

Digital Self-publishing as Planned Behaviour:

Authors' Views on E-book Adoption

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the MA degree in Communication.

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## Abstract

A popular school of thought in the study of publishing, exemplified by the influential Long Tail theory, suggests that the economic advantages of e-books will lead to a boom in self-publishing. However, this position focuses on economic factors at the expense of other potential influences. This thesis applied Azjen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour to explore which factors have the most influence on authors' decision to self-publish e-books, and, conversely, which factors influence others' decision not to. Qualitative interviews were conducted with 11 authors in the Ottawa area who have self-published or who are considering doing so in the near future. We discovered that there is significant resistance to e-books as a format for self-publishing, and that normative factors such as a lack of prestige and different promotional requirements were particularly influential. While e-books were seen to reduce economic risk, they were believed to be a less prestigious format, and so to represent an elevated risk to what Bourdieu called symbolic-capital. Some authors were also resistant because they felt unable to promote e-books in the way they are expected to. However, most said they would be willing to abandon their resistance if they perceived sufficient demand from their audience. These results open up paths for future study, including more focused examinations of the resistance factors that emerged; more longitudinal studies to see how authors' opinions change over time, particularly those of the non-adopters; and a further examination of the digital skills developed by adopters.

## Acknowledgements

The author gratefully acknowledges funding from three different bodies which supported the production of this thesis. The author received the Ontario Graduate Scholarship, provided by the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities for his first year of the Master of Arts program. In his second year, he received the Joseph Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship, provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. In both years, the University of Ottawa provided further funding and related employment opportunities.

This thesis was written under the supervision of Dr. Pierre C. Bélanger, whose guidance, editing and other support were essential to this project's success, as was the participation of thesis-committee members Dr. Mark Lowes and Dr. Daniel Paré.

Of course, the author also greatly appreciates the sustained participation, both in the interview stage and the subsequent validation stage, of this study's 11 interviewees, all of whom agreed to be identified by name in this report: Martin Bueno, Karl El-Koura, Robert Fowler, Kate Heartfield, Chris McNaught, Rusty Priske, Carol Stephen, Louise Szabo, Christopher Daniel Wallbank, Sherrill Wark, and Teresa Wilde. Help from other members of the Ottawa writing community was instrumental during the sample-selection stage: Raymond Coderre of Baico Publishing, Michael Murphy of the Capital Crime Writers, Prof. Heather Peace of Algonquin College, and Randy Ray of Ottawa Independent Writers.

## 1. Introduction

E-books represent a relatively recent innovation in the publishing field, particularly when compared to the hundreds of years of print-book history. Self-publishing is also an old practice, although some believe that it is poised for massive growth due to the advent of e-books. In the context of this thesis, we define self-publishing as the act by authors of paying for the production of their own books, rather than submitting manuscripts to third-party publishing houses to produce. The argument that e-books will popularize self-publishing is most notably put forth by Long Tail economic theory. Long Tail is prominent for its popularity, having been put forth by former *Wired* magazine editor Chris Anderson in his eponymous best-selling 2006 book (Garner, 2006). It is also notable due to the boldness of its claim, contending that the economic benefits of electronic publishing will lead directly to a large increase in amateur production – i.e. a boom in the self-publishing of e-books. “The tools of creativity are now cheap, and talent is more widely distributed than we know” (Anderson, 2006, p. 78).

However, this position assumes that all producers behave with simple economic goals in mind, which is not always the case. The purpose of this study is to explore which factors influence authors' decision to self-publish e-books, and, conversely, which factors influence others' decision not to. The author conducted a series of qualitative interviews with 11 authors in the Ottawa area to explore this topic, eight of whom have self-published and three have considered self-publishing. This approach was chosen because of the paucity of research on the topic of e-books and self-publishing. An inductive, qualitative approach is best suited to studies which intend to explore topics with relatively little pre-existing information.

### 1.1 Theoretical perspective

By adopting a macro approach to adoption, Long Tail and similar economically focused research (Kular, 2006; Tian and Martin, 2010) fail to consider variables associated with the micro

level: the concerns, attitudes and specific interests of the individual authors. To address this, we applied Azjen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), a micro-level theory of adoption which argues that the choice to perform a given activity is informed by an individual's prior attitudes toward that activity, perception of social norms regarding the activity, and perceived behavioural control – i.e. the ability of the individual to undertake the activity. TPB has recently been used to explain adoption patterns of various new technologies. Peng et al. (2012) used it to study internet non-users in Hong Kong, and Baker and White (2010) applied it to the study of adolescents' use of social-networking sites. In the context of e-books, TPB provides a framework through which to examine individually determined concerns such as personal taste, e.g. whether the author likes e-books as a format; perceptions of prestige, e.g. whether others consider e-books to be as prestigious a platform as print; and technological access and facility.

## 1.2 Sample and methodology

The sample for this thesis is composed of authors who write popular fiction and non-fiction. Given the exploratory nature of this study, the choice of the popular field made sense, because it is less specialized than those of academic or technical publishing, and more familiar to the average reader. Authors were sought who fit one of three possible target categories: 1) authors who had self-published e-books (adopters), 2) authors who had self-published print books but not e-books (non-adopters), 3) authors who had written at least one book-length project but had never published in either print or e-book form (unpublished authors). It was discovered in the process that the non-adopter category proved unworkable as first envisioned. Most authors who described themselves in initial contact as having only produced print had in fact been given e-book versions of their books by their self-publishing services<sup>1</sup>. However, as will be discussed in the methodology chapter, page 34, these authors were

<sup>1</sup> Self-publishing services are companies that produce print and/or e-books, and related services, for a fee. All of the self-published authors in this study made use of such services.



nonetheless categorized as non-adopters due to their professed lack of interest in the e-book versions.

All of the participants agreed to have their names used in this study.

The adopters group consists of:

- Teresa Wilde, a romance author who has self-published 11 books in both print and e-book format and one book as an e-book only;
- Karl El-Koura, a sci-fi/fantasy author who has self-published one book in both print and e-book format;
- and Sherrill Wark, who has self-published five books of fiction and non-fiction, in both formats.

The non-adopters group consists of:

- Martin Bueno, a sci-fi/fantasy author who has self-published one print book;
- Robert Fowler, a historical-fiction author who has self-published three print books;
- Rusty Priske, a performance poet who has self-published two print books;
- Chris McNaught, a historical-fiction author who has published two print books;
- and Louise Szabo, a non-fiction author who has self-published two print books.

Finally, the unpublished group consists of:

- Kate Heartfield, a speculative fiction author<sup>2</sup> who has published in magazines and online;
- Carol A. Stephen, a poet who has released two hand-bound *chapbooks*<sup>3</sup>;
- and Christopher Daniel Wallbank, a fiction writer and poet who has published short fiction and poetry online.

### 1.3 Literature review

While theories such as Long Tail ignore micro-level concerns related to e-books as a format for self-publishing, other literature (e.g. Christensen, 2000; Sarrimo, 2010; Westin, 2012; Carolan and Evain, 2013) suggested potential factors to raise in the interviews. Most of this information came in the form of academic essays and popular literature, though there were some empirical studies as well (e.g. Laquintano, 2010; Weisberg, 2011). The literature review chapter, page 9, is organized around the Theory of Planned Behaviour's three influence categories. Potential attitudinal influences that were found included perceptions about the health of the traditional publishing industry and the market share

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2 Speculative fiction is a broad genre that includes sub-genres such as horror, fantasy. Heartfield self-describes as a speculative-fiction author, but mentioned in the interview having written historical fiction as well, which is not generally included in the speculative genre.

3 Chapbooks are small, hand-bound books most often associated with small collections of poetry. Due to their brevity and their binding, which generally lacks a spine that can be printed on, chapbooks are more akin to magazines than books.

of e-books compared to print, viewing e-books as a disruption to a valued status quo (e.g. Christensen, 2000; Buschow et al., 2014), and viewing e-books as a tool of empowerment for authors (e.g. Dilevko & Dali, 2006; Haugland, 2006; Hewitt & Regoli, 2010). The most significant normative concept identified in the literature was a potential prestige gap between print and e-books (e.g. Westin, 2012; Striphas, 2011), as well as between traditional and self-publishing (e.g. Sumner, 2012; Hewitt & Regoli, 2010). Influences related to perceived behavioural control included the economic accessibility of e-books compared to print, and the potential technological difficulties related to their production and distribution. The most significant outcome of the literature review was that there is no consensus about the advantages and disadvantages of e-books as a format for self-publishing. However, the Theory of Planned Behaviour is only interested in a subject's perceptions. That is to say that even if there were resolution in the literature, it would only be of interest in this study if the interviewees were aware of it.

#### 1.4 Findings and analysis

In analyzing the results of these interviews through the lens of the reviewed literature, this thesis finds that there is more resistance to e-book adoption among self-publishing authors than is envisioned by proponents of Long Tail. Normative factors were found to be particularly influential on authors' choices of publishing format. Concerns about the prestige level of self-published e-books were paramount, including a belief that the reduced barrier to entry afforded by e-books has fostered a perception that self-published e-books tend to be of low quality. Related to this, the concept of symbolic-capital risk was identified as figuring heavily in the formation of publishing decisions. Symbolic-capital risk is the risk to an author's reputation, in this case resulting from having one's name associated with a publishing format that is potentially less prestigious. Symbolic-capital risk provides a normative counterpart to the concept of economic risk.

Some authors were reluctant to adopt because of a perceived inability to promote e-books the

way they are supposed to be, which again reflects a concern for social expectations. This reveals an interaction between two of the Theory of Planned Behaviour's influence categories, perceived behavioural control and subjective norms. The authors believed there were expectations among both their peers and the audience about how e-books should be promoted, and, as a result, they felt unable to meet those expectations. Factors from the theory's third influence category, attitudes, that emerged as significant were emotional attachment to the physical form of print books, and a basic lack of interest in the e-book format among some of the non-adopters. Again there was interplay between the categories here. Many of the interviewees expressed a willingness to abandon their own attachment to print if they were to perceive a demand for e-books from their audiences. The authors who believed that they were unable to promote e-books properly said that they felt able to learn how to do so, but their general lack of interest in the format prevented them from making the effort required.

### 1.5 The role of the researcher

I am far from a dispassionate observer of this topic. I have self-published two book-length fiction projects myself, both in print only. My own reasons for spurning e-book technology are a lack of familiarity with it, and a sense that print is more prestigious (a bias identified in the literature as well). That said, I have in recent years considered moving to e-books for their practical and economic advantages (as also described in the literature, though I was aware of them before undertaking this study), to the extent that I have recently experimented with converting one of my previous print books into an e-book to familiarize myself with the process. As such, I am sincerely and personally curious about how other authors feel toward them as a format. I am cognizant of my own experiences and biases, and so have tried to mitigate their effect by showing the exhaustiveness of my literature review, and grounding my survey and interview questions and the other aspects of this study in that literature. My personal familiarity with the topic was in fact an advantage in the interviews, in that it made them

more conversational and allowed me to understand many of the concepts and experiences discussed by the participants.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 Context

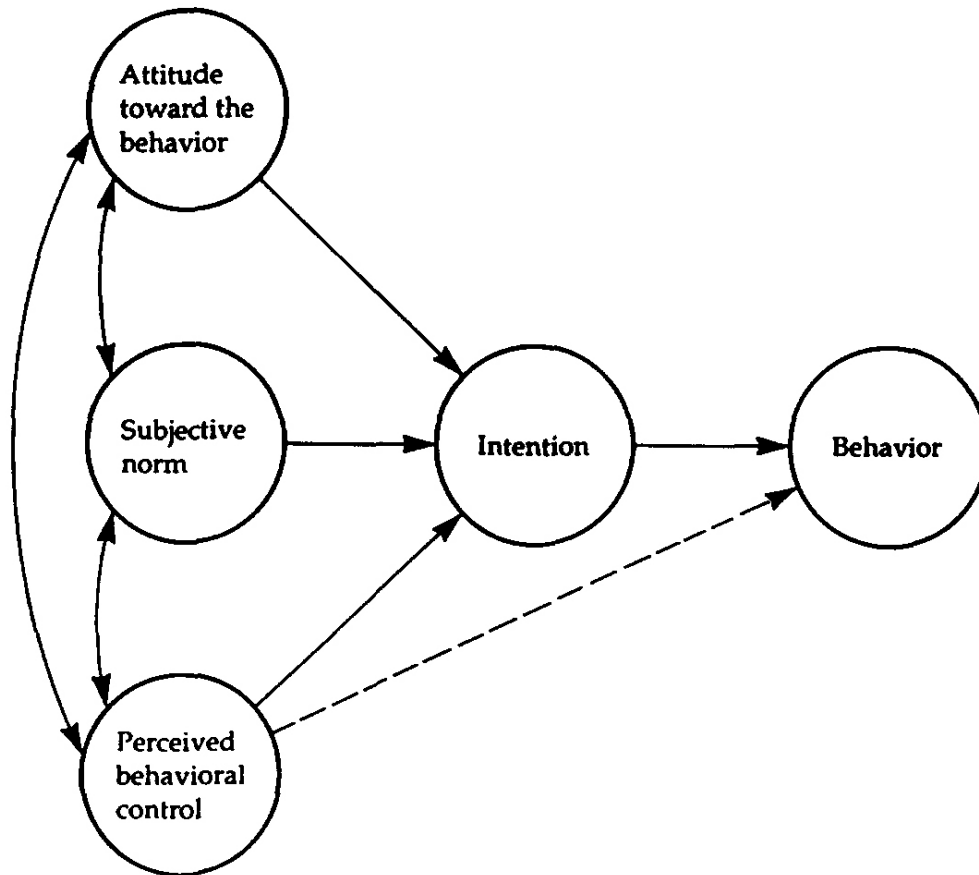
In his popular and most influential book *The Long Tail* (2006), former *Wired* magazine editor Chris Anderson claims that the advantages of electronic production and distribution – specifically, the avoidance of the inventory and distribution costs involved in physical retail – will produce a boom in e-book self-publishing. He states this in the simplest cause-and-effect terms: “When the tools of production are available to everyone, everyone becomes a producer” (p. 73). This kind of assumption is exemplary of that made by many boosters of the phenomenon once known as Web 2.0 (itself a contested term), that being *able* to produce media as well as consume it means people automatically *will* produce it. This assumption has been criticized by a number of media scholars for being over-optimistic at best, determinist at worst, and for taking a simplified view of the audience (Bird, 2011; Van Dijck, 2009). Because it addresses e-book adoption specifically, Long Tail will be referred to in the findings and discussion of this study as a sort of proxy for this optimistic/determinist school of thought, but it is not alone. As will be discussed in this chapter and in the analysis chapter, a number of other popular and scholarly articles make similar assumptions. Granted, Anderson is approaching the topic through the study of trends, rather than individuals. Indeed, the name of his theory refers to the section of a sales chart where demand is gradually decreasing and at its thinnest, hence the name the Long Tail. Nonetheless he is building on an assumption of a massified audience performing a single activity as a result of the stimulus of broadly available “tools of production.” What is needed instead to investigate authors' potential adoption of the e-book format is an approach which recognizes that individual differences in attitudes, social setting, access to and knowledge of software, and other factors will produce different decisions about whether to adopt e-books as a self-publishing format.

## 2.2 Theoretical perspective

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), developed by Azjen (1991), TPB is a broad theory of adoption behaviour which organizes the most salient factors informing an individual's intention to perform a given behaviour into three influence types: prior attitudes toward that behaviour, perception of norms regarding the behaviour, and perceived behavioural control. Intention to perform, however, is itself only a factor in the decision to adopt or reject the behaviour. A lack of actual behavioural control, as opposed to perceived, can still trump intention. Azjen defines attitude toward the behaviour as the “degree to which a person has a favourable or unfavourable evaluation or appraisal of the behaviour in question” (p. 188). An example, in the context of this thesis, would be a belief that e-books will never be as popular as print. The subjective norms category refers to the perception of social pressure to either perform or not perform the behaviour; for example, a belief that print books are a more prestigious publishing format than e-books. Perceived behavioural control is the perception of the ease or difficulty involved in undertaking the behaviour. An author's belief in her or his own computer skills is an example of this factor. These factors influence an individual's intention to undertake the behaviour, which is the main influence on the actual behaviour. Figure 1 displays the relationship between the factors and behaviour.

In contrast to the macro-level approach of Long Tail, TPB focuses on the characteristics and decisions of individuals. It offers a pragmatic approach to adoption in the context of publishing format. Put simply, Long Tail theory is limited by its focus on one discrete influence type (i.e. economics) in putting forth behaviour predictions, whereas TPB takes a broader view. That said, TPB limits itself to conscious decision-making. There can, of course, be sub- or semi-conscious factors at work – for example, the above-mentioned concept of prestige, or emotional connections with the book as a physical artifact – but, in terms of format adoption, such factors are only

Fig. 1: The Theory of Planned Behaviour. (Reproduced from Azjen [1991], with permission from Elsevier).



of interest in how an awareness of them – a *conscious* awareness – affects the adoption decision. TPB includes the awareness of such factors in its first two influence types, attitudes and subjective norms.

Though it is a broadly applied behavioural theory, TPB has recently been used to explain adoption patterns of various new technologies. Peng et al. (2012) used it to study internet non-users in Hong Kong, finding that the social-norm category, which they interpreted as the perceived popularity of the internet, had a significant positive correlation with intention – that is, belief that the internet is popular increased intention to begin using it. Baker and White (2010) applied TPB to the study of adolescents' use of social-networking sites. They extended TPB's categorization of intention to include an influence type for “group norm,” the pressure to adopt from members of an individual's social or peer group, arguing that Azjen's original conception did not sufficiently take direct social pressure into account, citing support from other TPB critics. Baker and White found that group norm had a strong

positive influence on intention subsequent adoption, along with the standard TPB influences of attitude and perceived behavioural control. These studies provide evidence of TPB's applicability in the study of the adoption of electronic media formats.

The application here of TPB to the adoption of a new technology owes a debt to Rogers's (2003) widely used Diffusion of Innovations theory (DOI). Rogers's innovation-decision model has five stages: knowledge, when an individual is exposed to an innovation; persuasion, when an individual forms a favourable or unfavourable attitude towards the innovation; decision, when an individual makes the decision to adopt, reject or suspend; implementation, when the idea is put into use; and confirmation, when reinforcement is sought for the decision, at which point it may be reversed. Thus, Rogers takes a much longer-term view, studying everything from how initial awareness of the innovation happens, up to the actions involved in implementing the new idea. That is a longer view than this thesis aspires to take. This thesis works from the assumption that the population already knows about e-books, and stops, theoretically, at their intention to adopt or reject. In a sense, TPB takes a closer and more detailed view of stages two and three of Rogers's model; it is concerned with persuasion (TPB's three influence types – attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control – describe how one is persuaded to adopt or reject) and decision, which TPB terms as intention. These two stages are also the ones which receive the least attention in Rogers' book (2003), so TPB offers detail that Rogers does not.

This thesis does borrow significantly from Rogers, including his language, most notably in talking about e-book “adoption”; TPB talks about “behaviour,” which is too general for this thesis. As well, Rogers offers profiles of various types of adopters, which will be applied in the findings of this study to discuss the subjects' responses. DOI divides people into five categories based on how quickly they adopt an innovation: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. TPB, being a more general behavioural theory, offers no such framework.



There are plenty of precedents for integrating Rogers' DOI into a theoretical framework to study e-book adoption. Shin (2011), for instance, appended DOI's outline of adopter personality traits to uses-and-gratifications theory to create an extended uses-and-gratifications model to study e-book users. Lee's (2012) study of adoption of e-books on various types of mobile devices in South Korea used DOI to bolster the technology acceptance model (TAM).

