The State of Book Publishing in a Tablet Based Society

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Chapter One: Purpose of the Study

As our world becomes increasingly digital, tablet and smartphone users are turning to digital modes to receive information which historically has been printed. This wealth information available digitally ranges from news to novels to magazine publications. If designers and publishers ignore the move toward digital publications they are ignoring a huge potential opportunity. The challenge for publishers in using two platforms to publish their material is finding an efficient way to produce and sell publications for both a tablet device and a printed book. In designing, one must take into account the different strengths, abilities, and limitations inherently found in the given platform- in designing for print, one should focus on the tactile aspects such as paper texture, embossing and binding. While the a tablet or e-reader aims to mimic a book in some ways, it lacks the textural experience a book can create. It's strengths lie in the possible added features available such as video, sounds (text read aloud), and animations. Can designers still succeed in transforming moving pieces of literature into a aesthetically pleasing page through a digital platform? The printed book and the tablet will continue to exist simultaneously as long as the designer and publisher embrace the strengths and push the limitations of both platforms.

Significance of the Study

The world of print publication must keep up with the quick pace set by technological growth; if not its success is at stake. Some big players in the entertainment industry have already taken hard hits that are directly related to not embracing the growth of the digital era. Two examples are Blockbuster and Borders; both of these companies failed to adapt to new digital technologies and lost to competitors who embraced digital solutions. "But in the mid-1990s,

Borders lost its edge."It made a pretty big bet in merchandising. [Borders] went heavy into CD music sales and DVD, just as the industry was going digital. And at that same time, Barnes & Noble was pulling back," says Peter Wahlstrom, who tracks Barnes & Noble for the investment research firm Morningstar. He says Barnes & Noble also invested in beefing up its online sales. Eventually, it also developed its own e-reader, the Nook. Borders did not. Instead, it expanded its physical plant, refurbished its stores and outsourced its online sales operation to Amazon."(Noguchi) Essentially, by failing to adapt to new technology Borders crumbled to their biggest competitor, Barnes and Noble.

The adaption of tablets and e-readers for publication purposes will require a lot of work and changes from a design and production team that is set up for print production. Book design in it's classic form (a bound book printed with ink on paper) is an art form that has been perfected over many centuries. The sudden entrance of the tablet has shaken the print publishing industry.

Interest in the Study

As a student of the Graphic Communication Department double concentrating in Design Reproduction Technologies and Graphics for packaging I am very interested in how technology growth affects print media. After completing a class in book design and designing a technical journal for Cal Poly's Technical Association of the Graphic Arts, I chose to focus on the variation between design possibilities and techniques regarding printed books and e-books. Through this process I plan to explore the downfalls and upsides of publication design for print and electronic books and come to an understanding of what good e-book design means and how to achieve it.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Books have been an instrumental element in the cultural history of the world. The invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg in 1450 aligned with the start of the renaissance. The birth of the printing press made books readily available and inexpensive and thus greatly increased literacy rates leading to a world of highly educated people. Publication is still a key aspect of communication today but the mode of publication is shifting. Books are still an integral part of our culture but a displaying device has entered the field: the tablet. As the world of publishing evolves from print to new digital platforms, we as designers, consumers, and publishers will face new challenges as well as new areas for opportunity. The next step is to find a balance wherein both traditional printed books and e-books can coexist and continue to add to the wealth of knowledge.

There are certain elements that make up what we know to be a book. Physically, a book consists of a series of pages bound in some form and wrapped with a cover. The content tends to follow a specific format featuring a title page and table of contents at the beginning, chapters, page numbers, and text formatted into paragraphs. The book acts as a content holder. The physicality of the book is what separates it from the new kind of content holder: the e-reader. Many people associate their experiences and enjoyment of reading with books as actual objects. Samantha Subramanian of *Firstpost Ideas* eloquently states,"My deep attraction to printed books also lies in their very material substance: in their impractical heft and weight, in the way they look when they are stacked up or shelved, and in the manner in which they occupy physical space in our lives... We read, after all, to find answers, either existential or factual. The solidity of

a book reassures us that answers exist, in a way that a virtual library, with no dimensions except

an abstract sense of depth, cannot. To look upon a stack of books— or shelves of them— is to

feel also a quickening of intellectual curiosity...More than anything else, a physical library holds

the promise of containing the one book that will speak uniquely to us and change our lives." The

physicality of the book makes it a lasting object that can be coveted, and cherished. "Of the

books we do print — the books we make — they need rigor. They need to be books where the

object is embraced as a canvas by designer, publisher and writer. This is the only way these

books as physical objects will carry any meaning moving forward." (Mod 2010a) Another aspect

of a printed book that is not present in an e-book is the subconscious feeling of suspense nearing

the end of the book. The reader can feel the thickness and weight of the book left to read

decrease as they go along which creates suspense and anticipation for the end of the book. In an

e-book, your only clues to how near the end of a book you are are visual so the tactile suspense is

non-existent.

