

DIKULT252 – Nordic Digital Culture Network

LOOKING INTO CHALLENGES REGARDING
E-BOOKS IN NORWAY
A qualitative research

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1 INTRODUCTION

The market for digital literature continues to grow, which means that writers and publishers alike are faced with new challenges and possibilities concerning the writing and creation of fiction. Yet, the e-book has somehow ended up as a poor copy of the paper book. A key question becomes: Is this because the industry has a too narrow approach to the opportunities that exist in the digital medium? Throughout this paper I will discuss a number of issues related to this new reality of book publishing. Firstly, the new technology that e-books brings and how this is limiting and encouraging new ways of expression. Secondly, the Norwegian market with its small size that gives opportunity to establish beneficial trade agreements. Thirdly, there are a number of options open to those willing to take new creative steps when writing digital fiction. This includes publishers who can work to make tools available and invest in new types of texts, and writers who can tell stories in different ways by implementing technology. Moreover, the new media also bring with them supposed disadvantages and challenges, such as immature technical solutions. Last, the authors Stai, Egeland and the numerous contributors to the anthology *komPost#1* all represent people who are living in this new digital literary reality and that have published digital fiction. How do Norwegian publishers and Norwegian writers use the opportunities of the technology? At the end of the day, the differences between the printed book and the e-book might not be as vast as one thinks, because they both concern language and narrative, and aim to facilitate a good reading experience.

1.1 Research Methods

I have conducted a qualitative study in which I search for different views and thoughts of how to use the new media. I concentrate on e-books that resemble paper books and that are published by publishers in Norway. To get a broad scope I interviewed writers of different genres and publishers of different sizes and markets. The questions focused on challenges and possibilities associated with e-books. They were carried out in Norwegian and the statements will therefore be referred to indirectly most of the time.

The four writers are Tom Egeland (historical fiction), Kari Stai (children's book), Skjalg Wie Skare (short prose) and Geir Gulliksen (poetry).

The three publishers are *Gyldendal Forlag* (Bjarne Buset (Information Manager)), *Post Forlag* (Sondre Midthun (Editor)) and *Vigmostad & Bjørke* (Arno Vigmostad (Publisher)).

Other people I have contacted are Kari Marstein (editor in *Gyldendal*) and Harald Ofstad Fougner (Manager for Digital Development in *Gyldendal*) about *Gyldendal*'s application for short texts, called *Kortlest* (Short read). I asked them about their thoughts on the new media, and what role they think their application can play. Application is here, and throughout the paper, used as in *application program*; computer software designed for specific tasks, also called an app.

Lastly, I interviewed the animator in *Gasspedal Animert*, Kristian Pedersen. *Gasspedal Animert* is a project that aims to develop the digital literature in Norway and challenge writers to write for another medium than the traditional book. In addition to Pedersen, Audun Lindholm is part in the project as an editor. They see *Gasspedal Animert* as a meeting place for literature and animated graphics.

2 THREE EXAMPLES

The objective to use three examples of e-books was to investigate the writers' thoughts on the Norwegian market, technology and possibilities in the new media. The three examples were chosen to show works that have been written for different purposes and different target groups. E-books are an evolving field, and constantly new works are created. The three examples are chosen because they have been forerunners in their field here in Norway: The first is children's literature in the form of an application. *Jakob og Neikob* was one of the first that made the transition from traditional picture book to an application that children can interact with. The second is a traditional novel enriched in the e-book format. *Nostradamus' testamente* was the first, large book published as an book especially made for the e-book market in Norway. The third is an anthology of short texts published only digitally. *Post Forlag* is Norway's first all-digital publisher.

The press has noticed these books for their use of the new media even though the books are quite traditional in their way of portraying text. Accordingly, this suggests that the new media has not been adopted into the Norwegian book market in any severe exploratory fashion.

2.1 Jakob og Neikob

Jakob og Neikob (Stai 2011) is an interactive application for children aged three years or more. It is possible to make the characters say "Ja" (yes) and "Nei" (no), turn on and off lights and touch the car to hear its motor, among other things. The application is based on a printed

book that was written by Kari Stai. The book has a clear idea, a simple story and pictures that can suit a screen, and that was why Stai's publisher thought it would make for a good application. The storyline is the same in both versions.

