

# The era of digital publishing of electronic textbooks: Reducing the gap between information producers and information consumers.

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**Abstract:** The study recognizes the challenges associated with slow adoption of digital publishing in our society, mainly at schools and universities. Digital publishing has still not reached its full potential besides increasing popularity of electronic publications and the fact we have lived in the digital age for a sizeable period of time. Our cultural patterns in information production and consumption have been quite consistent for several hundred years. Over the last 50 years, due to the rapid development of ICT, the cultural patterns in information production and consumption have been changing. The new technologies brought new possibilities in all of the stages of information production, promotion, distribution and consumption.

In the study, we identify the key problems of slow adoption, potential opportunities for improvements of the adoption process. As the result, we suggest how to overcome these barriers by suggesting new implementation methods and practices with a practical solution – digital publishing and distribution platform for electronic publications – **ecoetra.com**

**Keywords:** electronic books, adoption, book sales, ecoetra.com, hype cycle, publishing, reading devices, electronic textbooks, price elasticity, business model, ebooks,

## The current e-book trends

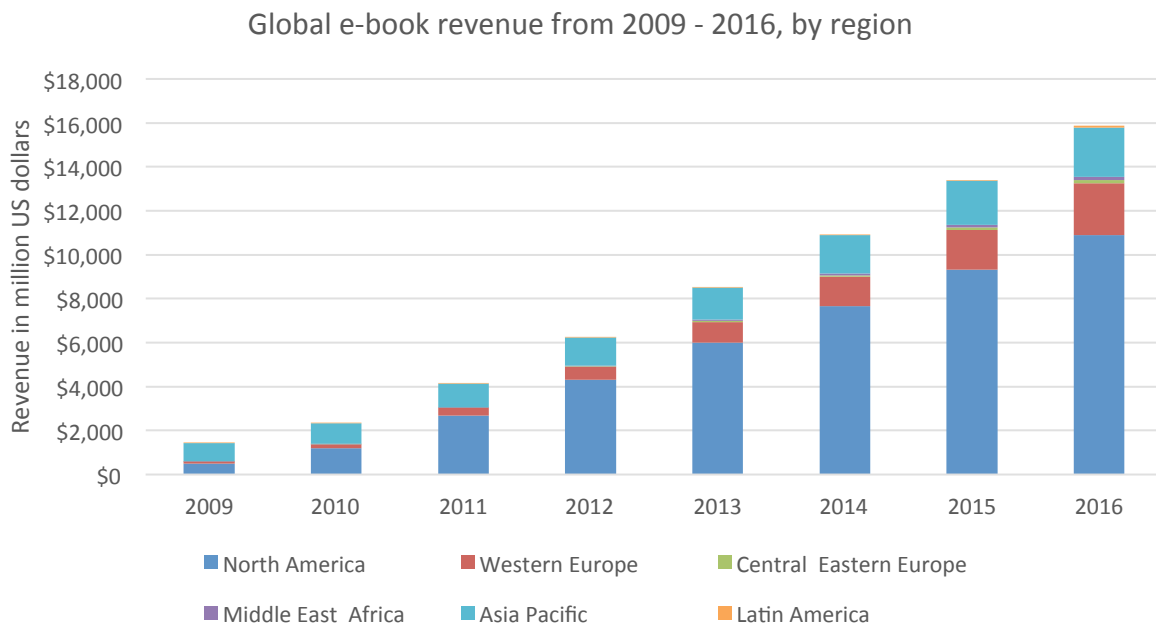
The current trend in use of electronic books and publication has inclining tendency. The forecasts (Figure 1, Figure 2) projected by the Pricewaterhouse Coopers showed upward global trend in the sales of electronic books. The highest revenues from electronic book sales were/are generated in North America, followed by Asia Pacific and Western Europe. Other regions of the World such Central Eastern Europe, Middle East and Latin America were/are generating much less revenues, but the sales trend is inclining proportionally as well. [1]

