contribution to the public good on a global scale

OJS Features

1. OJS is installed locally and locally controlled: our system's administrator has done this.
2. Editors configure requirements, sections, review process, etc: together with the editorial team, we've uploaded four back journals and are working on the current edition.
3. Online submission and management of all content: our dummy authors have submitted all the back copy articles
4. Subscription module with delayed open access options: the journal publisher has the choice to sell the journal in print form, displaying only part of the article, perhaps the abstract.
5. Comprehensive indexing of content part of global system: linked to library systems
6. Reading Tools for content, based on field and editors' choice: appropriate entry for subjects and disciplines
7. Email notification and commenting ability for readers: there's a constant to-ing and fro-ing between the editor and the other participants like the author and proofreader, for example.
8. Complete context-sensitive online Help support, which includes a discussion group.

Blogs

If you're a fan of Pamela Anderson, Jamie Oliver or Lleyton Hewitt, the chances are good that you've read their personal blogs. What exactly is a blog? This is what Wikipedia has to say:

'A blog is a website in which items are posted on a regular basis and displayed in reverse chronological order. The term blog is a shortened form of weblog or web log. Authoring a blog, maintaining a blog or adding an article to an existing blog is called "blogging". Individual articles on a blog are called "blog posts," "posts" or "entries". A person who posts these entries is called a "blogger". A blog comprises text, hypertext, images, and links (to other web pages and to video, audio and other files). Blogs use a conversational style of documentation. Often blogs focus on a particular "area of interest" . . . Some blogs discuss personal experiences.

Blogs can be hosted by dedicated blog hosting services, or they can be run using blog software on regular web hosting services. In the early 21st Century, blogging has quickly emerged as a popular and important means of communication, affecting public opinion and mass media around the world.'

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blog>

Google's has introduced a service called *Blogger* as part of its suite of tools. This is what they say about blogging:

'A blog is a personal diary. A daily pulpit. A collaborative space. A political soapbox. A breaking-news outlet. A collection of links. Your own private thoughts. Memos to the world.

Your blog is whatever you want it to be. There are millions of them, in all shapes and sizes, and there are no real rules.

In simple terms, a blog is a web site, where you write stuff on an ongoing basis. New stuff shows up at the top, so your visitors can read what's new. Then they comment on it or link to it or email you. Or not.'

http://www.blogger.com/tour_start.g

Bloglines

Blogging has led to another interesting service, called blog aggregators. The one I use is called Bloglines and this is what they have to say:

'Bloglines is a FREE online service for searching, subscribing, creating and sharing news feeds, blogs and rich web content. With Bloglines, there is no software to download or install -- simply register as a new user and you can instantly begin accessing your account any time, from any computer or mobile device. And it's FREE!







Bloglines is a window to a whole new world of dynamic content that is being created and distributed over the new "live" web. You can make your own personalized news page tailored to your unique interests from our index of tens of millions of live internet content feeds, including articles, blogs, images and audio. And it's FREE!















. . . Bloglines allows you to search for, read and share any updates from your favorite news feed or blog regardless of its authoring technology. And it's FREE!

Last, but not least, Bloglines provides you with the tools you need to begin creating your own clip blogs and blogrolls. Become a publisher [notice the use of this term], share your thoughts and opinions! And it's FREE! Get started today!

<http://www.bloglines.com/about/>

The 20 feeds to which I subscribe are:

-  ABC News: Top Stories **(200)**
-  About Literature: Contemporary **(9)**
-  Australian IT **(200)**
-  BBC News | News Front Page | World Edition **(200)**
-  Bloglines | News **(1)**
-  Guardian Unlimited **(200)**

-  InternetWeek Blog (19)
-  Lessig Blog (12)
-  Librarians' Internet Index: New This Week (162)
-  National Library of Scotland (1)
-  News24 (200)
-  NYT > Movie Reviews (46)
-  [NYT Book Review](#)
-  Powells Books New Arrivals Top 10 (15) [!]
-  Rotten Tomatoes: Movies (56)
-  The Shifted Librarian (2)
-  Slashdot (200)
-  VH1 Movie News (54)
-  [Washington Post Book reviews](#)
-  [Wired News](#)

What I receive onscreen from each service are *headlines with summaries* or *headlines with website links* which, when I click through them, go to the business owner's website for further information. This is precisely what Google does, allowing users to scan the contents easily before clicking to the website for further information.

