

# Harry Potter and the Chamber of Commerce: J.K. Rowling's Pottermore.com as the extension of the Harry Potter brand in a digital context

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## Abstract

With the launch of the website Pottermore.com, author J.K Rowling has extended the Harry Potter brand into the digital realm. After seven books and eight films, the Potter saga continues with an online multimedia experience and ebook versions of the Harry Potter books. The site, which is free to join and use, opened for beta users in August 2011, and subsequently, following a number of postponements, was launched to the general public in March 2012. Pottermore serves three main functions: 1) A social network for fans and readers, 2) A platform for games, puzzles and additional content tied to the Harry Potter brand, and 3) An online store for ebooks and digital audiobooks. This paper seeks to provide the background for Pottermore, identify the publishing strategy behind the digital launch, and discuss its implications for the book industry and the publishing supply chain. Focus is on the third main function of the site, i.e. the Pottermore Shop, the online store providing ebook versions of the Harry Potter books for the first time and on the specific kind of digital publishing that Pottermore represents. The study forms part of the author's PhD project on digital strategies and internationalization in the publishing industry.

## Pottermore = More Potter

The Harry Potter book series is an outstanding publishing success story. The sales figures for the seven books on the wizard boy of Hogwarts have surpassed 450m copies<sup>1</sup>, making it the all-time bestselling book series<sup>2</sup>. But Harry Potter is more than a series of books; the brand also encompasses eight films, computer games, theme parks, miscellaneous merchandise and other related media content. The success has spiraled author Joanne Rowling from oblivion to stardom, making her a powerful figure in the publishing world. The Potter series is also a world-wide fan phenomenon and in several respects a cultural landmark. The book series ended with *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* in 2007, and in 2011 the final chapter of the film series was due to end. The evident question was: Will there be more Potter? The answer turned out to be Pottermore.

## The Pottermore launch

In the summer of 2011, rumors began spreading of a website by the name of Pottermore.com, and anticipations arose that new content around the Harry Potter universe would be revealed. When the site itself appeared in June, it showcased nothing more than a few little pieces of information and a link to a Youtube video featuring J.K

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<sup>1</sup> According to Neil Blair of Rowling's former agency The Christopher Little Agency, cf. <http://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/wireStory?id=13292040>.

<sup>2</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_best-selling\\_books#List\\_of\\_best-selling\\_book\\_series](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_best-selling_books#List_of_best-selling_book_series)

Rowling, author of the Harry Potter books.<sup>3</sup> In the video Rowling says she wants to “give something back” and indicates that Pottermore will be “an online reading experience unlike any other”. She continues to state that:

The digital generation will be able to enjoy a safe, unique online reading experience built around the Harry Potter books. Pottermore will be the place where fans of any age can share, participate in and rediscover the stories. It will also be the exclusive place to purchase digital audiobooks, and, for the first time, ebooks of the Harry Potter series. I will be joining in too, because I will be sharing additional information I’ve been hoarding for years about the world of Harry Potter.

On July 31<sup>st</sup> 2011 Pottermore.com was launched. However, initially, access to Pottermore was restricted to one million users around the world. Early users had a function of beta testers, providing feedback via a ‘Beta feedback’ button on the Pottermore.com pages. To qualify for early access you had to register and subsequently find a “magical quill” through a number of steps including a Potter related riddle. Access to Pottermore was then granted to the lucky few in the period from end of July to mid-September. As stated by Rowling in the announcement video, full access to the public was intended from October 2011. However, due to technical issues with the site, the beta period was extended until March 2012 when the Pottermore Shop opened with ebooks and audiobooks; and finally, the full site was launched in April.

