

## EBooks: Friend or Foe?

by: John Joseph Burhop

Publishing is a \$35 billion industry. Up until just a few years ago, that meant almost exclusively books, magazines, newspapers, and other small items such as brochures and business cards. The internet has changed all that in more ways than one. Enter the eBook, or downloadable electronic book. Although early versions of the eBook have been around since the 1970's, it wasn't until late in 2007 that Amazon's eBook Reader, the Kindle, was released, and not until 2009 that dedicated reading hardware was produced. According to the Association of American Publishers, eBook sales rose 176.6% to \$169.5 million in 2009. Another report, this one conducted by Forrester Research, an independent research company that provides pragmatic and forward-thinking advice to global leaders in business and technology, predicts that eBook sales will cross the \$1 billion line in 2011.

When I first realized that eBook Readers were already starting to render the paperback book obsolete, I became distraught. That's because I had been working on my science fiction novel, on and off, for the better part of the last twenty years and it was very near completion. My novel was always meant to be a paperback; a handy little book that could easily fit in a backpack or a purse. I even knew what the cover art would look like: planet Earth in the background with my main character leaving orbit in his tiny spaceship while two unfolding alien spacecraft approached. I had it all figured out. I knew the printing industry was already getting hit hard but I figured the unique tactile act of reading a paperback book still had a good decade left in it. I don't believe that anymore. Of course, there will be die-hard paperback fans for many years to come, but eBook Readers are already starting to mimic the experience of having an actual book in your hands. It finally dawned on me that eBook Readers were not my enemy, they were, in fact, very much my friend.

Finding a publisher who is willing to invest their time and money to print thousands of copies of a book written by an unknown author is extremely difficult, to say the least. However, with services such as Amazon.com and Smashwords.com, an unknown author can publish a completed novel, poetry manuscript, or collection of short stories and make it available for sale to basically anyone with internet access in a single day. And the best part is that it's Free! There are, of course, many more online publishers than just Amazon and Smashwords but many of them are not free. I did finish my novel and published it to Amazon.com's Kindle platform and Smashwords.com for sale at \$9.99. It's very exciting to see copies of my eBook being bought by people who somehow found my novel among the millions of titles already available through a number of online publishers. I then decided to publish a collection of poetry that I compiled from my high school and college years.

So if you've written your memoirs, or have a book length manuscript, or even a collection of short stories or poetry, I highly recommend that you put them up for sale at Amazon.com's Kindle Store and Smashwords.com. Remember, it's totally free. Simply go to [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com) and find the "Self-publish with Us" link at the bottom of the page. Then simply click the "Get Started" link in the Kindle Books section of that page. From there you can set up your account, upload your manuscript, and then name your price. According to the research I've done, it's wise not to price your book too low or potential customers will get the impression that it's of lesser value than the higher priced options available in the same category. I decided that \$9.99 was a reasonable price for my book since it consisted of 36 chapters containing nearly 120,000 words- the length of a decent paperback. \$9.99 may seem high for a paperback-length book but there are thousands of eBook titles selling successfully in the \$20-\$30 range. Granted, many of those higher priced titles are best selling books that have been available to the general public for decades in print form. But

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#### About The Author

John Burhop is a 44 year old author who graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Creative Writing: Fiction from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. His science fiction novel "Rise of The Kek" and his poetry manuscript "The Universe Can Never Be Complete" are both available for instant download at Amazon.com and Smashwords.com.

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