The tensions of e-book creation and distribution in a small language culture

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Abstract

We report on research in progress on the e-book phenomenon in Sweden. The aim of which is to explore the impact of the e-book at every stage, from authorship, through publishing, library lending and bookselling to readership. Here two aspects of the research are covered, the attitudes of authors and publishers towards e-books to demonstrate the ‘early adoption’ stage of the e-book in the Swedish market. Interviews with authors reveal that most regard e-books, though most of those who have a contract with publishers see it as a by-product of print publishing. Most authors do not have much experience of e-book publishing or self-publishing. The survey of publishers reveals ambivalence towards e-books and in their relationships with libraries and booksellers. The main ‘drivers’ in the uptake of e-books are consumers’ demands for portable, convenient formats, and the search for more economic solutions to the provision of textbooks.

Introduction

The Swedish e-book market is still comparably small to for instance the US or UK (Rainie & Duggan, 2012), although constantly growing. ‘Small language’ markets differ from the international market in size, revenues and potential profits, reading tradition and use of information and communication technology. Thus, the English language market is global with approximately 840 million speaking it as a first or second language (Wikipedia, 2013), Swedish, on the other hand is spoken by about nine million people. Although the language is understood by Danes and Norwegians, how many in these countries are active readers of Swedish is, as far as we can discover, unknown. The effect of the lack of a global market is that the publisher in Sweden must rely very largely on the local market: the success of translations of the “Swedish noir” detective story is not enough to compensate.

Being a small language culture has certain implications for the market for e-books in Sweden. The growth of e-book publishing involves several parties; authors, publishers, libraries and readers. In a small language context like Sweden, the commercial market, however, is limited, therefore, public libraries play a more important role. The lending of e-books through public libraries has increased significantly the last few years and in 2012, the public libraries accounted for about 85 percent of the total e-book market (Wischenbart, 2013).

The whole situation is even more complicated by the fact that “the rapid spread of global English and the invention of e-books and online book sales... allowed the Anglo-Saxon book markets to almost unintentionally extend beyond their traditional retail and linguistic limits.” (Kovač, 2014: 15). Small numbers of e-books in Swedish and other local European languages make bilingual readers buy more and more English language e-books thereby establishing what Kovač calls a dual economy and culture. These two are increasingly divided not only into print and digital publications but also along the linguistic lines where local language literature exists mainly in printed format while the e-books market is dominated by English language production.

The e-book market development depends on several factors. One important component, aside from accessible platforms for reading, is accessible content and the pricing of devices and e-books (Clark et al., 2008; Jung et al., 2012; Peters, 2009; Westin, 2013). These factors might well be driving forces as well as hindrances in the diffusion process, and it is important to put
technology into a larger social context to understand the development (Bouwman & Van Der Duin, 2007; Winston, 1998).

The aim of our project, therefore, is to investigate the conditions under which the e-book enters the Swedish market and the impact it makes. This article aims to provide some insights into the attitudes of Swedish authors and publishers about e-books, their understanding of drivers, hindrances, potential opportunities and threats created by the e-book, and possible partners or competitors on the changing publishing stage in Sweden. This paper explores the tensions within and among two interest groups: authors writing Swedish fiction, poetry and non-fiction, and publishers producing these books. The empirical material for the paper is drawn from interviews with authors and from a questionnaire survey of publishers. Research questions that we seek to answer are:

What are the attitudes of authors in relation to the adoption of e-book in Swedish book sector?
What are the attitudes of publishers in relation to the adoption of e-book in Swedish book sector?
What are the similarities and differences between the attitudes of Swedish authors and publishers on e-books?

Setting the context: the publishing dilemma

For centuries, authors have sought to publish their literary works (Kular, 2006). It has become increasingly more difficult for authors to get their work published. Publishers are tightening up their business models in order to minimize risks and increase their margins. Further, there are also more authors wanting to be published and more titles than ever available on the book market (Cope and Phillips, 2006).