If the possibilities were there, Kari Stai would have liked to use animation in some parts. At the same time, she wanted to be conscious about not "killing" the story. A danger is that content and meaning will drown in technical effects. She writes that "så lenge teknikk og medium styrkar historia, er eg glad i alle nye muligheiter nye medium byr på" (As long as technology and media strengthens the story, I am happy for all the new possibilities new medias have to offer [my translation]).

2.2 Nostradamus' testamente

Nostradamus' testamente (Egeland 2012) is an enriched e-book. This means that the novel contains a lot of extra information that one does not find in the paper version. Tom Egeland, the author, uses a lot of footnotes, maps and pictures. He anticipates that these notes will contribute to the reading experience, but is uncertain of how. This e-book was an experiment, where he and his publisher explored the still fairly unknown landscape of e-books.

The expansion is one that easily could have been made in a paper book, only that the cost would have been increased. There are no hyperlinks navigating the reader out of the very text. Some of the things would even have been simpler in a printed book, for instance navigating footnotes. Egeland would like the footnotes to appear in the text itself as boxes for those who want to read them, but it was not possible to accomplish this with the tools they had. When I tried to read the book, I did not find out how to return from the footnotes back to where I was reading. After some more exploration, I found that it is possible if one presses the small footnote number. In this way the design and technology creates a friction while reading. It potentially becomes a frustrating reading experience; hence it is reasonable to say that some of these technical solutions are underdeveloped.

2.3 komPost #1

komPost #1 (Gulliksen et al. 2012) is quite traditional in its line-up, published by the all-digital publisher Post Forlag. They chose short texts (like short prose and poems) in the anthology, thinking that this can be a good way to use the new medium.

Skjalg Wie Skare is one of the authors in *komPost #1*. When he chose what texts he would have in the anthology, he picked the texts that could comment the format in a meta-fictional sense, or have a theme that was tied to it. The texts feature a person that

communicates with his past, by referring to it and looking at what was from the perspective of now. The correlation between the text and the format is loose, and his texts would not lose much meaning if read in a paper book.

While reading through *komPost #1* it is difficult to see which texts are written for the format and which are not. This suggests that the digital anthology did not give the authors a long-awaited new platform to write for, but rather just another way to publish their work. An example from the anthology illustrates this: The text is written by Geir Gulliksen, who used a text he had written before and did not think especially on the format it should be published in.

2.4 Differences and similarities

The clear similarity between these examples is that they do not have a form of expression that is unique to the new medium. Out of these three examples, one may say that the application for children, *Jakob og Neikob*, is the one that is farthest away from how a paper book is experienced. Yet this is on a very superficial level as the application does not do much more than what would have been possible in a traditional book for children. With the old medium, it is possible to make sounds appear when pushing on a button. A parent can read the text to the child. This shows that even though the application looks quite new, it is a very simple and basic way to tell a story.

The differences between the works are linked to their different target audiences. Furthermore, *komPost#1* and *Nostradamus' testamente* seem to have different goals in their use of the digital. Whereas *komPost#1* does not add anything to the texts, *Nostradamus' testamente* has footnotes, maps and pictures. According to Egeland, he looked at this as an experiment to explore the possibilities. Both Stai and Egeland would have wanted to be more creative, but found limitations in the technology.

Out of these three examples, *komPost#1* is the one that is the most traditional in its line-up and resemblance of the paper book. Yet, *komPost#1* is also the one that is only published digitally in contrast to the other two.

3 TECHNOLOGICAL ISSUES

Since the Second World War, the development of the computer has taken place at an enormous speed. The machines have become smaller and faster every year, but in some areas there has been a lack of newness, as in designing texts for the digital.

