42 Kindles: A Discussion on the Evolution of Text

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The Answer to the Great Question Of.....Life,
the Universe and Everything. . . (is) Forty-two.
--Douglas Adams, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*

I. Liberté

[1] How long does it take to start a revolution? The past decade has simultaneously hailed the coming of the eBook, declared that the eBook is dead, and greeted the eBook's resurrection via a multitude of charming devices with sophisticated prices. The National Endowment for the Arts has noted the decline of readers who read for the purpose of pleasure and leisure.1 Wayne Wiegand, historian of libraries and library services, has stated on multiple occasions that there are more libraries in the United States than McDonald's restaurants.2 Is the book dead or merely in a state of metamorphosis?

[2] On the same day the NEA published its report in November 2007, Amazon.com released its eBook reader, the Kindle. A thousand blog posts were launched; bloggers, posters, and reviewers who had used the device declared it useful if clunky, while those who hadn't declared it fugly or smarvelous (variously). It is difficult to judge a book by its cover when it does not have a cover but rather a leather carrying case. The information becomes a text instead of a book—a means rather than an end to itself. And then, of course, that same collection of blog posts reported both that the book was dead and thus the whole argument moot, and that the book was brand new all over again and better than ever.

[3] Salon.com's Farhad Manjoo evaluated the Kindle. He crunched numbers to determine whether it was worth the price tag for readers:

> *As I calculate it, if you add in the $400 cost of the device, you'll need to buy at least 40 e-books3 at $9.99 each to get an average per-book price lower than $20, roughly the cost of a standard bookstore hardcover.*
> *If you're sure you can read at least 40 books over the life of your Kindle -- let's say five years, so eight books a year -- then sure, go ahead and buy one. You'll save money in the long run, not to mention 40 books' worth of shelf space.4*

That he then declared people who read eight books a year "book fanatics" did not endear him to the techno-literary crowd.5 Buyers of books are also conflated with readers of books: an assumption that the consumption of information is as economical as it is educational. What he did not declare, and what has not yet been discussed, is whether the classic bibliophile of yore is to become a textophile. Putting aside the question of object-of-delivery lifespan (as if one could seriously compare the clay tablet to the battery), what is it that readers truly desire: the object or the text?

II. Egalité

[4] View the book as object. A typical mass-market paperback costs $6.99 and is "in fine print on fine paper with stories of fine people."6 A typical Kindle eBook is $9.99 and is ultimately a fine selection of fine 1s and 0s on fine bits and fine bytes of microchip and ether. View the book as disposable: a paperback left, disregarded on a bus, a park bench, a table in a coffee shop; an eBook deleted with the click

of a button.7 This scenario is perhaps not the popular image of the dissemination of text, but it is equally true.

[5] In February 2008, Texas A&M University Libraries purchased Kindles for the purpose of an academic study on their usability. Thirty-six staff and faculty with a variety of backgrounds in the Libraries agreed to be biblio-guinea pigs. Four additional members agreed to head the study.8 The participants were collected into dutiful focus groups and asked questions like "How often do you read on your Kindle?" and asked to measure its intuitiveness, its ease of use, and sometimes, whether it worked at all.9 Perhaps unsurprisingly, it was concluded that the tried and true paper and glue books were generally preferable.10 And yet—the group also largely agreed that something a little bit better would be nice, too.

[6] It should be inserted here that all technologies—including books—started off somewhere and were hardly perfect in the beginning.11 For illustration, compare how your average computer programmer will act when a software application fails with how the average PC-user acts in the same situation. The programmer as creator will search for the error and fix it; the programmer as user will either legally (if possible) modify it, and if not legally possible, hack it and do the same thing.12 Your average PC-user, when faced with software applications, will call for tech-support, and if such support is not forthcoming, will most often just give up and no longer use the program. Now apply this scenario to reading a text: imagine if you were allowed to hack a book's text, both for your convenience and that of others. Many medieval manuscripts consist of Biblical text with commentary to the side, and sometimes commentaries to the commentary. A modern e-text has the potential to offer the same allowance of multiples of scholarship, only in a participatory environment.