In 2004, the Swedish Authors’ Association (SFF) made an additional enclosure to the agreement between authors and publishers on e-books (http://www.forfattarforbundet.se/radgivning/avtal/monstervalten/). This was the first guarantee for the authors to agree or to disagree to distribute the printed copy in digitized format. This could be seen as an act of foresight, some eight years before the rise in the production of e-books in Sweden. Striking shift in e-book production took place between 2011 and 2012 (see Fig 1). According to Wischenbart, “2012 has seen a significant increase in sales, from 10,000 in 2011 to over 34,000 in 2012” (Wischenbart, 2013: 42). Today, the publisher decides which books are going to be distributed in digitized format, mainly best-selling popular fiction, and include this in the same contract. In most cases, the authors have to accept both.
One reason behind the increase shown in Figure 1 was the publication of backlisted books in e-format.

The relation between market and authors on e-books is still not regulated, which is a problem today. People do not buy e-books to any large extent, as the price of an e-book is usually higher than the price of the printed copy, depending on higher VAT (6 percent for printed books and 25 percent for e-books), but borrow them from the public library. The agreement is that each library-loan costs 20 Swedish crowns (SEK), independent of the number of loans. During the summer, 2014, the change was introduced in prices of library e-loans, increasing them significantly for new titles and decreasing for the old ones, but the results of this change are not yet visible. However, this will not diminish economic difficulties for libraries, which may have to stop lending e-books before the budget-year has ended. The payment for the library-loans is divided between the distributor and the publisher, who decides how the author is going to be paid. This is to be compared with compensation for public library lending based on copyright on printed books, which today is 1.41SEK per loan. This was established in Sweden in 1954 and is of importance to authors in small language cultures. The Authors’ Association now strives for the similar regulations for e-book lending in public libraries.

The present situation of publishers in relation to e-books is very similar to the situation some years ago in the recorded music industry. The peer-to-peer, file-sharing site Napster panicked the major record labels and some of their bands and, ultimately, the site was shut down. However, file-sharing continued, and as Waldfogel reports:

‘While the traditional purveyors of recorded music – the major record labels – have suffered since Napster, good music has continued to make its way to market. Independent labels account for a growing share of successful music, measured both by critical acclaim and sales. While many producers of recorded music have been made worse off by changes in technology, there is no evidence that the volume of high-quality music, or consumers, have suffered’ (Waldfogel, 2011).

Although there are numerous sites for the free downloading of books, none appears to have attained the prominence of Napster; nevertheless, book publishers are now as concerned about e-book piracy as were record producers of music piracy. Hard data is as difficult to come by for e-books as it was for recorded music, naturally so, since piracy is a covert activity and the
downloading or file-sharing sites do not publicise their activities. However, the impact of e-book piracy is just as uncertain as it was for music, indeed, for one publisher, O’Reilly Media, it has been shown that piracy actually increased sales:

‘one way to measure impact is to pick a book, wait for it to be pirated, and then compare sales before and after. Back in 2009, O’Leary did this for one publisher, O’Reilly Media, which publishes technical books. Surprisingly, he found that sales actually increased after their books showed up on pirate sites. Piracy seems to have boosted sales. O’Leary says people may have been using the pirated editions to sample books before they actually opened up their wallets’ (Misener, 2011, April 19).

Neither we, nor publishers, can assume, however, that this will be the case for books of all genres and publishers are in the same quandary as music publishers in knowing how to respond.

One response in the music industry has a parallel in the book industry: bands discovered that it could be more effective to publish their music tracks openly and to rely upon their appearance on stage for their profits. The equivalent in the book industry is the rise in self-publication as a result of the introduction of easy-to-use software, which makes the publication of a book from a Website a relatively straightforward matter for authors.

As a result of these two developments, the major publishers are feeling ‘squeezed’, and the problem is exacerbated by the decline in the availability of outlets for their products, with, in the USA, the closure of the Borders chain of bookshops and reduction in the number of Barnes and Noble bookshops. Elsewhere, for example, in the UK, there has been a decline in the number of independent bookshops. In other countries, too, there has been a small decline in the number of printed books sold.

Exploring the adoption of e-books as a disruptive technology in German publishing, the team of researchers note that traditional management and company culture may be barriers to the adoption of e-book, together with more general lack of investment resources and lack of pressure from competitors. “Surprisingly, non-adopters are characterized by high levels of innovativeness and expertise in digital publishing.” (Buschow et al., 2014, p. 71).