The growth of e-books is opening many doors for budding authors, designers, and

illustrators who are just starting to enter the industry. E-books are less expensive to produce than

traditional books which makes them an enticing option for self-publishers. They only need to

consider the initial cost of creating the book electronically whereas with printed books, one must

consider the cost of printed books and how many they will need to sell to turn a profit. "There's a

great opportunity that didn't exist before," he said, stressing that indie authors now have access

to new tools to help them better publish books, find new readers, reach niche audiences, market

books, and make their work available in a variety of formats. "I don't care who publishes your

book, you're going to have to find your audience," Fine said. "But again this democratization has

made it possible for you to reach audiences you could not reach before...Before you had to go to professionals to get that audience, but now you can find that audience on your own." (PublishersWeekly)

The presence of books in our lives is not going away completely but there is no doubt that new forms of electronic publication are growing in popularity. Much of the physicality of the book exists in the casing, yet part of what makes an elegant and readable book lies in page layout and typography. "iBooks and Kindle.app are incompetent e-readers. They get in the way of the reading experience and treat digital books like poorly typeset PDFs"(Mod 2010b). As designers, we aim to create a book that is elegant and designed to enhance readability through the use of proper white space and typography. Many designers follow the mindset that good book typography should be invisible (Ward) and thus aim to eliminate typographical errors that can occur when flowing documents such as widows and orphans. This is doable with a printed book because the typeface, point size, leading, and spacing are all set when printing. This is not true for e-readers, the font is not set by the publisher or designer but instead the user can choose from a list of options. "If you're not going to let the publisher/book designer select the book's typeface — and Sam Wieck explains why that alone is wrought with problems — the user's options better be good. Unfortunately Apple offers just five: Baskerville (Monotype), Cochin, Palatino, Times New Roman, and Verdana. Of these, I'd say Palatino is the only legitimate choice for reading a book on a screen. Unlike Apple, Amazon clearly did their research here. PMNCaecilia isn't well known outside the typorati, but it's one of the more readable typefaces ever designed and its low stroke contrast and slab serifs serve the Kindle very well." In order for e-books to be able to meet the design standards set by printed books, typography and page layout options need to be

enhanced. This will allow already trained book designers to bring their expertise to the e-book

industry and will concurrently increase the readability of e-books.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The goal of this study was to compare the usability aspects of a book in the traditional printed form with an electronic e-reader form. The objectives of this study were to:

• Determine the creation of book design elements changes from print to e-books

• Understand how these varied elements affect usability and consumer interest

Data Collection Plan

Research was collected from first hand accounts of design for print publication versus design for electronic publication. This research aimed to focus on different capabilities of each publishing platform. After conducting this research, both a printed version as well as an electronic version of the novel *Tales of the Jazz Age* by F. Scott Fitzgerald were created. The electronic version was exported from Adobe InDesign as an e-PUB then edited through use of the program Sigil to enhance usability and create an ePUB that was compatible with Apple's iBooks the iPad. While creating both versions, an attempt was made to keep design aspects as similar as possible with the only differences being due to the platform. A log was kept recording the design processes and limitations discovered in either platform while designing.

Once the products were both created, a group of twenty Cal Poly San Luis Obispo students were surveyed on usability and aesthetics with either product. The individuals participating in the study were asked to perform a few simple tasks that were aimed to touch on usability aspects of the different publication platforms. (see appendix A) Before being asked questions that related specifically to the product, first the respondents were asked a series of demographic questions aimed to allow for the study results to be easily categorized based on groups of respondents. The questions include age, college affiliation at Cal Poly, and whether

they own an e-reader. They were asked to choose which platform was easier to perform the tasks

on. The participants of the study were also asked to choose which platform they would choose to

read the selected book upon (assuming it would be free of charge) and requested to give a brief

explanation of their choices. (see appendix B)

Data Analysis

Data collected from this study showed whether there was a strong preference for printed

or electronic publications and whether or not that preference correlated with perceived ease of

usability from the consumer. The collected data will be displayed in written summary as well as

in a series of graphs.