Year	North America	Western Europe	Central Eastern Europe	Middle East Africa	Asia Pacific	Latin America
2009	\$ 500	\$ 93	\$ 4	\$ 5	\$ 817	\$ 1
2010	\$ 1,200	\$ 176	\$ 9	\$ 9	\$ 952	\$ 2
2011	\$ 2,696	\$ 324	\$ 12	\$ 18	\$ 1,088	\$ 4
2012	\$ 4,326	\$ 574	\$ 28	\$ 37	\$ 1,269	\$ 8
2013	\$ 5,992	\$ 938	\$ 53	\$ 57	\$ 1,477	\$ 14
2014	\$ 7,653	\$ 1,339	\$ 77	\$ 80	\$ 1,748	\$ 27
2015	\$ 9,324	\$ 1,816	\$ 108	\$ 107	\$ 2,007	\$ 46
2016	\$10,905	\$ 2,354	\$ 144	\$ 137	\$ 2,257	\$ 73

*Global e-book revenue from 2009 to 2016\*, by region (in million U.S. dollars)*

Source: PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2012

(1)

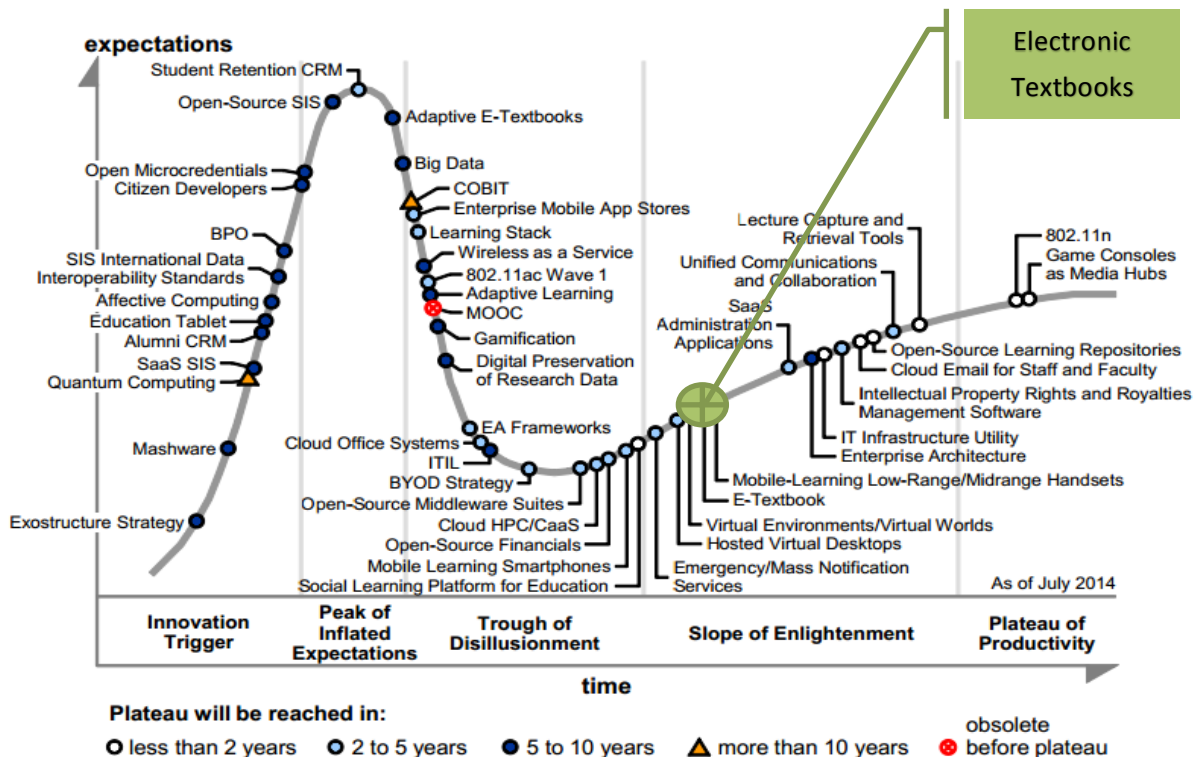


Source: PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2012

(2)