A framework developed to model user acceptance of new information systems, TAM is similar to TPB in that it outlines influence types which affect intention. It defines these types as perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, which in turn affect user attitude, which then affects intention. Mathieson (1991) compared TAM with TPB to see which was superior in predicting user intentions, concluding that, "TAM is easier to apply, but only supplies very general information on users' opinions about a system. TPB provides more specific information that can better guide development" (p. 173). Nonetheless, TAM's specific consideration of technology adoption might seem to recommend it, instead of TPB, for use in this thesis, but other aspects make it less suitable for the task at hand. TAM, for instance, abandons the social-norms category, in favour of considerations of usefulness. This is problematic for the purposes of this thesis because norms are identified by Westin (2012), Kostick (2011), Sumner (2012) and others as being potentially very influential on format choice. As well, TAM's constructs of usefulness and ease of use pre-suppose prior experience with the technology in question in order for the user to form such a specific belief. This thesis is not willing to make such an assumption. While it is assumed that the sample will be familiar with the existence of e-books, it is at least possible that they have no practical experience with their use. It would be better to include ideas about usability under the broader categories of attitude and perceived behavioural control, as laid out in TPB, and to leave instrumental conceptions such as usefulness to the subjects to bring up if they choose in the course of the qualitative interviews<sup>4</sup>.

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4 It should be noted that the TAM studies cited here are all quantitative, rather than qualitative, studies.

### 2.3 Applying TPB to e-book and self-publishing literature

The issue of self-publishing in e-book format can be seen as a dual question: there are reasons to self-publish or not, and reasons to do so in e-book format or not. A relation between these two options is suggested by Anderson (2006), who argues that self-publishing is easier and more viable thanks to the advantages offered by e-books' economic advantages (production costs and faster and broader distribution as compared to print).

While the adoption of e-books has been the subject of some study in academic circles (e.g. Laquintano, 2010; Westin, 2012), there has been little published work focusing on the perspective of authors. The vast majority of literature has been from the perspective of the audience (i.e. readers), or from the publishers and bookstore owners. Literature from the audience perspective approaches adoption as a sociological question: Who is most likely to embrace e-books and why? What does this mean for readers in the future? From the perspective of existing, traditional publishers, adoption is viewed as a business/industrial question: Will e-books spell the death of the publishing industry? How can existing publishers adapt? The current study's theoretical perspective is primarily concerned with perception – perceived norms, perceived behavioural control, and personal attitudes – and a perception of how readers and the publishing industry are responding to e-books will likely factor in to an author's publishing decision. A decision to self-publish will likely include some consideration of what the potential audience wants, at least in terms of publishing format; if an author believes, for example, that no one reads e-books, he or she will not likely want to publish in this format. As well, a decision to self-publish might be informed, at least in part, by a perception of the health and future of the publishing industry. For example, if an author has read Anderson's (2006) *The Long Tail*, or the numerous popular-media articles about it, he or she might be inclined to agree that self-published e-books are the future of publishing.

To apply the Theory of Planned Behaviour here, the literature is organized below into TPB's

three influence types: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. Relevant academic studies, as well as a number of personal essays appearing in peer-reviewed journals, were reviewed for these themes, to suggest perceptions this study's participants may hold which would inform their adoption decision.

### 2.3.1 Attitudes

Attitudes, or the “degree to which a person has a favourable or unfavourable evaluation or appraisal of the behaviour in question” (Ajzen, 1991, p. 188) emerged in the literature as the most common category of discussion.

As mentioned, while there is little literature from the authors' perspective on e-book adoption, the other perspectives are potentially of interest to this study, particularly that of readers. A perception of the audience is likely a key, or maybe even *the* key, factor in format choice. A self-publishing author is unlikely to pick a format which his or her readers do not seem to want; even seemingly personal motivations like sharing and self-expression (Haugland, 2006; Sarrimo, 2010), discussed below, presume the existence of an audience to receive the messages shared and expressed.

Weisberg (2011) conducted a longitudinal study which looked at student adoption trends of e-textbooks. He found that acceptance increased over time as the students became more familiar and comfortable with the technology. He also found that, by the second year of the study, some students were more favourably disposed to the e-textbooks because they had begun using e-reader devices for their pleasure reading, a finding that did not arise in the first year of the study in 2009. This study suggests that the audience for e-books is growing, which seems like an obvious consideration for authors in making the format choice.

Carolan and Evain (2013) offer further support for the growth of the e-book audience, quoting the Book Industry Study Group's Len Vlahos, who said at a conference that “power readers who adopt

reading on electronic devices are purchasing more books than those who continue to read uniquely on paper” (p. 298). Their study further found that “this is particularly beneficial to self-published authors who are primarily publishing in electronic format and who are exploring the opportunities offered by the panoply of digital distribution systems” (p. 298). This supports Anderson's (2006) basic premise that the distributional and acquisitional benefits of e-books facilitate self-publishing. It is worth noting that there were two self-published books on *Digital Book World's* Aug. 30, 2014 best-selling e-book fiction list (Greenfield, 2014a), while there were none on the *New York Times'* paperback list for that week (New York Times, 2014).

Recent statistics support these studies' findings of growth in e-books for pleasure reading. Industry-led non-profit service *BookNet Canada* has tracked e-book sales trends in English Canada since 2012 through a survey of 8,000 book buyers, and its findings show continued growth in the e-book market-share. It found that 17% of book purchases in 2013 were e-books, an increase of 2% over the previous year (Smith, 2014). This increase, however, seems to represent a slowing of growth. The *BookNet* statistics do not go back any further, however the similar U.S.-based service *Digital Book World* took a longer view and found that growth in e-book market-share has been slowing overall. E-book sales experienced triple-digit growth in 2010, at 109%, and 2011, at 154%. That growth slowed to double digits in 2012, at 33% (Digital Book World, 2014), and then single-digit growth of 3.8% in 2013 (Greenfield, 2014b). That said, *Digital Book World's* accompanying analysis points out that the statistics it used (drawn from the Association of American Publishers) do not take into account self-published titles, which make up, for example, 25 of the Top 100 e-books sold on Amazon's Kindle marketplace (Digital Book World, 2014; Bury, 2013).

While the statistics show sustained growth in e-book market share, print remains the general preference. A 2014 study by the Harris Interactive research agency (eMarketer.com, 2014) showed that nearly half (48 per cent) of respondents only read print books, while a further 17 per cent read both,

albeit more print than e-books. However, interpreted another way, these results show that more than 52 per cent read at least some e-books. A Deloitte study predicted very similar numbers for 2015 (Stewart, 2015). *BookNet Canada's* 2013 survey of English-speaking Canadian book buyers showed that e-book readers purchased more books per month on average than print readers – 4.4 per month for e-book readers versus 3.1 for print (Millar, 2014).

The fluctuating rate of market-share growth is part of a larger theme of general uncertainty, suggesting that commitment to e-books can be a risky proposition for publishers. The nascent and fragile state of the e-book market in general is a recurrent theme in the academic literature (Castledale Inc. et al., 2008; Shatzkin, 2009; Hilton & Wiley, 2011; Besen & Kirby, 2014). Pricing is another uncertainty in the e-book market. The 2013 *BookNet Canada* study suggested that the larger number of e-books purchased per month was due partly to the fact that e-books are generally cheaper than print books (Millar, 2014). Shatzkin (2009) and Tian and Martin (2011) both found that pricing uncertainty, particularly the decision by some publishers and self-published authors to offer their books for free, is threatening the profitability of e-books in general. However, Hilton and Wiley (2011) and Carolan and Evain (2013) argued that offering e-books for free for a limited time boosts sales in the long run, both for individual titles and for the publisher or author's other products. The recent statistics suggest that this pricing volatility may be disappearing: *BookNet Canada* found that 2013 saw a reduction in the number of free downloads and an increase in the average price paid per e-book, from an average of \$11.60 in 2012 to \$11.83 in 2013 (Smith, 2014)<sup>5</sup>. Smith (2014) suggests that an increased price per book, coupled with continued growth, is a positive indication of the health of the e-book market. This finding is still fairly new, however, and there is still a wide range of prices being charged for e-books, suggesting that the potential remains for self-publishing authors to perceive the e-book market as unstable, a perception which could produce a negative attitude towards them.

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<sup>5</sup> The average prices quoted exclude free downloads.

Conversely, other studies (Castledale et al., 2008; Shatzkin, 2009; Pew Research Center, 2013) also suggest that the traditional, print industry is in a fragile state. Survey data from the U.S.-based Pew Research Center show that the number of Americans who reported reading an e-book rose from 16% in 2011 to 23% in 2012, while the number who read a print book declined from 72% to 67% in the same period (Pew Research Center, 2013). A belief that the print industry is in decline casts e-books in a favourable light, suggesting they are the format of the future. Nonetheless, e-book growth slowed significantly after 2012. The 7% rise in e-book reading reported in this Pew Research study correlates with the year of 154% growth in e-book sales (Digital Book World, 2014), a rate which has since slowed to 3.8% (Greenfield, 2014b). It should also be pointed out that, even after the decline in print readership reported in the Pew statistics, the number of people reading print books remained 44% higher than those reading e-books, indicating that print is still the undisputed preference. Thus, the data can support a preferential attitude toward either e-books or print.

Buschow et al. (2014) argue that the publishing industry views e-books as a “disruptive innovation,” a term coined by Christensen (2000) to describe new developments in a given industry “that result in *worse* product performance, at least in the near-term,” but that also “have other features that a few fringe (and generally new) customers value” (p. xviii). Buschow et al. (2014) studied the German publishing industry and found that individual managers' attitudes toward e-books were the biggest barrier to adoption. They stated that, “while opinions diverge, as to if and when e-books will replace printed books, there is agreement that publishers have to decide whether to adopt or to reject this disruptive innovation – since it is increasingly difficult to ignore” (p. 64). This emphasizes that their study's participants viewed e-books as a problem to be solved, and a threat to a status quo that is valued. There is normative element to this as well, which will be explored later.

Dilevko and Dali (2006) wrote a brief history of how libraries have dealt with self-publishing, in which they frame self-publishing as being valuable because it resides outside the traditional-

publishing world. They posit that the corporatization and bestseller focus of the mainstream book industry means that “self-publishers may be one of the last frontiers of true independent publishing” (p. 233). The notion that self-publishing offers editorial independence could form a positive attitude among authors.

Tian and Martin (2010) looked at the book industry in Australia and the impact of digitization, referring to the growth of e-books as well as the trend toward digital typesetting and online sales of print books. They found that digitization is indeed destabilizing the status quo. They cite Anderson (2006), supporting his claim of a “Long Tail effect” on the book industry, arguing that “with publishers no longer able to dictate what is published or distributed, the traditional line between producers and consumers has blurred, leading to a significant power shift in the market” (p. 157). They argued that digitization is shifting power from publishers to readers, and suggest that authors could perceive the e-book as a tool of empowerment.

Having addressed the potential audience that exists for e-books, other studies (Laquintano, 2010; Lichtenberg, 2011; Weedon et al., 2014) maintain that the main strength of e-book publishing is its affordance or even encouragement of increased interaction with that audience. In his ethnography of the self-publishing of poker textbooks, Laquintano (2010) cites Anderson's (2006) Long Tail theory in asserting that writers and readers in specific niches form mutually supporting communities that put pressure on traditional publishing by legitimizing self-publishing. He stresses that the key to the legitimization process is in the engagement with a like-minded community online.

Weedon et al. (2014) and Lichtenberg (2011) both echo the idea of reader interaction as an advantage of e-book self-publishing. They look at the potential for e-books to be more than digital copies of print books. Lichtenberg suggests that e-books have the potential to become living documents, with extra notes, updates, and even author-reader interactions, appended to them as they are shared. Weedon et al. lament the fact that e-books are so far just “remediations” (p. 112) of print,

claiming that they represent a limited challenge to “the book system” (p. 120) as compared to more dynamic formats such as augmented-reality fiction and other multimedia formats. They nonetheless recognize that e-books still encourage ongoing author-reader interaction, and as such have a potential that print lacks, noting, “as our social interactions are changing with new communication technologies, so is the book, and we should view this as a positive change” (p. 121). If a self-publishing author values this type of interaction, an awareness of it could produce a positive attitude towards e-books. However, the opposite can also hold true: If e-books are perceived as *demanding* this kind of ongoing interaction, a less outgoing writer might be disinclined to adopt the format.

While e-book self-publishing affords increased interaction with readers, it eliminates other types of potentially unwanted input, such as that coming from copy editors and a publisher's marketing department (Haugland, 2006; Hewitt & Regoli, 2010). Hewitt and Regoli (2010) looked at academic self-publishing and found that authors can potentially value the control e-book self-publishing gives them over the final product, eliminating “intrusive outsiders” such as co-authors, developmental editors and copy editors. A desire for this sort of control and self-reliance can yield a positive attitude towards e-books. They point out that the downside of this lack of input is a lack of quality control in the final product.

The assumption of an impending boom in e-book self-publishing is based foremost on economic considerations. However, Sarrimo (2010), Haugland (2006), and Kular (2006) argue that the impetus to self-publish conversely comes from non-economic motives. Anderson (2006) argues that the boom will be facilitated by the diminished production and distribution costs afforded by e-books, which, he hypothesizes, they will be produced by amateurs who publish not for profits, but “for the love of it” (p. 63). There is some scholarly support for this motivation. Sarrimo (2010) expands on this idea in a study of young writers, in which the participants expressed a desire to themselves, as well as reporting obtaining an emotional “high” from such expression. In terms of TPB, this motivation fits



under the attitude influence category. The goal of expression is an attitude toward the act of writing, and is based on the belief that such a “high” will result from writing and, potentially, self-publishing.

Haugland (2006) also talks about motivation in her study of the then-emerging business of self-publishing services. She suggests that, for the clients of the businesses she studied, self-publishing was about sharing, even just with their own peer and social groups, and expression, observing that, “The writers frequently express their pleasure and pride in the accomplishment of seeing their words in book form” (p. 11). Echoing this view, Kular (2006) argues that self-publishing, in e-book form as well as print, offers authors a lower-risk route to the same sense of accomplishment they would get from appearing in traditionally published books.

The views outlined thus far present a number of attitudes potentially held by self-publishing authors. Some of the authors discussed highlight the instrumental advantages of e-books as being cheap to produce and easy to distribute, while others emphasize their ability to afford interaction between the author and reader, which can be valued as community engagement, or disliked as burdensome. There is a divide between those who emphasize the rapid growth in the e-book market, and those who highlight its small absolute size as compared to print as well as the persistent uncertainties regarding its future. On the other hand, there is also a general sense that the future of print is equally uncertain, and that its sales are also shrinking. There is also a negative view of e-books as representing a disruption of a valued status quo, or conversely as an ability to sidestep an industry that is somehow intrusive or disempowering.

### 2.3.2 Subjective norms

In TPB, subjective norms are defined as “the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behaviour” (Ajzen, 1991, p. 188), and such norms are only significant if they are held by so-called “important others” – i.e. those whose opinions are valued by the subject. The norms are

“subjective,” then, both because they depend upon their being perceived by the individual under study, and because they are only significant if the individual thinks they are.

One potentially important norm involved in the decision between print and e-books is the audience's perceived emotional attachment to print (Westin, 2012; Striphas, 2011; MacWilliam, 2013). Discussions about the perceived cultural value of the book or e-book as an artifact, the potential for a prestige gap between the two formats, and the emergent form of e-books as simple “remediations” of print, all relate to this notion.

Westin (2012) examines the idea of the book as an artifact – an object whose physical form provides some of its value. He argues that there has been a sense of loss, particularly prestige loss, whenever textual communication has changed forms, as far back as the days when the handwritten scroll gave way to the handwritten, hand-bound codex. In his view, e-books today are perceived as similarly “lacking in cultural value” (p. 131) when compared to print books, and that the key to overcoming this is to recognize the new cultural values created by the new format – such as mobility, the potential for reader interaction, and the ability to continue making updates after publishing. If the print book as an artifact is imbued with inherent cultural value, as Westin argues, this value may manifest itself as a normative pressure to spurn e-books despite any perceived instrumental advantages.

Westin's attempt to situate the transition from print to digital into an historical context is taken up by Striphas (2011), who offers a history of the print book, examining its role in today's society, including how it came to be perceived as a prestigious artifact. He traces the book's ability to confer prestige onto its owner to the early days of consumer capitalism, specifically to an attempt by the developing middle class to display its new wealth and social mobility through a display of accumulated consumer goods, specifically books.

Self-publishing has long had its own prestige problem, suffering under the disparaging label “vanity publishing” (Sumner, 2012). This label comes from the idea that, by bypassing the gatekeepers

in traditional publishing houses to publish their own books, authors are serving only their own vanity, and not readers' interests, nor the greater cause of literature. However, Sumner argues that e-books are changing this perception through a growing awareness of the economic advantages of e-books, with the higher profit margin reaped by the elimination of middlemen, re-framing e-book self-publishing as a smart, rather than vain, choice. This view seemingly challenges Westin's (2012) argument that e-books lack prestige. This seemingly supports the notion that the subjective norms regarding e-book self-publishing are in flux.

In her study of the usability and design of e-reading devices, Kostick (2011) found that the cultural value of e-books is perceived to be lacking. Her interviews with three experts in the field of usability and design relate this lack of cultural value with another common theme, that e-books are simply mimicking their print predecessors. “They all try to emulate the book reading experience, but they frequently fall short: when they do, another book customer is confirmed in his or her decision to stick with print” (p. 135). MacWilliam (2013) studied the usability of iPads as reading devices. Eighty-three per cent of the study's respondents said that the physical properties of books are still important to them, which MacWilliam argues is why e-books continue to try to mimic print in key ways, despite the much more dynamic potential of digital.

That said, others suggest that the prestige gap between print and e-books may be diminishing. Weedon et al. (2014) found that the print book is losing some of its elevated cultural value as e-books improve and popularize. In line with this view, an earlier study commissioned by Library and Archives Canada found that mainstream audiences, not just younger “digital natives,” are “primed for digital” (Turner-Riggs & Library and Archives Canada, 2008, p. 2), with older demographics enjoying the accessibility advantages of e-books and audiobooks. A perception that e-books are gaining cultural value can negate the pressure to produce more prestigious print books, or even create pressure to adopt 'up-and-coming' e-books. Likewise, the notion of the “digital native” can potentially be normative: If

one's peer group is is “primed for digital,” this may create pressure to meet demand, and to conform with this engagement.

The concept of a prestige gap has so far been discussed in relation to strengths inherent to the print book. However, others (Hewitt & Regoli, 2010; Greenberg, 2010; Carolan & Evain, 2013) counter that it relates to perceived failings of self-published e-books. As discussed above, Hewitt and Regoli (2010) found that self-publishing, particularly of e-books, affords the author complete control of the final product. However, it also removes the gatekeeping function performed by third-party publishing houses. They quote Carnoy, a journalist writing on Cnet.com, who avers that the digitization of books has made the “barrier to entry” low for self-publishing, causing a general quality-control problem: “Because the barrier to entry is so low, the majority of self-published books are pretty bad . . . [L]ess than 5 percent are decent and less than 1 percent are really good” (p. 326). Such value judgments are of course subjective, but this suggests a general perception that self-published books, especially e-books, are of lower quality than traditionally published ones. Carolan and Evain (2013) also argued that digital changes in the industry facilitate self-publishing, and find that there is a need for “labels of distinction” (p. 292) in self-publishing to suggest some kind of quality control, that would replace “the publisher's stamp [as] a gauge of quality” (p. 292). Related to this, they highlight a need for editing in self-published books, a role traditionally undertaken by publishers that should not be left to the authors themselves. This position stands in stark contrast to the views of Laquintano (2010), who maintains that “communal sanction via peer review” serves as an online replacement for the filter of a traditional publisher (p. 486). Greenberg (2010) disagreed with the idea that this function can be crowd-sourced in her essay about the state of editing in web publishing. She distinguishes between typographic editing and gatekeeping, saying that reliance on online community, along with automated systems like SpellCheck, for quality control remedies only the typographic aspect of editing while devaluing human judgment. The online community, she argues, “may be reluctant to discriminate and criticize, to say

that A is better than B” (p. 18). As well, it should be noted that the online community's contribution to the editorial process necessarily comes after the fact; “communal sanction,” as per Laquintano, can only be applied to a product that has been produced and released, and is thus past the metaphorical gate kept by traditional publishing.

