The battle to define the future of the book in the digital world

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Abstract

Commercial publishing interests are presenting the future of the book in the digital world through the promotion of e-book reading appliances and software. Implicit in this is a very complex and problematic agenda that re-establishes the book as a digital cultural artifact within a context of intellectual property rights management enforced by hardware and software systems. With the convergence of different types of content into a common digital bit-stream, developments in industries such as music are establishing precedents that may define our view of digital books. At the same time we find scholars exploring the ways in which the digital medium can enhance the traditional communication functions of the printed work, moving far beyond literal translations of the pages of printed books into the digital world. This paper examines competing visions for the future of the book in the digital environment, with particular attention to questions about the social implications of controls over intellectual property, such as continuity of cultural memory.

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HTML

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The actual future of books, according to Bershidsky, is "an enormous digital library in the cloud, where any book could be borrowed." I could see a cloud service working, but it's another amusingly confident prediction that contradicts previous confident predictions. Is the future cloud borrowing instead of Netflix model? Since I've taken some jabs at other people's overconfident predictions, here's where I post my own predictions for future bloggers to mock. It's possible that in the distant future we will "read" by injecting word venom into our bloodstream, but I don't think printed books are going away anytime soon. (Predictions beyond a decade are pretty pointless in conversations about contract negotiations or what way to publish your work today.) OEB defines a more precise terminology: the digital content which users read (i.e. a paperless version of a book, article, magazine, etc.) is called publication; the physical device used to read a publication is called a reading device (e.g. dedicated readers (see section 2), personal computers or personal digital assistants); the combination of software and hardware that processes content and presents it to users is called a reading system. This paper starts with discussion of hardware and software based e-book readers. Lynch, C. (2001) "The Battle to Define the Future of the Book in the Digital World". First Monday, 6(6), June 2001. Manes, S. (1999) "Gutenberg need not worry yet". We respect books. One reason has always been their potential permanence, which makes it especially worrisome that free books have such a tendency to vanish or become unfree. Another reason is economics. In the middle ages, books were awesome objects simply because they cost so much to create --- a rich man could own five or ten. Even after the invention of the printing press, a big initial investment was needed in order to publish a book. The assumption was that if you could get your book published, it must be good. Somehow it had risen to the top of what editors universally refer to as the &

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