Initial reports on sales and visitors to Pottermore indicated a good start. Ebook sales were worth over £3m in the first month following the opening of the Pottermore Shop on March 27<sup>th</sup>, and 22 million visits from 7 million users generated more than 1 billion page generations.<sup>4</sup> The sheer numbers are impressive, but then again, since Pottermore is a unique publishing venture, how do you compare?<sup>5</sup>

### **What is Pottermore?**

Basically, Pottermore.com is a web site. It is the official portal or platform for the distribution of Harry Potter related content and provides a community for Potter fans and readers all over the world. It is available in five languages: English (UK and US), German, French Spanish and Italian.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i5DOKOt7ZF4>

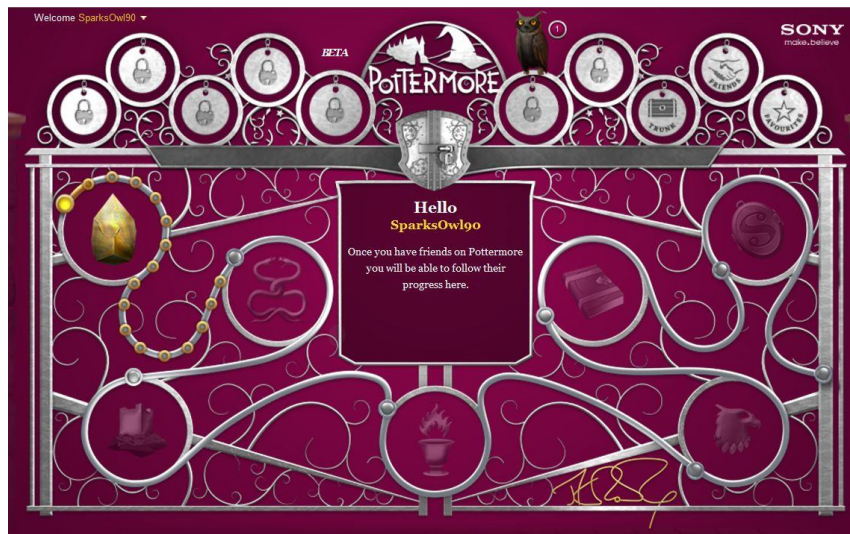
<sup>4</sup> <http://www.thebookseller.com/news/pottermore-e-book-store-sells-%C2%A33m-first-month.html>

<sup>5</sup> Comparisons with other bestselling ebook titles like Jonathan Franzen’s *Freedom*, Suzanne Collins’ *The Hunger Games* and E.L. James’ *Fifty Shades* trilogy are made harder because actual sales numbers are difficult to get hold of. Major retailers like Amazon (and Pottermore) prefer to release the numbers that look good, making comparisons subject to guesswork and rough estimates. Worldwide sales figures are even harder to come by than sales for each national market.

The Pottermore Terms & Conditions (Section 2.1) gives a good description of the various aspects of the site:

Users can enjoy features based around the Harry Potter books, play Games (...) and take part in the Pottermore community by posting messages and uploading pictures inspired by the Harry Potter series. Users can share their activities on Pottermore.com with other registered users of Pottermore.com. Through the platform, it is intended that users of 18 years of age and above can also visit and register with the Pottermore Shop to purchase a variety of eBooks, digital audio books and other items, for themselves or as gifts for others.<sup>6</sup>

Pottermore is a free service. Visitors need to be registered, and can then enjoy background material and participate in wizard-like activities such as mixing potions, practicing spells and duel with other users. The user moves through the site in a structured manner following chapters in the book series (see fig. 1).



*Fig 1. Screenshot from Pottermore.com showing the path users must follow*

In the Pottermore Shop one can find ebooks and digital audiobooks of the entire Harry Potter series in English (UK and US), French, Spanish, Italian, German and Japanese. Ebooks are compatible with all major e-reading platforms, including the dominant Kindle reading device from Amazon.

In essence, Pottermore.com performs three main functions:

1. Pottermore is intended to function as a social network and communication platform for fans and readers.
2. Pottermore offers interactive and multimedia experiences involving games, challenges and substantial amounts of additional content provided by the author.
3. Pottermore, through the Pottermore Shop, is an online retailing operation for digital media content and the only place to buy Harry Potter ebooks and digital audio books.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.pottermore.com/en/terms#about-pottermore>

The third main function, the Pottermore Shop as a publishing, retail and distribution strategy, is foregrounded in this paper.