In fact, in light of something called the *Dynabook* from the 1970s, the e-book can hardly be said to be innovative or new. In his lecture on “Designing for the Future Book”, Craig Mod talks about the Kindle as a design from the past. He asks: Did the design of e-book-devices stop in the 70’s? (Mod 2012) It was Alan Kay and Adele Goldberg that in the mid-1970s described a form of digital notebook and called it *Dynabook*. Their *Dynabook* vision foretold a lot of what notebook computing has become today (Wardrip-Fruin & Montfort 2003, 391). In the essay *Personal Dynamic Media*, Kay and Goldberg write about their design idea for a “personal dynamic medium the size of a notebook (the *Dynabook*) which could be owned by everyone and could have the power to handle virtually all of its owner’s information-related needs” (Kay & Goldberg 1977). This may be looked upon as the first concrete plan for an e-book-device. In my interviews with writers and publishers, this point is what a lot of them make, that the positive thing about the e-book is that the weight and size is no issue. Egeland writes that a benefit with e-books is firstly that: “du kan ha et helt bibliotek på innerlomma.” (you can have an entire library in your pocket [my translation]). In this way, Egeland talks of the e-book-platform in a way that is similar to Kay and Goldbergs vision of the *Dynabook*.

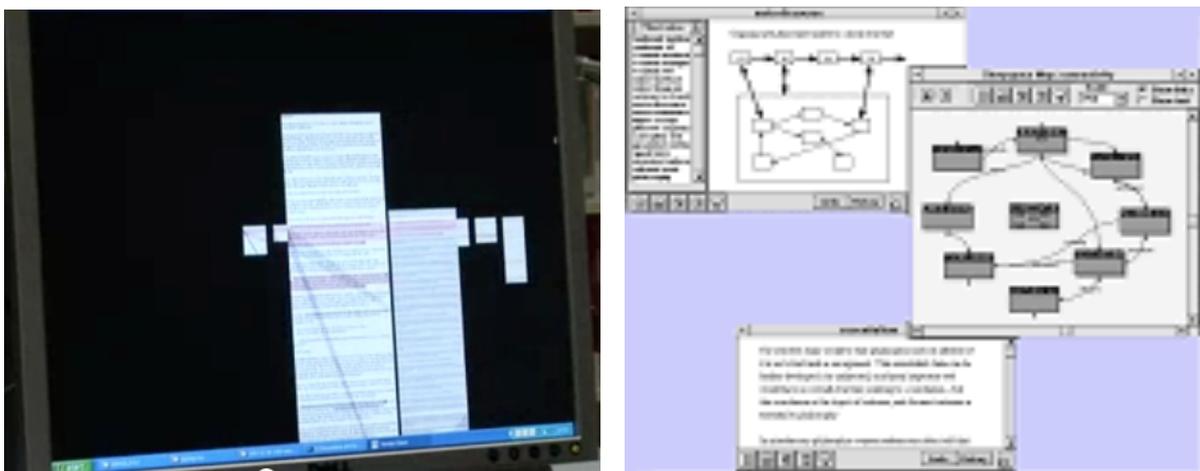
3.1 Technological issues on creating e-books

Limitations in the publishing tools and few writers that are exploring the possibilities are technological issues concerning the creation of e-books. Nevertheless, collaboration between various artists shows a way to create new ways of expression that fits the digital format.

The largest problem in adult fiction is that there is few that are exploring the new media, according to Harald Ofstad Fougner (Manager for Digital Development in *Gyldendal*). One reason can be that there have not existed good marketing places. That makes it reasonable for writers to primarily work with the paper format, where it does exist good marketing places, and where they can reach out to readers and earn money for their work. Another reason can be that it is difficult for a writer to suddenly master a completely new form of media that he or she is not used to.

When Kari Stai’s book was to become an application, there was a team that made the transition. Stai was part of the process, but not the person leading it. For Tom Egeland it was limitations in their publishing tool (EPUB2) that prevented him from accomplishing the things he wanted, it was not that he did not want to explore new possibilities. If the technology makes it possible, he would gladly make the book more interactive, and include videos, animation and/or music.

Today there are not many well-known programs that create a new way of writing books. There exist some programs, like *Storyspace*, “a hypertext writing environment, especially well suited to creating large, complex, and challenging hypertexts” (Eastgate 2009). Another program that facilitates for new types of writing is *Xanadu*. The concept is explained in this way: “Flying pages! Deep interconnection! Parallel intercomparison!” (Xanadu 2008). Although these programs represent alternatives to the traditional writing programs (like *Microsoft Word*), they are not very known and used by writers. A reason can be that the traditional way of writing is very common and the simplest option to write a text. Another reason may be that these other programs are not functioning as well as a user would want and that the user interface looks out-dated (Figur 1). When writers want to experiment with the new media, they have to do research to understand how these alternatives function, and this becomes cumbersome.