However, there is a counterpoint to this. Haugland (2006) frames the lack of gatekeeping and quality-control, lamented elsewhere, as a positive, contending that it is reflective of a sort of healthy rebelliousness. “This is a new form of cultural production – one that is not dependent on either the economic resources or the cultural authority of traditional royalty-paying publishers” (p. 12). She points out that a lack of “cultural authority” is common in other fields of artistic expression such as painting and dance. This relates to the idea of editorial independence expressed by Dilevko and Dali (2006) to suggest that e-books can potentially be perceived not as lacking in quality, but rather as being potentially more honest and truer to the artist's vision.

What these contending perspectives show is differing perceptions about the editorial quality of self-published e-books versus those produced through the traditional print publishing system. Insofar as an author is aware of this perception, it can produce a social pressure against adopting e-books. It should be emphasized that what matters for format choice is not that the self-publishing author agrees that the perception of general quality is accurate, but rather that he or she agrees that the perception is held by the potential audience.

As noted above, Laquintano (2011), Lichtenberg (2011), and Weedon et al. (2014) all show that e-books encourage interaction between authors and readers, as they are distributed via the Internet. This interactive capacity, defined by Laquintano (2010) as “sustained interaction among authors and reader/writers as the work of publishing becomes absorbed into online networks as literate activity” (p. 471), was discussed above in terms of the author's attitude toward the format, but the encouragement of such interaction can potentially be normative as well. Laquintano (2010) argues that a community

develops around e-book publishing, which is essential to the format's value when compared to print, which is echoed by Lichtenberg (2011) and Weedon et al. (2014). However, there is the potential for an awareness of this *capacity* to interact to be interpreted as a pressure *to* interact; put another way, an author can perceive this awareness as an expectation for interaction with the audience.

The notion of e-books as a disruption to the book industry (Christensen, 2000; Buschow et al., 2014), has a potential normative aspect as well. If e-books are seen as a disruption to the status quo, those who value that status quo can see their adoption as a betrayal, and thus be seen as pressuring a self-publishing author to resist the change. Further to this, the debate regarding whether to offer e-books for free can be related to similar normative pressure. Offering e-books for free, even for a limited time, as suggested by Hilton and Wiley (2011) and Carolan and Evain (2013), can be seen as a devaluation of authors' work. This, in turn, relates back to the idea of the e-book as lacking in prestige. However, an opposing view can also be held. As discussed above, a popular topic of discussion in the popular media is that the print industry is in potentially terminal decline. If an author were to perceive this viewpoint as being the one held by the audience, it can be in turn interpreted as pressure to adopt e-books as the smart choice, and the future of the industry (Turner-Riggs & Library and Archives Canada, 2008; Sumner, 2012).

To summarize, the above discussion has set out a number of norms that can potentially be held by self-publishing authors. It was suggested that e-books are considered by some to be of less cultural value or prestige, and of a lower general quality than traditionally published print books. However, there is evidence suggesting that the prestige gap is diminishing as e-books grow more common, and the lack of editorial gatekeeping is remedied by sanction from the more interactive audience. As well, the perception of e-books as a disruption to the publishing industry can be interpreted as a social pressure to spurn them in solidarity with a status quo, or to adopt them as the smarter choice in the face of a dying print industry.

### 2.3.3 Perceived behavioural control

The Theory of Planned Behaviour focuses on intention – the factors which influence an individual's plan to adopt a given behaviour, organized into the categories of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. The concept of behavioural control factors into the decision-making process at a later stage as well, in terms of actual control – that is, the ability to perform the behaviour – rather than the perception thereof. However, in undertaking a review of the literature about self-publishing and e-book adoption, the author was unable to find any scenarios where adoption is actually outside of an author's control, and so once again *perception* is what appears to matter here.

The key argument of Long Tail theory is that e-books make publishing economically accessible (Anderson, 2006), a position supported by other researchers (Kular, 2006; Tian & Martin, 2010; Laquintano, 2010; Sumner, 2012; Carolan & Evain, 2013). This is the most significant potential perception of behavioural control pertaining to this thesis. Should an author hold this perception of accessibility, it is likely to be a strong encouragement to choose e-books as a format for self-publishing. It can seem as if, thanks to the affordability of the technology, self-publishing is now within the author's control. This assumes a positive attitude toward self-publishing, the factors contributing to which were discussed above.

However, e-book self-publishing is only within the author's control if he or she is on the right side of the so-called digital divide. Popular interest in instances of rapid technological change can imply that everyone has access to and facility with digital technologies, but research continually shows this not to be true (e.g. Haight et al., 2014; Turner-Riggs & Library and Archives Canada, 2008). Even in relatively affluent and connected Canada, marked differences in access and facility exist. A study from the University of Western Ontario, which used Statistics Canada's 2010 Canadian Internet Use Survey as its dataset, showed that “access to the internet reflects existing inequalities in society with income, education, rural/urban, immigration status, and age all affecting adoption patterns” (Haight et

al., 2014, p. 503). The Library and Archives Canada study about the digitization of the book industry (Turner-Riggs & Library and Archives Canada, 2008) acknowledged the Canadian digital divide as well. While it found that e-books are growing in popularity among all demographics, it pointed out that accessing them still requires “a fairly advanced level of computer skill, and the required equipment can be expensive” (p. 17). Such accessibility problems can be extrapolated to authors. If accessing an e-book is seen to require a high level of computer skill, then producing one may seem to require an even higher level of skill. Haugland (2006) points out that services exist which can perform design and other tasks for a fee, but this adds to potential economic barriers. Otherwise, for an author to produce an e-book s/he requires specialized software and a personal computer powerful enough to run it, which are significant expenses extending beyond the computing resources required to simply write the book. Such technological and economic difficulties can potentially put the production of an e-book out of the author's immediate control.

Further, Carolan and Evain (2013) argued that print publishing itself is not perceived as being prohibitively expensive, especially when compared to the other cultural industries. It is cheaper and more manageable to self-publish a book than it is to make your own movie. “In many ways, the book should be considered as a cheap commodity. The fact that the book is so economical to produce is a driving factor behind both the continued buoyancy of the traditional publishing industry and the proliferation of self-published authors” (p. 297). Indeed, the new technology of print-on-demand and other digital changes to the publishing system have made the self-publishing of print books increasingly affordable in recent years (Haugland, 2006; Kular, 2006; Turner-Riggs & Library and Archives Canada, 2008).

While e-books and print-on-demand make self-publishing more affordable, a 2014 study by Digital Book World points out that authors who publish themselves still take on more economic risk than those who are published through traditional channels. In the latter mode, the publisher takes some



or all of the economic risks away from the author (Weinberg, 2015). The study, however, suggests not envisioning publishing risk as a dichotomy, but rather existing on a continuum. In self-publishing the author assumes all of the risks, and on the other end of the spectrum are publishers who pay advances to authors as well as royalties for books sold. In between, are other risk-sharing arrangements, such as deals where the publisher only pays royalties but no advance.

Economics aside, the concept of the digital divide is also concerned with technological facility, and the high number of specialized, non-writing skills required to self-publish e-books is a recurrent theme. A 2014 article in the *Economist* magazine showed the technological complexity involved in producing an e-book, partly due to the plurality devices on which they are used, such as the various e-reading devices such as the Kindle and the Kobo, as well as tablet computers and smartphones; as well as the plurality of file formats used, such as the broadly used .epub format, Amazon's proprietary .mobi format, and the more technologically limited .pdf file. As a result, the author concluded that he “was unprepared for how easy it has become to print a book and how difficult it remains to produce an electronic version” (Economist, 2014).

What the author was discussing is a relatively limited-function e-book, what Weedon et al. (2014) refer to as essentially a “remediation” of print. However, according to Kostick (2011), Lichtenberg (2011), MacWilliam (2013), and Weedon et al., (2014), e-books should move beyond this to embrace the much greater dynamic possibilities of electronic publishing. Insofar as an author perceives such a desire for this extended functionality in e-books, they can seem that much more technologically complex to produce.

Self-publishing an e-book also requires other skills beyond those required to produce the book itself. Writing from the perspective of authors, Camacho (2013) found that e-book self-publishing is hampered by the barriers of limited promotion, limited editing, and a smaller market-share for e-books versus print. He concludes that traditional publishing is more advantageous to first-time writers.

However, his study sets up a false dichotomy between self-publishing e-books and publishing in print through a third-party publisher, ignoring print self-publishing entirely. Nonetheless, Hewitt and Regoli (2010) and Withey et al. (2011) suggest that the same challenges are present here as well. There is also some evidence that publishers are not providing the sort of promotional support that Camacho assumes. In an address to the Independent Publishers Group spring conference in March 2015, Sandy Grant, founder of the Hardie Grant publishing house, said that traditional publishers need to invest more in supporting and promoting their authors, or else face irrelevance as self-publishing popularizes. “Self-publishing can look more and more attractive if we don't bring a lot to the table” (Shaffi, 2015).

Laquintano (2010), however, argues that, thanks to the communal aspect of e-book publishing discussed above, many of the necessary specialized skills can be crowd-sourced – that is, members of the writer's online community can potentially perform some of these tasks as part of their elevated engagement with the publishing process. However, he was studying the production of poker-playing textbooks, a highly specialized field that lends itself to audience engagement and expertise. The audience seems likely to be more engaged in that process than in the process of producing a general-interest novel, for example.

Perceived behavioural control seems to be the simplest influence type of those discussed in this chapter. The factors here can be divided into two categories: economic accessibility and technological facility. A number of authors suggest that the lowered production and distribution costs incurred by e-books versus print can potentially put self-publishing within the control of authors, despite acknowledging that print has never been perceived as prohibitively expensive. However, e-books can potentially seem to require a level of technological facility beyond that of most authors. As well, this all must be considered in the context of the persistent digital divide, in Canada and elsewhere, because of which a number of much simpler new-media activities, including simply reading e-books, remain out of reach for many.

## 2.4 Conclusion

Unfortunately, few clear positions emerge from the above discussion of e-book self-publishing. For every position examined, there seems to be a counter argument. What matters is that the positions discussed can potentially be held by the authors comprising the population sample for this thesis. Individual decisions are of particular interest because there is no broadly accepted wisdom guiding them; that wisdom will develop over time, as an interpretation of the results of these decisions. The seeming paucity of research from the authorial perspective is suggestive of this emergent state. Their perspective certainly matters, but it appears that of the industry and readers seem to matter more, and so they are the first stakeholders to be studied. This thesis aims to address this gap.

### 3. Methodology

This chapter outlines the design and methodology used for this thesis, including how the sample was selected, how the data was collected and coded, and the steps taken to ensure the validity of the findings. In general, the author followed the tenets of interview-based qualitative study outlined by Creswell (2013) and Neuman (2011), although some deviations were made to suit the specific circumstances of this research exercise.

#### 3.1 Sample selection

The researcher used the purposive-snowball sampling method for attaining the study sample, in which members of a population are chosen for their possession of certain characteristics, and it is hoped that they will be able to lead the researcher to other suitable members of the population with the same, or different, desired characteristics. The initial design of the thesis was to interview ten authors, divided roughly evenly between three types: authors who have self-published e-books (four were sought), authors who have self-published print books but not e-books (three), and authors who have written at least one book-length project but have never been published in either print or e-book format (three). Internet searches were conducted to find authors in the Ottawa area to meet these criteria sets. The sample population was restricted to the Ottawa area in order to allow the interviews to be conducted face-to-face. Creswell (2013) maintains that such interviews are more likely to yield looser conversations and richer responses.

After receiving clearance from the University of Ottawa's Office of Research Ethics and Integrity to commence research, a preliminary Internet search produced 17 suitable candidates, who were then contacted by e-mail to broach the idea of participating in the project. As part of this initial contact, the potential participants were asked about their publishing history to ensure they met the sample criteria.

It soon became apparent that finding subjects fitting the three criteria presented some difficulty. While identifying authors who have self-published e-books was no challenge at all, the same did not hold for those who have never been published. The published authors were generally found through their efforts to promote their books online; the unpublished authors had nothing to promote, and so were not traceable in this way. In order to address this issue, the author turned his attention to the public lists of local writing groups to see if any members fitting the selection criteria could be identified. Two of the participant unpublished writers were selected this way: Christopher Wallbank was located through the Ottawa Creative Writing Society, and Carol Stephen through The League of Canadian Poets. A third unpublished author, Kate Heartfield, was found in the list of contributors to a local literary magazine, *Postscripts to Darkness*. The third type of author, those who have self-published in print only, were the most difficult to find, so a third identification strategy was employed. The heads of seven local writing groups were contacted and asked to circulate a call for participation among their members (see Appendix A; note also that a call for unpublished authors was included as well, because at the time this document was circulated that list was yet to be completed). One of the participants, Rusty Priske, was contacted this way. The others were eventually found through web searching.

Though this study originally operationalized “adoption” in terms of who had produced an e-book and who had not, this definition proved to be unworkable because few print authors did not also have digital versions of their work. In three cases, when authors said in preliminary correspondence that they did not have digital versions of their work (Fowler, Szabo and Priske), the interviews revealed

<b>adopters</b>	Teresa Wilde Sherrill Wark Karl El-Koura
<b>non-adopters</b>	Robert Fowler Louise Szabo Rusty Priske Martin Bueno Chris McNaught
<b>unpublished</b>	Christopher Daniel Wallbank Carol A. Stephen Kate Heartfield

such claims to be inaccurate. The self-publishing service these participants contracted to produce their print books had, in fact, provided digital versions for free, but the authors had just ignored them due to a lack of interest. Furthermore, a fourth participant, Bueno, who was initially included as an e-book producer, proved to have the same lack of interest in his e-book, which was also provided automatically by his self-publishing service.

This lack of interest in e-books forced the author of this thesis to re-examine of what it means to adopt e-books. For the purposes of this thesis, four of the participants – Fowler, Szabo, Priske, and Bueno – are categorized as non-adopters despite having digital versions of their books, because they expressed no interest in e-books as a format, and have not made any effort to promote or otherwise sell their e-books. Thus the final sample breakdown is as follows: Five non-adopters of e-books (Fowler, Szabo, Priske, and Bueno, mentioned above, along with McNaught, who has in fact only published in print), three adopters (Wilde, Wark, and El-Koura), and three authors unpublished in either form (Wallbank, Stephen, and Heartfield).

The initial design called for ten participants, however in the end eleven were interviewed.<sup>6</sup> It was revealed during the interview that McNaught did not actually fit the criteria, in that he did not pay for the printing of his books. Thus McNaught was not self-published, but was rather traditionally published, in the sense that the printing of his two books were paid for by the company that printed them, Baico Publishing. Beyond that, McNaught received none of the benefits of traditional publishing, such as promotion or distribution. Baico Publishing is mainly a self-publishing business (one of the other participants, Szabo, used it to self-publish her book), and based on McNaught's description of his publication contract, it appears that the principal difference between his experience with Baico Publishing and that of a self-published author is that his printing bills were paid for. Baico's site lists its self-publishing rate for a 200-to-250-page book (McNaught's was 230) at \$800, plus editing costs

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<sup>6</sup> Note that, with such a small sample, the findings of this thesis are not generalizable.

between \$150 and \$300 (Baico, 2014). Furthermore, McNaught's statements matched those of the other participants who reported that the cost of printing is a relatively small piece of the perceived benefit of being signed to a traditional publishing house.

### 3.2 Interviews

The interviews were conducted over a three-month period spanning from October to December, 2014, at locations chosen by the subjects. All but one subject chose a public coffee shop as the setting. Szabo asked to be interviewed in her home. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes.

The semi-structured interviews all followed nearly the same questionnaire – the only differences being in questions regarding publishing history (e.g. their reasons for choosing to self-publish e-books, print books, or nothing). However, the researcher asked the subjects to expand or elaborate on ideas that seemed significant as they arose, giving the interviews a somewhat unstructured feel. As well, themes that were significant to subjects interviewed early in the data-gathering process were given more focus in later interviews. This is in keeping with the principles of emergent design in qualitative study (Creswell, 2013). An open, inductive approach to data-gathering was deemed the most suitable approach for this thesis's exploratory approach to this topic.

The questionnaire was grounded in themes identified in the previous chapter (e.g. prestige, audience demand, ease of production) and in the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (i.e. attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control).

### 3.3 Coding

Audio recordings were made of the interviews, which were later transcribed by the researcher. The transcriptions were then subjected to a four-stage thematic coding process. In the first stage, the interview transcripts, as OpenOffice .doc files, were read with statements divided into separate files

Table 2: Original code matrix. Many changes were made during the findings and analysis phase, notably the collapse of the two axial categories within subjective norms (publishing and format decision).

	<b>Attitudes</b>		<b>Subjective norms</b>		<b>Perceived behavioural control</b>
<b>Themes</b>	Practicalities	Disadvantages of print Advantages of print Disadvantages of e- Advantages of e- Interest Why not? Tactility Promotion Remediation Innovation Price Labour intensity Hybrid Permanence Disadvantages of traditional Advantages of traditional Accessibility Niche Length Future	Publishing decision	Confidence Validation Gatekeeping Promotion Definition of success Rejection Age Perceived audience Community Curation	Control of the process Ability Disadvantages of e- Affordability Promotion Accessibility Awareness
	Attachment	Attachment Tactility Future	Format decision	Prestige Pressure to adopt Perceived audience Quality Community Age Attachment Normative change Price Inevitability Future	
	Prestige	Prestige Quality Gatekeeping Definition of success			

according to which of the three influence categories they addressed: a) attitudes, b) subjective norms, or c) perceived behavioural control. Statements addressing more than one category were duplicated in both, or all three, files. This stage represents a deviation from the traditional three-stage process of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Neuman, 2011), a modification which was necessitated by the theory being used. Open coding derives themes from the data, but TPB's influence categories represent pre-existing themes which needed to be addressed first.



In the second, open-coding stage, thematic codes were assigned to these statements based on the concepts discussed by the participants. A total of 38 thematic codes were identified. Unlike in the first stage, these codes were not predetermined, arising instead during the analysis. In some cases, codes were collapsed together when deemed appropriate (e.g. a code for “limitations of digital” was later changed to “disadvantages of digital” when the latter code proved to be more widely applicable). A word cloud displaying the frequency of use of these codes is provided in Appendix B, and a list of the N values for these frequencies is provided in Appendix C.

In the third, axial-coding stage, the thematic codes were organized into broader thematic groups. The attitude category, which had the largest number of significant statements, consisted of 30 thematic codes, which were organized into three groups: practicalities, prestige, and attachment (see Table 2 for the code matrix). Only eight thematic codes were identified for perceived behavioural control, and so it was decided that thematic groups were not necessary for this category. The subjective norms category was originally organized into two groups, format decision and publishing decision. However, during the data-analysis process it emerged that these categories were not, in fact, discrete, insofar as statements were obtained from the interviewees that applied to both equally. Therefore the researcher decided to treat all subjective-norm statements together. Thus, only the attitudes category was organized into thematic groups.