### **Who is behind Pottermore?**

The site clearly states that J.K. Rowling herself is behind it, declaring in the banner “Pottermore – by J.K. Rowling”. A slim banner at the top of the site identifies Japanese games and consumer electronics giant Sony as the main collaborator for the project. Pottermore is owned by Pottermore Limited, founded by Rowling with Charlie Redmayne, former executive vice-president and chief digital officer at HarperCollins, as CEO, and listing among others, Rowling’s agent Neil Blair among the management team. The communications agency adam&eve was responsible for the launch strategy<sup>7</sup>, which also involved several Harry Potter fan sites (The Leaky Cauldron, MuggleNet and Harry Potter Automatic News Aggregator (HPANA)). Apparently, Rowling and her team also consulted with Melissa Anelli of the Leaky Cauldron in the development of Pottermore.<sup>8</sup>

The site is built by digital creative agency TH\_NK. Rowling’s UK and US publishers Bloomsbury and Scholastic are cited as partners, but remain in the background. Warner Bros, who owns the film rights and manages the Harry Potter rights issues, are even more pushed aside, as are games producers Electronic Arts, who are behind the Harry Potter video games. The ebook vendor OverDrive provides the digital infrastructure for the Pottermore Shop, an area in which they are experienced given their role as the primary ebook lending collaborator for US & UK libraries.

Perhaps the most surprising thing revealed in relation to the Pottermore launch is that J.K. Rowling herself retained the digital rights for Harry Potter. This is an unusual practice in publishing and helped pave the way – by sheer fortune or shrewd business sense – for self-publishing of the Potter series. The ebooks are published by Pottermore Limited.

As a digital venture by a bestselling author, the Pottermore site is exceptional. By essentially sidestepping the middlemen, notably her publishers Bloomsbury and Scholastic, and the computer game and film series’ rights holders (EA and Warner Bros.), while simultaneously promising ebook access on all platforms, Rowling seems to demonstrate a rare form of control of the publishing supply chain. As such, Pottermore is a genuine innovation and has the potential to shake up the relationship between publishers, retailers, digital resellers and technology providers, authors, agents, readers and fans.

### **Pottermore as a publishing strategy**

As the amount of books being published is increasing, the struggle for attention and recognition is also increasing (Squires 2009: 26, Thompson 2010: 11). Furthermore, books are competing for attention with other media formats like films, computer games,

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<sup>7</sup> [http://press.pottermore.com/launch/pottermore\\_teambigraphiesandcompanyprofiles\\_230611.pdf](http://press.pottermore.com/launch/pottermore_teambigraphiesandcompanyprofiles_230611.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <http://twitter.com/#!/melissaanelli/status/83973801603383297>

TV shows and a plethora of internet based formats. How do you stand out in this media saturated environment?

### Branding and risk

From a marketing point of view, branding and brand management offers a solution. A key objective in brand management is to make your products or services stand out, and make sure that consumers maintain the right impression of the brand. In publishing, brands can take several forms: Pitsaki (2008) distinguishes between Corporate brands (Publishing houses), Product brands (The Series), The Person as brand (Authors) and The Work as brand (The Content). In the case at hand, both “Harry Potter” (The Series) and “J.K. Rowling” (The Author) are stronger brands than “Bloomsbury” or “Scholastic” (The Publishing houses), in the sense that they are more easily recognized and differentiated from other competing brands.<sup>9</sup> The strength of the Harry Potter brand is that it combines marketing effects from the different forms (the author brand, the series brand, the work as brand).

Another value in brand management is that it can aid in avoiding extensive *publishing risk*. The trade book publishing industry is very much exposed to financial risk, in the sense that their business relies upon being able to tell what will be a bestseller (and how to create such a bestseller). In fact, one of the key functions of the publisher is to take on the (financial) risk of publishing a book, thus unburdening the author (Thompson 2010:19).

Thompson (2010) argues that publishers to a large extent are geared towards creating a few extreme bestsellers (rather than a large list of tolerably well-selling titles), what he calls “Big books” (Thompson 2010, see also Coser et.al 1982). The logics behind this system include hype, buzz and a “web of collective belief”: “Big books do not exist in and by themselves, they have to be *created*” (Thompson 2010:194, author’s italics). The track record and platform of a well-known author is a very valuable asset in this risk prone business. Brand-name authors and backlist “provide the counterweight (...) to offset the inherent riskiness of frontlist publishing” (Thompson 2010:212). Being able to rely on the strength of a configuration of brands, as in Rowling’s Harry Potter series, is most valuable to publishers, as it eliminates some of the risks involved in taking content to market.