[7] As such, it can be argued that communication as a whole is facing a new level of evolution. Thousands of years ago, humans made the leap from orality to literacy; we may now be transferring from literacy to electricity. Marshal McLuhan states that "electric technology seems to favor the inclusive and participational spoken word over the specialist written word."13 When those words were first printed, television was the new media, the grandchild of film and radio: pervasive and invasive, it was the original series of tubes that threatened to overtake American culture.14 Since then has come the next wave of multimedia: any combination of text, image, sound, or video is both possible and hyperlinked.

[8] The book is no longer necessarily an object but is instead a matter of text. That text can be read aloud, recorded, and replayed as a CD, an MP3, or other formats; it can exist as sets of pixels on screens. That leaves the objectified book to be disposed of or to be reverenced or fetishized.

[9] Return to the Kindle. How does a device that more than slightly resembles an oversized calculator treat a text? Variably, it turns out. Bestsellers and new books tend to be well formatted with minimal errors. Older, cheaper texts tend toward ugly text breaks and typographic errors. (Much like print texts, I'm sure it can be argued.) Cases in point: *The English American* by Alison Larkin was released in 2008 by Simon & Schuster. *Bran Mak Morn - The Warrior King of the Picts* by Robert E. Howard was originally published as individual stories in the 1930s and released digitally as a complete text in 2008 by LeClue22.15 The texts provided by LeClue22 have irregular breaks between paragraphs; Simon & Schuster has regularly formatted text. Much like using other electronic media, the source of the text impacts its quality.

[10] The Kindle tries to make up for these mixed offerings with more, shall we say, dependable resources, such as Wikipedia.16 Despite the fact that such a decision has undoubtedly encouraged the academically chaste to commit self-harm,17 it does have as an inducement a complete and sprawling encyclopedia (whatever you may think of its origins) as well as a dictionary accessible through a search feature. Less touted is its experimental feature Ask Kindle NowNow, in which Kindle users can submit queries to a Kindle reference team, much in the style of the retired Google Answers. Three answers from different sources arrive in the user's email and on the Kindle in a matter of minutes or hours, depending on when and what is asked. The service was available through a beta test standard website as well, though like Google Answers it was ultimately discontinued.18

[11] A case can be made that Kindle's fusion of texts (eBooks, Wikipedia articles, dictionary references, etc.) is the next step in hyperlinking culture, and possibly the first case of hyperlinking a product itself. Han Woo Park and Mike Thewell posit that hyperlinks are not just serving as a method to link individual texts but as an organizational and social structure all their own.19 This trend reaches beyond the standard social tools to the electronic versions of newspapers, from the venerable *New York Times* to your small local paper; readers can comment on stories and carry on their own discussions in separate forms. Though use of these web features is unavailable from the subscription-based version of the *Times* on the Kindle, it is available through the web browser.

[12] Contemplate the social landscape inherent in this picture: all texts are available (via Amazon.com, Project Gutenberg, numerous "share" websites and forums, and any text that can be managed in a supported format), annotatable, even editable. They are all hyperlinked. This creates both unique opportunities and issues, a World Wide Text, if you will.20 It is a universal conglomeration of information, democratically edited, re-edited, annotated, and cross-referenced.

[13] The technologically savvy have long valued this sort of cooperative culture. That it is being incorporated into the literary culture—even at a deeply resistant snail's pace—is a significant development. If nothing else, it shows that media corporations have (presumably) learned a lesson after the fallout from Shawn Fanning and Napster.21

[14] Jeff Gomez would like to make the argument that it is precisely this sort of culture of connectivity that threatens the book, and not just the book as object, but the book as text as well:

> *A hundred years ago we might have read War and Peace in an effort to see what life is like half a world away. With the world now joined in an electronic web, anyone curious about life somewhere else on the planet need only spend half an hour online to gain insight into another place. Graham Greene's Journey Without Maps becomes increasingly anachronistic in a world where Google Earth has inventoried nearly every backyard on the planet.22*

Gomez later backtracks on this argument by promoting the virtues of the eBook, primarily its mobility. However, his polemic ultimately dissolves into making a case for the liberation of texts, e.g. allowing a universal access to text after its purchase, which is to say, buying an electronic text and being allowed to access it from multiple points—much as the way Fanning visualized accessing music.