Another important aspect is the cultural policy in Sweden. The Government’s bill to Parliament 2013/14:3, “Reading for Life” (Regeringens proposition 2013/14:3, “Läsa för livet”), declares the importance of providing e-books in public libraries. The negotiations of the expenses should therefore be left to the municipality and county councils. This is thought to enlarge the library supply and the use e-books in reading-promotion activities. The Authors’ Association is positive about the future of e-books in the Swedish market on condition that restrictions and regulation works out well for the authors.

Traditional mainstream publishers have become more risk-averse and, as a result, concentrate on books that have a greater potential to become bestsellers and profit makers. Against the background of an increasing corporatization, book self-publishing could be a solution for first-time authors (and others) to reach the market (Dilevko & Dali, 2006). Self-publishers can now, together with networked people, create content apart from established institutions, which do not necessarily sanction this kind of production (Laquintano, 2010). It is important to note that self-publication is not at all new with the occurrence of internet or e-books. But the Internet has enabled e-book authors to locate an audience for their work (Laquintano, 2010). Several self-publishing services are available including editors, translators, proofreaders etc. There are also easily available programs for free (Kular, 2006).

Developments that will affect the market for e-books are taking place continually: one that has happened only recently is the emergence of e-book subscription services, thus, Readly, which began as a magazine subscription service now includes books for a flat-rate subscription of 99SEK a month, and the Mofibo service, based in Denmark, offers books in Swedish, also for
99SEK a month. What impact these developments, along with the entry of Amazon into the market, and other ventures that emerge, will have on public library lending and bookselling is something the E-book Research Group will be monitoring over the next two years.

The theoretical framework

To understand the acceptance of the e-book as a technological and social phenomenon by the main producers of e-books we use a theoretical framework for the research based on Winston’s (1998) model of the technical innovation process. In this model the key features are the ideas of the ‘supervening social necessity’, which results in prototypes becoming marketable innovations, and the ‘suppression of radical potential’, i.e., those forces in society or in the market that prevent the innovation from realising its full potential.

The ‘radical potential’ of the e-book is visible, because it can be produced and marketed more cheaply than a printed book, there is the possibility of a massive increase in sales based on lower prices. Secondly, the potential for self-publication means that the author could be in a much more powerful position vis-à-vis the publishing industry than at present. On the other hand, there are various limitations placed on e-books by various actors, such as the lack of a ‘public lending right’ payment to authors of e-books and the difference in VAT charges. Winston’s (1998) theory of technical innovation is represented in Figure 2, below. The theory can be briefly expressed as follows. The first stage in the development of an innovation is the emergence of an ‘idea’ from the scientific ‘ground’, this idea then finds representation in a prototype or series of prototypes, which precede the ‘invention’ proper, which emerges as a result of a ‘supervening social necessity’, i.e., a concatenation of factors that result in the invention being accepted as a desirable innovation. The diffusion of the invention depends upon the ‘law’ of the ‘suppression of radical potential’, the source of which may vary according to the nature of the invention, but the result of which is a failure fully to develop the possibilities of the invention.

Figure 2: Model of Winston’s theory of innovation (Based on: Winston,1998)

Although the rise of the e-book is significant in terms of publishing revenues in the USA and the UK and in other predominantly English-speaking markets, it still some way from constituting a major proportion of total revenues in the industry; for example, in the USA in 2012, revenues from e-books constituted 22.6 percent of the total (Franzen, 2013). In Germany, on the other hand, in the same year, e-book sales accounted for only 2.4 percent of the market (The Digital Reader, 2013). We might say, therefore, that, in the terms used by Rogers (2003), it is in the ‘early adoption’ phase. Consequently, our comments on the ‘supervening social
necessity’ and the ‘suppression of radical potential’ must be taken as being provisional; if the innovation assumes a more significant position in the industry, our perceptions of both of these concepts may undergo some change.

Nevertheless, the early adoption of e-books affects and causes transformation within the whole sector of books in any society and introduces changes into the book communication circuit – the model produced by Darnton in 1982 to explain the circulation of the book in 18th century society. Murray and Squires (2013) have explored how these changes affect each participant represented in Darnton’s model within Anglo-Saxon context. For the purpose of this chapter we will concentrate on the transformations of publishers’ and authors’ roles and functions. The digital technologies have increased possibilities of authors to publish without publishers and come into direct relationships with retailers and distributors of their texts. In some cases, authors can establish direct links with readers. Thus, publishers and other agents mediating this relationship disappear from the circuit. The authors themselves must perform publishing, marketing and dissemination processes and seek support services from other agents (aggregators, designers, copy-editors, etc.). Publishers, in turn, are forced to change attitudes towards competing publishers, literary agents, online retailers, etc., and what is most important, restructure their relations with authors into more equal partnerships (Murray & Squires, 2013).

