



E-books and Sex: An Editorial

By Dahlynn McKowen

It was summer of the year 2000. I was at a book launch event at a Borders in Northern California. The book to be celebrated was *Chicken Soup for the Writer's Soul*, co-authored by my dear friend, author and writing mentor Bud Gardner (BTW, Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen share the byline with Bud on this book).

Before the event, an informal lunch was held. Those at our table included myself, Bud, Jack Canfield, Dan Millman (author of *Way of the Peaceful Warrior* and many other amazing books) and Dan Poynter, prolific author and founder of www.ParaPublishing.com.

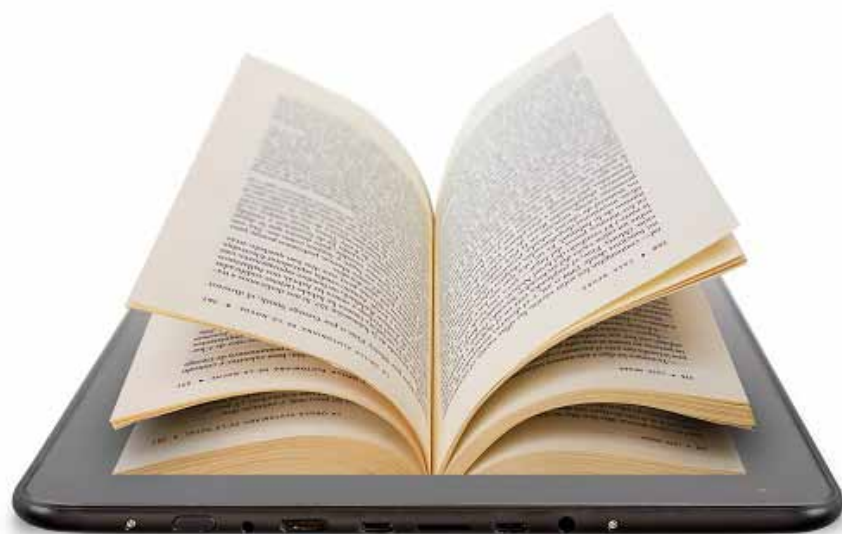
While we ate and visited, Poynter was playing with an electronic gadget. When I asked him what he was doing, he showed me—and the group—the device. “This is the future of books,” he announced. I seem to recall that Poynter said the device was an “e-reader.”

We passed the device between us, and reactions were mixed. Some said it would never come to be since human nature was to hold a physical book. But the more forward-thinking souls amongst us could see the book-selling potential in such a device.

Fifteen years later, the e-reader/e-book has a major foothold in the publishing industry, especially when it comes to erotica and romance book genres. In the July 2013 online article “Sex Sells: Online Retailers Rake in Profits with Dirty e-books” by Jacqueline Andriakos (*Entertainment Weekly*, <http://bit.ly/1Lz30tW>),



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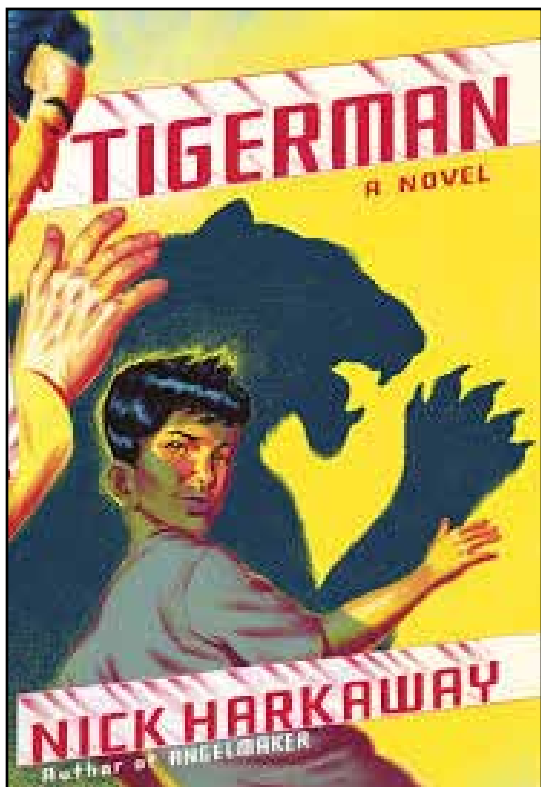
Andriakos reported that in 2012, erotica and romance held the top spot with e-book sales of \$1.4 billion. “Book-selling powerhouses such as Amazon and Barnes & Noble are raking in major profits from the sleazier online titles and genres that readers can absorb behind the privacy of tablet screens,” she writes in her article. When Poynter made that statement in 2000 about “the future of books” and e-readers, I wonder if he thought erotica and romance would be the highest use of the device.

Today (February 21st), I searched books and bestsellers under the category “Romance” on www.Amazon.com. The category covers both print and Kindle books. Here is what I found:

- #1 *Fifty Shades Darker* **Kindle**
- #2 *Fifty Shades of Grey* **Kindle**
- #3-8 Six erotica/romance titles, including *Fifty Shades Trilogy* bundle, all **Kindle**
- #9 *Fifty Shades of Grey Trilogy*, **Paperback**
- #10-11 Two erotica/romance titles, **Kindle**
- #12 *Fifty Shades of Grey*, **Audio**



From there, I selected “Erotica,” a subcategory under “Romance.” Again, this was for both print and Kindle books. [The Top 20 bestsellers were all Kindle books](#), with the exception of #3 (*Fifty Shades of Grey*, Audio) and #4 (*Fifty Shades Darker*, Audio).



