

Feet in the Future, Books in the Past: Overcoming the Stigma of E-Publishing

By Lauren Grimley

I was recently asked how technology and e-publishing has changed how I write. After checking the mirror for crow's feet, I explained that I'm young enough that beyond my elementary school days of journaling in blue books, technology has always been a part of my writing. I'm not denying that it has progressed tremendously since the days of floppy disks, but since it's always been there in some form or another, its evolution never fazed me. In some ways the technology has grown up right along side my generation; as we sophisticated, so did it.



E-publishing is a different story, though. It's new, even to my generation. Reading books that aren't physical books at all, but digital files on an electronic device is a change. People don't like change. When it comes to politicians, bad habits, or anything else that grates their nerves, they may say, "It's time for a change." What they mean, though, is that it's time to fix what we currently have. Younger readers may be more likely to embrace e-books, but many readers will tell you that their paper books will have to be pried from their cold dead hands. This reluctance is understandable and forgivable. We can choose what books we read. We should also be able to choose how we read them. Besides, who doesn't love the smell of a book?

The stigma of e-publishing goes beyond the disdain for e-readers, though. There is a belief that works only published electronically are of lesser quality and value. There is some legitimacy to this argument. With self-publishing as easy as clicking a couple of buttons, there are some truly horrid e-books out there. When I see an e-book on Amazon that has spelling and grammatical errors in the blurb, I cringe, not just out of embarrassment for the writer, but because it makes all e-book authors look bad. I want to email them and beg them to do the rest of us a favor by hiring an editor.

However, just because many authors of e-books went with an e-publisher or self-published because they weren't picked up by a 'big six' publisher, doesn't necessarily mean that their work is of lower quality or less entertaining. It might be that the market they wrote for was over-saturated. Or it could be that the book was great, but that the author never managed to nail the query. (Trust me, it's a very different type of writing.) Or maybe they just became impatient and wanted the control of publishing their own piece. (There's a lot to be said for the freedom of choosing one's own cover.) The point is, e-books are just that, books. Some people will like some e-books, others won't, just the way some people will like some print books, while others won't. Check out the Amazon reviews of your favorite book, if there are more than ten, chances are at least one reviewer hated it. Does that mean it's a bad book? Does that mean all print books are poorly written or deadly boring?

My defense of e-books may sound a bit disingenuous considering the joy with which I announced that my own book is going to be released in paperback. In reality, it was that joy that made me realize they needed defending. As an author of an e-book, I've spent the last four months apologizing to people who didn't have e-readers and don't like reading on the computer, as if it were my fault. Worse, whenever I or someone else mentioned I had recently published a book, I almost always qualified it by adding, "It's only an e-book." Granted, these were my issues of doubt and lack of confidence, but they were rooted in the

fact that there are still plenty of people who don't see writers of e-books as legitimate authors.

Having a book in paperback will make it more accessible to readers who've yet to embrace the new reading technology. It won't change the book. It won't fix any of its flaws. It won't alter the style or quality of writing. It won't make it any more or less entertaining. Why then does it make writers more legitimate as an author in many people's eyes? Is it because of a few bad apples who didn't bother to spell-check before hitting the send button on their self-published pieces? Or is it because of the snobbery of some major publications that don't include e-books in their best seller lists? (NY Times didn't start until last year.) Or is it just because technology has moved too quickly for the collective mindset to keep up with?

I'm guessing it's a little of each. The old-school part of me can't wait to hold a copy of my book in my hands. The snobby part of me agrees with the dreamer in me who can't wait to have a book I've written picked up by one of the 'big six.' But the rest of me knows a book is a book, published is published, and dreams come true in all shapes, sizes, and, these days, mediums.

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To learn more about her novel Unforeseen visit:
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