### Protecting and controlling the brand

Pottermore can be seen as a way of enforcing control and protecting the Harry Potter brand. This exercise of control is not new to publishing in general or indeed to the print history of the Harry Potter book series. Rowling and her lawyers have diligently

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<sup>9</sup> It is probably safe to say that this is characteristic of the world of book publishing in general: Very few publishing houses have a brand name that can compete with any of their most famous authors or with the titles of bestsellers in terms of recognizability. That is not to say that publishing houses do not have brands to manage and leverage. In fact, in some respects, publisher brands have a stronger impact than author names and book series’ titles, especially if you take the long term view.

protected the brand through its publication history since 1997. This includes protection from premature Potter releases in bookstores; from unauthorized fan fiction; from parodies and pirate versions; and from commercialization of the brand by anyone but Rowling and her official partners (cf. Striphas 2009 and Jenkins 2006 for more on the management of the Potter brand and the so-called *Potter wars*).

While being truly exceptional as a digital publishing platform, Pottermore must be recognized as a logical continuation of the Potter brand management in the material book world. Following the argument of Ted Striphas in *The Late Age of Print* (2009), I consider Rowling's venture to be in line with the historical inclination to enforce control over distribution, production, contribution and commercialization of the Potter brand: "[B]ehind every celebratory Potter release there lies a logistical operation whose pace, intricacy, and tight controls were, until recently, quite alien to the book industry" (Striphas 2009:149). The Potter series has been managed quite expertly in terms of timing releases and feeding the eager fans just the right amount of material at the right time (see for instance Loidl in this volume).

The beta user strategy in one sense implies a new approach for Harry Potter launches, in that new content is not released synchronously to all users, as was the case with the books (from *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*) and the films. Releasing the service to beta users for testing and feedback also indicates that Rowling was willing to let go of complete control over the universe. However, by creating a division between early users and the common public, it contributes to the "manufactured conditions of scarcity" (Striphas 2009:145) that mark the book's distribution. Beta users enjoy the benefit of exclusivity, while the general public must linger in anticipation of what Pottermore will contain. Of course, beta testing also allows fans to contribute with valuable feedback to the site (and as such, to the object of their fandom), and "help shape the experience", as Rowling stated.

According to Striphas, the enforcement of control takes a different turn in a digital context:

If creating a reliable and efficient distribution apparatus counted among the book industry's major problems in the first half of the twentieth century, then fine-tuning and securing that apparatus comprise two of the industry's most pressing concerns today (Striphas 2009:149).

Pottermore can be seen as the digital response to these concerns. Issues like piracy and file sharing are obvious worries in the publishing industry at this point. Timing whether new titles are to be released simultaneously or consecutively is an example of the kind of decisions that have become more challenging with digital piracy. But there are also other challenges, related to the new digital channels for distribution and retail.

### Digital retail

Publishers are concerned about the power of digital distributors/retailers such as Amazon, Apple and Barnes & Noble. These companies have gained an increasingly strong position

in the world of books through their respective digital ecosystems. Amazon's Kindle is the dominating e-reading device and forms part of a locked-in system in which Amazon retains control over almost the entire value chain of publishing. Similarly, Apple's mobile multimedia platforms iPhone and iPad are more or less tied to the iTunes store (for music, video and other audio-visual media) and App Store (for software applications such as book apps tailored for the devices). Owners of Barnes & Nobles' popular Nook device are equally reliant on content from the B&N platform.