Figur 1. *Xanadu* (left) and *Storyspace*

Accordingly, limitations in the technology hinder experimentation from the traditional writers. A way to overcome this obstacle can be for artists from various disciplines to collaborate, as *Gasspedal Animert* illustrates. *Gasspedal Animert* is a project where an animator creates animations to poems the author reads out loud. *Gasspedal Animert* combines artistic experiment with the nets distribution possibilities. (Gasspedal Animert 2012).

3.2 Technological issues with distributing e-books

There are many technical issues concerning the distribution of e-books, like temporary technological solutions and many different platforms. To overcome these issues, one solution may be to have a common standard and a design that suits the new format.

That the technology and the solutions are immature was one of the first points Bjarne Buset (Information Manager in *Gyldendal*) named as challenges they have concerning publishing books electronically. Because of temporary solutions, people will have to constantly buy new devices. *Gyldendal* are creating applications for iOS (Apples operating system), but are not yet earning money on this, because 1) there are not many that want to pay much for this and 2) they have to make the applications for Android and Windows as well, and this becomes meaninglessly expensive, Buset elaborates. The all-digital publisher, Post Forlag, has also experienced challenges linked to technology. Sondre Midthun says that it is difficult to create texts that suit all the different platforms (Kindle, iPad, Android). Therefore, the market is in need of a technological development.

A journalist in *Dagbladet*, Jan Omdahl, points out that most of today's platforms for reading e-books are quite primitive, similar to what Craig Mod mentioned in his lecture. An e-book that shall be distributed and readable on all platforms cannot be very creatively formed or, in the words of Omdahl: "sexy" (2012). Evidently, it seems reasonable that enrichment is mostly on the textual level, as in the e-book version of Tom Egeland's *Nostradamus' testamente* (Omdahl 2012). In this case the publishing technology created the limitations, and it could have been easier to explore the new media if there were less limitations connected to the publishing platforms.

It seems that what many publishers miss is better technology and easier design. Would it be possible to create a norm for the publishing that opens up the space for creativity but still are inside boundaries that will guide the reading? Craig Mod, the designer, suggest that this gives us the opportunity to find out what we want today's e-books to look like. Today's technology should facilitate a well-functioning platform for viewing e-books, but there are design issues to be solved. The spine of the book should be redefined, because the new medium does not have the same limitations as the paper book. Craig Mod describes it as trying to tame the hypervolume, trying to create boundaries. "Dual axis navigation makes for a bad, ungrounded reading experience" (Mod 2012). The paper book has become a self-explaining, practical design based on historical precedence. The problem with e-books comes when it is trying to copy the paper book. The e-book needs its own language (Mod 2012). In brief, when the e-book is a poor copy of a printed book, rather than a work based on the mediums own premises, it will not make for an independent product.

3.3 Nostalgia

Often in the discussion on e-books, the nostalgia card is put forth. Kay and Goldberg discuss this in their essay on the *Dynabook*: “It [the *Dynabook*] need not be treated as a simulated paper book since this is a new medium with new properties” (1977). At that time, the technology was not yet there, to realize all their visions. Their goal for the *Dynabook* was that the design of it should not be worse than paper. This is a problem that has not yet got a good solution. The experience of reading an e-book is, for many people, still inferior to paper books.

One book reader explains his relationship to the paper and e-book in this way:

I cannot imagine a time when there are no printed books to curl up with in bed or in a window seat [...] I am saddened by the thought of future generations who may never know the incredible pleasure of holding a book in their hands. At the same time, I am realistic enough to know that making books available in electronic form opens enormous possibilities for research and library acquisitions. (Ardito 2000)

In addition to this, there are many other examples that people would prefer a paper book to an e-book. This may reside in Craig Mod’s argument, that a good reading experience needs some boundaries that with the paper book used to be physical, but with the new digital format need to take on other forms. The spine of the book guides the reading, but an infinite canvas of text (as you can have on an iPad) will easily be overwhelming.

4 THE BOOK MARKET IN NORWAY

New technology has also major implications for the evolving literary market. In Norway, the traditional literary market is strong and thriving, whereas the market for e-books has not yet been as promising.

