# 01 Introduction

'You must change your life' – borrowing from philosopher Peter Sloterdijk, this could be the summary of our message for art and design oriented publishers, writers, editors and designers who are transitioning from traditional book making to electronic publishing or – more typically – **\*\*hybrid\*\*** print and electronic publishing. Hybrid publishing will sooner or later confront them with the following: (a) rethinking of traditional publication formats, (b) rethinking of editorial and production workflows and (c) rethinking of distribution. The changes that need to be made might be greater and more extensive than initially expected!

*\*Change is minor for scientific and mass publishers\**

With that said, there are exceptions. Workflow changes can be minor for publishers who already accomplish all their editorial work in highly structured digital document formats (such as **\*\*XML\*\*** or databases); but typically, this is only the case in scientific and technology-oriented publishing. Changes might also be minor for larger publishers that can afford outsourcing. Making an electronic (digital) publication next to a printed publication then is simply a matter of paying an external service provider such as a document engineering company or a media design bureau for turning a Microsoft Word or InDesign file into an **\*\*ebook\*\***. This process can be quick if the book is visually simple – like a novel or a textbook with little illustrations – and economical if many ebooks will be sold.

*\*Change is major for small, arts-oriented publishers\**

Since this Toolkit is for publishers who (a) publish visually oriented books in (b) mostly smaller print runs, it proposes an alternative route than the one mentioned before. Neither a complex internal IT infrastructure, nor costly outsourcing will be viable solutions for these types of publishers. But, to disappoint a common expectation, unfortunately there is no magic software button that will turn a print book design into an electronic publication just like that. Since the two media are so different, with their own specific editorial and visual design needs, such a button will probably not materialize in the future either. Hybrid publishing will ultimately require editorial work to change. The good news is that it can. this toolkit will provide a guide on how to deal with the several issues which arise when making the transition for traditional to hybrid or electronic publishing.

For art and design publishers, the challenge of going electronic with their publications is greater compared to other fields of publishing for a number of reasons:

- visually oriented publications are still more difficult to realize technically in the electronic medium when designing for a multitude of different reading devices and ebook **\*\*platforms\*\***;

- small publishers are under high pressure to keep project costs low due to often smaller budgets – but having to publish in multiple forms (e.g. print and electronic) will increase costs unless one accomplishes as much work as possible in a way that is not the dependent on the medium;

- to make the investment in a digital publication durable it is necessary that electronic publications are sustainable: they should not need constant investment into technical maintenance and version updates.

## Industry promises versus reality

We face a major contrast between computer industry promises and the reality of the new digital medium. On the one hand, publishers, editors, designers and artists tend to overestimate the interactive and **\*\*multimedia\*\*** possibilities of electronic publishing. These extra possibilities do exist, but in most cases cause higher development costs and remain specific to one particular technical reading platform.

On the other hand, publishers tend to underestimate how even technically simple and seemingly banal types of electronic publications can lead us to rethink established publishing practices and formats. When traditional publishing formats go electronic or hybrid, the possibility for transformation is real. Once the book becomes electronic or hybrid, the permanence, immutability and stability typical of physical books, is likely to mutate into dynamic, modular, and participative forms, that can benefit from the networked environment where ebooks exist.

Different types of electronic publications can be subject to significant change. An exhibition catalog, can for instances be split up into interrelated micro-monographs that readers can download and read as individual ebooks. An ebook can be assembled from a variety of sources selected by the reader, as currently happens in Wikipedia, where the visitor can compile her own collection of Wikipedia articles and export them to an **\*\*EPUB\*\*** or PDF using the [Book creator tool](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:Books).

The possibilities for change can go beyond rethinking publishing formats and expand to redefine what the book is.

## What this Toolkit provides

Going electronic – or going hybrid – means that you need to change the way you work in the publishing process from manuscript to publication. The software tools currently in use, from **\*\*word processors\*\*** like Microsoft Word to desktop publishing suites like InDesign, were created for the analog or desktop-publishing world. Although it's possible to create electronic publications from Microsoft Word [![Bloglink](images/dpt\_blog\_verwijzing.png)](http://networkcultures.org/digitalpublishing/2014/03/28/converting-a-docx-directly-to-epub-using-calibre/ "Link to blog post: Converting a DOCX directly to EPUB using Calibre")( Converting a DOCX directly to EPUB using Calibre) and InDesign [![Bloglink](images/dpt\_blog\_verwijzing.png)](http://networkcultures.org/digitalpublishing/2013/05/21/epub-development-in-adobe-indesign-cs6/ "Link to blog post: NOTES ON EPUB DEVELOPMENT IN ADOBE INDESIGN CS6")(Notes on EPUB Development in Adobe InDesign CS6) files that are likely the standard in the current publishing workflow, it will be painful, slow, inefficient and expensive in most cases. This Toolkit describes technical Do It Yourself (DIY) alternatives because it is primarily aimed at publishers who, in most cases, cannot afford to outsource ebook design to external service providers and furthermore it is aimed at those who want to keep the process in their own hands.