[15] Let us now descend from theoretical ether back to earth, and more precisely, to cold hard cash. The Association of American Publishers estimated 2007 sales to total around "just under $25 billion." Sales of eBooks, defined implicitly as those products to be purchased through a dedicated reading device, were credited with $67.2 million out of this pot.23 Even when factored in with the other great non-paper book benchmark, the audio book (which recorded sales of some $218 million,)24 non-print sales are barely a drop in the great bucket of publication.

[16] While I'm sure many would feel that assigning monetary values to texts is at best a necessary evil, it is nonetheless an issue that is increasingly cropping up with respect to digital texts. A recent lawsuit has publishers filing for an injunction against Georgia State University for using electronic course packets of readings:25

> *The lawsuit, which may be the first of its kind, raises questions about digital rights, which are confronting many media companies, but also about core issues like the future of the business model for academic publishers…*
> *"In academic publishing, we need to find the digital services people really want," said Brewster Kahle, founder of the Internet Archive, a nonprofit digital library based in San Francisco. "I wonder if this will turn out to be an 'attack the innovator' suit like the peer-to-peer suits for the music industry. Sometimes a bit of slack can help us all discover a winning formula."26*

[17] If history is cyclical, we may be viewing an instant replay. Ultimately the question is one of ownership—does one purchase the object or the text?27 If one purchases the object, then presumably one has to have multiple copies in multiple formats to contribute effectively to the World Wide Text. If one purchases the text, what are the purchaser's exact rights, defined? In the past, this information has been de rigueur for company purchases and only more recently for individuals' media purchases. It has not thus far infringed on the traditional book purchase beyond Fair Use notations in libraries and campuses. As print books segue to eBooks, this issue will be cropping up more and more. (For those in doubt, I advise a Google search for "Rowling" and for "eBooks." You will very quickly get a few articles with author J.K. Rowling's famous anti-eBook statements followed by far more sites offering illegal *Harry Potter* eBook editions.) 28

[18] Right now, I can lend a friend or colleague a text if it is printed on paper; I can also send an electronic file. However, my legal rights become embroiled in the case of the latter if the file is not of my own personal creation. And of course, if I post a file online, the issue can usually become foggier still, which is why so many sites—and even texts—now feature lengthy disclaimers of one kind or another. I can also reread my text, be it in print or in electronic format; I just have to remember to keep my files upgraded

with each software iteration. In the case of digital books, "dusty" items may become unopenable after a period of time.

[19] If a text can be bought and sold, but never owned, what does it mean to be a text? (I use the word "owned" in the individual and not in the corporate sense of the word. Of course, it can be—and often is—argued that a sufficient number of individuals appropriating the text essentially liberates it from the corporation. I offer this less in the sense of Napster but more in the sense of fan-fiction and other participatory media.)29 At least so far, there are two answers to this question. In the first case, the original creator quickly backs away from the possibility of open access and starts charging a use fee. In the second case, the creator accepts others' interest in his or her work and allows for sharing usage. Examples of the latter include the author Marion Zimmer Bradley allowing fans to write in a "shared universe" for decades.30

[20] For further examination, we can look at theoretical work. By way of Roland Barthes, we

> *know that a text does not consist of a line of words, releasing a single "theological" meaning (the "message" of the Author-God), but is a space of many dimensions, in which are wedded and contested various kinds of writing, no one of which is original: the text is a tissue of citations, resulting from the thousand sources of culture.31*

In this way, text is broken down not by ownership or by physical (or electrically ethereal) makeup, but by its intellectual provenance. The electronic text is multiplied by virtue of its multiple access points: writers and readers coming together to combine and annotate multiple texts.