The primary obstacle is Digital Rights Management (DRM) on the ebooks which makes it near impossible for consumers to transfer content across the devices, even if it has been legally purchased. When Rowling actually manages to offer ebooks from the Pottermore Shop across all major devices, she has in a sense broken the proprietary system. A visitor to Amazon.com will find the Harry Potter ebooks on display, but will have to leave the site to purchase these books, a practice that is unprecedented and does not comply with the practices of the digital front-runners. As one observer put it: "[I]f any author could get Amazon to change its policy, it's J. K. Rowling".<sup>10</sup>

Rowling's partnership with Sony could also aid in repositioning the Japanese company as a player on the international ebook publishing scene. Sony's line of e-reading devices, the Sony Reader line, is among the longest-running in the young ebook publishing business. The first version was launched in 2006, but Sony has been lagging behind Amazon, Barnes & Noble and Kobo in the important English language markets. A new version the Sony Reader is supposed to come preloaded with the first book Harry Potter book, *The Sorcerer's Stone*. Along with the ebook versions in general, the Sony/Potter package has also been delayed.

### **Pottermore's impact on book industry power relations**

The world of books is marked by an enormous stream of new titles; and characterized by creativity and innovations of the artistic kind. It is usually not the place for technological innovations, however. Until recently, book industry executives have been cautious to invest in technological inventions. But things have changed over the last years, especially following the launch of Amazon's Kindle e-reader and Apple's iPhone and iPad devices. The influx of technology companies into the book industry have forced and inspired traditional publishing actors to create new products, services and platforms. Digital formats provide ample opportunities for telling stories across different media, so-called transmedia storytelling (Jenkins 2006, cf. also Leogrande in this volume). Publishing companies, like other content providers grappling with digital challenges, also aim at synergies and economies of scale by creating multiple revenue streams based on the same content. Traditional media companies hope that this so-called COPE-strategy (Create Once, Publish Everywhere) can help them maintain a sustainable cross-platform business model (Bechmann 2012). Pottermore.com represents one such approach to digital publishing.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://paidcontent.org/article/419-three-ways-pottermore-com-could-change-book-publishing/>

Evidently, it is early to predicate the exact implications of the Pottermore extension of the Harry Potter brand. We need to divide the issue into smaller parts, asking about impact on different levels and in different contexts. We shall disregard here issues of artistic impact and are forced to withhold evaluations of strictly financial impact, mostly because it is too soon. Instead we shall focus on implications on publishing business power relations, an aspect that can become quite interesting to see unfold. It involves a possible shake-up of the relationship between publishers, retailers, digital resellers and technology providers, authors, agents and readers.

### Publishers and retailers

The Pottermore venture seems to sidestep both traditional publishers and retailers, and as such has managed to frustrate at least the latter party.<sup>11</sup> Although publishers Bloomsbury (UK) and Scholastic (US) are involved and will receive a cut of sales, the dominant partner is Sony. Even the digitally empowered Amazon and Apple are pushed aside by the magic wand. We have already touched upon how Rowling and especially Amazon are testing their strengths over Pottermore and are reminded that Rowling was second only to Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos in newspaper the Guardian's 2011 ranking of the most powerful figures in the world of books.<sup>12</sup> Given that Pottermore ebooks are actually available for all major reading devices, that means Rowling has found a way to circumvent the format "war" that marks digital publishing today, where the proposed industry standard Epub file format is pitted against Amazon's proprietary AZW format, and where DRM obstruct users from transferring files across reading platforms.<sup>13</sup>

As mentioned, with the Pottermore Shop, Rowling has managed to direct customers from Amazon.com (and other ebook vendors) to her own site. In doing, so, argues Matteo Berlucchi of book trade web site Futurebook.net,<sup>14</sup> "Pottermore transformed Amazon from a fierce ebook retailer into a tame ebook shop window"<sup>15</sup>. Fig. 3 illustrates how ebook buyers are redirected to the Pottermore.com site from Amazon.

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<sup>11</sup> See for instance: <http://www.thebookseller.com/news/physical-bookshops-frustrated-pottermore.html>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/datablog/2011/sep/23/books-power-100-list>

<sup>13</sup> Epub is recommended as the industry standard file format by International Digital Publishing Forum (IDPF), a trade and standards association for the digital publishing industry. AZW is a proprietary format for ebooks used exclusively on Amazon's Kindle devices.

<sup>14</sup> Berlucchi is CEO of social ebook retailer Anobii.

