PA Guide to Going Digital
Linda Bennett

In his Foreword to this book, Graham Taylor of The Publishers Association explains the need for this guide succinctly: 'It’s happening quickly now. . . . Digital delivery is now an essential skill set for most publishers. The opportunities are there, but the choices to be made and the issues to be confronted can be daunting.'

This report, commissioned by the PA in part as an update to its E-books: The Options (2006), written by the same author, is presented as part manual, part reference, part directory. It offers a rapid tour of the field for the unengaged or uninitiated, but it also offers a useful overview and update of the technical options available and the issues that a digital publisher must address in deciding on format and channel to market for those needing to re-appraise their offer. It includes the current status of market opportunities internationally, and includes useful contact information for purchasing consortia and potential suppliers.

(Foreword, p. v)

Linda Bennett, whose credentials are summarized on two pages following the Foreword, is eminently well qualified to write such a guide. Formerly a director of two library supply companies as well as Waterstone’s bookstore, she regularly organizes seminars and conferences for groups connected with the publishing industry. Her specialty is electronic publishing in all its many facets, and she has written widely on the topic. Readers of this guide can feel confident that they are being given authoritative information by an expert in this field.

The author ably carries out the aims of the book as stated in the Foreword. The Introduction usefully provides context for the rest of the book by outlining 'the key issues currently being faced by trade and academic publishers respectively as they develop their e-book strategies' (p. 2). For trade publishers, these include direct engagement with the consumer and the concomitant change in the traditional relationship between publisher and bookseller, the expectation of online consumers for services extending beyond simple provision of an e-book, the 'momentous problem of discoverability', the changing role of the author in an online environment, the challenge of new pricing models, and the impact of piracy. Many of the same issues are confronting academic publishers, but they have their own special concerns to deal with, such as the challenge from advocates of 'open access' and the pros and cons of aggregation versus direct-to-consumer sales. Here, and throughout the book, the author is careful to make sure that readers understand how differences among publishing sectors affect the issues they face and why one size does not fit all.

Part One on ‘Choices’, by far the longest section of the book, provides a wealth of information about available e-book formats, current e-reading devices, tagging and metadata, DOIs, Web 3.0, the retail library, and textbook markets, business models, DRM, royalties, conversion and digital access management, social networks, aggregators, print on demand, e-learning support systems such as Blackboard and Moodle, and reproduction rights organizations. It is very helpful to have all this information, now scattered across many sectors of the industry, consolidated in one place for easy reference.

The same may be said of Parts Two and Three. The second part summarizes ‘Opportunities’ open to e-book publishers by a variety of initiatives under way in the US, UK, and other Anglophone countries of the world as well as Western Europe. (The book does not attempt to cover the entire world in this respect, and to that extent the claim in the Foreword about surveying opportunities ‘internationally’ is misleading.) These are mainly government-supported efforts focused on either the public library or higher education sectors. Most of Part Two is devoted to a country-by-country or regional (for Scandinavia) summary of the projects of potential interest to publishers. Part Three provides basic information about e-book reading devices, library consortia worldwide and international organizations interested in e-publishing, contact details for companies mentioned in Part One, and a brief primer on digital compared with traditional offset printing.

Although many heads of publishing houses and upper administration who have some responsibility for keeping up with overall trends in publishing will have encountered much or all of the information contained in this book at some point, this can nevertheless serve as a handy quick reference for all of the diverse subjects it covers, and the inclusion of URLs in footnotes will make it easy for anyone to get more information relevant to any given topic. The book will be even more valuable for department heads and staff who may know what pertains to their particular area of responsibility but be less familiar, if not entirely ignorant, of what is happening with e-books as affecting other departments. For similar reasons, the book could serve as a basic text in instructional courses about e-book publishing offered by both professional associations and certificate- or degree-granting programmes in universities. One might hope that college faculty would educate themselves about e-books by consulting
my only complaints about this book concern matters of omission and style. as a CCC board member, I noted very few references to the CCC even though many of its innovations, such as Rightslink, are directly relevant to some of the topics discussed. As a former university press director, I was chagrined not to see the National Academies Press and the presses at California, Michigan, and Penn State mentioned alongside Bloomsbury Academic as pioneers in 'open access' monograph publishing. Project Muse, similarly, was omitted from mention of multi-product platforms. But then I had to remind myself that this is a British author who may not be quite as up to date on US as on UK accomplishments.