Method and data

The author study is based on semi-structured interviews with self-selected authors. A request was sent to members of the Swedish Author Association and persons interested in taking part in the study signed up. A choice was made to get as much breadth as possible in the sample in terms of e-publishing experiences, genres and sales. Fifteen persons were interviewed in 2014. Five interviews took place at Stockholm public library and lasted on average for one hour. One of the researchers was selected to lead the conversation each time, one or two of the others mainly observed, took notes and asked a few additional questions. Ten authors were interviewed by telephone by one researcher at a time. These interviews were slightly shorter. A semi-structured interview guide was used in all interviews to cover the themes for the research project. There were five aggregate themes that we wanted to cover in the interviews, where some are related to the analysis presented in this article, and some are relevant in other parts of the larger research project on e-books in a small language culture. The themes are: the publishing process from decision to product; e-books and the relation between author and reader; pricing, piracy and downloading; own e-book experience; e-book in society, effects on reading behavior, literature experience and alike.

To find out what publishers in Sweden feel about some of these issues, we conducted a survey in 2013. Most international statistics on publishing are drawn from members of the main publishers’ associations in different countries and, because not all publishers are members of such associations, they under-represent the true situation. To counter this, we surveyed not only members of the Swedish Publishers’ Association (Svenska Förläggareföreningen), but also those of the Nordic Independent Publishers’ Association (Nordiska Öberoende Förlags Förening, NOFF), giving a total of 203 publishers, after the removal of a small number of organizations that were not, primarily, publishers, but, for example, a garden centre, and an angling products company. Some questionnaires were returned, indicating that the company had moved or gone out of business and, following a check to discover any new address, these were removed, leaving a total sample of 198 companies.

The publishers had the choice of responding to the mailed questionnaire or using the same instrument on a SurveyMonkey Website and, after one follow-up message, 110 questionnaires
were returned giving a response rate of 55.6 percent. Returned questionnaires were copied into the SurveyMonkey version for ease of analysis.

The survey included altogether eighteen questions (plus response boxes for further contact) dealing with the present output of e-books and future intentions, the ‘drivers’ behind the emergence of the e-book, the perceived barriers to further diffusion, the impact of self-publishing, and the future role of libraries and bookshops.

Altogether, the two studies provide a base for analysing the tension between publishers and authors in the digital book market context. One should, however, be aware of the limitations of the studies. The publisher survey did capture about half of the companies relevant for this issue, but it has not yet been possible to make any in-depth analysis of the drop-outs. The author study does give a diverse picture of e-book publishing from the creators’ point of view, but future research will allow us to increase the understanding of the relations between publishers, authors and the e-book market further.

The authors’ position

The Swedish authors’ point of view on e-book publishing was captured through 15 interviews with authors both involved and not involved in e-book publishing. The voices are rather varied on the matter, and the interviews contribute a wide range of experiences, attitudes and thoughts on e-book writing and publishing. On the whole the attitudes toward the e-book phenomenon were mainly positive, except from one author, who pointed out the problem of preservation for the future. This author, with a background in teaching, also emphasized the qualities from reading printed books to be reflexive deep-reading and superior to digital reading. According to research (Wolf & Barzillai, 2009; Mangen et al., 2013), deep-reading has not yet been developed in digital reading.

Two authors had self-published e-books. They claim that they have seen e-book publishing as an opportunity to spread their word through tools that can reach many at a low cost. They have chosen to transform their printed books into e-book format and made available and promoted the digital books themselves. One of them used digital tools and made the book himself, the other had someone doing the job for her, but without any interference from publishers or other actors. Both bore the cost related to the publishing process.

The driving force among these authors is definitely the possibility of spreading their word. “I want people to read my story” as one of the authors puts it. Among the two who self-published e-books, a wish to spread their writing can be found, although the books might not be of any great interest to publishers. None of the self-publishers is interested in selling their e-book. They want it to be available for free downloading to be read by as many as possible. “It is better that 10,000 read the book than that 3,000 buy it”. The downloading figures seem to be higher than sales figures for the single titles, which is what counts to these authors.