Norway has one of the smallest markets for books in Europe. However, the consumers have access to a selection of books that in breadth and quality surpasses what one experiences in nations it is natural to compare with (Den norske Forleggerforening 2007). Examples of such nations may be France and Germany. One benefit from being a small market is the possibility to create trade agreements. Just recently, one such agreement was made, so that it will be easier for non-fiction books to become e-books (Flatø 2012).

The book industry and the politicians in Norway have worked to maintain and strengthen the Norwegian written language and to ensure participation in public debate. An efficient distribution network ensures equal access to literature across the country, and thus ensures the same conditions for acquiring knowledge (Den norske Forleggerforening 2007). First, to enable this, Norwegian literature receives governmental and financial support through *innkjøpsordningene* (purchasing arrangements). Second, a contract exists, that governs the relationship between publishers and booksellers. One important element in this *bransjeavtale* (trade agreement) is that the book's publisher determines the price. Third, a system that enables the publishers to set a fixed price till the end of a period. *Fastpris* (fixed price) does not imply that the prices of each book are standardized: The publisher decides the price of each book individually (Den norske Forleggerforening 2007). This scheme contributes to a wider selection of books, because the booksellers can know with certainty that the price of each title will be fixed, and can therefore safely invest in a number of copies without the risk of having to reduce prices as a result of price competition from other retailers.

4.1 The market for e-books

The e-book market in Norway has not yet flourished as much as in America, but the conditions for it to improve in time are nonetheless present. A large amount of eager readers and the possibilities to create trade agreements are such conditions.

In Norway, a problem has been that e-books are more expensive than what people think is reasonable. E-book is defined as a service and because of the tax it will cost 25% more than it would have done otherwise. Bjarne Buset in *Gyldendal* explains that to make e-books is a lot more expensive and more complicated than most people think. The largest investment in a book is not the printing, but the work towards the finished book, between the writer and the publisher. These costs are the same for a paper and an e-book. Den norske Forleggerforening (2007) writes that about half of the book's retail price goes to distribution and the dealer, primarily related to payroll and office expenses, and the other half goes to the author, the publishing process and the publisher. In an e-book-setting, it could be possible to get rid of a lot of the distribution and dealer costs.

Another issue that can hinder the development of the e-book market is the lack of writers that want to write for the new medium. Tom Egeland is not yet ready for writing a book that is first and foremost directed to the digital. This is partly because of the love he has for paper books, and partly because the market for e-books is quite narrow in Norway. For many years still, he thinks it is likely that e-books only will be a supplement to the paper

books. Reading literature on digital platforms has advanced a lot the last years, but in Norway the development has been characterized by a lack of effort (Post Forlag 2012). Post Forlag looks at electronic publishing as a major opportunity to expand the reading experience.

A quick look to the United States shows statistics that tell a rise in the e-book-market year by year. According to the latest survey by the Association of American Publishers (AAP) and the Book Industry Study Group (BISG): “[T]he total share of ebooks in the trade market has rocketed upward from 0.6 percent in 2008 to 6.4 percent in 2010. Although that number represents a small amount of the total market for all formats, it translates to total net revenue for 2010 of \$878 million from 114 million units sold” (Wischenbart 2011). From October 2010 into early 2011 e-book sales exploded month by month. In adult fiction, e-books accounted for 13.6 percent of the net revenue market share in 2010 (source: AAP/BISG, data for 2010; AAP February 2011 sales report). On *Amazon* digital books has become more popular than paperbacks, announced by Amazon founder Jeff Bezos in 2011 (Jørgenrud 2011).

It’s reasonable that the e-book-market in Norway will continue to rise, and good solutions need to be established. One chain of bookstores, *Ark*, has launched their own e-book-application to make it easier to acquire Norwegian e-books. The trend is that the market for e-books is growing.

5 THE POTENTIAL OF THE E-BOOK FORMAT

As shown, the issues with technology and the slim market for e-books are obstacles to overcome. In my interviews both publishers and writers see the potential in e-books. The history of the e-book does not start with the *Dynabook*. The need to store, collect and manipulate information has always been an issue. Devices to do this have existed in various forms for thousands of years (Kay & Goldberg 1977). Today it may seem obvious that the computer should be a media device, but at first computers were designed solely to do arithmetic. Now the computer has become a “metamedium” with the ability to function as many other media (movie, record, book) and in contrast to what a book can do, a computer can respond and create a more interactive experience.