Chapter 4: Results

The survey results gave an overview of Cal Poly students' views on reading and using different platforms whether it be printed books or e-books read on an e-reader. The survey group consisted of twenty Cal Poly students between the ages of 17 and 25 representing The College of Liberal Arts, The College of Science and Mathematics, The College of Engineering, The College of Agriculture, Food & Environmental Sciences, and The College of Architecture and Environmental Design though the majority (71%) of the participants were a part of The College of Liberal Arts.

All of the survey respondents can be classified as book readers. All respondents answered as reading at least two books over the past year and 50% of respondents read between 4 to ten books in the past year another 21% of respondents answered as reading eleven or more books in the past year.

How many books have you read in the past year?
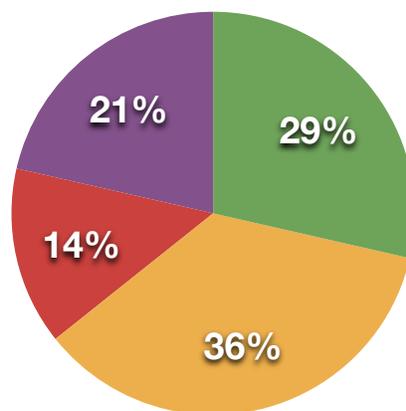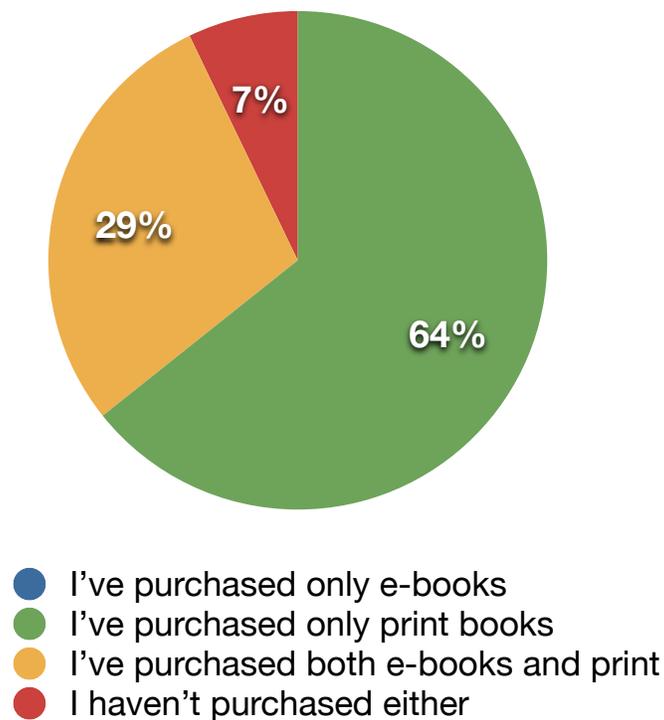

● 1   ● 2 to 3   ● 4 to 5   ● 6 to 10   ● 11 or more

Next this group of readers were asked to specify whether they have purchased e-books, print books, both, or neither over the past year. Sixty four percent of survey respondents had only

purchased printed books, twenty nine percent of respondents had purchased both print and e-books, and seven percent of respondents had purchased neither print nor e-books. None of this survey's respondents purchased solely e-books in the past year.

Have you purchased an e-book or print book in the past year?

🔵 I've purchased only e-books
🟢 I've purchased only print books
🟡 I've purchased both e-books and print
🔴 I haven't purchased either

Survey respondents were asked what was their most common form of book discovery. Only twenty one percent of respondents stated that their most common form of book discovery was through cloud stores associated with e-readers used to purchase e-books. The other seventy-nine percent of respondents most commonly discovered books in printed methods; fourteen percent of respondents at the library, twenty-nine percent of respondents most commonly purchased print books through online stores, and the remaining thirty-six percent purchased print books from a traditional bookstore.

The survey respondents showed a strong preference for printed books over e-books. When asked the question "Do you prefer print over e-books?" sixty-four percent of respondents

What is your most common form of book discovery?