Award-winning author Nick Harkaway (*Tiger Man: A Novel*, Knopf 2014) talks about e-books in his March 2014 article, “Paper vs Digital Reading is an Exhausted Debate” for www.TheGuardian.com (<http://bit.ly/1ACYRjN>). I fell in love with this paragraph:

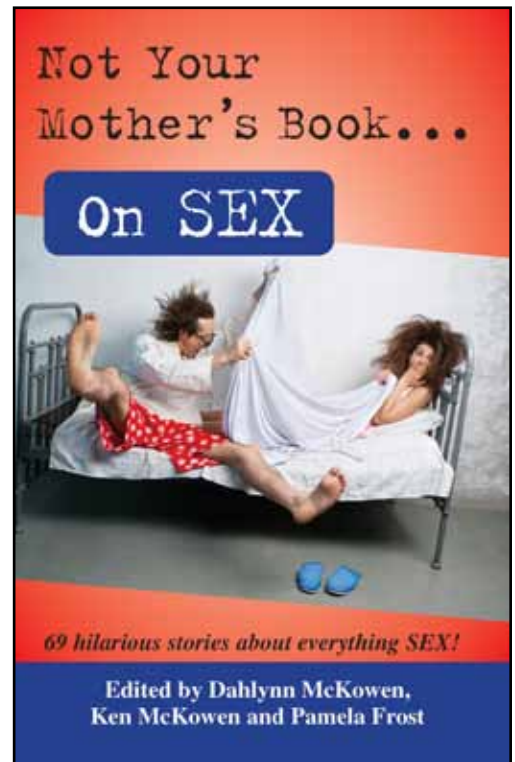
“Until a digital book is a magical object which physically transforms from 50 Shades into the new James Smythe novel according to your whim; until you can walk through a digital library and open books at random; until the technology becomes as satisfying to the physical senses as the text is to the cognitive self, there's still a need for shiny, gorgeous, satisfying books. And when those things happen, if they do, we will have lost nothing in the transition.”

Well said, Mr. Harkaway.

I am not surprised that the *Fifty Shades* phenomenon continues to dominate the publishing industry—surpassing *Harry Potter* book sales in the U.K.—and astonishing the movie industry with record-shattering box-office sales. While many non-erotica books are available to readers—most of which are more interesting and much better written—sex sells. Plain and simple.

Advertising using sex as the hook or bait in the U.S. is tame compared with advertising overseas. In Europe, sex is used to sell just about everything, and the practice is much more brazen, including frontal nudity. While Europeans' lax attitude about the topic may shock Americans, it is every day life there. Here's a link to several ads popular in Europe, from toilet paper to vacuum cleaners: <http://bit.ly/1DLejy6>

So when in Rome... Publishing Syndicate is following suit. On Valentine's Day, we released our newest book: *Not Your Mother's Book...On SEX*. The book is mildly erotic and even features some frontal nudity, but in words, no photos. Featuring 69 carnal stories penned by marvelous writers, the most important aspect of the book is that it is "sensually funny." Topics range from sex toys to cross dressing to timing mishaps to sex in the digital age. And there is even a story about spanking, but unlike *Fifty Shades*, this story is healthy and playful. Of course, the book was released as both a print and e-book and can be ordered from your favorite book retailer, including Amazon (<http://amzn.to/1KH64BS>) and Barnes & Noble (<http://bit.ly/1zWCHFt>).



With that, fellow authors, what are the lessons learned from my editorial?

- 1) Like it or not, e-books are here to stay...until technology transitions to the next best, latest and greatest reading medium, and
- 2) When it comes to books, genre popularity waxes and wanes. Whether it's Westerns, sci-fi, historical, fantasy or murder mysteries, sex is the constant. Keep this in mind when writing your Great American Novel. And if it is erotic, you'll probably sell many more copies, especially as e-books.



Dan Poynter's books are must-haves for all writers. We recommend *Writing Nonfiction* and his *Self-Publishing Manual*. Both are available wherever books are sold or directly from Dan's website: www.ParaPublishing.com. Also sign up for Dan's free "Publishing Poynters" online newsletter: we've been receiving it since it first came out.



This just in...from you!

“My local library had an authors’ symposium, and for the first time ever, I sat at a table and sold books, six in all, mostly *NYMB...On Cats*. Everyone seemed to love that one! There were over fifty authors at the symposium, and it drew a big crowd. I had a lot of fun talking to other writers and to the people who stopped at my table.”

~ Mary Laufer, Saint Cloud, Florida

Right: Photo that went with Mary’s story “The Little White Pill.” Mary looks confused!



Editor’s note: Mary’s funny stories can be found in these NYMB titles:

- “The Condom” and “The Little White Pill”—*On Being a Parent*
- “Empty House”—*On Being a Mom*
- “Michief’s Bath”—*On Cats*



Send in your book-event photos for possible inclusion in future issues of *The Wow Principles*. Hi-res photos only, please: Writer@PublishingSyndicate.com

And this just in from our favorite writing source—*Writer’s Digest*:

Answers to 14 Questions You’re Too Afraid to Ask Literary Agents

- What do you want/need to hear in an in-person pitch that differs from an email query?
- How willing are agents to represent a novel that falls into more than one genre?
- Will you automatically reject a book based on [a writer’s] education or lack thereof?
- How important is it for me to have a blog these days?

Click here to read more! <http://bit.ly/1zWCHft>



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