Lev Manovich is an author of new media books. He has written about what it means that the computer can affect all types of media. In 2001 he claimed “we are in the middle of a new media revolution – the shift of all culture to computer-mediated forms of production, distribution and communication” (Manovich 2001). He explains this in the way that earlier

media revolutions, like the photographic, have only affected one medium at a time. The computer revolution affects all stages of communication (acquisition, storage, distribution) as well as all media types.

Although a computer represents a metamedium, the texts portrayed on a computer will be influenced by the digital logic. This is why an e-book will not be the same as a paper book, because the two are affected by which medium they are viewed through. Moreover, it is difficult to pinpoint what this does with the experience of the user, and treat it theoretically. In Manovich's words: "This aspect of interactivity remains one of the most difficult theoretical questions raised by new media" (Manovich 2001).

Nevertheless, interactivity has become a word we in many ways associate with the computer, although some will argue that interactivity exists in all types of art in the way that we fill in blank spaces and uses our own fantasy to connect dissimilar ideas to each other. Thus interactivity is not a new idea, but it is experienced differently on a computer than in printed publications and as a result the e-book has other possibilities than the paper book.

5.1 Opportunities for publishers

The publishers are seeing a lot of opportunities in the new format, but economical insecurity can hinder them from investing. To get around this, it may be wise to start to explore the new format with educational and children's literature, where it already is a market.

Bjarne Buset, Information Manager in *Gyldendal*, argues that there are a lot more opportunities than challenges concerning e-books, among others is the fact that books get a longer life, the publisher can save a lot of costs, it can be good for the environment, they can sell more titles to more client groups and they can deliver their content in a more varied and smarter way than before. Buset does not think the press is correct when they are writing that the publishers will die. Personally, he anticipates that the publishers instead will blossom like never before.

Arno Vigmostad, in *Vigmostad & Bjørke*, finds that if an e-book only is a copy of the appearance of the printed book then the new media is not exploited properly. This resembles the way Lev Manovich feels about the new media, as a media that is idiosyncratic. Vigmostad is of the opinion that there is not enough money in e-books for it to be wise for a publisher to go all in – yet. One option is to start with the books that are used in education, because the government can pay for it. In this way, children can learn the digital as a norm, and may not have the same nostalgic feelings towards the paper book. *Aftenposten* wrote in February (2012) that the sales of digital books for children are exploding. *Tambar* exemplifies this,

being a children's book that sells more in digital than in printed form (Bok og Samfunn 2010). The new generation will not be used to read on paper.

The publishers' concern is the content, not so much whether it is on paper or on a digital platform. The positive outcome of e-books is that you can get hold of a product that is no longer for sale in the store, because when it comes to the digital, storage is not an issue. Another positive consequence is that an author's income can last longer. Evidently, e-books give publishers opportunities to deliver different types of content and to save cost. However, e-books in Norway are not yet a commercial success as the printed book, and may be an unsecure market to enter.

5.2 Opportunities for writers

More creative freedom is one of the important opportunities that writers see in e-books. However, they are also committed to the traditional way of writing and will not use the technology simply for the sake of it.

Tom Egeland says he gets more strings to play on with electronic books. When the technology is more developed, authors will have more possibilities to enrich the text. At the same time, Egeland points out, there are some novels that do not need enrichment. Egeland thinks that the e-books of the future will vary – some will be pure textfiles, others will be enriched with additional information.

Kari Stai sees that the new media can give older books new focus and interest. A history that is made into an interactive adventure can arouse stronger interest than the book did before.

Geir Gulliksen contributed with a poem in *komPost #1*. Although he can see the benefits, he is not sure how suitable it is to use the technological possibilities in the type of literature that he normally writes and reads. He thinks it is more interesting as a way to search for new forms, like Jennifer Egan has done in her text *Black Box*. This is a book that has been published one tweet at a time, and its content is about a technological future. In an earlier book, *A Visit From The Goon Squad*, Egan writes one chapter as a PowerPoint presentation. This "trick", as one reviewer called it, "feels appropriate in a book preoccupied throughout by the effects of technology on our lives and culture, from the consequences for music of the digital revolution [...] to the way in which technology is transforming our language" (Churchwell 2011). Consequently, this incorporates the new media in the traditional literature, and can be seen as appropriate because it corresponds with the rest of the book. Meanwhile

there are books that are not linked to any kinds of technology, and may rest in the use of just traditional text-elements.