This Toolkit has a particular (but not exclusive) focus on EPUB 3 as an electronic publication format and on Markdown as a word processing format because of the specific needs of small edition publishers in the art and design field: low cost, ease of use, sustainability and platform-independence. The recommendations stem from our practical experience in collaborating with four Dutch art, design and research publishers on electronic publication projects.

## Whom is this Toolkit written for

You may be a publisher, a designer or someone who is just starting out with making books. You probably identify with or work in the arts. You may hope to gain answers, knowledge, get tips, and consult various resources. This Toolkit intends to provide them all. The overall focus is on pragmatic solutions for publishers within the art and cultural sector. No prior knowledge of creating an ebook is required – with that said, a familiarity of various computer software is helpful, as is the willingness to learn and the inquisitive curiosity to look beyond this guide for certain answers. This publication is not a tutorial on how to make an electronic publication, it merely intends to give the reader guidance on how to make a first attempt at creating an electronic publication.

As mentioned before 'you must change your life', so there might a little culture shock reading through this document. If electronic publishing will merely remain an afterthought in the production chain and product portfolio, the change might be light. If electronic publishing will become just as important as print, the change may be radical. What this means is that if you want to make visual electronic publications, you should be willing to change your current way of working and gradually get used to the offered but less common alternatives.

## How to use this Toolkit

The Toolkit aims to provide a practical guide on how to develop electronic publications

for publishers as well as for anyone else interested in this subject matter. It will attempt to give insight into the preconditions of electronic publishing, providing Open Source tools where possible, and allow publishers of the art and culture sector to navigate the diverse and complex landscape of digital publishing in a more informed way.

Furthermore, the Toolkit will help the reader to develop e-publications, specifically art and design

publications, which generally make more use of different fonts, graphics and layout than text-dominant publications.

Chapter 3 will give a general introduction of these publications and sketches out various scenarios on how to develop e-publications. Issues and opportunities of going electronic will be discussed, as well as strengths and limitations of particular reader hardwares and softwares, file formats and lastly distribution platforms. Chapters 4 offers a practical, how-to guide to workflows (both structured and per scenario) and designing electronic publications for the various scenarios addressed earlier in Chapter 3. Chapter 5 illustrates the concepts with concrete examples from The Hybrid Publishing Toolkit For The Arts, A Guide From Print To Ebooks project.

## Who worked on this Toolkit

This publication is part of the Digital Publishing Toolkit [^DPT-blog] RAAK-MKB [^RAAK-MKB] research project. The following research questions was stated: *\*'In what way can a platform be created with new tools for Open Source publishing, by which publishers in the art- and cultural sector can produce interactive e-publications by themselves?'\**

To answer this research question, the Institute of Network Cultures (lectoraat Netwerkcultuur) of the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences and knowledge centre creating 010 of the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences executed state-of-the-art research. In collaboration with an already existing consortium [^DPT-Consortium] of eleven MKB-companies consisting of publishers, designers and developers, a fivesome subprojects were formulated. Within these subgroups publishers, designers and developers, (research)lecturers and students of the participating applied universities collaborated.

The result is this publication and a toolkit that exists of tools for digital publishing, based on Open Source-software of which the source code is published and freely accessible[^DPT-GitHub]. With a single command one can get hold of code repository, downloading not only the current state of 'source' files for the book, but also the full history of changes and comments were made by each collaborator to the toolkit up to that point. With another command, the various 'sources' are pulled together into an EPUB produced at that moment. In this way both the 'content' and the 'machine' to make the book are bundled and shared.

We are not claiming that all ebooks will follow, or must follow this path. We are simply laying out one of the many directions ebook creators can already undertake with their publications, by using with simple and inexpensive tools, and without needing to get into the industry's glossy scenarios of multimedia and interactivity.

Next to this publication and the toolkit, five e-publications of titles of the art- and culture books fund of the participating publishers were produced and presented on a platform that is developed for that purpose.

[^DPT-blog]: Blog of the Digital Publishing Toolkit research program, http://networkcultures.org/digitalpublishing

[^RAAK-MKB]: http://www.innovatie-alliantie.nl/stimuleringsregeling/regeling/item/54-raak-mkb.html.

[^DPT-GitHub]: http://networkcultures.org/digitalpublishing/github/

[^DPT-Consortium]: http://networkcultures.org/digitalpublishing/consortium/