The authors in our study, who have not yet published any e-book, were of two categories. The first category consists of authors who, although with high reputation among the critics and the intellectual establishment, i.e. with great cultural and symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1996), were not offered a contract with e-publishing of their books even if they wanted to, because their books are not very profitable to the publisher. The other category of authors, who have not yet published an e-book, simply do not express any advantages in reaching many or reaching wider and getting a bigger readership. Some of these authors produce non-fiction picture-books and lyrics to music, genres which are not easily transferable into e-formats. Another author, who has recently begun to think about the technical opportunities with the e-book format (embedded video, for instance) explicitly says that she, thus far, only thought about the making part of the
process, not really the distribution in a wider sense. Her concern is mainly about the message and how her intentions could be communicated in an interactive, digital book and her conclusion is that e-books do not contribute on this matter.

As noted earlier, a majority of the publishers in the study do perceive that self-publishing has little relevance for the publishing business. Only a few agree on the necessity of developing channels for self-publishing within their own businesses. They claim, however, that self-publishing could be an important way to identify new authors. It seems that digital self-publishing is in its infancy when interpreting the findings of the presented studies. The opportunity to reach readers by circumventing the established publishing process (Dilevko & Dali, 2006; Laquintano, 2010) seems to attract only a few, and is not the number one issue among publishers.

Authors, who had published e-books as part of their contract with a publisher, claim that it was not a particular wish or upon their own request that their writing should be electronically published, but rather just a part of the contract with the publisher. A part they seemed to pay hardly any attention at all. “I think that e-book publishing was part of the contract /.../ there was no separate discussion on this.” “I just signed.”

For these authors, there was really no question or discussion about e-book publishing. They wrote textbooks which were easily digitized, and are perceived to look about the same as in print. It was done by the publisher and the authors were not involved in the process at all.

It does not seem that the e-book publishing has affected these authors to any large extent. “The book sure has (made me more famous), but not the e-book per se.” They talk about it as a residuary product, coming with the main product: the printed book. They explicitly claim that publishing their book in an e-book format has meant that very little or nothing to them and that it has not affected them as writers except from one author, who has produced a large number of e-books in a popular fiction-genre. This author claims that her printed production is now moving from novels to short stories, because reading short stories on digital reading-devices is more suitable to this audience.

According to translations of e-books into other languages, it appears to be reserved for popular fiction-genres, mainly the so called “Swedish noir”. Self-publishing authors or authors with a Swedish focus in context would never think of translating their e-books for taking a step onto the global e-book market. Swedish authors available on Amazon.com are mainly available on the Kindle format. These authors’ productions are also managed by literary agents, working for the global market.

A fact which might affect both publishers and authors is the unpaid use of digital literature. On the one hand, there is piracy and illegal downloading; on the other hand, there are authors who deliberately make their books available for free. When talking about piracy, it is evident that the authors have not thought so much about it. Some say it is bad, some not, but they all agree on that it is hard to do anything about it. Those who are strongly against, raise argument about authors and publishers depending on their income: “It is important that authors earn their living, and that goes for publishers too.”

But there are other perspectives on privacy traced in the author study: “I think it is mostly fun because it won’t decrease my total print-run, rather it contributes to increase.” Available content is perceived as important in society and, rather than stopping illegal downloading or dealing with it by copy protection, one author suggests that there is a need to find revenue systems as in the music business. The market is thought to be self-regulating and one author expresses a belief in a mutual respect for the total value of creativity and the importance of paying for it. Two authors who have not self-published also mention that it is not problematic if
author colleagues make their e-books available for free downloading. It should be the decision of each author, one of them states.

Another author in the study is not at all familiar with the issue of authors making their work available for free and is rather surprised that anyone would do that. The same scatter of opinions as found for general e-book publishing is also found for making e-books available for free. It is evident that the intentions of publishing permeates the perception of making e-books available and putting them on the market. We may assume that experience of publishing and self-publishing affects the overall opinions. The conducted study has, however, limitations in this sense and cannot give more in-depth answers to such questions. Future research need to focus closer on the relation between self-publishing experience and the view of book business.