In cases like *Black Box* one should consider the typography and appearance of the e-text also, not just the content, according to Gulliksen. He often experiences that e-texts are set up as normal texts that shall be printed. That is not necessarily a good idea, because to read from a screen gives different possibilities than paper. In addition, he experiences literary texts as interactive enough as they are, because it is the reader that adds life in the text with his associations and imagination. Therefore, he has not considered making interactive books by including more video, animation, music and so forth.

All the writers are positive to exploration of the new media in different ways, but different texts need different language, and while some should embrace the new possibilities, others are strong as just text files. The new media can broaden the landscape of literature, not by excluding the old form but in providing new forms as well.

6 HOW TO CREATE GOOD, DIGITAL WORKS FOR THE NEW MEDIUM?

The development of the e-book does not progress by itself, which means that publishers and writers need to search for new partners to cooperate with, for instance animators and technological developers. This can be part in broadening the landscape of literature, and get a larger audience for the works. One assumption to the new medium is that it can give rise to genres like short prose and poetry, because these are genres that suit a mobile reading situation. Ending this section by reflecting on what makes a work literature, which is an essential question when it comes to creating something that is good and lasting.

Post Forlag's goal is to publish good literature that can be read on reading tablets, smartphones and computers. Sondre Midthun, one of the editors in Post Forlag, explains that they want to be trendsetters and explore what sound, pictures, video, interactivity etc. can do with the traditional understanding of literature.

Harald Ofstad Fougner (*Gyldendal*) writes that the publishers try to facilitate everything they can to help their writers into a new era, but when all is said and done, they need the authors themselves to run the artistic development. A publisher's work is not to come up with the good ideas, but to help authors complete *theirs* and helping the authors to reach out to as many readers as possible.

Tom Egeland, the writer of *Nostradamus' testamente*, thinks that the greatest challenge will be to get the authors to understand and exploit the new digital formats. Does this mean that a writer should take on a bigger role, not just writing text, but creating works that combine texts with other elements, like videos and interactivity?

The tools to produce audio-visual work have become available to everyone. This makes it possible to create a multimedia work as long as one has a computer and a good idea. Kristian Pedersen, the animator in *Gasspedal Animert*, hopes that more and more people experiment with the different tools, but at the same time it would be sad if the writers did not need him anymore. In his poetic animations, he is dependent on the author and the collaboration is intriguing. When people are working with different approaches something new can occur, that neither could have foreseen. Pedersen would highly recommend “å ha med seg en lekekamerat” (have someone to play with [my translation]). He has experienced that his movies have been well received, especially by the authors. Summing up, collaboration between artists of different genres may be a way to create new digital works.

Collaboration can also give the works a larger audience. The movies from *Gasspedal Animert* have been shown or invited to movie-, animation and literary festivals and to design competitions and poetry events in Norway and internationally. Pedersen finds it inspiring that the movies have been received as literature. The series was on *Morgenbladet's* list of favourite books from the past year (Haagensen 2010) and a recommendation on *Aftenposten's* pages for literature (Økland 2011). Accordingly, there are examples in Norway that experiment with the way to publish literature and these experiments are considered to be literature. New forms can come from collaboration or by having good tools for writers to experiment on their own without the need to study different ways of communicating first.

6.1 Good genres for the new medium

Post Forlag believes that the short genres (short stories, short prose, poetry) suit the digital format. It seems like others are thinking the same: One of the more traditional publishers had in April 2012 a competition where they wanted short, concluded texts. These were texts they wanted to publish on their “Kortlest”-application. They wanted the application to present texts that were suited for mobile reading situations. With “Kortlest”, Gyldendal also wanted to create an environment for people who read texts that are more part of the arts than the commercial literature.

Even though the competition was to write a text that should be published in a digital format, the texts had to be sent in on paper. Kari Marstein explains that the reason for this was

practical. *Gyldendal* has routines for handling manuscripts on paper, and they have had the experience that writers think of a submission on paper as more final than a digital submission.

