

## Online

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*The rise and rise of ebooks; the George Bernard Shaw image collection; The Times and its paywall; paying for Nature, and the first bookless library*

## Ebooks

The phrase “tipping point” has been proliferating in article headlines about ebooks in the professional and popular press following a press release from Amazon on July 19th (<http://phx.corporate-ir.net/phoenix.zhtml?c=176060&p=irol-newsArticle&ID=1449176&highlight=>) in which founder and CEO Jeff Bezos cites the price cut from \$259 to \$189 (£149 for the equivalent model in the UK) as the reason for the tripling of Kindle sales in the second quarter of this year. More interesting is the news that Kindle books have been outselling hardback books through Amazon in the US in the last three months. If ebooks are going mainstream, the Kindle looks like an early winner, but the iPad and the new wave of tablets/slates could leave ebook readers exposed as one-trick ponies. Ebook readers may need to sell much more cheaply to take full advantage of growing ebook sales. Could Amazon’s ebook sales infrastructure be a more durable business? Amazon boasts “Over 670,000 books, including 107 of 111 *New York Times* Best Sellers”, and Kindle books can be read on Windows computers, Macs, iPads and a range of mobile devices. Moreover, what does the tipping point mean for education? How close are we to widespread use of ebook readers in schools and colleges? ResourceShelf found this article in Bloomberg Businessweek about Kindle trials at seven universities in the US: [http://www.businessweek.com/bschools/content/jun2010/bs20100610\\_200335.htm](http://www.businessweek.com/bschools/content/jun2010/bs20100610_200335.htm) where difficulties encountered included accessibility, navigation slowness, difficulties highlighting/note-taking, file management, etc., issues familiar in user evaluation of ebook readers. *Library Journal* is holding a one-day virtual conference called eBooks: Libraries at the Tipping Point (<http://ebook-summit.com/>) on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> September.

## George Bernard Shaw

<http://archiveshub.ac.uk/features/georgebernardshaw/>

The London School of Economics/National Trust project *Man and Cameraman* aims to preserve and digitise the photograph collection of George Bernard Shaw. Shaw left the collection to the LSE and the British Library, and it was originally stored in his home in Hertfordshire which he left to the National Trust. Work has begun preserving and cataloguing the 16,000 photos and 8,000 negatives. Half the photos and all the negatives are to be digitised, with a few already available on the Archives Hub. The photographs were taken by Shaw and others, and include images of such figures as Rodin and Augustus John.

## Paywalls

An article published in the *Guardian* (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2010/jul/20/times-paywall-readership>) 18 days after *The Times* paywall was launched, interpreted web metrics from Experian HitWise to indicate that “traffic actually going from the registration site to *The Times* site is just 84,800, or 1.06% of total UK newspaper traffic – a 93% fall compared with May”. Perhaps it is too early to deem *The Times* paywall a success or failure. Will Hutton suggests (in the *Observer* <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/sep/12/rupe-murdoch-british-media>) that News International will bundle its online newspapers with subscription TV when it owns 100% of BSkyB, and predicts that by 2020 “an enfeebled newspaper industry in which NI titles command more than half the circulation and revenues”.

## Royal Mail

I couldn't find anything about this on the Royal Mail website, but the stamps in the Great British Railways issue on August 10<sup>th</sup> are supposed to link to online content if you scan them with your mobile phone. A number of websites mention it, for example EContent <http://www.econtentmag.com/Articles/News/News-Item/m2end-RBIT-Limited-and-junaio-Create-%22Intelligent-Stamp%22-for-Royal-Mail-69877.htm>. Have you tried it?

## University of California (UC) and Nature Publishing Group (NPG)

<http://osc.universityofcalifornia.edu/npg/>

Early in June a letter was sent to UC Faculty, urging a controversial boycott and other sanctions in protest at the cost of renewing *Nature* and 66 other NPG journals. The letter was authored by the executive director of California Digital Library (CDL), the chair of the University Committee on Library and Scholarly Communication of the Academic Senate and the convener of University Librarians Council, and stated that the renewal would cost more than \$1 million. The authors note that “in the past six years, UC authors have contributed approximately 5,300 articles to these journals, 638 of them in the flagship journal *Nature*”, and

that, “UC Faculty supply countless hours serving as reviewers, editors, and advisory board members”. NPG issued a combative reply, denying any unfairness in the cost of the renewal and asserting that CDL were paying a very small cost per download from high-impact NPG journals. CDL responded, accusing NPG of intransigence in previous negotiations over cost, and said “UC Faculty do not think that their libraries should have to pay exorbitant and unreasonable fees to get access to their own work” – a general sentiment echoed by universities worldwide, a situation that has been driving the implementation of open-access publishing models and institutional repositories.

A much friendlier press release in August reported that UC and NPG had met on August 17<sup>th</sup>, had a full exchange of views and were working towards a mutually acceptable solution. It also promised updates that will be awaited with interest.

### **University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA)**

<http://www.utsa.edu/today/2010/09/aetlibrary.html>

The first entirely bookless library in a university has opened its doors for business at UTSA, and it is a dedicated Applied Engineering and Technology (AET) library. 425,000 ebooks and 18,000 e-journals are available, and staff are on hand to help. The building has capacity for 80 students, and has been given an ultra-modern finish and a range of study spaces and equipment. Echoing the earlier piece on eBooks, UTSA are looking to introduce further innovative services including pre-loaded ebook readers and iPads.