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What do an (e)Book, (i)Book and (face)Book have in common? Or, How I got carried away at PUB U

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So, I was going to write a piece about how the whole social network aspect of marketing is reaching the stage of over-hype. I was gonna say that this social network thing is oversold and is the equivalent of the tech bubble. Everybody says that everybody has got to join in... or else! Buy in now, or you'll be left behind in the stampede for exposure, a loving fan base, and loads of ensuing money!

But wait a minute. Before I go on, let me back up and explain how I got here.

Pub U Newbie

I was lucky enough to go to IBPA's annual Publishing University (Pub U) this year, as a scholarship recipient from the MBPA chapter of IBPA. I had come to the conference wondering about eBooks and Apps, hoping to learn some of the new lingo and make some good decisions about where True Center Publishing should invest its time and money.

We feel we have a special role to play in moving forward thoughtfully with the adoption of new publishing technology, since we are currently publishing the work of John Suler, Ph.D., who is considered a father of the field of CyberPsychology. Fifteen years ago, John began publishing one of the first online Hypertext textbooks, *The Psychology of Cyberspace*, and people look to him for his opinion on the future of the personal and interpersonal Internet. At Pub-U this May, I was an emissary in search of info about how, why, if and when to make a cross-link between print, digital and online publication.

Well, I'm here to report -- and to admit -- that I'm still grappling with what I learned, my reactions to what I learned, and -- most difficult -- my thoughts about how much of what I heard/learned was affected by the extreme revolution that seemed to be happening at that pivotal moment in time.

At the conference, technology was on everybody's mind. The rise of eBooks and social networking were the two goliaths. (Yes, finally, a reference to social networking and my entire opening paragraph. Hold on, I promise I'll get back to it soon. But let's start with eBooks.)

eBooks On My Mind

The debut of the iPad only two months before the event had generated stunning sales numbers. Even the presenters seemed to be reeling with heady excitement. Dominique Raccah, founder and chief executive of Sourcebook -- one of the largest independent publishers in the nation -- gave the opening Keynote Address. Only weeks before PUB U, she had gotten an iPad herself and had unexpectedly become an instant convert. As she put it, "In one weekend, I transformed from complete physical books reader to a complete eBooks reader!"

The phenomenon of the iPad, combined with the imminent launch of [Google Editions](#), was generating a massive wave of excitement at PUB U. The promise and peril of instantaneous change: A tidal wave of potential is about to hit, so grab a technology surfboard and ride the wave up!

As far as basic eBooks are concerned, it's really a no-brainer: The conversion process is inexpensive and your books can quickly be available in digital form. You have many choices for getting the conversion done and then placing your eBooks with Amazon, B&N.com and Apple. Or, just go straight to [smashwords.com](#), where you will share more of the profits for the convenience of one-stop conversion and distribution.

When we move into the multimedia zone of enhanced eBooks, Apps and websites, that's when things get complicated. It's truly new and evolving territory, a work in progress, even for tech savvy companies. I purchased an iPad this summer, and I have found many enhanced eBooks and Apps are rudimentary at best. But I have to admit: When they are good, they are really good. Beautiful, functional and easy to use/read while lying on the couch!

At PUB U, I began to visualize enhanced, "multimedia" content for all of our books (for example, small animations or videos that pop up within the books). But right now, I'm more inclined to take those ideas and use them to create book trailers. At MBPA, these fun promotional tools will be the focus of our next meeting. But you can get started for free: Just take your images, sound clips and video, and pump them into [Animoto.com](#). You pick your music accompaniment, and Animoto does the rest.

All the pretty, multimedia possibilities are a lot like stem cells: They've got loads of potential, but need well-planned tissue differentiation to really perform a function. As [Kassia Krozser](#) says, "There seemed to be quite a frantic tone to enhanced eBook discussions, with little consideration for what people actually want from them. Little

time spent, prior to launch, patiently analyzing the real world user experience readers want from these new formats.”

Social Networking Rant

Well, this brings me around (I know that took a while...) to my opening rant on social network marketing. At PUB U, it was hailed as the must-have marketing tool. Create a tribe, lead it with authenticity, rally the tribe to an important mission, but don't forget to build it around an editorial calendar so the media can pick up your content for use as content per their editorial calendar. But don't do obvious marketing, be a thought leader of your tribe, etc, etc. Oh, and make sure you coordinate it all on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, your own blog (and don't forget Tumblr, the [New York Times](#) says it's hot!).

Maybe I am a bit jaded from living through many cycles of: The Next Big Thing, followed by excessive media hype, followed by the media believing their own hype, followed by everyone else believing the hype, creating a bubble of over-investment, followed by the inevitable crash, and finally on to the era when the big thing becomes a reasonable, sustainable tool in our culture. Anyway, you get the picture.

Yes, everybody is probably right about the importance of building and using social networks, but take a deep breath. Don't over-invest your time or money. Build your network sustainably. Can you keep it up long-term without wanting to shoot yourself or your computer? And don't forget the basics: People are still people. They are your potential partners. You want them to know about, get excited about and tell their friends about your work! Sound familiar?

Isn't It Ironic?

By the way, I didn't build the whole article around my “watch out for the social network version of the tech bubble” rant because... well, for one thing, it's very curmudgeonly. I was sounding like one of those naysaying, old fogies I told myself I'd never be. But also, the day I started writing my rant, I got an email message from my daughter. Her friend had Facebooked her to tell her that a photo of me was actually included in the trailer for the movie “[The Social Network](#).” There I was, in a wet bathing suit!

My husband has only four photos for sale with [Getty Images](#). This one's a 30-year-old picture. What were the odds I'd end up on the big screen, driving viewers to a movie about the arrival of social networks?

It was a little too ironic to ignore.

SIDEBAR

eBook Resources

Pub U revealed many resources indy publishers can explore to help them take advantage of the eBook revolution. Here are just a few:

eBook Conversion

Need a source to convert your p-books to e-books? Try ebookarchitects.com

Providing Content

[Get considered as a supplier of content](#) for the iPad and iPhones.