Gyldendal were curious if the new form – an application – would do anything with the understanding of genre, but could not see that it had any effect on the contributions. The application does not have hypertexts, but it is not the technical aspects that stop them. Harald Ofstad Fougner writes that hypertexts are a difficult field in which Norway lack good examples and writers that master this form.

Skjalg Wie Skare, author in *komPost* #1, suggests that digital books can create “books that are alive” in the sense that they can be written continuously, almost like a blog or television show. He also thinks that short prose can rise in popularity because this genre does not need the long span of concentration like the traditional novel. It may come more book singles, and this may give the audience a larger spectrum of different genres.

The thought of the short text, that does not need a long span of attention, is in correlation with the rest of the digital around us. Everything is in motion, for example on Facebook where the feed and the ticker are constantly updating. When you read an online newspaper there are flashing advertisement and plenty of links to other articles or websites. The mobile reading situation may create a new era for the short genres. At the same time, longer games and the possibility to drown completely in another world will still be interesting.

6.2 What makes digital works literature?

When dealing with the new media we may interestingly ask: Will it change the content? In one way it inevitably does, but at the same time, as I have looked at e-books and talked to writers, the professed differences between paper and digital format do not come across as crucial or even many.

It is difficult to pinpoint what exactly makes a work literature and not a work of art or a video game. N. Katherine Hayles writes about this in “Electronic Literature: what is it?": “The demarcation between electronic literature and computer games is far from clear; many games have narrative components, while many works of electronic literature have game elements. [...] Nevertheless, there is a general difference in emphasis between the two forms.” (Hayles 2007) *Jakob og Neikob* is an application that can have some resemblances to a videogame. Kari Stai defines a literary application as an application based on a literary piece, and that it conveys the literary work without compromising the value. She says that the

difference between *Jakob og Neikob* and a videogame is that there are a lot more one can do in a video game. *Jakob og Neikob* follows the same storyline as in the book.

On the other hand, it is not hard to imagine an application for children that would give the reader more options and resemble a videogame in more ways. Markku Eskelinen (2004) thinks that the difference between a video game and a work of literature is that in games the user interprets in order to configure, whereas in works whose primary interest is narrative, the user configures in order to interpret.

Skjalg Wie Skare, author in *komPost #1*, is working on a text in the digital format. In this text he is thinking of using links to sites that are explaining his made-up characters, for example on Wikipedia. He finds that it is more appropriate to include different platforms when one is writing for the net anyway. Still, when asked the question whether he has considered making more interactive books and include video, animation or music, he says he has not considered it as such. He thinks that literature is an interactive medium in itself. He wants to cultivate the literary expression, the text itself and the language, rather than to include video etc. Despite this, he would not exclude that he might be thinking differently at a later stage.

The thought of what literature is, were dissimilar for the writers in question. Some stressed the importance of written words, others of the narrative in the story. There are different ways to cultivate a literary expression, and maybe the borders are not that strict between the different genres of art. For instance, the videos from *Gasspedal Animert* are seen as both videos, art and literature, and they are probably all of it.

7 CONCLUSION

As I have shown, the e-book as a copy of the paper book may result from an industry that has a too narrow look on the opportunities that exist in the digital medium, at the same time the industry is dependent on writers that are willing to experiment, a growing market for e-books and a well-developed technology. Both Tom Egeland and Kari Stai said that there were limitations in the technology that hindered them from doing all the things they wanted in their texts. Even the things they managed to do, like the footnotes in *Nostradamus' testamente*, are awkward and difficult to use. What's more is that something about the new media seems quite old fashioned, for instance in the design of Kindle. Instead of trying to imitate the successful paper book, the new media needs its own language that fits the digital possibilities.

Finally, even though the e-book market in Norway are still fairly tiny, the country has a lot of people that are eager to read and governmental founding to secure a good literal heritage. There is no reason why e-books should not be a success here, similar to what we can see in the USA, but it requires good tools and some that are willing to be the first initiator.

The interviews I conducted suggest that there is a gap between needs and tools: Although writers wish to exploit the digital medium and to use new tools, they do not have the overview of technological options or they lack suitable utensils. For the Norwegian e-book market to progress in a favourable manner, it may be essential to create a link between writers and publishers on the one side and developers of technology on the other.

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