Wikis

You may not be familiar with wikis, but If you have children or grandchildren, it's likely that they use Wikipedia for school assignments. Wikipedia is an example of a wiki and this is their definition:

'A wiki enables documents to be written collectively in a simple markup using a web browser. A single page in a wiki is referred to as a "wiki page", while the entire body of pages, which are usually highly interconnected via hyperlinks, is "the wiki"; in effect, a very simple, easier-to-use database.

A defining characteristic of wiki technology is the ease with which pages can be created and updated. Generally, there is no review before modifications are accepted. Most wikis are open to the general public without the need to register any user account. Sometimes session log-in is requested to acquire a "wiki-signature" cookie for autosigning edits. More private wiki servers require user authentication. However, many edits can be made in real-time, and appear almost instantaneously online. This can often lead to abuse of the system.'

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiki>

Have a look at Canberra on Wikipedia. You may even have something of interest to add to the site.

SMS

SMS or texting doesn't need any introduction. Every teenager and many older users use this service to communicate quickly and cheaply with their peers. We're bombarded with TV ads inviting us to text in our preferences or to buy ring tones. In order to capture the older market, new mobile phones on the market have bigger touch pads, specially designed for those of us with less nimble fingers.

How does SMS work? SMS is available on digital Global System for Mobile (GSM) networks allowing text messages of up to 160 characters to be sent and received via the network operator's message center to your mobile phone, or from the Internet, using a so-called "SMS gateway" website. If the phone is powered off or out of range, messages are stored in the network and are delivered at the next opportunity.

Google has recognised that SMS presents a business opportunity and has launched Google SMS which enables you to send queries as text messages over your mobile phone or device and easily get precise answers to your questions.

No links. No web pages. Just text — and the information you're looking for. With Google SMS you can:

- Get *local business listings* when you're on the road and want to find a place to eat.
- Obtain *driving directions* to get from point A to point B without having to ask for directions.
- Find *movie showtimes* and theater locations of movies currently playing near you.
- Check *weather conditions* and 4-day forecasts to plan your day.
- Study the latest *stock quotes* and stay on top of the market.
- Get *quick answers* to straightforward questions.
- Compare online *product prices* with ones you find in retail stores.
- Look up *dictionary definitions* to expand your vocabulary or prove a point.

<http://www.google.com/sms/>

Conclusion

So what can we conclude from all of this? It's clear that there are opportunities in publishing: new, exciting formats both for books and for other means of communication; shorter production times and lower costs; an ability to reach a broader audiences, and the ability to entice and participate within a wider community.

But setting aside the processes, publishing is also facilitating new forms of writing. Mobile phones and SMS have spawned a new genre: mobile text-message poetry.

In 2001, the *Guardian* newspaper ran a pioneering text poetry competition that attracted nearly 7500 entries from 4700 mobile phones. The only limitation was

the number of characters, which as mentioned previously, is a maximum of 160 characters.

In this form of writing the poets take liberties with spelling and syntax to fit the words into the limited character count. Vowels are sacrificed for space, consonants are dropped off the ends of words, symbols are freely used to represent whole words. For example, in the poem I'm going to read you, 'before' is represented by the letter 'b' and the number '4'; 'try to write' is abbreviated to 'try-number2-rite'; 'and' is always represented by an '&' and so forth – you soon get the message (literally).

This is the winning text-message poem by Hetty Hughes

txtin iz messin,
mi headn'me englis,
try2rite essays,
they all come out txtis.
gran not plsed w/letters shes getn,
swears i wrote better
b4 comin2uni.
&she's african

So in closing, I'd like to ask you to take out your mobiles, listen to the following text-message poem and then rate me according to the list – you need to hit the numbers which best correspond with your experience.

This entry into the *Guardian* text-message competition is called *Choosing*:

Choosing

1 love me

2 hate me

3 miss me

4 need me

5 adore me

6 like me

7 feel me

8 wana hug me

9 wana kiss me

10 wana kill me

send ur best 3 answers