

# ISQ

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SPECIAL EDITION: STATE OF THE STANDARDS AND YEAR IN REVIEW

PLANNED OBSOLESCENCE:  
A NEW MODEL FOR  
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ELEMENT SET

E-BOOKS: THE ETERNAL  
NEXT BIG THING

Z39.7 LIBRARY METRICS &  
STATISTICS DATA DICTIONARY

OPENURL KNOWLEDGE BASES  
RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

CYNTHIA HODGSON

## E-Books and Standards Webinar

On November 18, 2009, Aptara Corporation, a provider of knowledge process outsourcing solutions (including e-book production), hosted a free webinar on *E-book Readers and Standards... Where to Next?*

While the title implies a focus on readers, in actuality the webinar was more far-reaching in discussing the whole e-book market and a particular standard for e-book content.

Speakers **Sarah Rotman Epps**, an Analyst with Forrester Research, and **Michael Smith**, Executive Director of International Digital Publishing Forum, both have a wealth of knowledge in the e-book arena so were excellent choices for the webinar.

Although this webinar took place well before the announcement of the Apple iPad, Rotman Epps' point that publishers are "betting" on which devices and formats will win the market race is even more relevant with the growing number of new and improved devices, including the iPad. She also stated that Forrester's own May 2009 forecast for the e-reader market is already too conservative and they are now predicting as many as 6 million e-reader units to be sold in 2010.

In comparing e-readers to the music industry's experience with the iPod and similar devices, Rotman Epps expects that the adoption will be slower since less content is already digitized, but that convergence with other devices will occur faster. Many consumers do not want a specialized device for e-books; they want to e-read on their laptop or smartphone. Interestingly, more people expressed interest in reading e-books (50% of the survey group were interested or very interested) than magazines (36%) or newspapers (33%).

Content providers need to make sure their content is "device agnostic" and will reformat to look good on a wide variety of devices as well as having the ability to transfer between devices. Some publishers have already created new business models using subscriptions, incremental content sales, and advertising to generate revenue. Rotman Epps expects the revenue to initially be incremental and replacement for other sales, but potentially still profitable, especially through cost savings in print operations as publishers are gradually able to cut back on print production.

Michael Smith followed up with the answer to cross-device content formatting: the open EPUB standard that specifies how to create digital reflowable text, which he claims is perfect for small screen applications. Smith feels it is only a matter of time for EPUB to become the dominant format and it is just a question

of how fast. The standard is already supported on many readers [including the new Apple iPad, but not the Amazon Kindle as yet] and there is significant interest in the STM market and in Europe, China, and Japan in adopting the standard.

The standard is currently at version 2 and a maintenance working group ensures continuous improvements; they are already working on version 3, which Smith said will support annotations, dictionaries, and deep linking. Although not mentioned in Smith's talk, IDPF has recently appointed the DAISY Consortium to be the maintenance agency for EPUB. Also the maintenance agency for the NISO/DAISY standard, *Specifications for the Digital Talking Book* (ANSI/NISO Z39.86), the DAISY Consortium has long supported the EPUB standard, which includes the DAISY DTBook as a "preferred vocabulary." E-reader devices have been especially popular with reading-impaired consumers since they generally offer the ability to increase the text size.

Smith touched only briefly on DRM, comparing DRM-free EPUB to Adobe Digital Editions, which uses DRM. What he did not discuss was that DRM can easily be added to an EPUB-formatted work, which has already been done by some publishers. Apple has stirred up controversy with its announcement that DRM will be used to secure EPUB files that are sold through its forthcoming iBookstore. | CR | doi: 10.3789/isqv22n1.201012

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