<sup>15</sup> <http://futurebook.net/content/has-pottermore-cast-riddikulus-spell-amazon>





*Fig. 3: Screenshot of the page which appears when customers are redirected from Amazon.com to Pottermore.com*

Control of the purchasing stage of the user journey means having access to end user details. This is a crucial element in digital retailing, because, as Berlucchi points out: “Who sells the ebook owns the relationship with the customer.”<sup>16</sup> Rowling’s move thus “shifts the power from retailer to publisher”, with considerable benefits for the latter:

- they gain direct access to the user/reader for marketing purposes
- they have total and final control on the price of their ebooks
- this approach does not affect the retailers as they could still earn healthy ‘introduction fees’ and also retain data on the user
- the publisher controls how much they pay the retailer who has procured the customer
- they build a customer base
- they gather invaluable user data for statistics and future planning<sup>17</sup>

We should add that not only does Amazon lose the purchasing point of the user journey, but they also lose the advantage of tying customers to their own reading device, as Harry Potter ebook buyers can choose to access their books on several devices. Fig. 4 shows the availability of Harry Potter ebooks for various platforms and formats.

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<sup>16</sup> ibid

<sup>17</sup> ibid

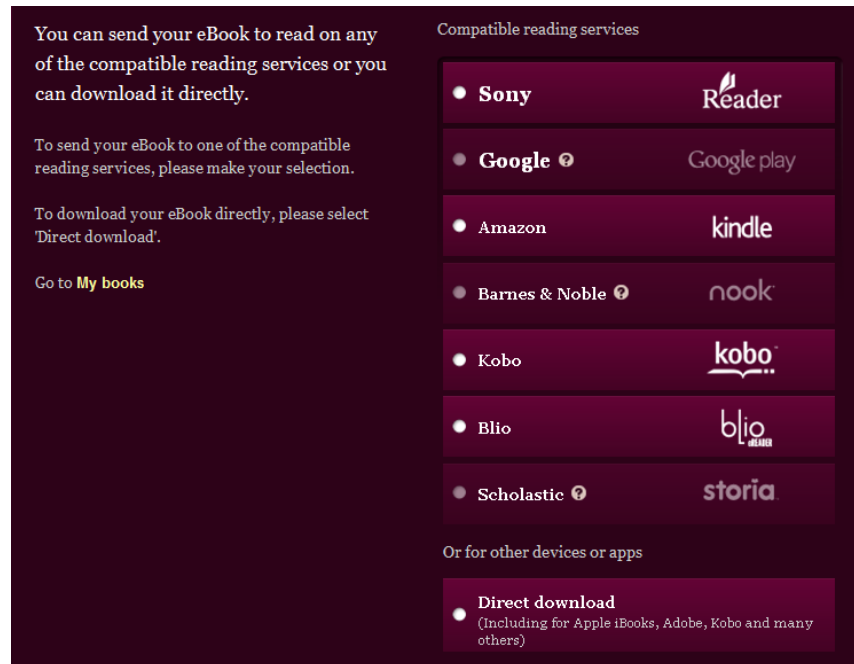


Figure 4: Screenshot of Pottermore Shop indicating the availability of ebooks for all major e-reading platforms

## Film and games

Interestingly, the rights holder for the Harry Potter films and games, Warner Bros. and Electronic Arts, hold no stake in Pottermore. Both companies have huge amounts of experience with digital and audiovisual content, but they were sidelined for the Pottermore release. Reportedly, the UK visual design company Atomhawk created the digital artwork for Pottermore.com.

## Agents

Furthermore, Rowling actually changed publishing agency in front of the digital launch. Rowling parted with longtime agent Christopher Little prior to the Pottermore launch and is now represented by Neil Blair, a former associate of the Little agency. Christopher Little had been Rowling's agent since 1996 and helped build the Harry Potter success story. It was also with his agency that the domain Pottermore.com was registered in June 2009. In any case, Blair's role in the development of Pottermore points to the fact that agents can perform vital tasks in the digital book ecosystem.