[21] The primary difference in these notations is that of the Press, or rather, the lack thereof. Once upon a time, Press was synonymous with Publisher. If you have the machinery, then you are its operator and thus the producer. In the electronic age, each originator of text is both the author and the publisher. I think this becomes apparent with my earlier examples of works on Kindle produced by Simon & Schuster and LeClue22. Neither Alison Larkin nor Robert E. Howard themselves made their texts electronic, and thus when the publishers introduce spacing and typographic errors, the work changes. Its cultural sources have not changed, but it is a fundamentally different e-object.

[22] It is perhaps for this same reason that the self-publishing industry is getting a re-awakening. Authors who want to make their texts available on Kindle need only sign in and assign a price to their work.32 Much like the Internet, anyone with a keyboard and a connection can make his or her voice heard. This inclusivity or pluralism gives the impression of a democratic space: all voices are equal (to be bought and sold).

III. Fraternité

[23] But in this electronic democracy are all texts equal?

[24] Historically speaking, more scholarly and even communal trust is placed in the texts provided by a trusted authority. Witness the etymology even in the words: author—the creator; authority—a person with the power to determine or control a subject; authoritarian—exercising control of others. The predominant complaint by traditional (literary and/or political) authorities over the new online media of the blog and the wiki is that material for both can be written, re-written and edited by anyone, rather than a personage traditionally vested with this authority by and over others.

[25] When the respected science journal *Nature* did a study comparing articles in the Encyclopedia Britannica with articles in Wikipedia, a media war broke out when the journal determined that the traditional encyclopedia was only 30 percent more accurate than the online encyclopedia.33 Debates and arguments over determining criteria and results ensued. Editorials and rebuttals were published in *The New York Times*. Advertisements decrying or praising the results were placed in multiple publications. The final result over the brouhaha? In an astonishing reversal in June 2008, Encyclopedia Britannica announced its plan to allow user participation by running user-generated articles alongside the standard text online.34

[26] That Amazon.com's Kindle hyperlinks with Wikipedia for free while charging for "subscriptions" to blogs (which are otherwise free on the Internet) is not overly remarked upon by the producer.35 One can of course access these blogs via Kindle's web browser, albeit with difficulty. Amazon.com states only that the "Kindle also includes free built-in access to the world's most exhaustive and up-to-date encyclopedia—Wikipedia.org. With Kindle in hand, looking up people, places, events and

more has never been easier. It gives whole new meaning to the phrase *walking encyclopedia*."36 In contrast, the built-in electronic dictionary is provided by *The New Oxford American Dictionary*, a more traditional resource.37 Given the nature of the digital world, one expects a more democratic option than those given: shouldn't the user have *easy* access to all of these information resources—the blogs and the encyclopedias and the dictionaries—as well as thousands more?

[27] Amazon's choice of phrase in "walking encyclopedia" is significant here. Modern people of all stripes travel constantly now—to school, to work, for work. Watch commuters in any city and you will see people reading their morning newspapers in print and on their Blackberries or iPods or other devices. The twentieth century can be thought of as being the Age of Transport—within seven decades, the first plane flew some twenty feet and the first man walked on the moon. The latter part of the twentieth century through the twenty-first is giving way to the Age of Information, as computers the size of rooms give way to devices that can be held in the palm of one's hand. It is not unusual for a casual business trip to require an individual to fly across the better part of a continent and that individual now generally requires some sort of object—be it electronic or print—to hold the information he or she needs access to for the day.

[28] Jay David Bolter writes that in "the age of print the library itself became the replacement for Victor Hugo's cathedral…There is nothing monumental about an electronic library" that is reduced to numbers and chips.38 Multiple times Amazon.com asserts that one of the beauties of the Kindle is how you can "travel with your library" or "carry your library with you."39 When Meriwether Lewis and William Clark went on their famous expedition to explore North America, Lewis took a wagon with his personal library with him. Two hundred years has reduced a wagonload to a little over ten ounces.