One key innovation of e-books and reading devices is the ability for authors to update their books with corrections long after the customer had already bought them (Westin, 2013). Two of the interviewees in our study mention the possibility of doing something more than just at linear text book. Since they are textbook writers, it has not yet been a question for them or for their publishers, but one or two mention the possibility of interactive books with pictures, links, films etc. It does not seem that the publishers have actually asked them to think creatively about bookmaking in the digital world, as for now, e-book publication rather seems to be just another format for making the text book (and also books that contain pictures) available, a part of the business model which is not questioned or developed in a cultural sense.

As e-books are regarded as by-products from the printed books, the authors in this study did not seem very aware of the income from the digitized versions, either from selling or from library-lending. They did not show suspicioun of rules and legislation, apart from the fact that the VAT on e-books is much higher than on printed books. The opinion was that it should be the same, 6 percent overall.

Questions on reading e-books, more specific if the authors themselves were readers of e-books, resulted in a diversity of answers. There seems to be no relation between the publishing of e-books and reading e-books. Some younger authors were avid readers of e-books, but there was no consistent relationship between age and e-book reading. Some authors chose e-books for their ready availability, whether they are heavy-readers of fiction for pleasure, or journalists or researchers who needed e-books quickly for work. Others emphasized convenience, such as, light weight, portability, lit screen allowing reading in darkness, etc.

Most authors believe that the future of the e-books are good, although stressing it is only a by-product of the printed book. Not many authors believe in the idea of the ‘enhanced e-book’: “Then it is something else than a book.” The authors’ opinion on digitization and computers’ effects on reading and readers were not very articulated on the whole. Some were very positive to this new format, while others were answering this question in a thoughtful but not elaborated way.

The publishers’ survey

The present level of impact of the e-book on publishing in Sweden can be gauged from the fact that respondents were almost equally divided (56 to 54) between those who had published e-books and those who had not. A majority of those who had not published e-books (54 percent) intended to do so, over the next two or three years.

The question used to determine the publishers’ view of the ‘supervening social necessity’ was, How significant do you consider the following for the development of the e-book market in Sweden? As Table 1 shows, the dominant reason is the consumers’ demand for a portable and convenient format.
### Factors affecting the development of the e-book market in Sweden (percent, n varies)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Very significant</th>
<th>Fairly significant</th>
<th>Not very significant</th>
<th>Not at all significant</th>
<th>Total n</th>
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<tr>
<td>Consumers’ demand for a portable and convenient format</td>
<td>34 (34.3)</td>
<td>51 (51.6)</td>
<td>13 (13.1)</td>
<td>2 (2.0)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure from technology manufacturers</td>
<td>15 (15.2)</td>
<td>38 (38.6)</td>
<td>31 (31.3)</td>
<td>15 (15.2)</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The economic potential of the e-book for the publishing industry</td>
<td>16 (16.2)</td>
<td>46 (46.6)</td>
<td>31 (31.3)</td>
<td>7 (7.1)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection of copyright through DRM</td>
<td>15 (15.2)</td>
<td>26 (26.3)</td>
<td>45 (45.5)</td>
<td>14 (14.2)</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The possibility of self-publishing by authors</td>
<td>17 (17.3)</td>
<td>51 (51.6)</td>
<td>23 (23.3)</td>
<td>9 (9.2)</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The evolution of technology use in education</td>
<td>28 (28.8)</td>
<td>41 (41.6)</td>
<td>26 (26.6)</td>
<td>4 (4.1)</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Factors affecting the development of the e-book market in Sweden (percent, n varies)

Technology use in education and self-publishing possibility are generally recognized as the main driving forces for the demand for e-books. Publishers are less sure about the economic potential of e-books or pressure from technology manufacturers, while technology of copyright protection does not figure as a strong driving force altogether.

The ambivalence induced in publishers in Sweden by the e-book phenomenon is indicated in answers to some of the questions in our survey. For example, considering the future role of booksellers, Table 2 shows a fairly narrow division between those who think that booksellers will continue to have a role, but the majority believe that the role will decline and that publishers will engage in more direct selling to the reader.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agreement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Booksellers will continue to function as outlets for both e-books and printed books.</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only online bookshops will sell e-books.</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The role of the bookseller will decline as e-book sales increase.</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales of e-books will increasingly shift to direct sales from publishers to readers.</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: The future role of the bookseller (percent, n=98)

**Comment:** Question posed: *To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding the traditional bookstore’s role in the delivery of e-books?* A four-point scale was used: Completely agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree. Answer options completely agree and agree are merged into “Agree”. Answer options disagree and strongly disagree are merged into “Disagree”.

