



## KINDLE E-READER

PETER BLAKEY, FORMERLY OF MASSEY UNIVERSITY, NZ

Electronic books, or e-books, are here to stay, and are selling by the thousands. A 2011 article summarising this trend states that 'e-book sales soar 20 per cent in a year'.<sup>1</sup> In particular, Amazon has experienced a sharp swing in its book sales subsequent to the launch of the very successful Kindle e-reader. As reported in *The Guardian*, at the beginning of 2011, sales of the electronic format outstripped total sales of paperbacks for the first time. This case study looks at what has made e-books, and in particular the Kindle, so successful.

Amazon correctly predicted the move to e-books when it launched its Kindle e-reader in November 2007, and followed this with improved and also enlarged versions over the following years. Apps for smartphones and tablet computers, including the iPhone and iPad, were released from mid-2010. There are

also versions of Kindle available for browsers on laptop and desktop computers.

As opposed to the Kindle apps on phones and tablets, the Kindle is a dedicated device whose only function is to facilitate the reading of e-books, into which category also fall magazines and PDF documents. Focusing on this functionality

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has enabled the Kindle to emphasise the following aspects of electronic reading:

- high-contrast e-ink screen—not backlit as are LCD screens, so requires some light in order to be read, but can be read in bright sunlight, just like a book
- lighter than a paperback—weighs 240 grams, and is less than a centimetre thick
- storage—has the capacity to store approximately 3500 books
- long battery life—with wi-fi off, reading for an hour a day enables the battery to last for a month
- built-in wi-fi—used to download books
- 1-Click<sup>®</sup> purchase.

As with music, so with e-books. Electronic delivery means that this type of e-commerce can result in immediate delivery. As soon as an account with a credit card number is established with Amazon, e-books can be purchased with a click of the 1-Click<sup>®</sup> button, resulting in instant downloading and immediate reading. This is true of the Kindle apps as well as the Kindle itself. This new type of consumerism is hugely advantageous to vendors, in that it facilitates enormously the

buying process for consumers. But, as individual users can verify, the satisfaction of searching for a book, finding it and then downloading it with 1-Click<sup>®</sup> for instant reading is hard to beat!

### Amazon Whispersync<sup>®</sup>

The technology used to ensure a seamless reading experience is called Whispersync<sup>®</sup>. Using the concepts of cloud computing, data about each reader's Kindle accounts is held remotely. Data held includes details of all books bought, and the last-read position in each book, so that the reader can return to a book exactly where they left off.

More significantly, each reader's account can be synchronised across all the devices the reader uses as Kindle e-readers. Whether it be one of the actual Kindle devices, an app on an Apple or Android device, or via a browser on a personal computer, the user's e-books are synchronised across all of them. So a reader might start off reading a book on their iPhone, move on to reading on a laptop, and end up reading it on their iPad. Seamlessly. This functionality dramatically extends the world of e-books.

## reflect

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