

What's the Value of "Open," In the Universe of Free?

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Nothing to sell

- But plenty to tell.
- Based on 13 years of NAP online presence
- 20 years of online experience
- Facts, conclusions, musings, and suppositions
- Will try to stay jargon-free

Books, not journals, not reference

- “Long form material” functions differently online, than articles and items
- Strategy drivers in general: Time-sensitivity, context, competition, audience expectations
- Perspective vs. fact
- Immersive reading vs. just passing through

National Academies Press (NAP)

- 180+ books/year, from National Academy of Sciences, Institute of Medicine, National Research Council, National Academy of Engineering: mostly perspective with fact
- <100 sales, to >100,000 sales; we don't get to choose titles, just what titles to promote
- NAP's "Dual mission": financial sustainability and maximal dissemination

Katrina and NOLA

- *This American Life*, a month after Katrina
- First-person stories from NOLA illuminated, informed and amazed me.
- At that time, *TAL* charged for Web audio. So, **I couldn't promote it** for them.
- They lost the opportunity for broader audiences, new audiences, new supporters.
- **Not open enough**, at that time.

NAP:

Science, Evolution, and Creationism

- Free full-book PDF, on site **and** sent out to 1000s
- Free browsable Openbook on site
- Free superdistribution (“send this on”)
- Free print copies to 1000s
- Widely linked-to by bloggers worldwide
- Still selling well, but possibly “too open” to maximize profit

Online habits (2.0)

- 1 Billion+ Web users
- Participation, engagement, discussion
- Giant conversation of passing comments, quoted content, and links to value
- Giant systems trying to make sense of this abundance
- “what’s the best out there/in here?”: Google, Digg, Del.icio.us, blogs

New competition/discovery models in the world of "free"

- Google: links-to as **votes** for significance
- Digg or Flickr: tags as **votes**
- Del.icio.us: collective bookmarks as **votes**
- Blogs (DailyKos, Slashdot, etc.): comments, history, and “recommended” as **votes**
- Site contexts (Google Site Rank)
- Alexa: traffic as status marker

Preconditions for online promotion

- some degree of openness
- something available, so people **can respond**
- something for people to **link to, quote from**
- the willing participation of readers
- **quid pro quo** with readers, bloggers, commenters

www.nap.edu – our experience

- 3800+ books online, page by page, **free**
- Many free helpful tools – skim, find, related titles
- **Lots** of “accrued algorithmic interest” since 1994
- 1.5 million visitors per month, ~ 8-10pp/visitor
- 1/3 of our income via online sales (of which $\frac{3}{4}$ is still print, $\frac{1}{4}$ digital versions)
- Google site rank of 9 out of 10, pretty consistently
- High page rank for content in search engines
- **Algorithmic authority that matches our scholarly authority**

Formats for Open that matter

- PDFs: composed (best form), or page scans
- HTML (Web chapters, pages)
- Page images (Google Book Search, archival Openbooks) with behind-the-scenes OCR

What are you trying to accomplish?

- Promotion/Marketing?
- Dissemination?
- Increase sales?
- Increase visibility?
- Increase lifetime in market?

Promotion: Being found, and mattering

- Scarcity vs. abundance
- Rational response to abundance: openness
- Word vs. Phrase vs. Multiple search
- Likely near futures
- Accumulated interest
- “Significance” in the engines: votes by links, by quotes, by valued reference, etc.

Goal: Increase sales

- Audience size, vs. cannibalization fears
- NAP: **0.2% of visitors purchase** – but we get **1.5 million visitors/month, so still ~100 sales per day online**
- Provide “best non-optimal version” you can (HTML, not PDF; PDF image, not PDF from composition)

Why do people buy a book?

- To **own** it
- To **immerse** in it
- To **show off** their interests to others
- Because they're **readers**, not skimmers
- Few of above are replaced by Web reading:
ergo, cannibalization fears not realistic

Reading process online: many styles

- Streaming?
- Download?
- Web-centric? Print-centric?
- NAP: “staccato stream” of single pages for browsing; must pay for (most) download or print experiences.
- NAP remains print-centric, but use open Web **for what that form is best for.**

Content type matters a great deal

- Reference (dying in print, ad supported online)
- Textbooks (in crisis in print, finding digital life)
- Newspapers (in crisis in print, ad supported online)
- Long form fiction (Web is a poor competitor to immersive experience; ebooks tiny; may be years)
- Long form nonfiction (Web may be a competitor, depending on audience; ebooks tiny; may be years)
- Magazines (Web is poor competitor/venue)
- Periodicals/articles (Web is good competitor/venue)

Long-form Books: what to sell

- Your highest, best forms, to be "owned" by customer (print, PDF, ebook version)
- Enhanced variants of original (audio book, multimedia-enhanced, high-quality print)
- Big packages of content (front/backlist in PDF or Ebook) to libraries and intermediaries (NetLibrary, Ebrary, etc.)

Long-form Books: What to give

- **Best non-optimal version**
- **Quid pro quo** of some kind, for **attention** and **participatory promotion**: Free HTML, page images/OCR, first chapters
- Something to **quote from, link to, and browse**

What to do with open/free

- Treat every item as an **advertisement for itself**
- Presume sharing – include **URLs and promo** in every PDF
- **Upsell related titles, content, services**
- Acquire **email addresses** from site readers whenever you can – make **a friend** of your customer
- Make sales **frictionless** – one click or two
- Treat **every minute on your site** as a sales opportunity
- Keep it free, for the **huge** majority of browsers

NAP's lessons learned

- Get **free/open early** in HTML, or even ASCII
- Have **definitive URLs** for chaps and pages if possible
- **Skip PDFs**, except as a sales form, or as a dissemination tool – too close to “the optimal thing”
- **Encourage** engagement, participation, commentary, and give them something back – free browsing – **in return for their attention**
- **Actively compete** for algorithmic and human attention in the content abundance economy