### **Electronic Textbook Adoption**

Despite this global upward sales trend of electronic books, the spread of electronic textbooks for students has not reached its full potential. The current trend of electronic textbook use can be seen in the Gartner's Hype Cycle for Education (Figure 3). The hype cycle demonstrates the adoption curve of technological innovations for education and the current stage of the most emerging educational technologies. In the Hype Cycle, we see the adoption trend of electronic textbooks which passed the Trough of Disillusionment Stage and is climbing into beginning of the Slope of Enlightenment Stage. This momentum toward adoption of electronic textbooks derives from increasing availability and deployment of reading devices, the practicality of digital form for education purposes and competition in the publishing industry. Still, not all educational institutions are ready for the transition from physical delivery of textbooks to digital delivery of electronic textbooks. Few educational institutions already migrated completely into electronic form of textbooks. Publishers have not found the optimal business model to spread the use of electronic textbooks. In terms of usability of digital content, single-purpose devices for reading are not the right choice as multi-purpose devices are preferred options by most users/readers of electronic books. [2]



Source: Gartner, 2014

(3)

### Factors causing slow adoption of electronic textbooks

As mentioned in the Gartner's Study, many publishers did not find the right business model for selling and distribution of electronic publications. One of the key factor of the business model is pricing. The sales data from Amazon shows that the prices of electronic books are highly elastic, meaning when the price goes down, readers buy more. If readers would buy **100.000** of copies of an electronic book at **\$14,99** then the same readers would buy **174.000** of the same electronic book at **\$9,99**. [3]

Another experiment by Random House publishing company confirmed that the prices of electronic books are elastic. Rob Reid's sci-fi novel was being tested at the price of **\$1**. The book had been out for over a year and then the publishing house dropped the price to **\$1**. Suddenly, the book escalated into New York Times best seller list. [4]

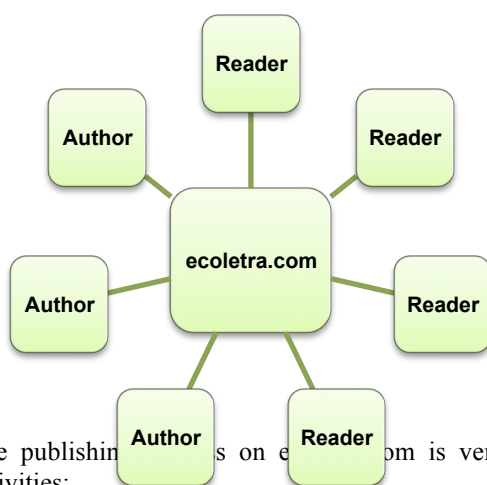
Many electronic books are being released at high prices, almost equally high as hardcopies. The overall costs associated with an electronic book are much lower as there are not any printing costs, warehousing costs, physical distribution costs and so on.

The other key factor mentioned earlier was usability, in other words – what is the most preferred option for reading? There are many different single-purpose content readers, but it seems that multi-purpose devices are preferred as they are more flexible in terms of its use. In one study from 2012, **63%** of university students believe that tables will replace textbooks within five years. The study also reveals that **6 of 10** of these students prefer digital over printed content because of easy access to embedded interactive materials, access to social media to share notes or ask questions. The same study conducted in 2011 showed opposite results where more university students preferred printed content over digital. This transition from paper books toward digital books is inevitable as the trends of using multi – purpose digital reading devices is increasing. [5]

## Recommendation for faster adoption – development of distribution and publishing platform ECOLETRA.COM

These circumstances mentioned above and the slow trend in the electronic textbook adoption led us to suggest a practical solution for faster adoption. We considered the key factors of slow adoption mentioned earlier and developed a web platform for better and faster distribution of electronic content.