## Fans and readers<sup>18</sup>

As for the fans and readers, they seem to be getting both more content on their hands and a platform from which to discuss Harry Potter, but perhaps at the expense of getting caught in a commercial web which is controlled by the rights holders, including the

<sup>18</sup> Of course, the Harry Potter series started out as a children's book series, but as it has gradually transcended that segment and become a cross-over success for readers of all ages, I will not address the issue of marketing and creating services specifically for children.

highly esteemed author herself. Potter fans have proven themselves to be a resourceful and creative team and have previously been in legal disputes with Rowling and her lawyers (Striphas 2009, Jenkins 2006). It remains to be seen how they will cope with the kind of assimilated social networking that Pottermore can offer. Harry Potter as a fan phenomenon is of a scale that can barely be controlled. This is indicated by the extreme amount of fan fiction devoted to the Potter universe, much of which is straying far away from the mostly family-friendly official version. In fact, fans of Harry Potter have already launched a social network called MyHogwarts.com, a site which offers many of the same type of features that Pottermore offers, but which is run by fans alone (see also Jones in this volume).

## Authors

Finally, we have the authors. The dominant stakeholder in Pottermore is the author herself, thus indicating that writers can take a prominent role in the digital supply chain. Rowling's initiative can be considered the most extravagant in a line of self-publishing ventures recently. With the ebook breakthrough in the US and UK publishing your work directly to the reader has become an increasingly viable option for authors. Amazon especially has paved the way for self-publishing a large scale with its Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP). Authors like Amanda Hocking, J.A. Konrath and John Locke have reached astonishing sales as KDP self-publishers. But J.K. Rowling is in a class of her own. Not only is Rowling a genuine star author, Pottermore also has the backing of Sony and is built upon a global brand and a very large and loyal fan following. Pottermore is self-publishing on steroids. And, needless to say, those steroids are not equally distributed among authors.

## Disintermediation? Reintermediation!

Wired magazine has likened the Pottermore strategy to rock band Radiohead's self-release of the album *In Rainbows*, emphasizing what has been termed the disintermediation of middleman publishers.<sup>19</sup> This begs two comments:

First, when considering the impact on publishing supply- and value chains and so-called *disintermediation* we should be aware that digitalization rarely means creating fewer links between artist and the public. Rather, the intermediaries have new names. They are now agents, digital resellers, aggregators, or multimedia developers. In the case of Pottermore, we find digital intermediaries such as Sony, TH\_NK, OverDrive and the Blair agency. The term that has been launched to describe this phenomenon is "reintermediation" (Martin & Tian 2010:135). Fig. 5 illustrates the traditional supply chain for publishing, from author to reader via well-known intermediaries like publishers, printers and book stores. Figure 6 demonstrate how the digital supply chain opens for direct publishing models (from author via web aggregators, portals or online book shops to readers). But the figure also shows how the digital supply chain introduces a number of new channels and intermediaries between author and reader.

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.wired.co.uk/news/archive/2011-06/23/pottermore-radiohead-publishing>

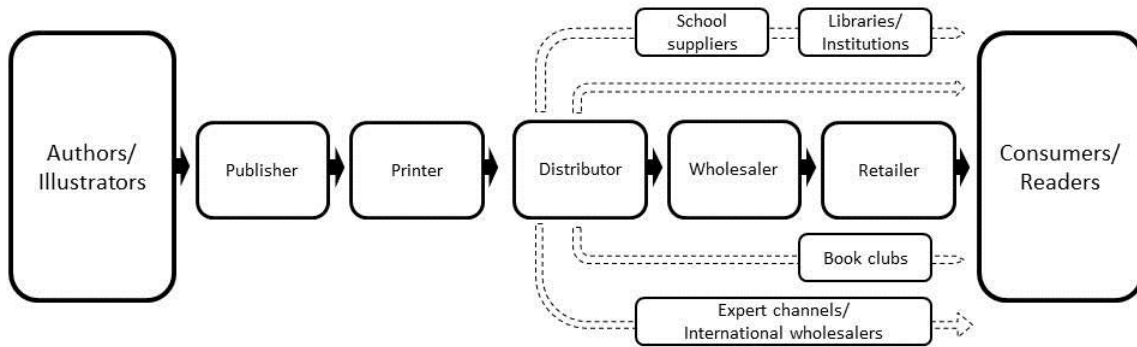


Fig. 5: A traditional supply chain for book publishing, from Martin & Tian (2010:134)