In the final, selective-coding stage, the statements and thematic codes were reviewed and some statements were deemed not significant enough for inclusion in the final report. Themes that were not addressed very frequently, or by multiple participants, were excluded. For example, *labour intensity* was a code applied to two statements by a single subject, and as such it was not included in this thesis.

### 3.4 Validation

A draft of the analysis chapter of this thesis was sent by e-mail to the participants for their

review and confirmation, in a validation process known as “member-checking.” They were told that this was an opportunity to verify that their statements were understood and represented accurately, but that they were not obligated to read it if they did not wish to do so.

The participants' own words will be used in this report as much as feasible, and connections will be drawn between the ideas and concepts expressed by the various participants so that they can, in a sense, validate one another. Both steps are part of the validation process called “thick description” (Creswell, 2013, p. 252).

### 3.5 Conclusion

Though certain alterations had to be made, this study followed a relatively orthodox qualitative design. Assumptions in the study's initial design phase about the realities of self-publishing had to be adjusted when selecting the sample, and another stage needed to be added to the coding process to incorporate the tenets of the Theory of Planned Behaviour.

#### 4. Findings

The discussion in this chapter is divided in three parts reflecting three influence types of TPB: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. It presents the findings from the interviews in terms of their significance to this thesis. The significance of the concepts that are presented was determined based on the importance the speaker gave to the concept being discussed, the frequency with which the concept was mentioned across participants, and how the concept relates to the literature reviewed above. The significance of individual statements, which are presented in the participants' own words as much as feasible, was based on the how clearly the statements addressed significant concepts.

The attitudes factor (A) was the most prevalent variable identified in the literature reviewed for this thesis, and this is mirrored in the data obtained from the interview participants. Broadly speaking, the attitudinal responses of the participants tended to address surface-level ideas and concerns (e.g. the practical advantages of e- or print books), and unqualified statements of preference. The questions designed to investigate the subjective-norms (SN) and perceived-behavioural-control (PBC) categories required the participants to be more introspective, and to examine their own motivations. Thus, the responses obtained in these categories were less frequent, but often offered more depth. This speaks to the power and usefulness of TPB as a perspective for its identification of influence types that may not be front-of-mind for participants, and to treat them with equal importance.

It should be noted that author awareness was not as complete as had been assumed by the author of this thesis in the early design of the study. For example, Stephen's observation that she does not know anyone who has produced an e-book was included in the SN section as a pressure against adoption. When asked about self-publishing, Wallbank automatically assumed it referred only to e-books – he had never heard of print self-publishing but was willing to speculate about it in his answers. That being said, the assumption that all the subjects would be at least generally aware of e-books and

their advantages as a format held across the participants.

One noteworthy broad-level observation was the finding that all of the participants expressed distaste and even bitterness toward traditional publishing houses. One particularly revelatory statement came from Wilde, who, in response to the question about the stigma of self-publishing, made this A-category statement: “A lot of people now, they just don't care for the publishing houses. So the more success we hear from the self-publishers, the more we want to do that.” Responding to the same question, McNaught acknowledged the stigma, but suggested that the norms are changing: “I think that's definitely turning, though. Because the publishing industry has become so tight, and so paranoid about its future, they are even limited in what they'll take, and they don't take anything unsolicited.” This negative attitude towards publishers was expressed in terms of PBC by El-Koura, who likened the editing process in traditional publishing to “getting your manuscript dumped on an editor's desk,” whereas in self-publishing he can work with editors who know him and his style.

The discussion in the remainder of this chapter is structured in accordance with the three influence categories of TPB – attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. Occasionally participant statements appear in more than one category, either because they address concepts, or because certain thematic categories developed in the coding stage were applicable to multiple categories. For example, the most prevalent theme identified is prestige, probably because it was addressed directly in the interview questionnaire. Prestige was discussed as an attitude held by the participants, and as something held by other authors and potential readers that exerts pressure on the subject, thus rendering it a subjective norm. The theme of quality is another example of one which was cross-coded, and which was related to prestige. In the A category it reflects a judgment of quality on the part of the speaker, while in the SN category it expresses a perception of such a judgment by members of other important social groups. Redundancies were eliminated where possible, but often the statements were too significant to not be mentioned again.

While reference is occasionally made to the participants' status as adopters or non-adopters of e-books, this is only so where it is deemed to be relevant to the particular statement. Regardless of their publishing choices, every one of the participants in the sample made statements for and against print and e-books as formats for self-publishing.

#### 4.1 Attitudes

As discussed in Chapter 3, statements relating to the A influence category were divided into three thematic categories: practicalities, attachment, and prestige. The

Table 3: Key factors in attitudes category
- practical benefits of e-books
- attachment to print
- lack of interest in e-books
- prestige (of being an author)

- practical benefits of e-books
- attachment to print
- lack of interest in e-books
- prestige (of being an author)

The majority of A statements, 58 per cent, were related to practicalities, referring to either the practical advantages e-books or print books. The attachment category, though the least frequently discussed of the three, was significant for its near unanimity: Nine of the 11 participants made similar statements expressing an attachment to the physical form of the print book. Prestige was found to be the most commonly discussed theme overall in this study. It was present in 44 instances. However, the prestige statements relating to the A category were less common than those relating to the SN category.

##### 4.1.1 Practicalities

As noted earlier, only three of the participants in this study can be considered adopters of e-books. The remaining eight participants either have self-published print books but not e-books (McNaught), had their self-published books adapted into e-book format without requesting it (Fowler, Szabo, Priske, and Bueno), or have chosen not to self-publish their book-length projects (Wallbank, Heartfield, and Stephen). Thus, much of the data collected from the interviews pertains to reasons advanced by the participants for *rejecting* e-books as a format.

The clearest single reason given for not adopting e-books was a general lack of interest. Stephen

identified the biggest factor in her rejection as “laziness, always writing, never getting to it.” Fowler had one of his books converted to e-book without being asked, and in an excellent example of lack of interest, claimed to not know whether his others three works had been converted. Szabo had a similar experience, saying she was surprised one day to find a copy of an older book of hers available as an e-book. Commenting on her more recent publication, written with two co-authors, she noted, “we kind of forget that we have it.”

Nine participants expressed some preference for the tactile<sup>7</sup> aspects of print books that e-books cannot or do not replicate. Five participants mentioned that they are committed to print books because they value the live-sales aspect, averring that signings, readings and such events are key parts of their promotion. Priske was particularly adamant about this, saying that his particular genre, performance poetry, is built around live interaction.

I don't really have any other distribution channel. I print the books myself, and have them with me when I do a performance, so that people can buy them. The service I use, which is Blurb, provides an e-book version of the books, but as I say nobody's ever bought one.

McNaught envisioned an end to such events in a digital-only world. “There'd be no more book signings or appearances by authors because there's no book. So do you ask them to sign the back of the Kindle? Sign over my tattoo? I don't know. Like, that's the logical extension.”

The practical advantages of e-books for self-publishers, namely the lower cost of production and the increased ease of distribution, were also discussed. Fowler, El-Koura, Heartfield, and Bueno all specifically mentioned the distributional benefits of digital publishing. “I think the worldwide distribution that I talked about before is really nice. The whole world is your audience now,” said El-Koura. Fowler offered a more localized example as one reason he regretted not having an e-book version of his novel. “I try to get a review in the *Toronto Star*, and they said, 'Well, if your book's not

<sup>7</sup> Note that the term “tactile” is used here to refer to aspects related to a print book's physical form. It is considered more accurate than the term “physical” because even digital files exist in physical space, on hard drives, servers or elsewhere. The use of “tactile” here includes aesthetic concepts – what Stephen describes as “the feel of a book” – as well as practical ones such as storage space and the affordance of face-to-face sales.

being sold in Toronto we don't want to sell it.' Now, if I said I had an e-book they might have made a review.”

Heartfield and Bueno both took the affordability and distributional benefits to the same conclusion as Anderson's Long-tail theory (2006). Heartfield, for example, opined, “It seems to me that there's a lot more self-publishing – well obviously there's a lot more self-publishing in e-books, because it's just easier and you don't have the outlay and distribution to worry about.” Bueno commented that “there's so many venues with which that you can get out on the Internet your work as an author.”

Wark and El-Koura pointed out the added reading functionality of e-books as potential reasons to adopt. El-Koura said:

I think there's features in e-books that print will never be able to catch up to, right? Like changing the font, or clicking on a word and popping up a dictionary, or being able to highlight without picking anything else up, just with your finger.

Wark, who has self-published non-fiction as well as fiction, praised the ability to provide hyperlinks to external information, saying it is helpful in “covering my ass about plagiarism.” Wilde, however, was less enthusiastic about e-books' hyperlinking function, fearing it would limit readers' ability “to lose themselves in the book.”

After discussing the benefits of both e- and print, El-Koura, who has published both and was one of the more enthusiastic e-book advocates in the study, said he opted not to limit himself. “For me, it's not like I've chosen e-books over print. They're different channels and I use both of them.” This sentiment is true of the other adopters in the sample as well ( $N = 3$ ), and seems to relate to a belief shared by all of the participants that the biggest outlay of effort resides in the writing and preparation of the manuscript. Once a book is produced in one format, converting it to the other is seen as incurring relatively little cost and labour. Wark said that her self-publishing service offered print-on-demand, “so you can get one book printed at a time.” Print-on-demand, a relatively recent technological development in publishing, involves a higher per-copy price, but it removes the economic risk of large

print runs that previously were the norm in publishing.

That said, Wilde still found compelling reasons not to produce a print book. During the interview, she was openly weighing whether she would produce a print version of her next book. She said that although print books did not sell well for her, she valued having both versions for promotional reasons. However, two months after the interview she released her newest novel as an e-book only.

Wilde agreed with the basic premise of Long-tail theory, that a big advantage of digital self-publishing has been a proliferation of niches.

I think it's brought a lot more variety to the reader. I hate to use this example, but I'm going to: You can write caveman romance ... You can write male-male caveman romance and do pretty well for yourself. New York<sup>8</sup> is not going to publish that. Not necessarily ... I mean, they would publish it if it would sell, but it's not going to sell in the numbers that they need.

Stories that are shorter than a novel represent another kind of niche, mentioned by three participants. Heartfield, Wilde, and El-Koura all said that e-books have made publishing shorter works viable. As per Heartfield:

It seems to be there's a lot more openness to that in e-books. Because, I mean, who cares how long it is in e-books, right? All of those production issues and things that led into bigger books looking like better value, or whatever it is, on the shelf, just aren't a factor.

She said she has not written anything of this kind of non-standard length herself, “but part of it is I've been conditioned not to.” Wilde, on the other hand, has made use of this affordance: “The short stories have been a huge, huge benefit. Just the fact that you can write something short and put it up now, it's amazing.”

Promotion is a prime example of a theme that was not addressed in the questionnaire, but which was raised by the participants as an important factor. Six of the participants discussed promotion as a skill that is necessary in order to be a self-publisher, but for which many had a distaste. El-Koura put it succinctly: “I think the marketing part of it sucks. It's a necessary evil.” Wark agreed, but said that in part it is a matter of prioritizing.

<sup>8</sup> Throughout her interview, Wilde used “New York” to refer to traditional, third-party publishers as a group.



It's not something I like doing ... it's like, I don't have time, but if I really liked doing it I'd find time, because I can find time to do everything else. That's the problem with self-publishing. However, the way the publishers are now – the real publishers – because they are going out of business with all the self-publishing, it's a self-fulfilling prophecy on both sides. They are not promoting as much either.

This aligns with statements from McNaught<sup>9</sup> and Szabo, who claimed that being traditionally published does not mean you have your promotion done for you.

The participants all agreed that promotion is different for e-books than for print. Wilde and El-Koura said that part of successfully promoting e-books is having a lot of them to promote. El-Koura said that “you promote one novel and that novel promotes other novels, right? And I've read other successful writers who have said don't even think about promotion until you have 10 novels published.”

Wilde reported having developed skills specific to e-book promotion, such as spelling words in such a way as to garner the maximum number of search hits, and updating the blurbs in previous books to promote new ones as they are released. She even said that one of the reasons she had continued producing print versions of her books despite poor sales is, ironically, to make her e-books look more appealing on Amazon.

One good reason for doing them is the way your page is displayed on Amazon. If you do it through CreateSpace, you will get what they call 'the slash.' So Amazon, at the top of your page, says 'list price, digital price, savings.' So if you have a list price up there that's \$9.99 for your print book, they will put a slash through it and say, your e-book, you put it up for \$2.99, they'll put a thing at the top of your page that says, 'Ooh, you saved six dollars!' You're not saving six dollars, really, but there's this big red thing at the top of your page that says if you buy the digital one you're saving money. There's a lot of psychology going on, but maybe I think too much.

Bueno and Fowler reported fearing they would be unable to promote e-books in such a way as to make them stand out from what they perceived to be an over-crowded field. “Yeah, e-publishing, you can get it worldwide, but how many books are in the e-publishing universe?” Fowler mused.

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<sup>9</sup> Again, it should be noted that McNaught was, in fact, traditionally published, but as can be seen here, he suffers many of the same challenges as self-published authors.

Bueno similarly expressed, “There's so much e-books out there the problem is getting it out to an audience. Right? Because you write a story, you publish it online, how does anybody even know that you've written it?”

Bueno and Szabo both expressed another particular concern regarding a shift to e-books: permanence. In explaining her motivation for self-publishing, Szabo cited a desire to make her manuscript into something permanent.

If I die then it goes into the garbage if it isn't formatted into something ... substantial. This is one of the things that I kind of have against having e-books, because e-books will disappear, you know, 15 years from now. They're there but ... they're lost, all the millions of them in there. It's nice to have a book that you can hold.

Bueno, a science-fiction writer, imagined a future without power. “I personally think the problem with e- is that it's electronic, and we're living in a society ... when the lights go out ... Figure out what you do when the lights go out.”

The participants were all asked directly for their predictions about the future of publishing in terms of format, and the market share of e-books and print books. Wark and Priske predicted the complete death of print. Priske said:

There's no question that the future is e-books. No question. This is all growing pains. As I said I'm a person who is, all my music is switched to digital, the way I get TV is switched to digital, from standard cable, the fact that I haven't switched on books, well, it's going to happen. To me it's just a given. I mean, we have the technology to stop having to have all these piles and piles of paper.

All but one of the remaining interviewees imagined that the market will settle at some kind of split between e-books and print, with variation just coming in the percentage of market share.<sup>10</sup> Fowler said he had heard the e-book market share had reached a sort of plateau – a concept that has garnered much media attention. “From what I hear, I thought I read that e-publishing is kind of levelling out. I don't know if it's about 20 per cent or something. But it's the whole thing's in an uproar, eh?” He later

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<sup>10</sup> Bueno did not directly address the idea of the future of publishing.

mentioned another article he had read that also claimed that print would survive in some capacity.

“That was one of the themes they were talking about, that it's in a great turmoil, but both are going to survive. So whether it's 60/40, you know, 70/30, I think that's ... That seemed to make sense to me.”

Wilde, talking about youth adoption of e-books, offered another estimate. “I think they know technology and they accept technology, but they're still going to want to unplug with a paper book. I think, in the end, probably we're going to end up around 50/50.” El-Koura was a little less generous about the future of print, but believes there is one. “I think within my lifetime, probably, print will be around, and then after that it'll be probably more of a niche. You know, like people who still listen to vinyl records.”

Heartfield discussed the role of digital self-publishing in the future of publishing, and said it had a role, but was not going to be the only option. “I don't think it's the answer with a capital 'A' or anything like that. I don't think it's the one solution for writers, but I think it's one possible way to go.”

#### 4.1.2 Attachment

Nine of the participants, including two adopters, made statements expressing a continued attachment to the physical form of the print book, couching this in sensory terms such as “feel,” “touch,” and even “smell.” Five reported having tried reading e-books, either on dedicated e-reading devices or on tablets, and returning to print for such aesthetic reasons. Wilde, an e-book adopter, said that she had previously held such an attachment to print as an author, but had since lost some of that attachment in the face of the practical benefits of e-, and of the drawbacks of print.

It's really not a big deal for me, having the book as artifact. I did have a little moment when I got my first one in the mail, but now I don't know if I'm actually going to do a print book for the next set, because they haven't actually sold very well.

At another point in the interview she called into question the validity of people's attachment to the form.

I've started to think about, you know, what is a book? Because a lot of people will say, 'Oh, I don't read on a Kindle, because that's not a book.' Well, there's a difference between book as story or writing, and book as artifact, right? So if you say 'I love books' and you point out a book, well no, you like the thing that's on paper. The story that's inside there is still the same whether it's on paper or not.

El-Koura, another adopter, calls himself “definitely a print guy,” but said that he sees this attachment disappearing in other people. He thinks that this will continue with time until print becomes a “niche.” This notion of time eroding attachment was also raised by Priske. At one point in the interview, he expressed an enduring attachment to print that trumps the practical benefits of digital. “I have my books in print but they're available in e- version. If somehow that were to shift and my primary source of sales was the e- version, I would still want the print one, just so I could have that.” However, later in the interview, he said he expects his own attachment will disappear. “I'm a person who is, all my music is switched to digital, the way I get TV is switched to digital, from standard cable, the fact that I haven't switched on books, well, it's going to happen. To me it's just a given.”

Wilde also predicted that attachment may not be enough to safeguard the future of print, tying it to the failures of traditional publishers. “We'll see what happens to publishing houses, because I think people would love for print books to stay around, but their business models are so old, and they've got dinosaurs running those businesses. But we'll see what happens.” Note that Wilde's discussion of the future of publishing here is related directly to her own attitude toward the third-party publishing houses.

#### 4.1.3 Prestige

Prestige emerged as one of the most-discussed themes (N = 44). This is of course related to the fact that it was addressed directly in the interview questionnaire<sup>11</sup>. However, the fact that the interviewees were willing to expand upon it at length, that it 'caught' with them as a theme, suggests

<sup>11</sup> “Prestige” was mentioned directly in the question: “Do you think it is considered less prestigious to publish in e-book than in print?”

that it is important to them. Prestige, in this thesis, is defined as a high value or esteem in the eyes of others. The presence of “others” in this definition places this theme in the SN category. However, the interviewees expressed a number of different personal attitudes relating to prestige.

The subjects discussed prestige in terms of the status of being an author. Wark shared an anecdote about why she has long wanted to become one.

I wanted to be a writer since I was about, like, eight years old. Dad used to make up stories for me when I was a little kid because we couldn't afford to buy books and stuff. This was back in the old days, the '40s, and the first time I went into a library I think I was about five, and I was like, 'Wow, look at all the stories!' I was just, like, blown away and just delighted, OK? And then I realized that people had to have written them. And because I was ... Dad was encouraging me around four or five years of age to tell stories back to him, it was like, 'Oh, I could get it into one of those book things.' And, then, that was that. I mean, I've always been a writer, kind of thing. But, I mean, a writer, you want to get it into one of those book things, so that's what you pay for.

This last sentence shows Wark's position on self-publishing: The prestige-related thrill of being in a “book thing” is, for her, attainable through self-publishing.

Heartfield presented a connection between the print-versus-digital and self-versus-traditional publishing dichotomies. When asked about the existence of a prestige gap between print and digital, she explained that the reason she is “pursuing the traditional route” was that she wants to see her name on the cover of a print book, and that “it seems like it would be a lot more of a pain trying to self-publish in print, trying to distribute it and everything else.” So she has not self-published because it cannot provide the display value she desires. She rejects the term “prestige” to describe this desire, saying instead that “it's not even necessarily that it would be to show the world, it would be for myself.” However, a statement made by McNaught suggests that even this division may be eroding. “Everybody wants to be a writer. So of course the fact of self-publishing – they would like to have it in any form, sure, e- or conventional. They want to be published, they want to write, they want to see their words in print.” What is notable here is that he includes self-publishing an e-book as having one's words “in print.”

