Internet Publishing in a Borderless Environment: Bookworms into Butterflies

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We readers and publishers have become accustomed to thinking about publishing as a process resulting in a concrete object, a book, which is distributed to and paid for by readers. Our business models have been refined with the introduction of word processing, computerized typesetting and production technologies, and desktop publishing but, until very recently and the advent of Internet publishing, the end product was just that—a physical product, a book, and recently, a CD or a disk—so the basic business models for selling ideas, information, and entertainment enjoyed a concrete basis.

Subtracting the physical incarnation, the physical product from the equation, does not eliminate the actual substance of what is for sale. However, the exponentially increasing use of global computer networks as a publishing medium invites, even requires us to examine the fundamentals of the publishing process, and asks us to recognize that process for what it is: an ongoing and evolving method for transferring ideas, information, and entertainment among people around the world. Shifting from the paper and disk-based media to the evanescent networked media offers significant opportunities to expand and redefine what it is publishers are doing and ultimately, what they are selling in the worldwide market.

To understand the fundamental otherness of this new online media, one needs a brief introduction to the Internet, the worldwide computer network of networks. The important thing to understand about the Internet is its principal architectural characteristic: it is a distributed network. This means that it has no center, no headquarters, and is not owned by any company, government, or entity. Computer communication among disparate computers worldwide—PCs, Macs, and UNIX machines—is made possible by a common protocol, TCP/IP. Because the Internet is an open network of networks, a collaboration among some 20,000 networks worldwide, it has experienced exponential growth over the past ten years or so, and today reaches into all seven continents, over 70 countries, and an estimated 25-30 million people worldwide have access to the Internet either through direct-dial or larger, leased-line connections.

Again, unlike centralized, privately owned networks such as CompuServe, the Internet serves as a superset of networks. Designed originally by the U.S. Department of Defense during the Cold War, the distributed network architecture assures us that if part of the network goes down in response to something such as a nuclear strike, the rest of the network will continue to operate and thrive. In that sense, it is a self-perpetuating method of communication. Obviously, this is not the case with a centrally-located computer network, or publishing house for that matter.

To appreciate and commercially exploit the Internet as a publishing resource, we must make the first difficult
step of recognizing this medium as fundamentally "other" than any publishing medium before. We will not succeed in publishing effectively and furthering the evolution of the publishing process on the Net by simply using it as a global distribution medium for digitized versions of books, or as a "front end" for selling CDs or other "contained," disk-based publications. It's always inviting to invent a new word to define a new process, and in this case, such a coinage is in order to make the distinction between publishing a concrete physical object such as a book or a CD, and beaming ideas, information, and entertainment. Let's say that the tangible act of publishing a thing is indeed publishing, and that the commercial release of digitized information is "pubnetting."

The imaginative leap necessary to understand the evolution from publishing to pubnetting involves appreciating the following defining characteristics of pubnetting:

- it's immediate
- it's global
- it's interactive
- it's kinetic
- it's multimedia.

Anything that can be digitized can be transmitted over the networks: texts, pictures, videos, sounds—even people, via email links to them.

The economy of publishing represents an economy of scarcity: one is selling finite objects. If I am a publisher and have a book for sale and someone buys, steals or borrows that book, then I am poor, I am without. Pubnetting operates in an economy of abundance. If someone makes a million copies of the files off of my machine or my server, I still have the original files and am none the poorer for the transaction. The currency becomes the *attention* of the reader, and the challenge before us in the evolution from publishing to pubnetting is to construct a commercially viable business model for pubnetting. What matters and what is for sale in the tactile environment is fundamentally other than what is for sale in the instantaneously accessible online environment, where the issue is not *distributing* a tangible thing, which the buyer then owns or possesses, a copy of a book or a disk, but rather *accessing* ideas and information. How does a pubnetter sell access to ideas and information, to whom, and for how much? That becomes the issue.