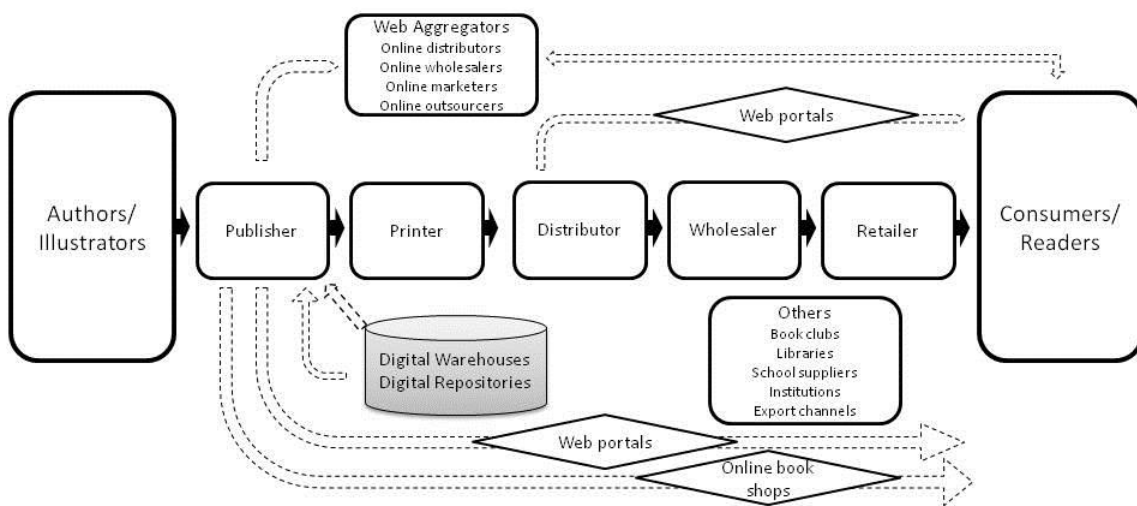


Fig. 6: A digital publishing supply chain, from Martin & Tian (2010:135)

Secondly, as Wired’s analogy with one the biggest rock bands in the world indicates, this is not a strategy for everyone. Rowling herself is quite aware, as she stated in a press conference:

I am lucky to have the resources to do it myself and I think this is a fantastic and unique experience that I could afford to take my time over to make this come alive. There was really no way to do it for the fans or me than just do it myself. Not every author could do this, but it's right for Harry Potter.<sup>20</sup>

This aspect also leaves it somewhat difficult to make long term predictions on the book industry based on Pottermore. I hold that Pottermore provides more a powerful illustration than an example to be copied. As Striphas (2009) argues on the Potter phenomenon in general:

<sup>20</sup> Press release quoted in <http://www.wired.co.uk/news/archive/2011-06/23/pottermore-radiohead-publishing>

Harry Potter is (...) an exceptional case when it comes to the book industry's everyday operations. The series is a best seller's best seller, with unusually broad appeal, but its success – or, more precisely, the conditions surrounding its success – aren't yet applicable across the book industry as a whole (Striphas 2009:173).

What will prove interesting to see, is whether Rowling's initiative might be followed by similar attempts by other star authors. There are extremely few authors of her commercial caliber out there, but a scenario with other big name authors (e.g. James Patterson, Stephenie Meyer, Paulo Coelho) doing self-publishing on a grand scale is not unthinkable. That might have serious repercussions in an industry increasingly preoccupied with and centered on bestsellers and *big books*.

## Conclusion

Pottermore provides an example that the power of the author and of popular fiction brands like Harry Potter can be transferred into the digital realm. Ultimately, the impact of Pottermore depends on the success of the platform in the long run and the successful delivery of services and products on all three main functions of the site. Many questions still remain unanswered at this point: Will casual readers find their way to Pottermore.com? Will fans favor the structured environment of the official fan site (the Chamber of Commerce) over established sites like Mugglenet.com or the fan initiated MyHogwarts.com? Will ebooks customers like having to deal with several digital shop windows? Can Rowling beat Amazon in a full scale power struggle? How will it affect the Harry Potter brand if Pottermore turns out to be unsuccessful in the long run? By launching Pottermore J.K. Rowling extended the Harry Potter brand into territories that are hard to control.

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