There is a similar ambivalence in relation to author self-publishing: 54 percent of respondents felt that self-publishing has little relevance for the publishing industry, but 34 percent believed that it forced publishers to market their products more effectively and 84 percent thought it helped to identify new authors. Eighty-nine percent thought that self-publishing was not a threat to their business, but 28 percent thought that they needed to develop their own self-publishing channels. Table 3 shows the comparable situation in Lithuania and Croatia, with the shaded cells showing the areas of agreement among the three countries.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Sweden (n=98)</th>
<th>Lithuania (n=52)</th>
<th>Croatia (n=43)</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-publishing has little relevance for the publishing industry</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-publishing can help to identify new authors</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-publishing forces us to market products more effectively</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-publishing is a threat to our market position</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We need to develop our own self-publishing channel</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Publishers’ reaction to author self-publishing (percent)

Comment: Question posed: The e-book development has led to an increase in author self-publishing; please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements. A four-point scale was used: Completely agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree. Answer options completely agree and agree are merged into “Agree”. Answer options disagree and strongly disagree are merged into “Disagree”.

It seems that there is a tension between the publishers’ role as a distributor of books, which the e-book simplifies and, hence, has the potential to deliver more profit per unit, and the fear that uncontrolled access to e-books will result in piracy and a decline in profits.

Discussion

To at least partially answer our first research question, at this stage of the project, both publishers and authors in our study seem to be rather reluctant regarding the digital book format. There seem to be only a number of factors preventing e-books from reaching their full potential. For example, the authors interviewed in the presented study do not, in the current situation, see the ‘radical potential’ (Winston, 1998) in, for instance, self-publishing.

In the literature, self-publication is described as a sustained interaction among authors and readers involving social network activity (Laquintano, 2010). Not much of this is seen in our study, where self-publication is done in order to spread the word. The authors in our study are not yet in networks of self-publishing authors, which might be a consequence of Sweden being in the beginning of the e-book diffusion process. Another finding strengthening this interpretation is that the authors hardly talk about e-book publishing as business at all. Neither self-publishers, nor the one’s whose publishers decided on e-book publishing mention the book production chain or the possibilities of e-commerce mentioned by for instance Cope and Phillips (2006).

Regarding our second research question it is generally recognized by publishers that convenience and portability constitute a driving force for the demand for e-books, which are very convenient if one has a long journey-to-work time in commuting to one’s job and when taking holidays abroad. Dozens (even thousands) of books can be carried on a light, portable device such as an e-reader or an iPad and one can easily switch to a new book if one finishes
reading the current one. Suitably equipped, it is possible even to buy a new book from, say, Amazon, while travelling.

In a rather more specialised area, it is interesting to note the emphasis given by publishers to ‘the evolution of technology use in education’ as a driving force. With more and more school districts (in the USA) and higher education institutions turning to e-textbooks, where the drive is almost entirely economic, this cannot be ignored as an element in the ‘supervening social necessity’.

The survey was repeated in Croatia, with the assistance of colleagues at the Universities of Osijek and Zadar and these two factors again headed the rankings: 90 percent of the forty-four respondents who had published e-books felt that the convenience factor was ‘important’ or ‘very important’, and 84 percent felt that the increased use of the technology in education was ‘important’ or ‘very important’. A very similar situation was revealed when the survey was carried out in Lithuania, with the help of colleagues from Vilnius University. Here, the convenience and educational factors were almost equal, with about 90 percent of respondents regarding both of these as equally significant.

Given the extent to which these two drivers are likely to affect the take-up of e-books in small language markets, the publishers are in a dilemma: on one hand, increased sales of books, in whatever format, will lead to increased profits, but, on the other hand, if e-books and e-textbooks are made available in the same way as printed books, lending between friends or, more seriously, uncontrolled library lending, may reduce profits. For the textbook publisher the situation may be exacerbated by the ability of teachers and university lecturers to produce their own e-textbooks and make them openly available (see, for example, Tracey, 2014).