- Library
- Bookstore
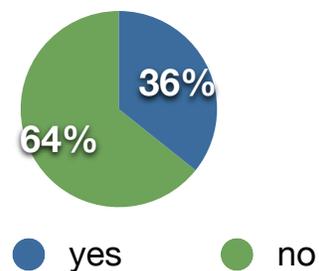- Purchase Online (printed book)
- Purchase online (e-book)
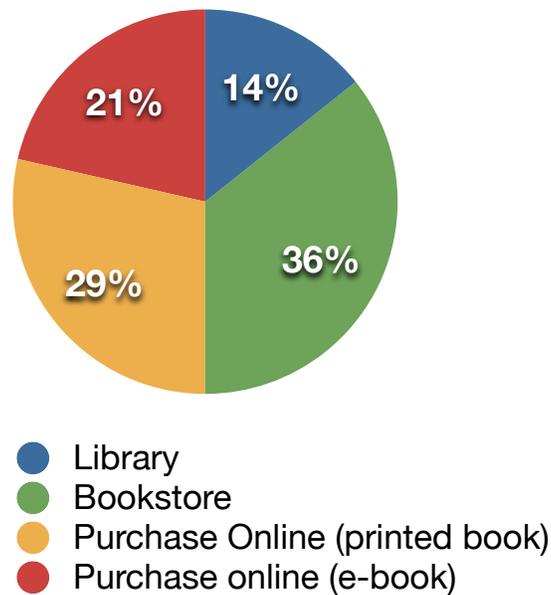
responded print books only, thirty-six percent responded both print and e-books, and no

respondents said they preferred e-books only.

Do you prefer to read print or e-books?

- e-books only
- print books only
- both

Do you own an e-reader?

- yes
- no
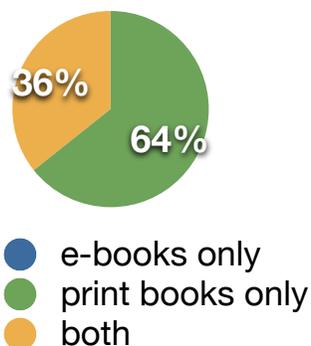
The answers to the next question "Do you own an e-reader?" brought remarkably similar

results to that of the prior question. Sixty-four percent of respondents responded that they did not

own e-readers while thirty-six percent of respondents stated they were e-reader owners.

Unsurprisingly, the same respondents who own an e-reader answered that they preferred both e-

books and print books while the respondents who preferred for print only were not e-reader

owners. Of the e-reader owners, fifty percent owned an Apple iPad, thirty-three percent an

Amazon Kindle, and seventeen percent chose other and wrote in that they owned a Nexus 7.

Next, e-reader owning respondents were asked why they own an e-reader. Some common

responses were convenience, frequent travel, got the e-reader as a gift, or that they own a tablet

with e-reader capabilities but mainly use it for other purposes such as note taking in class.

Next, all survey participants were asked to what extent they agree with the following

statement: "e-readers will eventually become the most popular platform for book publishing?" A

majority of respondents at fifty-seven percent stated that either they strongly agreed or agreed

with this statement. Only twenty-nine percent of respondents disagreed with this statement, and

fourteen percent were neutral about the statement. This is interesting because while a majority of

the respondents preferred print books to e-books, the majority still agrees with the idea that e-

readers will eventually become the most popular platform for book publishing. This seems to

suggest some sort of disconnect. Will readers who prefer print eventually switch to e-readers due

to price competitiveness while giving up their reading experience preference or will the creators

of e-readers further develop their product to emulate what traditional readers like?

Next the participants were given both a printed and e-book version of *Tales of the Jazz

Age* by F. Scott Fitzgerald to take a look at. (see appendix B) They were asked to look at the

provided e-book and print book. Then they were asked for each to, navigate from the table of

contents to the story *May Day*. Finally, they were asked to rate how difficult the task was. Overall,

participants rated both the tasks as fairly simple. Navigation in the e-book was rated as extremely

simple by seventy-nine percent of participants and simple by fourteen percent of participants;

only seven percent of participants rated the navigation as neutral. No participants found

navigation of the e-book difficult. In contrast, navigation of the print book was slightly more difficult for participants. While the majority of participants, at seventy-eight percent, rated navigation of a the print book as simple or extremely simple, fourteen percent of participants rated navigation as difficult.