Wark, Priske, and McNaught all made statements to the effect that the importance of prestige, both in terms of format and in terms of self-versus-traditional publishing, can be overstated, and that publishing is really about sharing one's work. Earlier in his interview Priske opined that although digital is less prestigious than print, as a self-published author of print, his own work may be seen by others as suffering a similar prestige deficit because it was not traditionally published. He concluded by stating, “But in the end, it's just getting your work, getting your art out, available. And however you're going to do that, however it works for you, I think is great.”

Discussions of quality arose frequently in the interviews. A number of participants expressed concern that readers will increasingly be overwhelmed by low-quality e-books – a “slush pile” in Bueno's terms. In his words, “We're so bombarded with stuff, and reading stuff and music stuff, we've got to be more discriminating. And is e-technology going to help us or hinder us? I think it's going to increase the slush pile.”

Bueno's argument, that the lowered barrier to access afforded by digital self-publishing is diminishing the average quality of the output, was expressed by nine of the subjects. This was the single biggest issue relating to the perception of quality. Priske said:

My preconception is that yes, the average quality would be lower. That may not be true, but my preconception would be that, simply because I've run in to people who do fiction in an e-book format, and I've run into enough people that I'm like, 'This is garbage,' you know, that it makes me think that it's easier to publish crap that way. That does not mean there isn't good there, but it's going to pull down the average, just for ease of entry.

This quality perception was also held by the adopters in the group. Wilde and El-Koura both suspected that the average quality is diminishing as more people publish, and each blamed the lack of a gatekeeping function performed by the self-publishing companies – the services authors hire to produce their books. “I do think the barrier to entry has been lowered, so you're going to have a lot more stuff out there, and there's gonna be definitely self-publishers who just put stuff through,” said El-Koura.

Wark, who previously worked in the publishing industry, suggested that some self-publishing

services do not deserve to be called publishers. “There are companies out there that call themselves publishers, but they're just printers.” However, it was not clear what sort of company she included in the category of “publishers.” She made this statement while discussing the lack of editing that is evident in most of today's self-published work, so it would seem that she considers self-publishing services that provide editing to be “publishers.” Indeed, two of the subjects praised the editing help they received from their self-publishing companies, but not all received a service. Fowler, for example, said that he had to hire his own editor, and feared that most self-published authors did not take the trouble to do the same.

Bueno said that he chose his self-publishing service in part because they had an acceptance process much like a traditional publisher, and that they “don't just publish anything.” This provided a sort of stamp of approval that he valued.

Heartfield also lamented the loss of the “gatekeeper function” of publishing houses, but was hopeful that this role would be filled in part by social media:

But I think that gradually, as more and more traditionally published authors self-publish, and as we continue to get the really great success stories in self-publishing ... then the sort of gatekeeper function will be served by GoodReads and other social media and that kind of thing. So people won't say, 'Oh, was this self-published,' or 'Did I get it in my local Barnes & Noble or not,' or 'Is it Penguin, or is it self-published?' I think the question will be instead, are people saying this is a good book, and then they won't care how it was published to begin with. And I think we're already switching over in to that.

El-Koura was more optimistic, saying that “serious self-publishers,” who take greater care for their output, can produce work as good, or even better, than the traditional publishers. Serious self-publishers can produce works of a higher quality because “this is their baby,” he said. He compared them to third-party publishers. “A lot of them have cost-cutting measures and have outsourced their editing, or have, you know, heavily overworked editors.”

El-Koura's optimism, however, is linked only to typographic editing. Wark argues that a good editor does more than that.

An editor can say, you know, 'Let's pick her up a little bit, make her more interesting. Or 'There are five different things to make the character lovable, you've got to at least do three of them.' So no, they're just terrible. And it's not just spelling and grammar either, it's storyline.

That said, she reported that such measures are not currently taken by the majority of self-published authors, and so quality is lacking.

Wark and McNaught, on the other hand, pointed out that this is changing. As McNaught put it: “More and more people are doing it who are also good writers, because they have accepted the reality that they are never going to get through to a conventional publisher.”

#### 4.2 Subjective norms

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) defines subjective norms as “the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behaviour” (Ajzen, 1991, p. 188). The interview

data suggest there are three social groups who are perceived as applying pressure on the interviewees.

The most prominent one is the audience, whose demographic makeup and stylistic interests were identified by the interviewees as factors in their decision-making. Other authors and traditional publishing houses also emerged as sources of decision-making pressure. The views and actions of all three of these social groups influenced the participants' opinions regarding themes such as prestige and future trends.

In addition to falling in the attitude category, prestige emerged as a subjective norm. Eight subjects reported that there is a prestige gap between self-publishing and traditional publishing, and that an awareness of this gap by others exerts pressure to shun self-publishing. McNaught reported having directly suffered from this perception directly. He reported being rejected for a grant from the Canada Council for the Arts because his books were self-published.

**Table 4: Key factors in subjective-norms category**

- prestige gap between self-publishing and traditional
- prestige gap between digital and print
- audience demand
- confidence
- digital promotion



Despite being an enthusiastic adopter of digital self-publishing, El-Koura felt a similar sort of pressure from some people. In his words:

It depends who you talk to, I think. Because definitely you know, with family or something like that, it would be cooler to say to them Doubleday just published my book, or Penguin-Random House or whatever they're called now, than it is to say I self-published my book ... So I think if you're chasing prestige it makes more sense to go with a traditional publisher.

Wilde also acknowledged such a perception among the public, but felt that the realities of modern self-publishing are diminishing it.

I think when it first started, when we first started to hear about digital self-publishing, there was a lot of snobbiness and nose turning-up ... This is why self-publishers love to talk about their numbers so much, is because you just can't, you can't turn up your nose at numbers. So we love to talk about how many copies we've sold, and how much money we've made, because ... I mean, Amanda Hawking made two million dollars in a month, so that takes care of a lot of snobbiness right there, right?

Perceptions about the prestige of self-publishing are tied to the practice of linking the term and concept to vanity publishing. The term “vanity” remains contested, with authors claiming that, while previously applicable to self-publishing, the term is no longer accurate, or refers to something separate from self-publishing. “There was always a stigma attached with self-publishing, a lot of people have it confused with vanity publishing,” said El-Koura. “So I stayed away.” Priske claimed that self-published books were once dismissed as exercises in vanity, but that they are now seen as legitimate works. He further added that a similar normative change has legitimized e-books.

There was a time where if you couldn't buy the book at Chapters or the equivalent, then it didn't exist. Self-publishing was seen as, well, vanity press, right? ... There's plenty of big-name, very talented people who are doing self-publishing by choice, so the view of it changes. It's the same thing with e-books. There would've been a time where if you were electronic only, you'd be seen as, well, 'You're doing that because no one wants to pay for your books to be published,' and that was probably true. But as times change, and that is the way that people want to consume your work, then do that.

Other pieces of terminology emerged as notable when discussing the potential prestige gap between traditional and self-publishing. McNaught referred to being published by a third party as “legitimately published,” while Bueno spoke of being “fully published.” Wallbank referred to third-

party publishing houses as “proper publishers,” in his statement that “I don't think a self-published book could ever be as good as a proper publisher's.” Bueno spent much of the interview discussing the process by which he was very nearly published by a third party house, and said that only after being ultimately rejected did he decide to self-publish his novel. “I had to eat a great big huge slice of humble pie,” is how he described that decision.

Some subjects argued that the prestige value of self- and digital publishing are changing as the practical advantages of the latter become increasingly evident. Priske connected the idea of sharing as the basic motivation for publishing to the notion of prestige change. “If people then tell me that they want to buy it in electronic fashion, then that's what I'm going to give to them, because wherever the market is, we'll do that. It doesn't change the work.”

Other subjects identified a prestige gap between digital and print. Fowler, for instance, shared an anecdote about an acquaintance who only buys books in hardcover: “I sent him a copy of the book and he said, 'Oh yeah, I really like your book, etc., etc. I wish it was in hardcover because normally I only buy hardcovers on my shelf. That's all I buy.’” Priske cited a similar sense of display-related pressure, saying that he was glad to have “a fully bound, nice book ... Something my mother can put on her bookshelf.” McNaught expanded on the concept of display value.

It does reflect a certain core value, having books, physically. Because if you go to a person's house and you see a bookshelf or you don't. You know, with the classics up there, *Kidnapped* and Mark Twain books and books of poetry and, Lucy Maude Montgomery, *Anne of Avonlea*, things like that. And it tells you something about a person.

The demographic make-up of the audience and its tastes were also identified as a source of normative pressure.

The role of age proved to be a point of disagreement among the subjects. Four of the participants claimed that younger people prefer e-books while older people still prefer print, while three stated that age is not a determining factor. Stephen was among those who felt that e-books appeal more

to younger audiences, and related this to the idea of attachment.

I suspect that the audience is a bit different. I suspect it's a younger audience. Not to say that older people don't have them, but I suspect there's more resistance to them, and they're the people who say they like the feel of a book.

Three interviewees pointed out that the younger generation is not adopting e-books as unreservedly as predicted. For example, Fowler offered anecdotes of young people resisting e-books, and of older people embracing them. Wark, on the other hand, acknowledged that anecdotal evidence does not disprove trends, and recommended playing the odds, so to speak, in choosing a format. "If you're going for us old fuddy-duddies, put it in both, but if you're going for the new, young people, go e-." However, she also said that all the demographic guesswork is beside the point, to some degree. "If it's only in e- and it's good enough, even the staunch oldies are going to want to read it."

Wilde and El-Koura pointed out the accessibility benefits of e-books for older people, with Wilde lamenting a lack of awareness of this particular advantage. "I keep trying to tell older people who like larger print and that kind of thing that the Kindle is ideal for them, because they don't have to pay the premium for the larger print, they can just turn up the type."

Four non-adopters said they were not certain an audience existed for their particular type of book among e-book readers. Fowler, McNaught, and Heartfield are all historical-fiction writers, and all expressed some suspicion that their particular niche was not popular with e-book readers. McNaught said:

For e-books, I'd want to know if there is an audience out there ... I'm pitching, it's really historical fiction. ... And, I'm very cynical, but I know that people tend to fall in to two camps that way. ... All that to say the sort of person that Kindle attracts, are they good for me? Are they likely to read my stuff?

Fowler expressed the same fear, stressing that the added time cost involved in promoting an e-book would likely exceed the payoff in terms of readership. "It's the marketing of the thing, I don't think I'd have enough marketing response to make it worthwhile."

Wilde found her own, very focused niche audience among e-book readers, thanks in part to the peculiar nature of online sales.

They've got millions of books on there; how do you get somebody to notice yours and want to read it? So, but I have a huge advantage in that way because my Teresa Morgan books all have a very great keyword in the title: the word 'sheik.' Because there are readers out there whose drug of choice is the sheik romance novel.

She also suggested that the concept of success needs to be redefined for self-publishers.

Successful in self-publishing is a different definition, because to be successful in regular publishing a lot of people have to read your book. In self-publishing a lot fewer people read your books. And with the anthologies aside, there's a lot fewer *New York Times* best-selling authors in self-publishing.

The experience of being rejected by a traditional publishing house or a literary agent<sup>12</sup> was discussed by six of the participants. Three of the five self-published authors in the sample reported choosing self-publishing as a second choice, after being rejected by a traditional publishing house or agent. These rejections were often presented along with more general expressions of distaste for publishing houses. Nonetheless, they present publishers and other industry functionaries as being an important social group.

Wilde recalled one moment of rejection.

I never got rejected on the quality of my writing. Except for once, I got a rejection on quality of my writing from an agent three weeks after I signed with an agent. So it was another agent who said, 'This writer needs to work on her grammar.' And I was like, 'Hmm, you don't know how the kids talk these days.'

For her, this experience was an unfair barrier to publishing. McNaught reported a similar experience when he applied to a prominent literary agency.

With *The Keli Dowry*<sup>13</sup>, for example, which was also historical fiction but a lot of reality and political stuff in there, I sent the manuscript to a very notable Canadian agent, and it came back, and I'm sure it was a young fellow who probably, probably an intern, who was resentful or something, and he obviously, he just didn't like the story and he said, 'This is all over the place, I can't follow it.' Well, what I would say is it's because you never studied history in your MA and you can't pay attention to more than 10 seconds in a sound bite.

<sup>12</sup> A literary agent represents an author and negotiates deals with publishers on the author's behalf.

<sup>13</sup> *The Keli Dowry* is McNaught's second published novel.

He suggested that part of the reason for his rejection was unfair discrimination against his genre of choice. Fowler reported a similar type of discrimination, but by the publishers themselves, claiming, “The subject is military history, of a kind of special kind. And ... the big publishers, they weren’t interested in it.”

Fowler tied his experience of rejection to a distaste for the Canadian publishing industry in particular. “It was funny, I wrote to publishers in England, because they like the military there, they’re keen there, and I got nice replies from all the British ones, and I didn’t even get one reply from the Canadian ones.”

Wark also attached some distaste for the publishing industry to her story of rejection, by asserting that, “Quite a few years ago I wrote a book and sent it to places, ‘Oh this is not quite for us blah blah blah.’ So I thought, ‘Oh, screw this, I’ll just do my own.’” She credited this experience with leading her to conclude that self-publishing is the future. “Whenever I found out about CreateSpace and the e-books, and the new way of doing things, and the trend is for self-publishing. But I’m trying to make it different by doing it right, like, the way the big guys do it.”

Bueno argues that the phenomenon of choosing self-publishing only after failing to be published by third-party houses is common, and part of the stigma against self-publishing. “You’re not up to snuff. You’ve been turned down by traditional publishing houses and therefore your work does not meet that professional standard required by the industry in general.”

He did not seem angry at the publishing industry for rejecting him, despite repeatedly defending his book as being of a higher quality than most self-published works. At one point during the interview he seemed to suggest that his rejection was an acceptable error, of the sort that is necessary in order for the publishing industry’s traditional gatekeeping function to retain its value.

I think there’s a status of being properly published by Random House and Tor and Edge Science Fiction, the good, the real publishing companies, because they have to go through the slush pile

and pick the ones ... Now sure there's gonna be ones in there, like mine, that got rejected. We talk about all the authors that got their rejections, but you know that when you pick up that book you're going to get a quality of final product.

Initially, statements on this theme were labelled with the tag 'rejection.' However, during the selective-coding phase it became apparent that the term is not always accurate. Not all authors considered their unsuccessful attempts at being published by traditional publishers a rejection. El-Koura and Wilde blamed other circumstances. El-Koura said he was accepted by a publisher, but after a long wait the publisher decided to cease producing fiction. Wilde had a similar experience, having been accepted by an agent who, after a long period of waiting on Wilde's part, did not produce results. While Wilde's story includes rejection by publishers, El-Koura's technically does not, and she seemed to hold none of the bitterness held by the others.

Other authors writ large (i.e. those not interviewed for this thesis) emerged from the interview discussions as the third important social group. For example, upon completion of his novel, El-Koura felt pressure from within the writing community to release this work as an e-book because this is the current trend. "When that was done I started getting back into the forums and things like that, and there was a lot of talk about e-books and Kindle and all the stuff that writers were doing." Stephen, another interviewee, felt differently. She said that "the Ottawa scene [community of authors] is still very much print," referring to this as a reason not to publish an e-book herself.

She also reported not having enough "street credit" within the community to be confident enough to self-publish. "I didn't feel I had enough street credit to get someone else to publish, outside of a friend. And unfortunately that seems to be one of the bad habits writers have, is self-doubt." This statement about confidence is reflective of a common theme in the interviews. The prevalence of the confidence theme is further evidence that publishing houses are an important social group whose judgment is important to the interviewees.

Indeed, confidence was not referred to in the interview questions, but was raised independently

in some way by seven of the eleven interviewees. In the confidence thematic group, a phenomenon that arose with three of the participants was the idea that a near-encounter with being traditionally published was a source of confidence to self-publish. Bueno and El-Koura used stories that had previously gone through the traditional-publishing process as first items for self-publishing. They maintained that, since these works had already been “vetted” by a system seen to have expertise and prestige, they were good enough to be published. Wilde similarly noted that having been accepted previously by a literary agent gave her a belief that her work was worth reading.

Because I had the agent I didn't have any qualms about quality. You know, a lot of people don't ... don't have the ability to judge the quality of their own work, so they publish ... we kindly say they publish before they're ready.

The importance of confidence in the decision to self-publish was also discussed in terms of its absence. Heartfield, for example, could only see herself having the confidence to self-publish once she was at “the point where I was convinced that there was a readership for a novel that I had written, but that I couldn't sell it for whatever reason, that traditional publishers just didn't want it but I knew there were readers out there.” Wallbank, another unpublished author, said that he had not self-published yet because he did not feel that the quality of his work was high enough. “It's mostly ... the quantity of quality stuff that I've written isn't at that level where I feel I can do a decent collection.” Bueno suggests that, because self-publishing a print book is more difficult and expensive than an e-book, the decision to only publish an e-book, when it occurs, reflects a lack of confidence on the part of the author.

What happens then is if you're only e-book publishing, and you're not going through the effort of getting it in to hard copy, then you've already decided it's not worth the effort. And shall we equate the effort it takes to the amount of confidence you have in yourself?

He further argues that this lack of confidence should be seen as an indication that the book is inferior. He uses this as support for his belief that self-published e-books are, in general, of a lower quality than print, and that e- is a less prestigious format. Szabo advanced a similar conclusion, also relating it to

confidence.

Anybody can publish an e-book if they put their mind to it. It doesn't matter what you put in there or whatever. When you put it in print, it's a lot more complicated, and you have to want to put out your best stuff.

Six of the interviewees reported feeling pressure to promote their books in a certain way. Szabo, Bueno, and Fowler all stated that if you produce an e-book you are expected to engage with social media to promote it, but said that they had no interest in doing so. Bueno said:

I devote x-amount of time per week to it, I say, 'OK, I've got to do this, if I want to be a successful author they tell me you've gotta do this. So I go on social media, I do the Twitter, and I absolutely have no use for it. I think, 'Ugh, what a waste of time, energy.'"

Bueno said this while talking about a social-media course he took through the Ottawa Independent Writers group, so this pressure is coming from fellow authors. Fowler, Stephen, and Szabo mentioned taking similar courses as well.

As noted above in the discussion regarding the attitude category, the interviewees were directly asked to speculate on the future of the two formats. All eleven of the participants made statements to the effect that a shift to digital publishing is in some way inevitable, and six expressed this as a pressure to adopt. Bueno was one of the authors whose self-publishing service produced a digital version of his book for free.

My original reaction was, 'Nah, I'm not interested.' That was my initial reaction. And they said, 'No no no. I'm telling you where the future is. If you want your book to go anywhere you need to have it as an e-format.'

Priske also reported preferring print, but recognized that he will likely shift to e-books. "I like books, so I write books. But things change ... The reality is things change and to me there's no question that the future is e-books."



### 4.3 Perceived behavioural control

Within the PBC category, control of the various stages within the process of publishing a book was identified as the most commonly discussed theme, raised by nine of the interviewees. This is another theme that was introduced by the subjects themselves. El-Koura went so far as to say that control of the publishing process is the biggest factor leading authors to self-publish: “Self-publishers want control, right? That's why we're doing it.”