When publishers are asked about driving actors on the e-book market, they clearly point out readers: users of public libraries and customers in online book stores. Authors are ranked lower, and the relation or tension between publishers and authors does not seem to be an important driving force. But on the other hand, publishers do not point out authors as hindrances either. Library lending models, and market size are rather thought to slow the development. Users seem to play an ambivalent role both as drivers and as hindrances. Surveys of large numbers of respondents strengthen this impression. In the Swedish adult population, less than 10 percent has read an e-book at least once within a year and the share of weekly readers is about 1.5 percent if you include both fiction and non-fiction (Bergström & Höglund, 2014). In a small language culture with established reading habits and strong actors in the wider book market, mutual lack of interest among two of the main actors, publishers and authors, might affect the development of the e-book market negatively.

We can analyse the Winston’s ‘law’ of the suppression of radical potential in the light of our third research question. Winston gives as an example of the ‘law’, the extent to which the potential uses of the telegraph were delayed, following its initial use in the USA to enable the safe operation of trains on the single-track railways of the time (Winston, 1988, p. 23), by patent disputes, disputes over the ownership of systems, and a lack of government interest in the system.

The response of publishers has been to embed digital rights management (DRM) software in e-books, in the hope of preventing piracy, or, if that word is too strong for the exchange of books between friends, duplication of the book. In the case of library lending, the major publishers have put arbitrary limits on which books may be acquired (or licensed) by libraries, how many loans of any one e-book may be made, and various other restrictions, fearing that unlimited loans of e-books will reduce profits from sales. A large part of authors seem to agree with publishers about the threats of piracy and even free distribution of e-books by authors. They are interested in securing the income of creators and publishers, though would not seem as eager
or as sure about prevention measures. Some are quite pleased with the fact that their texts are pirated and see this as a measure of popularity.

There are similarities between the attitudes of authors and publishers relating to a certain conservatism in both groups when the question of e-books is raised. Authors prefer good relationship with an established publishers rather than face the uncertainty of self-publishing. Publishers clearly wish also to maintain the status quo with their existing partners – bookshops and libraries. On the other hand, some authors resent the fact that there creativity is constraint by existing system and see e-books as freeing them from the dictatorship of a publisher and allowing experimentation in a community of artists.

Both authors and publishers see potential in the e-book: publishers in the prospect of increased sales, and authors in the prospect of more readers.

**Conclusion**

It is evident that the Swedish e-book market is in its infancy in spite e-books being on the market for some decades now. Not only in comparison with other markets (Wischenbart, 2013), but also in relation to the national Swedish book market as a whole.

It is evident from our investigations to date, that the diffusion of the e-book phenomenon in Sweden is at Rogers’s (2003) ‘early adopter’ stage: readership of e-books in general is very low; the production and market remain unstable and vulnerable. If the income from e-book sales grew up 53,5 percent between 2012 and 2013, it has dropped down 19,2 percent during the first half-year of 2014 (Svenska Bokhandlareföreningen and Svenska Förläggareföreningen, 2014: 33).

The reason for this drop has yet to be established, but it might be influenced by any factor: a new entrant to the market, price of e-books, increase in English language reading or anything else.

The data shows that the authors have little awareness or interest in the e-book as an alternative publication mode, one or two have been involved in self-publishing, but most of those interviewed had little interest in doing so and were aware of digital publishing only because it appeared in their contracts with publishers.

When we look at the data from publishers we see that there is a degree of ambivalence regarding the e-book: publishers are aware of it, half of them in Sweden have published at least one e-book, but the uncertainty regarding the take-up by the market is probably holding back further expansion. The ambivalence is evident in a number of areas: for example, they regard self-publishing as of little interest and no threat to the industry, but think it a useful way to discover new authors and a small proportion think that they need to develop their own self-publishing channel. In this respect it is interesting to note that Bonnier advertised its own self-publishing channel for both printed and e-books at the 2014 Book and Libraries Fair in Gothenburg. This is most probably the one of the first indications of a serious change in the attitude of the publisher towards investment into innovation. According to Steiner, high level of avoidance of serious technological development can explain why e-books are so slowly finding their ways into the book sector (Steiner, 2009: 107).

In our research so far we did not see any disintermediation in the traditional book circuit that was suggested by Murray & Squires (2013). For the time being all the actors in the Swedish book circuit, including e-book circuit, remain in the same places that were established in the 20th century and the major changes happening on the international level are yet to be seen.
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