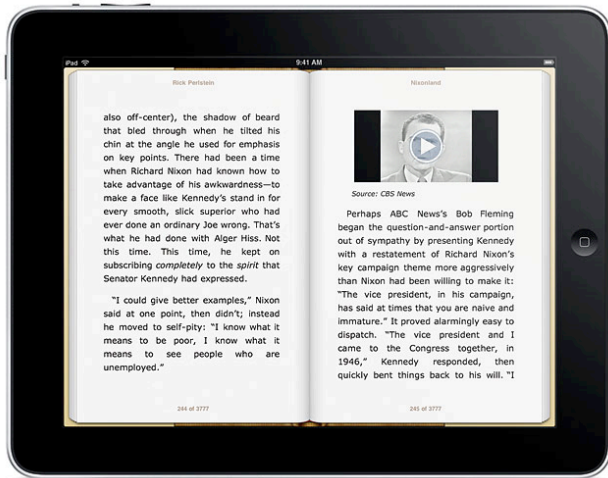


E-Books Fly Beyond Mere Text

By Julie Bosman, July 29, 2010; New York Times;

http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/29/books/29ebook.html?_r=1&hpw

E-books of the latest generation are so brand new that publishers can't agree on what to call them.



An “enhanced” “Nixonland” arrives Thursday.

In the spring Hachette Book Group called its version, by David Baldacci, an “enriched” book. Penguin Group released an “amplified” version of a novel by Ken Follett last week. And on Thursday Simon & Schuster will come out with one of its own, an “enhanced” e-book version of “Nixonland” by Rick Perlstein.

All of them go beyond the simple black-and-white e-book that digitally mirrors its ink-and-paper predecessor. The new multimedia books use video that is integrated with text, and they are best read — and watched — on an iPad, the tablet device that has created vast possibilities for book publishers.

The start-up company Vook pioneered the concept as a mobile application and for the Web in 2009, but with the iPad, traditional publishers are taking the multimedia book much more seriously.

“It’s a wide-open world,” said Molly Barton, the director of business development for Penguin. “You can show readers the world around the books that they’re reading.”

Simon & Schuster has taken the best-selling “Nixonland,” first published in hardcover in 2008 in a whopping 896 pages, and scattered 27 videos throughout the e-book. One video is a new interview with Mr. Perlstein,

conducted by Bob Schieffer, the chief Washington correspondent for CBS News. Most are news clips from events described in the book, including the Nixon-Kennedy debates in 1960 and public reaction to the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (Simon & Schuster is a division of the CBS Corporation.)

Each video clip, embedded in the page, starts to play with a simple tap of the iPad screen. After pausing to watch a video, the user can go back to reading the book.

Ellie Hirschhorn, the chief digital officer for Simon & Schuster, said the intent was to use the video sparingly, at points that seemed natural to the story, so that it wouldn’t overwhelm readers.

“We set out to tell stories in a multimedia way, and to take advantage of the new technical features that allow great stories to be told,” Ms. Hirschhorn said. “It is still a reading experience.”

Grand Central Publishing, part of Hachette, released an “enriched” e-book version of Mr. Baldacci’s latest novel, “Deliver Us From Evil,” in April to coincide with the hardcover release. The e-book producers borrowed from the film industry and included “research photos taken by the author, deleted scenes from the manuscript, an alternate ending and other special features,” Hachette announced in March. Penguin’s edition of Mr. Follett’s “Pillars of the Earth” comes with video clips from an eight-part television series based on the book.

The early versions of these books are experimental, and, because they were developed quickly to compete with other publishers, some of the technology is new and unpolished. But eventually the books could regularly feature full-length movies and photo slideshows. For authors who are open to the concept, new books could be written with multimedia in mind.

Some publishers said that before long e-books with video, photos and other media could be widely available to readers as another option alongside hardcover, paperback, audiobooks and standard e-books.

Brad Inman, chief executive of Vook, said his company is working with 25 publishers to create multimedia books. “The iPad brought this to life,” he said. “Everyone knows now that they’ve got to put their toe in this water.”

Books with multimedia also allow publishers to charge a higher price. The “enhanced” “Nixonland” costs \$15.99 in Apple’s iBookstore and through the Amazon Kindle store (though it cannot be read on the Kindle e-reader), an increase from a black-and-white e-book, which generally tend to be less than \$14.99.

Ms. Hirschhorn said Simon & Schuster was actively developing other books to follow “Nixonland.”

“We’ll see how the readers evaluate it,” she said. “It’s not appropriate for every book, but it certainly was for this one.”