[29] The electronic age has also made the personal the public. In the nature of public diaries, people now will cheerfully share their personal libraries, or at least the titles in them. Programs like LibraryThing allow people to use their libraries as social tools.40 This is not a new phenomenon either— books were symbols of wealth even into the twentieth century. In *The Great Gatsby,* a visitor remarks on Gatsby's library:

> *"Absolutely real—have pages and everything. I thought they'd be a nice durable cardboard.*
> *Matter of fact, they're absolutely real. Pages and—Here! Lemme show you."*
> *Taking our scepticism for granted, he rushed to the bookcases and returned with Volume One of*
> *the "Stoddard Lectures."*
> *"See!" he cried triumphantly. "It's a bona-fide piece of printed matter. It fooled me. This fella's a*
> *regular Belasco. It's a triumph. What thoroughness! What realism! Knew when to stop, too—*
> *didn't cut the pages. But what do you want? What do you expect?"41*

The books are real, the man is not, but the books aren't read. A critical reading invites that books equate truth even when human beings lie—and in Fitzgerald's world, everyone lies. Only books are real.

[30] In the "old world," sharing books was a mode of conduct. Books were given to friends, books were exchanged during courtships, and the like. In the electronic age, files are generally shared indiscriminately. There are numerous websites where users can sign in to download eBook files that other users have made available. This is a viral transmittal that has some unknown implications for the Kindle at least. Kindle files are currently in a format that can be opened on the device—yet we can safely assume it's only a matter of time before a discreet "mod" or hacking program is developed to liberate the text. The possibility leads us back to our unanswered questions about legality and textual ownership.

[31] Returning to the idea of social tools, the Kindle is not yet directly a social device, though it seems the possibility is on the horizon. The summer of 2008 saw groups of "Kindle Ambassadors": Kindle owners willing to post their location online and allow interested visitors to view the machine on arranged dates and times.42 Some people are concerned about the safety inherent in these voluntary encounters, though seemingly no problems have been reported. Nonetheless, it is interesting that people will gather in person to view an electronic device with electronic files, despite the insistence that the digital world trumps the real world.

IV. Ou la Mort?43

[32] The great drawback to the electronic word is its ephemerality: it is ethereal and evasive in the most physical and even the theoretical sense. Websites evaporate and become Error 404: File Not Found.

Servers can go down and documents cannot be accessed. Electronic devices with signals must be shut down during parts of plane rides; other signals can be lost in tunnels, tubes, blindspots. Very old and very new software applications cannot always be opened, or opened correctly. While the data itself may continue to reside physically elsewhere in tapes, disks, drives, and caches, does it really matter if it isn't accessible? Many archival institutions struggle to find and maintain the equipment necessary to access outmoded recorded data, be it phonograph, Betamax or laserdisc. Printed books thus give the impression of immortality. Of course, they can erode through age, poor material, or improper storage, but they are there, and something remains. Papyri from Herculaneum, thousands of years old and carbonized from intense volcanic heat, still exist and are being painstakingly reassembled so that ancient texts can be rescued. Gutenberg's imprints are still a deep and legible black after nearly half of a millennium.

[33] Electronic books' mortality, however, does not decry their usefulness. A Kindle with its thirty-hour battery life is undoubtedly more environmentally friendly than any number of books made up of pulped trees. Their multi-access nature also aids the modern information exchange. A print book can be shared with one person at a time; an electronic text is virtually omnipresent. Admittedly, Amazon's Digital Text Platform/AZW format is a problem, but that applies only to Amazon-specific texts. The Kindle can still access TXT, HTML, PDF, and MOBI formats, as can other eBook readers. Is reading being revolutionized with the Kindle? "Kindle" is a verb as well as noun; promotional material is dictionary-like, "v.t. 1. Set on fire. 2. To inspire, stir up. –v.i. 1. Catch fire. 2. Become animated."44 The object promises action and supplies immediate gratification. Want a book? Here it is. Think of something to look for? Look it up on the spot. The only limitation is battery-life, which is easily managed so long as one is attentive.