**Table 5: Key factors in perceived-behavioural-control category**

- control of the publishing process
- formatting limitations of e-books
- ability to produce/promote e-books

Control of scheduling emerged as a major sub-theme. Three participants discussed it, and two of the e-book adopters (El-Koura and Wilde) made it a particular focus of their discussions with the researcher. Both stated that being able to decide when and how often they publish is a big factor in favour of self-publishing in general, and of e-books in particular. Indeed, El-Koura claimed that his main motivation for self-publishing was “not to have to wait around for a publisher.” He further asserted that e-books offer the control to make changes in minutes, even to already-published works. Such direct control and quick turnaround are impossible in traditional publishing. Wilde suggested that another related advantage is production rate. Self-publishing allows authors to be prolific, producing as many books in a year as they like, whereas a contract with a publishing house dictates how many books per year an author may release.

The interviewees tended to frame these scheduling aspects in relation to traditional publishers, discussing the temporal benefits of digital self-publishing in comparison to publishing with third-party publishing houses. Other aspects of control that were discussed in similar, comparative terms include: the ability to incorporate the author's own watercolour paintings as illustrations in books, the ability to employ family members as editors, and the potential to empower authors vis-à-vis traditional publishing houses.

There can be a downside to this affordance of control. For instance, El-Koura reported that the

lack of a corporate master produces a temptation “not to hold back” and “to publish everything,” even if the manuscript is not ready. He likened this publishing control to a “drug you have to stay away from.” Wilde made a similar statement about the compulsive aspect of control, but said that it can also produce the opposite effect, making authors feel that a manuscript is never 'ready.' The ability to make changes to an e-book after it is published means an author is “never finished writing a book” if he or she does not want to be, and can “tinker with it forever.”

The theme of control included more practical discussions as well. Stephen, a poet, said that e-books are not as well-suited to poetry because of the dynamic nature of the text flow. Because e-readers allow the font and font size to be changed, the text is constantly re-flowing. Poetry, however, often includes page layout as part of its art – in Stephen's terms, “the all-important line break.”

Two other interviewees expressed a similar belief that e-books are unable to reproduce their work as they intend it. However, they qualified these claims with an acknowledgement that they might just not know how. Wallbank provided an excellent example of this in stating, “If you're going for a piece of art, e-books are probably a pretty bad idea, especially trying to do it yourself.” He later said that, in general, e-books are more restrictive in terms of formatting. Szabo said that she feared she would have to take the pictures out of her book if she were to produce it as an e-book, but later modified her statement to say that it would be “complicated” to include them.

I decided the new book, I have pictures in it, and the pictures go from one page to the other, so putting it into an e-book, I couldn't do it with it, unless I take out all the pictures. So it just gets a little more complicated when you format it.

Concern about the practicalities of producing e-books speaks to another aspect of PBC: ability. The three adopters reported that producing and distributing an e-book was easy, whereas ability statements by the non-adopters and non-publishers were mixed. Four of the non-adopters reported that their self-publishing services automatically had e-book versions of their print books produced and distributed – that is, listed on one or more of the e-book sales websites. Nonetheless, one of these

authors, Szabo, spoke of producing an e-book as being beyond her ability. “I’m kind of resisting. Not so much resisting as I don’t really know where to start. There’s a lot of software out there to use.” Stephen, an unpublished author, said that her decision to not publish an e-book thus far was “partly” a question of not having the required technological ability, though she reported that she would probably be able to acquire it if she chose to. “I don’t know how to do it, but I don’t imagine it’s all that difficult. Unless I have to write code. I’m not going to write code.” When asked about whether there was a technological barrier to their producing e-books, the nine remaining interviewees made similar statements, indicating they would be able to master the technology if they had the interest to do so.

This ties to another sub-theme pertaining to ability: curiosity. Szabo, who reported feeling unable to produce an e-book herself, asserted that part of the problem is “I’m not curious enough,” and that if she were willing to experiment more with new technologies, she might be able to learn. This contrasts with a statement from Wark, who said that she taught herself how to produce e-books. “I’m always learning new things, that’s just sort of my personality.”

Fowler reported being sufficiently curious to experiment with technology, but that technological ability did not factor in his decision to not adopt the e-book format. His main reason was a perceived inability to promote an e-book effectively.

Because I have to market the book, when I’ve self-published it, and I can’t market an e-book. You have to do that through this other ... I’ve heard so many talks about it, you have to get it on social media. You have to have blogs, and you have to really know what you’re doing. I have those things, but I’m not good at it, and you have to really grasp it.

McNaught and Heartfield also reported lacking the ability to promote an e-book. Wilde, an adopter, reported that promotion is “definitely not one of my strengths,” but shared an anecdote about learning how to name her books in such a way as to optimize their placement in Amazon search results. This kind of digital-specific skill suggests she is at least developing an ability to promote e-books.

Five subjects advanced the related argument that having a tactile copy of their book is

preferable for promotional events and face-to-face sales. “I went with print, because I could take it somewhere and say, ‘Here’s a book, look at it and here, buy it.’,” Fowler said. McNaught lamented the loss of “the event” – that is, the end of book launches, signings and readings that would follow if the industry shifted totally to e-books.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

Taken as a whole, the interview findings suggest there are few points of consensus regarding e-books as a format for self-publishing. The interviewees' statements often contradicted one another. However, the interviewees were unified in expressing concerns relating to all three TPB categories. As well, multiple themes were addressed by all, or nearly all, of the subjects. Attachment and prestige were among the most popular themes in the attitudes category. Prestige and confidence were by far the most addressed themes within the subjective-norms category. Control over the process was the most significant theme within the perceived-behavioural-control category. In the next chapter, these themes and the interviewees' statements are analyzed through the lens of the reviewed literature to see what understandings and conclusions can be reached.

## 5. Analysis and discussion

The context of this thesis is a prevailing claim, advanced by Anderson (2006), Kular (2006), Tian and Martin (2010) and Carolan and Evain (2013), that the economic benefits of e-books will lead to a boom in digital self-publishing. The main finding emerging from the interviews challenges this hypothesis by showing noticeable resistance to e-books among the self-publishing and potentially self-publishing authors composing the sample. The main source of this opposition appears to derive from subjective norms. Attitudes and perceived behavioural control were also identified as potentially influencing the sampled authors' perceptions. However, the themes identified in these categories tended to be more favourable towards adoption.

The main subjective-norm influences identified were related to the themes of prestige (i.e. the idea that e-books are less culturally valued than print) and confidence (i.e. the belief that self-publishing requires some external source of validation). Emotional attachment to the print form is an attitudinal influence that persists among the sampled authors, as does a lack of interest in the digital format among four of the non-adopters. However, seven of the interviewees argued that negative attitudes towards e-books will likely change as e-books become increasingly popular, and as their practical benefits become more evident to audiences, other authors, and the publishing industry. Put another way, attitudes will change when the prevailing norms change. In the perceived-behavioural-control category, six of the interviewees argued that e-books require a specific type of promotion that they are unable to perform. It should be noted, however, that all of the participants made statements for and against e-books as a format for self-publishing, with no format seen as ideal by any of the participants. The adopters were by no means uncritical e-book devotees, nor were the non-adopters and unpublished authors in the sample tended to be averse to the digital format; every interviewee had good and bad things to say about both. The publishing decisions of the individuals comprising the three groups are the result of complex value judgements that take into consideration multiple factors.

In analyzing and drawing conclusions from the findings, it is necessary to examine the interplay of the various influences and influence types because factors from different categories influence one another. One prime example is the idea that e-books are cheaper to produce and easier to distribute, which has thus far tended to be promoted as a positive attitude towards them. However, this notion was presented as a negative attitude by two of the interviewees when they incorporated the subjective norm of confidence: Stephen and Bueno maintained that publishing only an e-book version of one's manuscript reflects a lack of confidence, because it entails less economic risk on the part of the author/publisher.

In studying the interplay of the various factors and themes, some new concepts were identified that the author of this thesis did not find in his review of the literature. For example, symbolic-capital risk emerged as a type of risk undertaken in the act of publishing that is not related to economics. It also emerged that the attitude of the sampled authors towards the traditional publishing industry, particularly their past experiences of rejection, potentially influences their publishing and format choices.

### 5.1 Alignments with the literature

There were a number of places where the findings of this study aligned directly with some of the key concepts found in the literature review. The most significant point of agreement between the findings and what was found in the reviewed literature, in that it was advanced by all of the interviewees, was on the practical benefits of e-books. Their lower production cost and ease of distribution are the basis upon which predictions about their widespread adoption among self-publishers are predicated (Anderson, 2006; Kular, 2006; Tian & Martin, 2010; Carolan & Evain, 2013). All of the interviewees were aware of these benefits. Moreover, three of the participating authors – Wilde, Heartfield, and El-Koura – expressed agreement with the contention of Anderson's Long Tail

theory that these practical benefits are conducive to the expansion of niches within literature.

Ideas about the relationship between age and e-book adoption by the population at large received significant attention in the literature (Turner-Riggs & Library and Archives Canada, 2008; Weisberg, 2011; Haight et al., 2014), and from the interviewees. Haight et al. (2014) and Weisberg (2011) suggest that young people are adopting e-books, while Turner-Riggs and Library and Archives Canada (2008) found that the accessibility advantages of e-books mean they are equally appealing to older readers. The same disagreement was found among the interviewees who participated in this thesis research. Szabo, Stephen, and Bueno opined that young people are more receptive to e-books. Others suggested the division is not so clear. El-Koura agreed with the idea that the accessibility advantages of e-books draw in older readers, while Fowler, Heartfield, Wark, and Wilde all offered anecdotal evidence of either older people embracing e-books or young people clinging to print. This uncertainty regarding the audience's preferences was mentioned by four of the interviewees as an influence on their format choice.

Haugland (2006) and Hewitt and Regoli (2010) found that key attractions for self-publishing are the capacity for self-reliance and for control of all aspects of the publishing process. This type of control did emerge as the most frequently discussed concept in the perceived behavioural control category, raised by nine of the participants.

## 5.2 Reasons for resistance

Unlike in the attitudes and perceived-behavioural-control categories, many of the subjective-norm influences discussed by the participants were oriented against the adoption of e-books as a self-publishing format. Some were norms against e-books specifically, such as a belief that the audience desires the display value of print books. Others seemingly opposed self-publishing in general, such as the belief that the “stamp of approval,” in Heartfield's terms, of a traditional publisher is something that

readers value. Opposition to e-books and to self-publishing often converged as well, such as in the idea that e-books are lowering the economic risk of self-publishing, which is diminishing the average quality of self-published work and consequently diminishing the prestige of self-publishing.

### 5.2.1 Symbolic-capital risk

There was near-unanimous agreement that the wide accessibility of e-book technology is diminishing the average quality of published work; this perception concurs with the claims advanced by Hewitt and Regoli (2010) and Carolan and Evain (2013). Bueno referred to a flood of low-quality self-published books as “slush,” while Wilde called them “tripe.” It is interesting that this belief was also evident among the three e-book adopters.

Among the sampled authors, concern with average quality was seemingly linked to a sense that self-published e-books are less prestigious than self-published print books, and prestige emerged as a highly significant factor for the participants, as both the most-referenced theme (N = 44), and one which inspired frequent, lengthy discussion. Two of the participants pointed out that because print books are more expensive to produce and difficult to distribute, they are seen as being more prestigious. In this sense, the practical benefits of e-books are working against them. What Anderson (2006) discusses as the democratization of publishing is here interpreted as a kind of gate-crashing.

This produces a paradox: It would seem that Long Tail's contention, that lowered barriers to access to publishing afforded by e-books will produce a boom in self-publishing, is perceived by a majority of the sampled authors as being true. Yet this perception is cited by these same individuals as a reason for not engaging in the behaviour. A perception of less resistance may actually be compounding resistance. A solution to the paradox can be found by framing it as risk, rather than resistance. Looking at it in this manner draws attention to different types of risk, depending on what is potentially lost in the venture. Thanks to the economic benefits of e-books, authors are risking less



money and labour than ever before when they engage in self-publishing. However, given that self-published e-books are viewed by many as lacking in prestige, the author is risking his or her symbolic capital as a writer by producing them.

Symbolic capital is a term coined by Pierre Bourdieu (1984) to mean “a reputation for competence and an image of respectability and honourability” (p. 291). Bourdieu envisioned symbolic capital as being distinct from economic capital, one of four types of capital, the other three being cultural, social, and economic (Bourdieu, 1986). In the context of this study, symbolic capital is a different expression of the concept prestige previously discussed. To say that print books are believed to be a more prestigious publishing format comes down to saying that being published in a print book confers more symbolic capital onto the author. Conversely, then, self-publishing an e-book is seen by all of the eleven participating authors in this study as representing a lower economic-capital risk, but a higher symbolic-capital risk.

### 5.2.2 External cultural authorities

The belief was expressed by eight participants, from all three groups, that the gatekeeping role performed by traditional publishers is still required. They contend that the low-quality e-books that diminish the prestige level of publishing would have been rejected by traditional publishers. Without this selection stage in the publishing process, there is no guarantee that a manuscript that makes it through the publishing stage is of a sufficiently high quality.

According to the participant authors the prestige that is lost in this process does not come just from the work itself. Five of the authors said that there is prestige in being able to call oneself an author. If the low cost of producing e-books is leading to bad books being produced and thus devaluing what it means to be a book, then the same process can be seen as devaluing what it means to be an

author. The gate-crashing phenomenon may be seen as placing both the public's estimation of the authors' work and of the authors on the line. This again relates to the concept of symbolic capital, which rests with the author as well as in the work.

Faced with this threat, four of the authors in the sample claimed to look to the self-publishing services to provide the same kind of gatekeeping function that is performed by traditional publishers. Wark, El-Koura, Wilde, and Bueno all lamented the fact that some self-publishing services are willing to turn any and all manuscripts into books. Bueno praised his service, Friesen Press, for providing editing, and for the fact that it refuses manuscripts that do not meet its standard of quality. Further to this, Wark said that some self-publishing services do not deserve to call themselves publishers at all, but are rather just “printers,” because of the fact that they have no bar of acceptance.

That eight authors in this sample would look to external authorities to serve as gatekeepers, as a way of addressing the problem of diminishing prestige, suggests that the sort of rebelliousness and rejection of “cultural authority” discussed by Haugland (2006), and the valuing of editorial independence discussed by Dilevko and Dali (2006), do not have much traction among them.

Instead, a belief in the continued need for some kind of gatekeeping function aligns the eight interviewees with Carolan and Evain (2013), who argued that widely held perceptions of low quality have led to a need for “labels of distinction” to replace “the publisher's stamp [as] a gauge of quality” (p. 292). This, however, is also about the reader's ability to find good books amid the “slush.” Heartfield and El-Koura looked to other technologies to fill this void, with Heartfield naming the social-media site GoodReads specifically. GoodReads allows authors to create pages for their books, and to solicit user-generated reviews. Other social-reading sites, such as Wattpad, fit this bill as well. Belief in such user-generated reviewing concurs with Laquintano's (2010) contention that the online community can fill the gatekeeping void via peer review. That these two individuals were the only authors in the sample to mention such services might speak to the fact that six of the others in the

sample expressed discomfort with social media as a promotional tool.

A milder form of this appeal to an external authority to address e-publishing's prestige problem is found in the need expressed among the eleven participants for editing. While six of the participants reported feeling that a professional editor was necessary, El-Koura pointed out that there are advantages to having someone close to you be your editor, partly because he or she will be familiar with your writing style, and partly because it gives the author more power in the relationship. Thus, simply employing an editor can be seen as potentially, but not necessarily, submitting power to an external "cultural authority." The role and nature of editing is also the subject of similar disagreement. Greenberg (2010), for instance, writes that depending on acquaintances, or even the online community, as per Laquintano (2010), to be one's editor puts an emphasis on typographic editing, and devalues the human-judgment aspect of an editor's role.

### 5.2.3 Confidence

The concept of gatekeeping, or lack of it, relates directly to another common theme of discussion that arose in the interviews: confidence. The notion that confidence is a requirement for an author to decide to self-publish was mentioned by seven of the eleven participating authors, despite not being mentioned in the questionnaire used to guide the interviews. Given that the decision to publish is entirely in the hands of authors in self-publishing, they require some source of confidence in order to feel that their books are good enough to be released. Otherwise they run the risk of publishing, as Wilde said, "before they're ready," which constitutes an elevated symbolic-capital risk.

Once again, three of the participants, including members of both the adopter and non-adopter groups, reported that having their manuscripts accepted by either a literary agent or a traditional publisher gave them a sense of validation. When their manuscripts subsequently failed to be published, the authors retained the sense of validation and felt confident enough to publish manuscripts

themselves.

Other potential sources of confidence were also identified by the interviewees. Other authors emerged as the third important social group offering validation, and their approval was cited as a potential source of the confidence required to self-publish. It seems plausible that such online sharing may produce a response from peers and a potential audience that is positive enough to enhance one's confidence, without one ever interacting with members of the publishing industry. The social-media site Wattpad is designed with this in mind, to facilitate reader feedback and foster a direct connection between author and readers.

Confidence is another area where the economic benefits of e-books can be seen to be working against them. Bueno and Szabo expressed the view that an author who self-publishes in only e-book format must lack confidence, because he or she is undertaking the minimal amount of economic risk. Their view is a clear link back to the idea that e-books are less prestigious than print because they are cheaper. However, this ignores the concept of symbolic-capital risk. Self-publishing in any format was deemed by seven of the participating authors to require a good deal of confidence. To stay within the language of risk, external approval is an indication that symbolic-capital risk is minimal.

#### 5.2.4 Symbolic-capital reward

Logically, symbolic-capital risk must have a corresponding reward. Thus far in this study we have seen that the importance of the economic benefits of e-books has been overstated in much of the scholarship, in that it ignores social influences. Further to this, some of the authors said that their reasons for writing, that is to say the rewards they seek and the needs they fulfill, are also social rather than economic. Wark, Priske, El-Koura, and McNaught all reported that sharing their work with others was the main reason for publishing. In Priske's words, "in the end, it's just getting your work, getting your art out, available." This relates to Haugland (2006) and Sarrimo (2010), who assert that sharing

and self-expression are the basic motivations for writing. Sarrimo specifically points to the emotional “high” that results from self-expression. However, among the authors interviewed for this thesis, it was clear that having an audience to share with was a key concern; there can be no “high” without the belief that others were reading. The difference between sharing and self-expression is the accumulation of symbolic capital, which only exists in the perception of others. Just as one risks economic capital for the purpose of accumulating more economic capital, so does one risk symbolic capital, in this case by self-publishing a book, with the hope of accumulating more, by having that book widely read and, hopefully, respected.

The perspectives emerging from the interviews with the sampled authors suggests that this concern for an audience may shape format choice. Much of the resistance among the non-adopters in the sample (N = 5) came from a fear that no one would want to read their stories in e-book format. McNaught, for example, wondered, “the sort of person that Kindle attracts, are they good for me? Are they likely to read my stuff?” However, later in the interview, he would say that one could receive the same feeling of accomplishment of seeing one's name “in print” even if it was in fact in an e-book. Thus, in his eyes, the sharing motivation can be satisfied by e-books as long as they actually find an audience.

The goal of simply finding an audience may, however, have to include an acceptance that the audience will be smaller for e-books. Wilde advocated for a redefinition of what it means to be successful as a self-published author, “because to be successful in regular publishing a lot of people have to read your book. In self-publishing a lot fewer people read your books.” This suggests a need to recalibrate the definition of success based on the differing scales of production and distribution, a suggestion which is echoed by Anderson (2006), Lichtenberg (2011) and Carolan and Evain (2013). Though e-books can be produced cheaply and distributed widely, self-publishers still do not have the same resources as traditional publishers. There is, conversely, an economic benefit to this: a self-

published author receives a much larger piece of the sale price of a book.