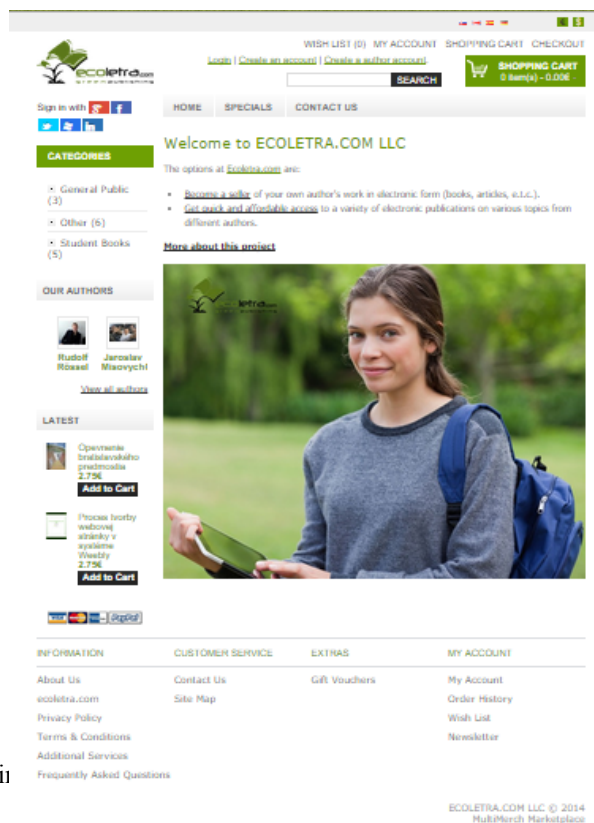
**Ecoletra.com** is rather a digital distribution platform rather than just a publishing house. The platform connects authors with readers (students) directly as there are no publishers involved in the selling and buying process (Figure 4, Figure 5). All prices of eBooks at ecoletra.com are maintained low in order to keep them accessible to every reader. In fact, the authors set and control the prices of their books within a price range (€2,75 – €7,00) that is controlled by ecoletra.com. This dynamic pricing allows the authors to manage their book prices flexible and control the demand. The profit from each purchase is equally distributed between the author and ecoletra.com. Once payment is made, the platform provides instant digital delivery of the ordered book. The entire digital books found on our platform come in PDF format that is readable for almost all of the computer devices and readers. The authors maintain full control of their intellectual property as well as the entire sell process. The author's dashboard provides an overview of detailed sales statistics which allow the author to see directly his/her audience and keep closer "relationship". The audience on another hand is able to review the books and the authors. This social aspect of the platform allows information interexchange between both parties involved. [6]



(4)

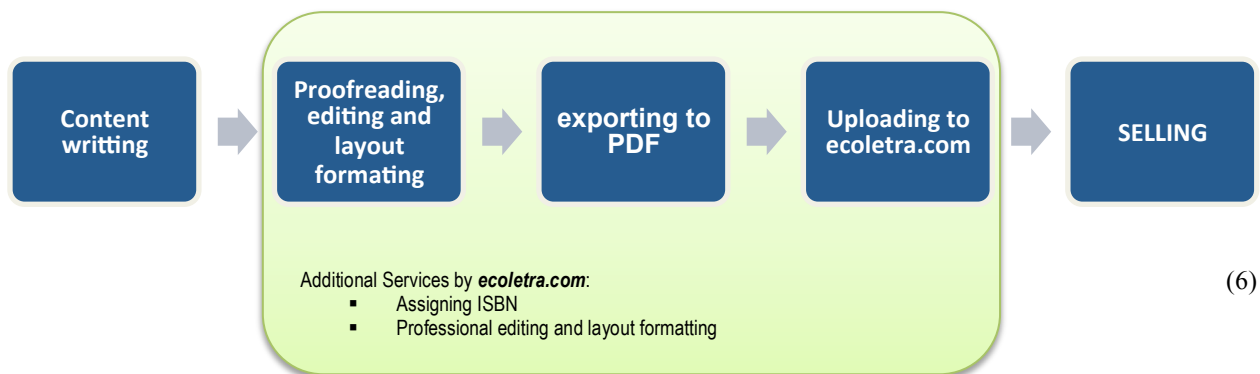
The publishing process on ecoletra.com is very intuitive activities:

1. Content writing
2. Proofreading, editing and layout formatting, assigni
3. PDF exporting
4. Uploading
5. Selling



If authors do not have the capabilities to do professional layout formatting, proofreading and assigning ISBN, ecoletra.com can provide such services for a fee. Such additional services ensure the quality of the offered books on the platform.

The system itself is based on an Open Source Content Management System with modified and improved capabilities developed by Ecoletra.com



(6)

## Literature

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