No such excuse is available to explain the numerous editorial lapses, however. Inconsistencies abound, for instance, with regard to use of the serial comma, US or USA, capitalization, punctuation (IT or I.T.), use of acronyms before the full names are given, and other basic points of style. In Parts One and Two I counted over 100 such mistakes, which are distracting, to say the least. It is shameful for a publishers' association to issue a book in such a flawed state when it otherwise has so much to recommend it. One hopes that the PA will soon provide a digital edition of this book (which would be good to have so that constant updating could be done to keep it current) and correct the many errors in that edition at least. I would be happy to provide my list of corrections to the PA for this purpose.

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Clark's Publishing Agreements: A Book of Precedents, 8th edn
General Editor Lynette Owen

Another 50 pages in this eighth edition of Clark's Publishing Agreements, published only three years since the seventh edition, is indicative of the rapid changes taking place in the current publishing environment. At this rate, it surely will not be too long before this veteran of publishing handbooks exceeds 1,000 pages.

Lynette Owen has once again assembled a band of colleagues from all walks of publishing life to create this new edition, including Hugh Jones, Kevin Stewart, Brenda Gvozdanovic, Leo Walford, Anjali Pratap, John Cox, Diane Spivey, Michael Ridley, Nick Fitzpatrick, Alan Williams, Duncan Calow, Andrea Shallcross, Richard Balkwill, and Alicia Wise. Each deserves special thanks for giving their time to the project free of charge, all royalties being donated to the Book Trade Charity (formerly BTBS) and the Royal Literary Fund.

One of the first questions that someone new to Clark's might ask is, 'This book looks a bit heavy going – should I wade through it or should I call my lawyer?' The answer is not to be put off by the book's appearance, which, for each precedent, consists of suggested clauses on the right-hand page and notes/commentary on the left, and instead retire to a quiet room to take it all in and produce a tailor-made agreement with the assistance of the accompanying CD-ROM. Inevitably, there will be times when professional advice should be sought, but fees could be reduced considerably if the publisher's brief is for a health check of a draft agreement based on a precedent in Clark's, as opposed to asking a lawyer to create one from scratch.

There are 23 precedents included in the book, ranging from an initial General Book Author/Publisher Agreement to the final Website Content Distribution Agreement, and these comprise the bulk of the book. There are also 11 useful appendices covering the US market, paperback rights, book clubs, collective licensing, territories, and other very useful material. In addition, there is an extremely valuable legal update by Hugh Jones and so, altogether, there is a feeling of having been well briefed by the expert team involved.

The extent of the changes made to this edition by Lynette and her team are too numerous to list completely here. As well as updates to the agreements between the publisher/translator, publisher/illustrator, and publisher/packager, those dealing with international co-editions, exploitation of film and merchandising rights and how to license royalties to less traditional markets such as China and Eastern Europe have also been revised. There are also brand new precedents on the publishing of a learned society journal and on the distribution of e-books.

Where next? Inevitably, there will be demand for additional precedents with an electronic theme. There is currently no agreement for the provision of content to an electronic aggregator – according to the editor this is because such companies normally use their own form of contract. There is certainly a case for simplifying the often horrendously long agreements offered to publishers by aggregators, and regaining some control might benefit the publisher. There is also scope for greater coverage of site licences for content purchased from a publisher's own website as well as advice on terms and conditions for pay-per-view downloads or rentals. Some policy