Of course, it should be noted that it could have seemed tacky for the authors to dwell too much on their incomes, and that this could explain an emphasis on social factors. However, the authors seemed uninterested in discussing economics even in general terms, and in fact Wilde said elsewhere in the interview that she enjoyed quoting her sales statistics to people in order to deal with “snobbiness” among those who find e-books less prestigious.

E-books have another, less conscious kind of prestige working against them: display value. Fowler, McNaught, and Priske all said that they or people they know value the print book's ability to be displayed – to be something that, in Priske's words, “my mother can put on her bookshelf.” E-books have tried in various ways to mimic and satisfy the user experience of print, however they have not addressed display value. At one point in his interview, McNaught envisioned the absurd scenario of someone nailing an old Kindle reader to the wall to show off his book collection. Striphos (2011) traces the display value of books back to the early days of the mass-production of books as consumer goods, and in fact to a deliberate campaign, undertaken by public-relations pioneer Edward Bernays, to deal with a chronic oversupply problem in the book industry (p. 58). Thus, display value would not seem to be something intrinsic to the role of books in society. However, the fact remains that it was cited by three of the participating authors as contributing to their decision not to produce e-books.

#### 5.2.5 Attitude of attachment

Most of the influences against the adoption of e-books discussed thus far have been categorized as subjective norms. However, emotional attachment emerged as a widely held negative factor in the attitudes influence category. Attachment was identified by MacWilliam (2013), who found that 83 per cent of his study's respondents reported that the physical properties of the print book remain important to them. Westin (2012) put forth attachment as a normative influence, suggesting that the concern

would be with whether an author's perceived audience was emotionally attached to the print form. In the interviews conducted for this thesis, however, emotional attachment emerged as an attitude among the authors themselves, i.e. their own attachment, rather than that of the audience. This aligns with a persistent mixing-up of the roles of reader and author in the minds of the interviewees; their answers often shifted from one perspective to the other. Westin argues that attachment is the kind of cultural value that has historically been over-emphasized as textual communication shifts from one format to another, and that this effect can be defeated by purposefully emphasizing new cultural values offered by the incoming format. In the case of e-books, the new cultural values include diminished production and distribution costs, which are beneficial to self-publishing authors such as those interviewed in this study. That the interviewees are letting their emotional attachment as readers influence their format choice, then, is going against their interests as author-publishers.

That said, the attachment theme is equally noteworthy because of its near unanimity: Nine of the 11 interviewees, including two e-book adopters, expressed emotional attachment to print. It is difficult to unpack this phenomenon, given that it is an emotional response that tended to be discussed in vague or even dismissive terms that the interviewees seemed unwilling to explain. This is typified by Fowler's response to the question of why he chose to self-publish in print and not digitally: "Because I like print."

There was some indication that, as predicted in the arguments advanced by Westin (2012) and Weedon et al. (2014), the practical benefits of e-books may erode this attachment. Wilde provides an example of this prediction in action. At the time of the interview, she was considering abandoning print entirely and only producing e-books. She said that print editions of her books never sold very well, but that she continued producing them because of the same kind of emotional attachment cited by the other authors. However, in e-mail correspondence with the researcher a few months after the interview, she indicated that she had decided not to produce a print version of her newest book, writing, "I haven't

done one. I may in the future, but for now I'm concentrating on other things since the print books represent so few sales.”

#### 5.2.6 Future of publishing

The idea of an erosion of attachment relates to the perception (see, Pew Research Center, 2013; Smith, 2014; Digital Book World, 2014), that e-books are at least the current trend, if not the 'way of the future,' so to speak. All of interviewees expressed this belief. Peng et al. (2012) suggest that belief may be interpreted as normative pressure to adopt. El-Koura's statement that he felt pressure to publish his first novel as an e-book after reading “a lot of talk about e-books and Kindle and all the stuff that writers were doing,” is exemplary.

However, perceived trends are not always incorporated into publishing decisions. The non-adopters (N = 5) seem to have taken a shorter-term view, concerning themselves more with what their perceived present audience wants and expects, and what they feel they can feasibly provide. The three historical-fiction authors, for example, suspected that this trend towards e-books did not apply to readers of their genre, and four of the five non-adopters feared that they could not promote an e-book the way they are supposed to be promoted. Not surprisingly, the adopters seemed to be the ones most interested in future audience trends.

The participants of this study held different views about the future of publishing, though their guesses did not necessarily seem self-interested. For example, Priske predicted the impending death of the print book, despite having opted against producing e-books. Wilde, an e-book adopter who has now stopped producing print books, believed that e-books will never exceed a 50-per-cent market share, making hers the most generous prediction in terms of print's role. The fact that there is so much room for authors to interpret the future popularity of e-books, let alone their present, matches the general uncertainty found elsewhere.



This uncertainty supports decisions based on subjective feelings of attachment and prestige. For example, Priske argued that eventually the market will shift decisively to e-books, defeating attachment, and he intends to continue producing print until that shift comes. However, Smith (2014) and Digital Book World (2014) find that e-books have already surpassed print books by some, though not all metrics. For example, e-book sales are growing at a much faster pace, and e-book readers buy more titles than print readers (Millar, 2014). This suggests that the tipping point at which this shift occurs remains subjective, or at least based on which studies a person sees or believes. In an opposite example, Wilde said she tries to fight prejudices against e-books by quoting high sales numbers. However, she admits herself that her evidence is anecdotal.

#### 5.2.7 Disruptive innovation

Attachment, display value, and discussions of the importance of live sales and a fear of the loss of “the event,” are all examples of the interviewees viewing e-books as a disruptive innovation. Each of the eleven interviewees positioned print books as an integral part of a status quo that is valued and which they wish to preserve. This relates to the digital shift being perceived negatively, as an inevitability. Put otherwise, e-books were viewed as a problem to be solved. Given the consensus among the interviewees that the digital shift is irreversible, the 'solutions' they put forth were aimed at preserving what is valued in print books, rather than embracing what is different about e-books. A question posed in all of the interviews, about whether they thought e-books were simply digitized print books or if they were something different, failed to generate much discussion. Attempts were made in each case to prompt discussion, for example by asking about the multimedia potential of enhanced e-books, but these efforts by the researcher yielded little response. This would seem to support Lichtenberg (2011) and Weedon et al. (2014), who claim that most people take a limited view of the potential of e-books, and that they are currently undervalued as being remediations of print. This

limited view relates to the fact that all of the participants in this study perceived e-books as a disruption of the print status quo to some degree. Relating this to the theme of uncertainty, it seems plausible that such a negative view might further encourage authors to delay the point at which they perceive the market shift to e-books as having occurred – that is to say, the point at which it becomes truly inevitable.

However, this disruption was interpreted as a positive phenomenon by some subjects, which makes sense given the antipathy expressed by the majority of interviewees toward the state of the current industry. This is typified by Wilde's statement: "A lot of people now, they just don't care for the publishing houses. So the more success we hear from the self-publishers, the more we want to do that." Four of the participants expressed similar hopes that the increase in the number of self-published e-books will be interpreted by the publishing industry as a threat that will change some of its behaviours towards authors. This view was principally connected to the difficulty of being accepted by traditional publishing houses. The fact that these four participants thus viewed e-books as both a positive and a negative disruption, and that they expressed distaste for the industry at the same time as they appreciated its value as a gatekeeper and validator, points to a conflicted and complicated relationship with the industry.

#### 5.2.8 Rejection

Ambivalent feelings toward the industry relates to the fact that all the participating self-published authors chose to produce their books only after being rejected by traditional publishers. Tian and Martin (2010) argue that e-books will lead "to a significant power shift in the market" (p. 157), and that authors can seize upon them as a tool of empowerment vis-à-vis the publishing industry. Most of the discussions about the traditional publishing industry were indeed focused on a loss of power for authors, regardless of whether the individual embraced e-books or not. Bueno, for example, thus

described his experience: “I thought, I'm nobody, and then all of a sudden I've got an agent and a publisher and a top-notch editor, like, I mean, this is too good to be true. And it was.” Wilde, an adopter, described being nearly accepted by a traditional publisher early in her career, only to be ultimately rejected, as “a little heartbreaker.” Thus, the concept of disempowerment is prevalent, but it has not necessarily led to adoption of e-books as a remedy – at least not for these two individuals.

The idea that acceptance by the industry provides validation is justification for the bitterness with which four interviewees described their rejection. Within the admittedly small sample in this study, this bitterness appears to correlate with the rejection of e-books. The two most enthusiastic adopters, Wilde and El-Koura, did not express bitterness regarding their failure to be published traditionally. Wilde did say that being ultimately turned down was a “heartbreaker,” but focused more on the acceptances that led up to that moment, starting with being accepted by a literary agent. “Because I had the agent I didn't have any qualms about quality.” El-Koura, too, was not bitter about his rejection experience. A publisher which had agreed to publish his novel decided to quit the fiction-publishing business before releasing his book. He described this experience as simply “annoying.” Wark, the third adopter in the sample, expressed some lingering bitterness at having been rejected. “Quite a few years ago, I wrote a book and sent it to places, 'Oh this is not quite for us blah blah blah.' So I thought, 'Oh, screw this, I'll just do my own.’” While she now believes that digital self-publishing is the way of the future, she is far less enthusiastic in her advocacy for following it. That said, upon being rejected she did begin to see digital self-publishing as a viable alternative. Fowler, a non-adopter, focused on the disappointment of numerous rejections. When asked why he chose to self-publish, he said:

Well, it was the only way of getting it done, I guess, basically. I mean for this last book, I did go to an agent. The agent accepted me, which I thought was my way clear. But the subject is military history, of a special kind. And so for the ones she knew, the big publishers, they weren't interested in it. So she said, well you'll have to go on your own, go to the secondary publishers. And I did those letters, nobody replied.

One potential explanation for the differing views is that those interviewees who feel embittered see a continued need for the industry, and so being rejected by it remains problematic for them. For the adopters, Wark is very dismissive of the industry's opinions, and while El-Koura and Wilde did both find validation in its approval, they did not seem to be too concerned about it after they decided to self-publish. In contrast, the three non-adopters who raised their rejection experiences in the discussions speak of them as if they continue to sting. McNaught, for example, assumes his rejection from an agency came from an inexperienced, potentially even resentful, low-level employee. Bueno makes the clearest argument for why the industry's opinion continues to matter, even for self-publishing authors:

An indie author, it's considered that you haven't passed muster, you haven't ... you're not up to snuff. You've been turned down by traditional publishing houses and therefore your work does not meet that professional standard required by the industry in general.

The idea that bitterness relates to a perceived need for the publishing industry makes sense when considering the practical advantages of digital. Tian and Martin (2010) and, to some extent Anderson (2006), suggest that the economic advantages of e-books offer an opportunity for authors to empower themselves in relation to the publishing industry. In this sense, the adopters should, hypothetically, feel less like they absolutely need the publishing industry in order to be successful<sup>14</sup>. The adopters reported that the industry was a source of necessary validation, although that was discussed as a one-time interaction that, once received, was not needed again. Moreover, the fact that discussions of control were so popular among the adopters, suggests that they have experienced some sense of empowerment from digital self-publishing, insofar as they report valuing the ability to control their schedule, their process, and to have final say over the result. Meanwhile, print self-publishers are forced in some ways to mimic the activities of the traditional publishing industry. Bueno, for example, praised the fact that his self-publishing service offers distribution through the Ingram Book Group, so that his book can reach a wider potential audience. Fowler lacks that distributional help, and expressed

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<sup>14</sup> See also the previous discussion about a different definition of success in digital self-publishing.

a sense of exhaustion at the amount of work he has to do to promote and distribute his print book. Referring to his practice of driving around to various readings and to getting his book on bookstore consignment shelves, he said simply, “I can't keep this up, you know?”

### 5.2.9 Promotion and perceived behavioural control

The perception that the different formats require different promotional techniques is one of the most noteworthy observations to come out of the perceived behavioural control category. In the interviews, none of the participating authors seemed to feel that the production of an e-book was outside his or her ability. The unpublished authors (N = 3) all felt they were able to produce one if they wished, and of the self-published authors who were classified as non-adopters, all but one had e-book versions of their books automatically provided by their self-publishing services<sup>15</sup>. The problem in terms of behavioural control is in promotion. Six of the participants reported not knowing how to market an e-book effectively. Five interviewees expressed fear of the loss of live events. This relates to the idea that the book industry treats e-books like digital versions of print books, when in fact they are different, and require and afford different related activities. Given that the e-book adopters interviewed for this thesis expressed personal attachment to print books, it seems plausible that perceptions about new types of promotional activities may be an indicator of receptiveness to adoption. None of the adopters brought up the idea of live sales as being particularly important to their promotional strategies. However, two of the adopters discussed their digital-promotion strategies. Wilde spent a great deal of time talking about the online-promotion skills she had developed in the course of her writing career, and El-Koura discussed at length the advantages and disadvantages of the various e-book marketplaces,

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<sup>15</sup> Haight et al. (2014) and Turner-Riggs & Library and Archives Canada (2008) point out that a lack of technological access and facility is a persistent problem in Canada, however mainly among members of traditionally disadvantaged groups (Haight et al., 2014). Given that this study's sample was not random, and that the authors were all found and contacted online, it is not surprising that the authors in this study did not fall on the wrong side of the so-called digital divide.

such as Smashwords and Kobo, and the formatting differences of each.

This idea of promotion as a digital skill suggests that ability in this case is in fact more complicated than simple production, involving an interplay among attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. There was a perception of social pressure to promote e-books in a certain way, namely through social media, that not all of the interviewees felt capable of. Thus, self-publishing e-books tended to be regarded as being within each participant's ability, but doing so 'properly' was not.

That said, four of the participants believed in their ability to learn new skills as required, including those related to social-media and promotion. This belief can be seen in the proactive approaches they reported having taken already: Four of the authors who expressed some level of technological discomfort in the activities related to e-book promotion – Stephen, Bueno, Fowler, and Szabo – also reported having taken courses to improve their related skills, including courses on social-media use. Szabo and Bueno, however, reported abandoning the courses partway through due to a lack of interest, an attitudinal factor.

The tension between ability and interest is the most noteworthy interplay between the attitude and perceived behavioural control categories. Despite all the participating authors reporting that they felt able to produce an e-book if they desired, and able to learn how to perform the related promotional tasks, in the case of the non-adopters these perceived abilities were overcome by a professed lack of interest in e-books as a format. This is particularly clear in the non-adopting authors whose works were converted to e-books automatically by their self-publishing services. That these individuals have e-book versions of their works already made but choose to ignore them is a supreme expression of lack of interest. As with attachment, lack of interest is an attitude that was generally expressed flatly, and which the authors were generally reluctant to explain further. Also like attachment, lack of interest frequently had significant interplay with other factors. For example, Bueno's lack of interest was

confronted by external pressure to adopt e-books because they are “where the future is.”

My original reaction was, 'Nah, I'm not interested.' And they said, 'No no no. I'm telling you where the future is. If you want your book to go anywhere you need to have it as an e-format.'

However, Bueno remains a non-adopter. In this case his lack of interest, an attitude, defeated the normative pressure of the perceived trend.

The challenges of promoting self-published e-books were only addressed in two studies, Camacho (2013) and Laquintano (2010), identified by the researcher. The findings emerging from the interviews conducted for this thesis appear to challenge the claims of the latter studies. Camacho argues that digital self-publishing is a bad choice for authors, first-time authors specifically, because they are incapable of doing their own promotion. However, he focuses on traditional promotional tools such as paid advertising and live events, and his assertion is premised on the assumption that traditional publishers always undertake these promotional activities on behalf of their authors<sup>16</sup>. However, four of the five non-adopters in this study pointed out that in today's publishing environment, traditional publishers are not providing that support for their authors anyway, so they are left to do their own promotion regardless of format choice. Laquintano (2010), on the other hand, takes an optimistic view of promotion for self-publishers, saying that much of it can be outsourced to the online community. However, such a community can only be developed through the sorts of digital social activities that six of the participants in this study say are beyond their ability to begin with.

### 5.3 Normative change

Subjective norms emerged from the interviews as the biggest source of resistance to e-book adoption among self-publishing authors. However, nine of the eleven interviewees also expressed a belief that these norms will change with time, with increased awareness of the practical advantages of

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<sup>16</sup> As mentioned in the literature review chapter, Camacho's study also completely ignored print self-publishing, setting up a false dichotomy between self-published e-books and traditionally published print books.

digital self-publishing. This belief echoed Westin (2012), Sumner (2012), and Weedon et al. (2014).

The prevalent belief among the participating authors is that the lowered barrier to entry afforded by e-books is leading to a preponderance of bad books, that are diminishing the perceived quality of self-published e-books overall, and thus their prestige. However, this lack of quality is not seen to be an unsolvable problem. There seemed to be consensus that if authors and self-publishing services take greater care for the quality of their output, the prestige level of self-published e-books will improve. Bueno's publisher, Friesen Press, with its policy of rejecting some manuscripts, is an example of a service already taking steps in this direction. If the concern for quality becomes widely known, a Friesen label could potentially become such an indication of quality for readers. Such "labels of distinction," in Carolan and Evain's terms (2013, p. 292), were identified by the interviewees as being important to the future of self-published e-books. Of course, the economics are different than with traditional publishers, in that Friesen's income is from authors and not readers, and thus there would be pressure to err on the side of acceptance rather than rejection of a manuscript that comes with a cheque attached. However, if Friesen's ability to attract business, and potentially to charge higher prices than its competitors, comes from an elevated profile among readers, this may theoretically provide sufficient incentive to maintain this quality bar.

Furthermore, there was a suggestion that the "slush" problem can be overcome via better information filters. Heartfield offered the popular social-media site GoodReads as a potential replacement for the gatekeeper function provided by traditional publishers. What she is referring echoes claims by Anderson (2006) and Laquintano (2010) that the number of poor-quality books available does not matter as long as readers have ways of finding the good ones, or put another way, to filter out the bad ones. This is an idea that extends beyond the publishing industry into web-based retail in general, where customer reviews and official recommendations have become linchpins in marketing strategies.



Bueno and Stephen expressed a belief that publishing in e-book only suggests that the author lacks confidence. However, there is also room for such a decision to be deemed simply prudent, as advanced by Kular (2006) and Westin (2012). Wilde, for one, made a cost-benefit calculation and decided that print was not economically beneficial for her. Wilde is also the only author to openly ponder the question of “what is a book”?

I've started to think about, you know, what is a book? Because a lot of people will say, 'Oh, I don't read on a Kindle, because that's not a book.' Well, there's a difference between book-as-story or -writing, and book-as-artifact, right? So if you say 'I love books' and you point out a book, well no, you like the thing that's on paper. The story that's inside there is still the same whether it's on paper or not.

Having moved past her own emotional attachment to print, she decided that it had no more to offer her.

The notion also arose that e-books are simply too new, and that acceptance will come with time. McNaught argued that the prestige level of self-published e-books will rise as audiences are exposed to ones produced by “good writers.” El-Koura, an adopter, calls himself “definitely a print guy,” but said that he sees this attachment disappearing in other people. He thinks that this will continue with time until print becomes a “niche.” This notion of time eroding the attachment factor was also addressed by Priske, a non-adopter. At one point in the interview, he expressed an enduring attachment to print that trumps the practical benefits of digital. “I have my books in print but they're available in e- version. If somehow that were to shift and my primary source of sales was the e- version, I would still want the print one, just so I could have that.” However later in the interview he said he expects that even his own attachment will disappear. “I'm a person who is, all my music is switched to digital, the way I get TV has switched to digital, from standard cable, the fact that I haven't switched on books, well, it's going to happen. To me it's just a given.”