[34] This moment in textual history is one of transition. It is significant that a pamphlet dedicated to the eternal life of paper is being circulated digitally.45 Just as there is resistance to the advent of the electronic word, there was protest at the advent of the printed word. Guilds of scribes vehemently protested Gutenberg's press; after all, a French guild successfully lobbied to prevent the import of the machine into France for twenty years. It is human nature to be resistant to change.

[35] The fundamental nature of a text, however, remains the same. It is communication. Neither the hyperlink nor the eBook has changed our alphabet or the majority of our symbols and signs. You can read Dickens on a Kindle: *The Pickwick Papers* will remain *The Pickwick Papers*. Provided you have a good edition, there will be a minimum of typographic or spatial errors—at least, no more than in a usual print edition. The only difference is that if you want to look up a word, you don't have to use a second device or book—it is enclosed.

[36] In fact, if one was to pull a number of historic volumes and lay them on a table, one beside the other in the order in which each was made, one finds that the basic design of a book has not really changed in a millennium. A front and back cover, pages in the middle. The languages and the decoration change over time reflect the latest fads and fashions, but that same shape and form, the *Ego* of the thing, if you will, is the same.

[37] Right down to the Kindle. Two covers, enclosing a text. You can even flip pages—with a button.

[38] Sometimes, the future of reading collides with its past in astonishingly obvious, maybe even prescient ways. Among my first purchases on Kindle were a handful of Star Trek novels. I was placidly reading one day and then came upon this passage
He was relaxing in his cabin after one particularly strenuous workout, sprawled facedown across his bunk, reading. The volume was one of Kirk's own cherished bound books. "The kind of book you can hold in your hands," as Sam Cogley had put it. The lawyer had introduced him to the hobby of collecting "real" books, and Kirk had found this remarkably well-preserved copy of an old favorite in an antique shop on Canopus IV.46

[39] Here I was, in the twenty-first century, savoring the technology of the electronic word, while a character of the twenty-third century savored print.47

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About the Author

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Endnotes

1 "To Read or Not to Read." NEA Research Report #47. November 2007. Available online: <http://www.nea.gov/research/ToRead.pdf> Date accessed: 5/5/2008.

2 Wiegand, Wayne A. "Librarians Ignore the Value of Stories." The Chronicle of Higher Education v. 47 no. 9 (October 27 2000) p. B20.

3 Close readers will note my use of "eBook" throughout the article; I chose this spelling to emphasize the Book in "eBook." In the literature, the terms e-book, eBook, and Ebook tend to be used interchangeably with no prescriptive usage yet defined by an authority. I use the term "e-book" in my quotations and citations where that term is already used to avoid confusion for those who may wish to find these articles and citations.

4 Manjoo, Farhad. "Amazon's Kindle Won't Spark Your E-Book Fire." November 28, 2007. <http://machinist.salon.com/feature/2007/11/28/kindle_review/index.html> Date accessed: 5/5/2008. And this is, of course, ignoring the issues of battery life, platform upgrades, format upgrades, and new formats entirely, all of which are problems inherent in electronic lifespans.

5 A sample comment from "billcap": "I actually don't have anything to say about the Kindle itself. But how sad is it that we now refer to someone who reads 'eight books a year', or less than one a month, as a book 'fanatic'? Heavy sigh." November 27, 2007 09:50. <http://letters.salon.com/tech/machinist/feature/2007/11/28/kindle_review/permalink/5e7b923f36c2f3485f b36e798164d5de.html> Date accessed: 5/5/2008.

6 Apologies to Henry James. James, Henry. In the Cage. NuVision Publications, 2008.

7 Kindle books can be deleted from the device but remain in the purchaser's "media library" on the purchaser's website. Thus the object will survive as long as its producer, if not its consumer.

8 I am aware that thirty six plus four equals forty. Please pay no attention to the scholar with the laptop behind the curtain.

9 Johan Gutenberg died all but penniless in the proverbial gutter, after all. Of course, five hundred years later, he was declared "Man of the Millenium" by Time Magazine.