Making the leap from the economy of scarcity to the economy of abundance involves a fundamental metamorphosis from Bookworms into Butterflies. It's a common misperception that people dread change and, to understand the parameters of change, we frequently resort to polarities, dichotomizing the world into either/or static endpoints, and we embrace one pole or the other, responding to a desire to be right and know what is. But change does not have to spell destruction; pubnetting does not sound the death knell for publishing books, but invites us to adapt one technology to complement another, to develop complementary income streams. While we were in the business of publishing books, in the good old days, the best customers were bookworms whose imaginations took wing through the thoughts and ideas contained in those books. Pubnetting enables publishers to have a hand in developing a business in what heretofore was a purely imaginative realm. Sharing ideas, information and entertainment on an immediate, electronic, global level, in an organized and repeatable fashion—that's pubnetting. That's collective, interactive thought on a level impossible in any other media.

Pubnetting enables readers to free-associate electronically, to direct their thoughts and reading paths in whatever direction they choose. In this way, the online version of a book becomes a concrete complement to the printed book. The downside of distributed pubnetting, of course, is Attention Deficit Syndrome, a byproduct of new media, I would argue, where people think in chunks and sound bytes rather than in clear linear fashion. That's where the synergy between publishing and pubnetting comes in. As an example, consider: Wiggins, Internet For Everyone, a hyperlinked book from McGraw-Hill, which pubnet version positively complements the printed version. In this case, the OBS version is available for free and serves as a "marketing front end" for the printed books. The thousands of people accessing these files get a taste of the printed book, and McGraw-Hill and OBS believe that this will increase the print sales for the book.

Appreciating the marketing or advertising value of pubnetting as a complement to printed books, McGraw-
Hill has also shown foresight in understanding an essential tenet of internetworked pubnetting: copying is not the central issue. In a general sense, though, it's fair to say that in an effort to protect their business, the fount of their capital, publishers are greatly concerned with the issue of copying, which issue was adumbrated with the advent of the Xerox machine. Pubnetting makes not only rampant copying, but also instantaneous distribution or opening for access, not only possible but ridiculously easy. Our challenge is to embrace and accept the practical reality that rampant copying and instantaneous global access is an inalterable tenet of the online environment, and is a "good" thing, is desirable. What a pubnetter puts up for sale, the basis of his or her business, is not a static copy of something but access to an interlinked, kinetic process. Efforts to hobble, with encryption and other proprietary systems, the fundamental given that copying is no longer the central issue, all in the name of protectionism, will lead to either a Tower of Babel or a global monoculture when it comes to pubnetting and the creation of digital libraries. The fear of rampant copying really is a fear of losing control of the products which spell the basic income source for publishers. Pubnetting offers new parameters for control, new sources for revenue. One can control access to digital information by constructing an interactive and kinetic context for that information, which context is unaffected by whether or not people copy static files.

We find ourselves at a key time in the evolution of the Net; people are jockeying for position. In violation to the fact and spirit of a distributed network which, again, has no owner, no center, we see new efforts every day to "corner the market," be "the one." Such efforts are doomed to failure if the network remains a distributed network. Those driven by fear and greed may come to see that curiosity and the effort to create useful ways to use and transmit ideas through the networks—ways which will be copied, imitated, widely adopted, and revised—will yield the highest revenues. Perhaps I sound like a proponent for a digital Esperanto here, but what I'm saying is that publishers, as they begin to explore the pubnetting possibilities, follow the lead of the computer and software companies which created the Internet on the collaborative, distributed model, creating an even playing field in which then anyone can compete. OBS along with EUnet is spearheading an effort to create a consortium of publishers interested and active in the area of Internet pubnetting and, for more details, you can come by our booth in Halle 1.1 As we pioneer the development of a commercial pubnetting system, a process complementary to the existing publishing business, it seems obvious that we do so with the understanding that this process is ecologically as well as commercially sound. This isn't to say that paper publishing should end tomorrow; change doesn't have to mean destruction. But pubnetting offers us the opportunity to offer access to ideas and information independent of the medium of dead trees. Pubnetting offers a different and complementary income stream to paper publishing. Online, one can see that the library concept merges with the bookstore which sells copies of books. If a means for selling access to a digital library is the question, then individual copies of books no longer become the issue and devising a strategy for selling access becomes paramount. Again, it's not the copies that matter, but the access to the ideas, information, and entertainment that is at issue.

What is the function of publishers and where is their commercial usefulness in the pubnetting environment where it's not the copies for sale that generate the primary source of income? How do publishers become commercially successful pubnetters?