With curiosity as to whether the perceived simplicity of book navigation on either platform would sway the readers' platform preference, participants were asked "If you were going to read this book on either platform (free of charge) which would you choose?" These results were the same as the results to the earlier questions "Do you own an e-reader?" and "Do you prefer print or e-books?". Sixty-four percent of respondents would choose to read the printed book and thirty-six percent would choose to read the book on an e-reader. According to the results of this survey, readers who own an e-reader have a preference for reading an e-book, while those who prefer printed books, choose print of price. Some reasons given for choosing to use the e-reader are "more portable and less intimidating in e-book form", "lighter, don't have to carry as much stuff around", and "easy to navigate and saves paper". The respondents main motivations for selecting the e-reader over the printed book lies in convenience, ease of usability, and environmental friendliness. On the other hand, respondents who would choose to read the printed book state reasons such as liking the feel and charm of print books, feeling attached to the tradition and they are low cost so the reader does not need to worry about damage.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The book publishing industry is at a crossroad. As publishers begin to adopt the tablet as a new form of publishing medium, they need to fully understand how the tablet and the printed book can best coexist to satisfy customers needs. As consumers begin to embrace the tablet it brings great opportunity to book publishers. The tablet is a device that can be used as a main mode of communication as well as entertainment. As its capabilities grow, it becomes an increasingly more enticing product for consumers. Instead of owning many devices, consumers can own just one that serves many purposes, this product decreases consumers cost while maintaining value. This being said, many consumers are still stuck in the paradigm that printed books are best. They say they are drawn to printed books for a number of reasons, many of which stem from the sensory interaction one has come to know with printed books. Respondents of this study claimed to prefer printed books for reasons tied to emotion such as the feel of a book, the smell and the act of turning pages; the act of reading on an e-reader does not fulfill these qualities that readers who prefer print books associate with reading.

We can see a similar situation with the introduction of mobile technologies to the personal communication industry. Communication has progressed from primarily handwritten letters and telegraphs, to telephone communication, and now to instant text, email, and video communication that is quick and to the point. As this revolution toward instant communication took off many proponents of traditional communication had feelings that these new forms were going to be dry and meaningless whereas a letter or phone call is meaningful and personal. Personal communication with mobile devices has been able to grow and shift to a place that can

capture a similar level of meaning and personality that proponents of the letter savored. Today, through the use of mobile devices, people can instantly communicate through video conversations. Services such as Skype, FaceTime, and Vimeo allow users to imitate the intimacy of a face to face conversation from any location in the world. The mobile communication industry's ability to capture the essence of communication that traditionalists cherished, has allowed them to broaden their market and be a communication platform for the masses.

In order for the book publishing industry to succeed in a market shifting toward tablets they need to act in a similar fashion to that of the mobile communication industry. While the publication and sale of printed books will not disappear any time soon, book publishers need to optimize the use of both print and electronic publishing to be the most successful. From the results of this study one can conclude that the experience of reading is much more important than the cost of the material. In order to increase e-reader support throughout readers, e-books must emulate the reading experience print advocates enjoy and associate with reading. Once more of these elements have been integrated into the e-book experience the e-book and e-reader will act as a more suitable substitute for the printed book that accommodates not only superior functionality but cost effectiveness and a satisfying reading experience.

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How old are you?

☐ Under 20   ☐ 21-25   ☐ 25-30   ☐ 30-40   ☐ 40-50   ☐ 50 and older

What College are you a part of?

☐ Liberal Arts   ☐ Math & Science   ☐ Business   ☐ Agriculture   ☐ Engineering   ☐ Architecture

How many books have you read in the past year?

☐ 1   ☐ 2-3   ☐ 4-5   ☐ 6-10   ☐ 11 or more

Have you Purchased an e-book or print book in the past year?

☐ I've purchased only e-books
☐ I've purchased only print
☐ I've purchased both e-books and print
☐ I haven't purchased either

What is your most common form of book discovery?

☐ Library
☐ Bookstore
☐ Purchase Online (printed book)
☐ Purchase Online (e-book)

Do you prefer to read e-books or print books?

☐ e-books only
☐ print books only
☐ both

Why?_____
_____

Do you own an e-reader?

☐ yes   ☐ no

If Yes...

Which e-reader do you own?

☐ Amazon Kindle
☐ Barnes and Noble Nook
☐ Kobo
☐ Sony Reader
☐ Ipad
Other: _____

Why do you own an e-reader?

☐ I travel often
☐ Commute via public transportation
☐ Convenience
Other :_____

Do you agree with the following statement: "e-books will eventually become the most popular form of book in publishing"

☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree

Looking at the provided e-book, navigate from the table of contents to the story *May Day*.
How difficult was this task?