10 Clark, Dennis T., Susan P. Goodwin, Todd Samuelson, and Catherine Coker. "A Qualitative Assessment of the Kindle E-Book Reader: Results from Initial Focus Groups." Performance Measurement and Metrics. Volume 9, Number 2. 2008. pp. 118-129. [full text: doi:10.1108/14678040810906826]

11 See "Medieval Helpdesk." <http://youtube.com/watch?v=pQHX-SjgQvQ> Date accessed: 5/5/2008. In this short video from Norway (the linked version has English subtitles), a medieval monk requests tech support because he is having problems with the new system, "the book," which takes quite a bit of getting used to from the previous system, "the scroll." "Øystein og jeg." Norwegian Broadcasting (NRK), 2001.

12 For a more precise example, let us look at the gaming industry. Users of the game *World of Warcraft* are allowed to write and insert mini-programs into the game, as well as make them available to others, so long as they do not give players unfair advantages. For instance, popular "mods" include a coordinate program that inserts longitude/latitude coordinates onto the world "map" and a program that allows players to mark resources on maps. Illegal mods would include programs that would allow players' game avatars to loot other players or programs that would allow users easy entry into enemy terrain. In contrast, the game

Warhammer allows absolutely no modifications whatsoever, and players have to agree to this condition each time they log in to the game itself.

13 McLuhan, Marshall. Understanding Media. MIT Press, 1999. p. 82.

14 Vis. Senator Ted Stevens: "I just the other day got, an internet was sent by my staff at 10 o'clock in the morning on Friday and I just got it yesterday. Why? Because it got tangled up with all these things going on the internet commercially... They want to deliver vast amounts of information over the internet. And again, the internet is not something you just dump something on. It's not a truck. *It's a series of tubes.* And if you don't understand those tubes can be filled and if they are filled, when you put your message in, it gets in line and its going to be delayed by anyone that puts into that tube enormous amounts of material, enormous amounts of material. "< http://www.boingboing.net/2006/07/02/sen-stevens-hilariou.html > Posted 7/2/2006. Accessed 5/6/2008.

15 As of the revision of this article, an Amazon.com search reveals that Simon & Schuster has produced some 1406 Kindle titles (averaging steadily at $9.99) while LeClue22 has released 259 (also averaging steadily at $0.99 per text). These numbers fluctuate constantly as texts are added, removed, or updated.

16 Let's save debates about Wikipedia for another day.

17 "I would prefer to stir-fry my own small intestines than to have continual access to a site where the entry for Klingon is longer than the entry for Latin." – Brabazon, Tara. "A New Chapter for Readers and Writers." Times Higher Education. March 13, 2008. <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=26&storycode=401079> Date accessed: 5/7/2008.

18 Ask NowNow. URL: <http://www.nownow.com/nownow/>. Date accessed: 11/13/2008.

19 Park, Han Woo and Mike Thewell. "Hyperlink Analyses of the World Wide Web: A Review." Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication. Vol 8(4), July 2003, pp. 1-30 "In other words, hyperlinks are considered not simply as a technological tool but as a newly emerging social and communicational channel. There is a tie through hyperlinks that connects individuals, organizations, or countries on the Web. The literature suggests how hyperlink networks may in some circumstances reflect off-line connections among social actors, and be unique to online interactions in other cases." Available online at <http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol8/issue4/park.html> Date accessed: 5/8/2008.

20 Of course, many of these opportunities have the potential to be moments of "wikiality," or, "the truth that we can all agree on." The clip of Stephen Colbert's infamous monologue can be viewed at <http://www.comedycentral.com/colbertreport/videos.jhtml?videoId=72347>. Date accessed: 5/8/2008.

21 "Since 2001, the recording industry has logged seven straight years of decline. 'That's when we lost the users,' Hilary Rosen, former CEO of RIAA, told *Rolling Stone* last year, reflecting on Napster." Albanese, Andrew Richard. "Reality Checks." Library Journal NetConnect. Spring 2008. P. 10.

22 Gomez, Jeff. Print is Dead: Books in Our Digital Age . Macmillan, 2008. P. 157.

23 "Industry Sales Post Modest '07 Gains." Publishers Weekly. V. 255, no. 14. P. 10. April 7, 2008.