### 5.3.1 Vanity publishing and norm change

Depending on who is being asked, self-publishing as a whole has either undergone or is

undergoing similar normative change to that experienced for e-books. This can be seen in the case of the contested term “vanity publishing.” As discussed in Chapter 4, the term was dismissed by four of the interviewees as either a pejorative term that has now largely disappeared ( $N = 2$ ), or as a term that is still applicable to only a certain type of low-quality self-published books ( $N = 2$ ). In the former case, the argument is that people stopped seeing self-published books as exercises in vanity once they were exposed to high-quality examples. “There's plenty of big-name, very talented people who are doing self-publishing by choice, so the view of it changes,” Priske said. El-Koura is an example of this change in action. He said he was initially reluctant to self-publish because of the taint of “vanity” attached to it. However, he started frequenting online writing forums and got the sense that self-published e-books were the future of publishing, a normative influence discussed previously, so he changed his mind. Wilde suggested that a knowledge of the economics involved in digital self-publishing can change people's ideas about the format.

I think when we first started to hear about digital self-publishing, there was a lot of snobbiness and nose turning-up ... This is why self-publishers love to talk about their numbers so much, is because you just can't, you can't turn up your nose at numbers.

The problem here is: How can e-books, which lack prestige, be seen as bringing prestige to vanity publishing? The four of the interviewees who contested the term “vanity publishing” seemed to side with Sumner's (2012) claim that the vanity tag is being defeated by an expanded recognition that self-published e-books are in fact prudent. They seemed to feel that the prestige level of both is gradually rising at once, thanks in large part to the practical benefits of both. Among the participants, self-publishing is increasingly seen a reasonable response to unfair barriers in the traditional publishing industry, and e-books are increasingly seen as an inexpensive and easily distributed format. Authors in this study who felt otherwise, such as Bueno and McNaught, can thus be seen as those who are yet to be affected by these gradual changes. The adopters in this study could then potentially be seen simply

as early adopters, in Rogers's (2003) terminology<sup>17</sup>.

#### 5.4 Conclusion

Given the attention and focus devoted to discussions of the economic benefits of e-books, the resistance to them expressed by the eleven interviewees, grounded largely in normative and emotional factors, is noteworthy. Prestige was predicted by Westin (2012) and Kostick (2011) to be a potentially significant influence against e-books, and within the sample used for this thesis, this claim appears to hold. However, confidence and the idea of symbolic-capital risk were also influencing the sampled authors' format choices, despite not being identified anywhere in the literature examined by the author. Both of those concepts relate to another key observation, which is that the participating authors' previous interactions with traditional publishers appears to have a complicated and sustained effect on their subsequent self-publishing behaviours. Even after six of the eleven participating authors decided to publish their own work, they continue to see traditional publishers as performing an important role in the field of literature.

The findings of this study appear to fall in line with claims that the publishing industry, and the perceived role of e-books within it, are at a tipping point. The perspectives espoused by the interviewees suggest that many of the reasons offered for resisting e-books as a format for self-publishing may be temporary and may eventually disappear, either with time, with the shifting of norms, or more likely with both working together. Thus, while the importance of the economic benefits of e-books are overstated in the current literature, they are still significant aspects working in the format's favour. As people come to realize that they are an economically prudent format choice, the

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<sup>17</sup> Early adopters are described in Diffusion of Innovations theory (Rogers, 2003) as taking a measured but enthusiastic approach to new ideas and practices, and are seen as having influence with others that helps spread the innovation. They are identified as the second group to adopt, preceded only by the innovators group. Rogers describes the innovators group as being, to some degree at least, interested in change for its own sake. The adopters in this study, who still expressed a residual attachment to the old technology, and credited their decision to adopt e-books partly to external social influences, consequently do not fit in to this first category.

prestige gap they currently suffer from may be closed. Consequently, the direction of this process of normative change seems to be towards digital self-publishing.

## 6. Conclusion

It was stated in the literature review one of the limitations with the conclusions drawn by Long Tail is its assumption of a mass audience, leaving no room for individuals to make different value judgments en route to making other decisions. The most important contribution of this thesis is to outline some value judgments that can be, and are being, made by authors in the context of their format choices. This is not to say that Long Tail's prediction is wrong, i.e. that a boom in self-published e-books will not occur. However, if it does it will unquestionably be the result of more factors than just the economic and distributional benefits of e-books. The findings of this thesis also suggest there will still be other people pursuing different paths, as there are objections to e-book self-publishing that currently seem to have no solutions.

Long Tail theory's focus on economics is problematic largely because it ignores normative pressure. Long Tail theory posits that, in considering the decision to self-publish digitally, an author only looks at economic risks. However, this thesis found that a potentially larger concern is related to symbolic-capital risk, or the potential loss of one's "reputation for competence and ... image of respectability and honourability," to use Bourdieu's terms (1984, p. 291). This risk is perceived to come from an author's association with a format that lacks prestige. For those interviewed for this thesis, resistance to digital self-publishing is not the result of a lack of awareness of the practical benefits of e-books, but rather the prioritization of symbolic capital. Even in the opinions of the three e-book adopters who participated in this study, digital self-publishing represented a lower economic-capital risk, combined with an elevated symbolic-capital risk. Though quantifying symbolic capital is obviously a complicated proposition, the authors in this study can thus be seen as making their format choices based on a risk calculation that weighs the two types of capital differently.

Prestige is particularly important in the field of publishing, as discussed by Striphas (2011), and by all eleven participants of this study. Being able to simply call oneself an author, and the value of

seeing one's name on the cover of a book, were both mentioned as conferring prestige on a person, and were discussed in almost wondrous terms – for example, both Wark and Heartfield traced their drive to be an author back to their childhood dreams. The valuation of prestige can also be seen in the terminology used by the participants, such as the interest of some participants to disassociate their work from the idea of “vanity publishing,” and alternatively in the uses of “legimately published,” “fully published,” and “proper publishers” to refer to the output of traditional publishing houses as compared to self-published work.

Such terminological care can also be seen in Bueno's objection to the term “self-published author,” preferring to be called an “indie author,” again seemingly to view this as a more prestigious term. However, in conducting the eleven interviews for this thesis it became evident that the participants who self-publish their work are not yet truly independent of the traditional publishing industry. The participants expressed a continued appreciation for the gatekeeping role played by third-party publishers, citing it as a source of necessary quality control. Furthermore, eight of the interviewees, including both adopters and non-adopters, still look to the publishing industry as a source of validation.

The interviewees considered validation and confidence to be mandatory in forming the decision to self-publish as they were seen as evidence that the choice came with low symbolic-capital risk. A 'stamp of approval' from a respected external source, such as a member of the traditional publishing industry, means that the book is more likely to be received well among the audience, and getting a good reception from the reading public means accumulating much valued symbolic capital.

Sarrimo (2010) and Haugland (2006) suggested that sharing and self-expression were motivations for writing, but in the interviews it emerged that it was sharing specifically that appeared of interest. The presence of an audience is key, because without it there is no accumulation of symbolic capital. There is also some concern that there was no audience among e-book readers for certain genres,

namely historical fiction, which fed a reluctance to adopt.

Attachment to the physical form of the print book is the main factor from the attitude category that was the source of resistance to e-book adoption. Nine of the 11 interviewees expressed this to various degrees. Their attachment was from the perspective of a reader, rather than of an author. Given that the physical form of print books is an economic drawback in that they are more expensive to produce and difficult to distribute than e-books, the interviewees' interests as readers seem to be going against their interests as authors. However, three of the authors, including one non-adopter, said they would be willing to abandon their attachment to print books if they felt certain that their audiences wanted e-books. Wilde is an example of this shift in action, having abandoned print for her newest release.

Nine of the eleven participant authors reported viewing e-books as the future of publishing. A belief in this trend was interpreted by some, but not by all, as normative pressure to adopt. Opinions differed among the participants about the point at which the shift to digital publishing will occur. Such uncertainty supports decision-making based on softer factors such as emotional attachment and prestige. Seeing the shift to digital as a trend can also be a negative, if the trend represents a threat to a status quo that is highly valued – that is, as a disruptive innovation. From that standpoint, an author may wish to delay any change to that status quo. Viewing e-books as a disruptive innovation, and basing decisions on soft factors in the face of uncertainty regarding hard numbers, leaves room for authors to delay the point at which they perceive the shift to digital publishing as occurring. If they perceive the shift to e-books as residing in a hypothetical future, authors can feel justified in not adopting them in the present; such is the case for three of the five non-adopters in this study.

Another source of resistance identified in the interviews is a belief among some of the non-adopters that self-published e-books require promotional skills, especially social media skills, that they do not possess. This perception seemingly related to a normative pressure to promote e-books

“properly” – a perception among six of the authors in the sample that members of the audience and the writing community expect them to promote e-books in a certain way. From the perspective of adopters, new skills must be developed in order to promote their e-books effectively. These include social media, search-engine optimization, and learning the demands and strengths of the various online sales platforms. This suggests the presence of e-book promotion skills that need to be learned, or at least are beneficial to have. However, the concept of digital-promotion skills as a barrier to adoption can be seen as being somewhat illusory. Four of the non-adopters in the sample expressed confidence in their ability to learn these skills if they so desired, but two of those said simply that they had insufficient interest in e-books to warrant the effort.

As with the idea of attachment, many of the sources of resistance are not unchangeable. The 'soft factors' discussed above were all believed by the interviewees to be subject to revision, particularly once the practical benefits of e-books, and of self-publishing, become more widely understood and accepted. At that point, self-publishing in e-book format may come to be seen as a wise, prudent choice.

The perceived quality problems, which a majority of the interviewees said are at the heart of the prestige gap between print and e-books, and between traditional and self-publishing, can be solved through the development of new systems of quality control and of endorsement. Four of the interviewees looked to self-publishing services to fill roles played by publishers, specifically gatekeeping. This would seem to support claims that the sort of rebelliousness and independence advanced as a key affordance of digital self-publishing by Haugland (2006) and Dilevko and Dali (2006), is not particularly valued by the authors; at least not the eleven who participated in this thesis. A slightly less authority-based resolution to the quality issue is found in social-media sites which provide reader-generated reviews, and which may serve as information filters helping readers wade through the “slush” and find the good books. The idea that a prestige deficit can be redressed has a



precedent, in the eyes of many of the authors, in the case of the “vanity press” tag. That derogatory label, which was once applied to all self-published books, is seen as being no longer applicable thanks to an awareness in the public of the high-quality work that is produced that way.

## 6.1 Notes on the theory

The results of this study suggest that the participants prioritize factors from the Theory of Planned Behaviour's subjective-norms (SN) category over factors from the attitudes (A) and perceived-behavioural-control (PBC) categories. This is not to say that norms are inherently more powerful, but rather that the specific SN influences discussed seemed to frequently be more important, or at least more determinative, than the A or PBC influences. While potential SN influences were identified in the other reviewed literature, they are all but ignored by Long Tail theory. The fact that they also emerged in this study's findings shows why the Theory of Planned Behaviour, which highlights them in their own influence category, is a more suitable theory in this instance than the technology acceptance model, with which it has been compared (Mathieson, 1991).

The blending of perspectives, in terms of the attachment influence, was problematic in terms of keeping the TPB's categories discrete, particularly attitudes and subjective norms. For example, differentiating when expressions regarding prestige are attitudinal and when they are normative is difficult to assess, since they are made from the perspective of audience members, which, in turn, are often identified as the most important source of normative pressure. Furthermore, other members of the writing community as a whole are also a source of such pressure, and so their opinions as authors can also be seen as normative. When such blurring occurs, the tendency is to examine the concept as a normative influence, because attitudes were reported by participants in this study to be changeable, subject to normative pressure.

## 6.2 Delimitations and limitations

The sampling method – purposive snowball – is largely implicated in the lack of diversity, but it was a necessity of the design. This being a master's thesis, limited time and monetary resources imposed significant sampling limitations. Coupled with the relative paucity of research about the topic at hand, this means that any study of this topic is necessarily exploratory in nature. The topic was perceived to be best served at this stage by sacrificing generalizability for an effort to blaze trails for future research. That said, a larger and more diverse sample could have yielded potentially different, broader results. For example, the concept of the digital divide, discussed in Chapter 2, was not an issue in this study's results, but this could be because the participants did not come from any of the traditionally disadvantaged groups. The sampling limitation also includes the fact that only English-speaking authors were chosen.

Another limitation was the choice of authors from the popular fiction and non-fiction fields, ruling out other publishing areas such as academia, whose authors have different goals and requirements. Also, as was discussed in the literature review, this study only addresses one brief period in the adoption process – two stages in Rogers's five-stage model of the adoption process (2003). The earlier stage, when authors first became aware of digital self-publishing, could have been illuminating in relation to this study's topic, but was not addressed.

## 6.3 Avenues for future research

On looking at the results of a qualitative, exploratory study such as this one, the question is always raised about how representative the findings actually are. A quantitative study to examine whether the beliefs and opinions discovered in this study are widely held could be illuminating, and could help to predict the future of the publishing industry with greater accuracy.

Other qualitative studies are also possible. A study of adopters to further examine digital skills

they developed would be of interest to the fields of literature and technology adoption. A longitudinal examination of the authorial experience with the new innovation of e-books would be valuable as well. It would be interesting to see, for example, how a non-adopter's perceptions and attitudes change over time. Wilde offers a glimpse at the possibilities here, having been a producer of both print and e-books at the interview stage of this study, but having abandoned print entirely by the end. Also, the findings that are considered this study's most prominent contributions, such as the importance of confidence in the publishing decision, and the introduction of symbolic-capital risk into the decision-making process, could be examined with greater focus.

As discussed previously, the Theory of Planned Behaviour can be seen as a more detailed view of the second and third stages of Rogers's five-stage diffusion of innovations theory, and it stops at the subject's decision to adopt or reject. An examination of the other stages would be of interest as well. Having made the decision to adopt e-books, how does the author go about producing and distributing them (i.e. implementation, stage four of DOI), and what sorts of input are considered when the author evaluates the success of the adoption (i.e. confirmation, the fifth stage). These two stages were touched upon in the responses in this study, however they were not the focus, and were not examined in depth.

#### 6.4 Significance

This study provides empirical information about ways in which the prevailing view of the introduction of e-books, from an economic perspective at the macro level, fails to fully explain how they are being received at the micro level. More specifically, the discussion of symbolic-capital risk is significant to the field, and putting soft factors such as prestige, confidence, and the need for validation in to such structured terms offers the opportunity to discuss them in the same terms as harder economic factors that have received more scholarly attention thus far. Also, the identification of the factors influencing format choices is potentially useful in understanding the authorial perspective at this

particular moment in popular literature's shift to digital. Such understandings could also be useful to the private sector, or for others who are interested in either preserving the market share of print, and of traditional publishing, or in expanding the share for e-books and/or self-publishing. A fuller understanding of the concerns and interests of authors in Canada is of value to the Canadian publishing industry as well, as it struggles to incorporate e-books, and to understand their impact on the industry, and on the literature industry.

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## Appendix A: Call for participation

The following text was distributed by a number of writing groups in the Ottawa area to seek participants in this study:

My name is Adam Thomlison and I am conducting a Master of Arts research study at the University of Ottawa's Department of Communication. The purpose of the study is to understand writers' attitudes toward e-books as a format for self-publishing. I am looking for authors in the Ottawa area who would be willing to be interviewed about their views. I am specifically seeking:

- authors who have self-published print books, but not e-books; and
- aspiring authors who have written a book-length manuscript but have not yet been published.

Authors who meet either of these descriptions, and who are willing to be interviewed (it should only take about an hour, at a location that is convenient for you), can contact me at [athom150@uottawa.ca](mailto:athom150@uottawa.ca).

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Appendix B:

A word cloud showing the frequency of the themes found during the coding stage.



Appendix C:  
The frequency of themes found during the coding stage.

prestige	N = 44
ability	N = 42
future	N = 39
control	N = 34
quality	N = 33
promotion	N = 29
advantages of e	N = 28
attachment	N = 27
perceived audience	N = 26
physicality	N = 26
disadvantages of e	N = 25
community	N = 14
confidence	N = 12
rejection	N = 11
age	N = 11
validation	N = 9
affordability	N = 9
why not	N = 8
interest	N = 8
pressure to adopt	N = 8
gatekeeping	N = 5
advantages of traditional	N = 4
permanence	N = 4
accessibility	N = 4
price	N = 4
inevitability	N = 4
advantages of print	N = 4
curation	N = 3
definition of success	N = 3
niche	N = 3
disadvantages of traditional	N = 2
remediation	N = 2
disadvantages of print	N = 2
awareness	N = 2
normative change	N = 2
labour-intensiveness	N = 2
hybrid	N = 2
length	N = 1
innovation	N = 1

## Appendix D: The questionnaire used in the interviews.

NOTE: Questions are labelled according to their presumed correspondence with TPB's three belief types: attitude toward the behaviour (A), subjective norms (B), and perceived behavioural control (C). As noted in Chapter 3, on page 38, the answers did not always meet these expectations.

### Adopters:

- Why did you choose to self-publish in e-book/print format? What do you consider to be the advantages? What are the disadvantages? (A)
- Do you read e-books yourself? (A)
- How do e-books compare to print books, in your opinion? (A)(B)
- Do you consider e-books to have the same audience as print books? (B)
- Do you think it is considered less prestigious to publish in e-book than in print? (B)
- What role do you think e-books have in the future of publishing? (A)(C)
- What was the process like for publishing your e-book? (C)
- Do you consider yourself to be the kind of person who is good with technology? Was that a factor in choosing e-books? (C)

### Non-adopters:

- Print self-publishers:
  - Why did you choose to self-publish in print format? (A)
  - What is your opinion of self-publishing in e-book format? (A)
  - Have you considered self-publishing an e-book? (A)
    - If yes, what has stopped you so far? (A)
    - If no, why not? (A)
  - Do you read e-books yourself? (A)
  - How do e-books compare to print books, in your opinion? (A)(B)
  - Do you consider e-books to have the same audience as print books? (B)
  - Do you think it is considered less prestigious to publish in e-book than in print? (B)
  - What role do you think e-books have in the future of publishing? (A)(C)
  - Do you consider yourself to be the kind of person who is good with technology? Was that a factor in choosing e-books? (C)
- Unpublished authors:
  - What is your opinion of self-publishing in general? (A)
  - What is your opinion of self-publishing in e-book format? (A)
  - Have you considered self-publishing an e-book? (A)
    - If yes, what has stopped you so far? (A)
    - If no, why not? (A)
  - Do you read e-books yourself? (A)
  - How do e-books compare to print books, in your opinion? (A)(B)
  - Do you consider e-books to have the same audience as print books? (B)
  - Do you think it is less prestigious to publish in e-book than in print? (B)
  - What role do you think e-books have in the future of publishing? (A)(C)
  - Do you consider yourself to be the kind of person who is good with technology? Was that a factor in choosing e-books? (C)

Appendix E:  
Ethics approval notice.

**File Number:** 04-14-01

**Date (mm/dd/yyyy):** 05/05/2014



**Université d'Ottawa**      **University of Ottawa**  
Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche      Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

**Ethics Approval Notice**

**Social Science and Humanities REB**

**Principal Investigator / Supervisor / Co-investigator(s) / Student(s)**

<u>First Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>	<u>Role</u>
Pierre	Bélanger	Arts / Communication	Supervisor
Adam	Thomlison	Arts / Communication	Student Researcher

**File Number:** 04-14-01

**Type of Project:** Master's Thesis

**Title:** Digital self-publishing as planned behaviour: Authors' views on e-book adoption

<b>Approval Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</b>	<b>Expiry Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</b>	<b>Approval Type</b>
05/05/2014	05/04/2015	Ia

**(Ia: Approval, Ib: Approval for initial stage only)**

**Special Conditions / Comments:**  
N/A