☐ Extremely Difficult   ☐ Difficult   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Simple   ☐ Extremely Simple

Looking at the provided print book, navigate from the table of contents to the story *May Day*.
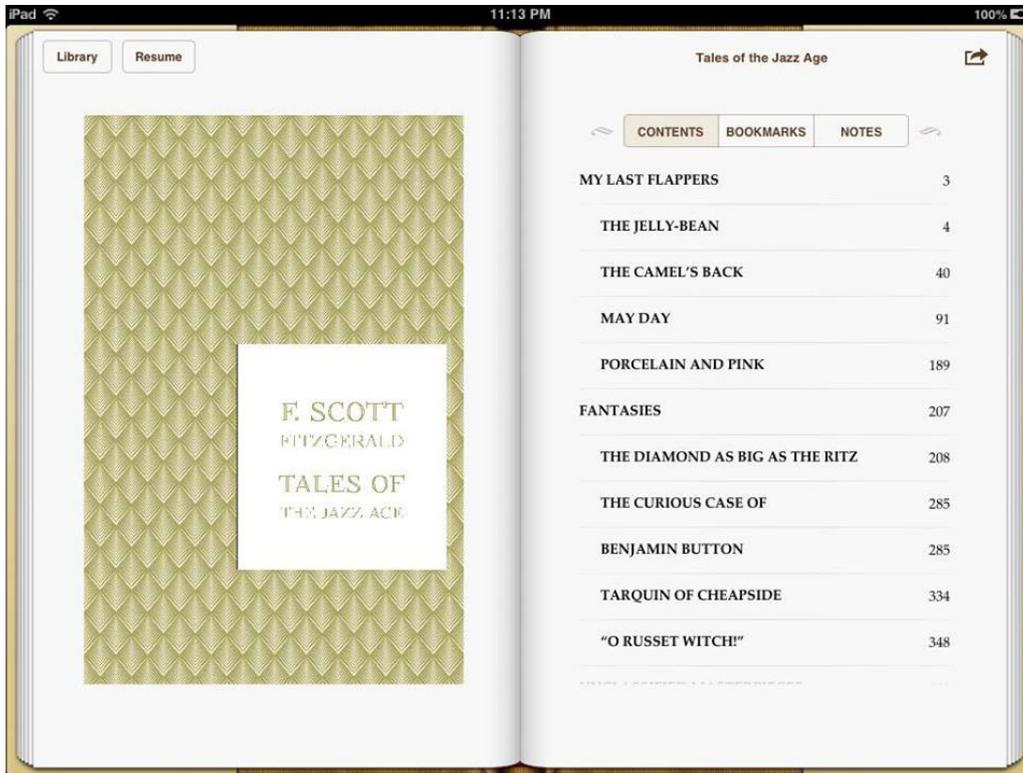How difficult was this task?

☐ Extremely Difficult   ☐ Difficult   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Simple   ☐ Extremely Simple

If you were going to read this book on either platform (free of charge) which would you choose?
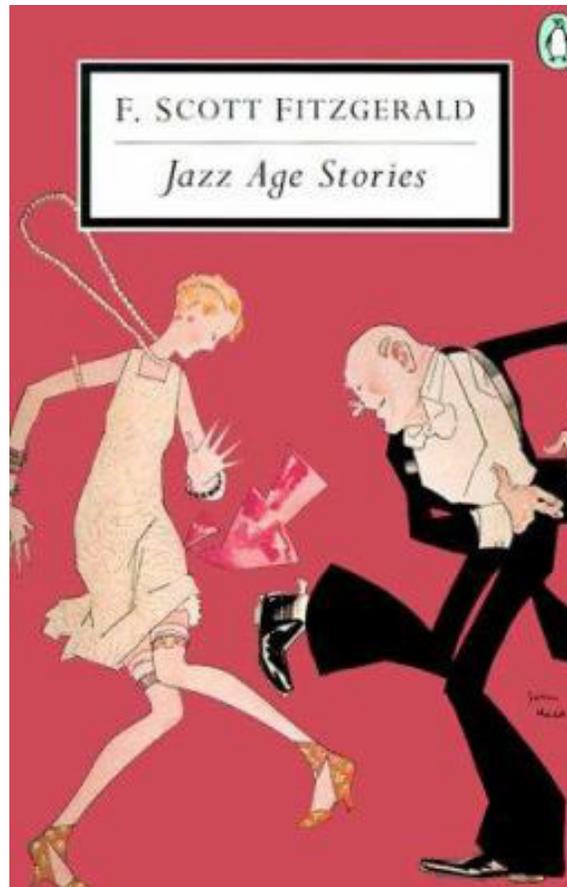
☐ Print   ☐ e-book

Why?_____
_____

Appendix B

E-Book version of Tales of the Jazz Age used for survey as displayed on iPad

Printed version of Tales of the Jazz Age used for survey