24 Ibid.

25 Hafner, Katie. "Publishers Sue Georgia State on Digital Reading Matter." The New York Times. April 16, 2008. P.2.

26 Ibid.

27 In this case, "object" is defined as the physical representation of the text, be it a clay tablet, papyrus scroll, bound book, or sheaf of paper. "Text" is defined as the information that can be conveyed on any of these things.

28 Just one of many sites on Rowling's sentiments: Italie, Hillel. "Rowling: No E-Book for Harry Potter VII." The Washington Post. February 4, 2007. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/04/AR2007020400654.html> Date accessed: 5/15/2008. "Rowling has cited two reasons over the years: concern about online piracy (which has never been a major problem for the Potter books), and the desire for readers to experience the books on paper."

29 See Jenkins, Henry. Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture. Routledge, 1992.

30 Bradley's fan group, "The Friends of Darkover," published fan fiction with her knowledge and consent for almost twenty years. An abrupt halt was called to this when a fan attempted to sue the author because they were both working on similar projects. This case is documented in multiple issues of the "Darkover Newsletter."

31 Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author." Aspen, No. 5+6, item 3. Roaring Fork Press, 1967. URL: <http://www.ubu.com/aspen/aspen5and6/threeEssays.html>. Date accessed: 6/3/2008.

32 Amazon.com: Digital Text Platform Sign-in. URL: <http://dtp.amazon.com/mn/signin>. Date accessed: 6/3/2008.

33 The whole incident was recounted in The Economist. April 1, 2006, Vol. 378, Issue 8471, pp 65-66.

34 Fischman, Josh. "Encyclopedia Britanica Goes—Gasp!—Wiki." The Chronicle of Higher Education: The Wired Campus. June 6, 2008. URL:< http://chronicle.com/wiredcampus/index.php?id=3064>. Date accessed: 6/9/2008.

35 In fairness, one can access the blogs for free using Kindle's web browser. That said, Kindle's browser lags significantly behind more common browser applications.

36 Italics are Amazon's. Amazon's Kindle product page. No permanent URL. Date accessed: 6/5/2008.

37 Ibid.

38 Bolter, David Jay. Writing Space: The Computer, Hypertext, and the History of Writing. Larence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 1991. p. 101.

39 Amazon.com Kindle product page. Ibid.

40 LibraryThing. The site declares "LibraryThing is an online service to help people catalog their books easily. You can access your catalog from anywhere—even on your mobile phone. Because everyone catalogs together, LibraryThing also connects people with the same books, comes up with suggestions for what to read next, and so forth." URL: <http://www.librarything.com/>. Date accessed: 6/5/2008.

41 Fitzgerald, F. Scott. The Great Gatsby. Web edition published by ebooks@Adelaide, University of Adelaide, South Australia, 2007. URL: <http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/f/fitzgerald/f_scott/gatsby/chapter3.html>. Date accessed: 6/5/2008.

42 Klaasen, Abbey. "Consumers Become Kindle Ambassadors." Advertising Age. Vol. 79, no 33. pp. 4, 71. September 8, 2008.

43 "Liberty, equality, fraternity, or death" is of course the most famous slogan of the French Revolution. A less famous factoid is how the French Revolution ultimately helped give birth to the concept of a National Archives, in which records and texts were to be open to the public.

44 Printed on the Kindle box. The Kindle box is built like a book, and held closed with a strap similar to those that once closed medieval codices.

45 Powers, William. "Hamlet's Blackberry: Why Paper is Eternal." 2007. URL: <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/presspol/research_publications/papers/discussion_papers/D39.pdf>Date accessed: 6/5/2008.

46 Crispin, A.C. Star Trek: Yesterday's Son. Amazon Digital Services. Kindle Location 155-59. Original, printed text Pocket Books, 1983.

47 Discerning readers will notice that I have presented them with thirty-nine Kindles instead of forty-two. I must reluctantly submit that the secret of life, sadly, is not perfect.