Publisher's role in the kinetic online world:

- Imprimatur of quality, content filter.
- Verifying authenticity of the files.
- Creating context around core content;
  - licensing links
  - politics of pointing
  - drawing in non-book components, publishing in subject areas
  - Example: "Paperless Publishing" linking to examples outside of itself.

- Developing and maintaining an equitable royalty system based on number of accesses.
- Customizing the content for the readers;
  - realizing that this is a reader-driven environment.
  - Example: "Paperless Publishing."
• Developing and catering to the collective reading experience;
  • discussion groups/online writer's group
  • Example: Catbird press. Suddenly it is possible to reveal the process of publishing in a way not possible in paper, contained publishing.

• Developing hybrids between publishing and pubnetting;
  • selling online what you can't on paper
  • updating
  • increased and ongoing involvement with the authors.

• Protecting privacy of author and reader in an electronic flatlands environment where equal access is afforded to all by electronic mail.

Unlike a few years ago, it is now difficult to find a publisher who still holds that publishing is and will always remain a paper-based medium. The question is not whether people are going to be doing their reading on the screen—millions already are. But how can publishers apply what they've learned over the past 500 years to make that reading experience an effective transference of ideas, an effective online complement to their existing paper-based businesses.

In entering the pubnetting process, publishers must be aware of and accept the fact that the copying goes beyond the editorial issues alone. Consider the transparency of code in the Mosaic program, a distributed publishing program widely used on the Internet. With a paper book, one would look at a typeset page and see just that: the typeset page. All the codes specifying typeface, leading, kerning, indents, placement of graphics, columnar makeup—all used to be the purview of the typesetter. With DTP that changes, and the publishers can own and possess the files they paid for. On the net, you look at what one publisher has done and can see immediately and painlessly *how they did it*, and you can copy or improve on it. Thus, one's publishing production methods as well as content can also be copied freely.

The same goes for color: again, part of the magic the publisher exercised on paper was the treatment of color. The reading public and competitors didn't necessarily know about ink mixes, whether Toyo or PMS colors were used, and in what percentages. Paper stock choices, offering background juxtaposition for ink, again, open. Not only is this knowledge readily available for the reader online, but any reader who so desires can modify that mix, can customize the publication as he sees fit. Rather than seeing this as a threat, however, publishers should look at it as an opportunity to revise and improve what it is they are doing by using, rather than attempting to wall themselves off from, the interactive, internetworked environment.

The issue of control applies, too, not only in the area of content, production issues of typography, printing methods, but also in control of authors and readers. Authors become big media stars overnight, not sheltered by the publisher. “Controlling” readers becomes a quality content experience issue, it means keeping them interested, involving them in the publishing process by customizing your offerings to them and, if pubnetting in the distributed environment, being like good parents whose children have grown up, opening the garden gate for them so they can go and do whatever they want, but creating a home publishing environment they will want to return to. Satisfied readers who find what they want from an online pubnetter will pay for access, and around this structured access the business model of online pubnetting might be built.

Publishing expands beyond even the now-familiar multimedia parameters in the electronic storage medium of CDs. Consider the publication of people through the medium of their home pages, to emphasize the point raised above about the role of the Internet-active publisher being to protect the privacy of and nurture the imagination of the author. It used to be that "publish or perish" meant not only getting and keeping an academic post, but also an author's ability to survive in print through his books conveyed a sense of immortality on the author. The written word endures. Through personal home pages, people publish themselves, not necessarily through words they have written to express thoughts, but through an organized set of relational hot links which define who they are at any given moment. These living contexts may be fact or fiction: on the Internet, no one knows you are a dog. Publishers may find themselves in the position of publishing not only the typescript of an individual, but the author himself—license plate, first drafts, home
Copyright law has developed in close connection with technological evolution. This is particularly true of digital technologies, especially the Internet, which, since the mid-1990s, has generated both vast opportunities and enormous challenges for the copyright system. Geographical distance is no longer an obstacle to the dissemination of works, which can now take place at virtually no cost. This has provided creators and their commercial partners with new means to exploit their rights, and it has opened the door to new forms of infringement, some of which have proved difficult to combat. To a When it comes to self-publishing, a high-quality book cover is one of the most important elements that will get your book to convert into sales! The reason is because your cover design is what readers see first and will immediately determine whether they want to read your book or not. “Don’t judge a book by its cover” simply doesn’t apply to actual book covers, as much as we wish it did.