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TITLE:

HOW ARE BOOK COVERS AND THEIR COMPONENTS REPRESENTED IN THE DIGITAL MARKET?

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the way in which the book cover and its elements are represented in and translated into the digital market. It opens up the space for discussion about which components of the print cover design translate successfully and are most applicable to the digital market. In particular, it considers how metadata is used alongside the cover image within the digital selling space. This is achieved through two in-depth interviews conducted with currently active cover designers who experienced the digitisation of the book industry first-hand. It is also achieved through a detailed case study of the unique company Blind Date with a Book, and their use of metadata clues instead of a book cover. The article concludes that the book "cover" in the digital market is a deconstructed version of its physical counterpart. It is formed of a cover image and various elements of metadata, released from the boundaries and limits of the physical print book. Instead, the digital cover exists in the online selling space – the webpage.

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> [T]ext is rarely presented in an unadorned state, unreinforced and unaccompanied by a certain number of verbal or other productions, such as an author's name, a title, a preface, illustrations.
> – Gérard Genette, *Paratexts*[1]

1 BACKGROUND

1.1 DEFINING THE BOOK COVER

In order to consider the book cover in the digital market, it is important to first define where the cover came from and what it embodies in the print format. The use of book covers began in the early nineteenth century, as an attempt to support the title page and ultimately take over its responsibilities.[2] Initially, the cover was an almost exact replication of the internal title page; however, it has since developed into its own entity. Therefore, while in its earliest role the "cover or jacket protect[ed] the book", in the current market the "cover's main purpose is to sell".[3] These two purposes ultimately direct what is included in the book cover.

There is a very broad consensus across the publishing industry and its critics as to what constitutes a book cover. For instance, if one compares book covers from different genres, a number of similarities are noticeable. They would all contain the author's name, the title of the book, the publisher's logo and, on their back covers, a blurb. This is what Genette would classify as the "virtually (if not legally) obligatory" components for a book cover.[4] Clark and Phillips likewise define the cover as something which "identifies the author and title, and carries the blurb. The ISBN and bar code enable ordering".[5] Together these two definitions perfectly summarise 'the cover' from a book history perspective and a publishing perspective, and this study uses a combination of these definitions.

1.2 THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL PUBLISHING ON BOOK COVERS

The universal move into digitisation inspired much transformation in the publishing industry, which caused quite a stir amongst publishing and book history professionals. There were many new changes to come to terms with. The introduction of ebooks meant that suddenly the traditional print format had competition.[6] Consumers' increased access to information led to a new form of marketing: social media. Also, there was a whole new digital perspective to be considered in the design of books. Although much of the research on these changes tends to look negatively on the digitisation of the book industry, there are some who acknowledge its potential.

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1 Gérard Genette, Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 1.
2 Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 23.
3 Giles Clark and Angus Phillips, *Inside Book Publishing*, 5th edn (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 201.
4 Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 24.
5 Clark and Phillips, *Inside Book Publishing*, p. 201.
6 Alexis Weedon, 'In Real Life: Book Covers in the Internet Bookstore', in *Judging a Book by its Cover: Fans, Publishers, Designers and the Marketing of Fiction,* ed. by Nicole Matthews and Nickianne Moody (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 117-125 (p.119).

1.3 THE RISE OF THE EBOOK

The introduction of the ebook towards the end of the 1990s was initially thought to spell the end for printed books.[7] But, as Jeff Gomez points out, this did not happen.[8] Instead, ebooks saw their peak in 2014. Since then, their sales have plateaued while hardback sales have surged. This is evident in the Publishing Association's research which showed ebook sales had fallen by 17% in 2016, with print books sales up by 8%.[9] However, despite the anti-climactic impact, ebooks did have a significant influence on cover design for both print and digital books. This is evident in the diverse range of opinions on the subject.

Tim Kreider takes a highly cynical view of the impact of the ebook on cover design. He contemptuously dismisses the importance of cover design, citing the impact of eReaders as the death knell for the art form. He aligns the future of book covers with the recent history of album covers, in that they will sink into the background and be a thing older people must explain to the "uninterested young".[10] His argument, however, was written prior to the decline in ebook sales, when digital publishing was still seen as an existential threat. Once this threat dissipated, the research surrounding the impact of digitisation on the book cover significantly changed; the focus shifted to how print books have survived and thrived in the battle against digitisation.

One such commentator is Alex Preston, who considers the change to print covers since the introduction of ebooks. Initially, publishers countered the rise of the ebook by changing the aesthetic of the physical book. In Preston's words, they made them "as grey and forgettable as ebooks".[11] But when ebook sales plateaued after 2014, publishers realised the advantage of physical books: the jacket. In *Cover,* Peter Mendelsund lists the different 'talents' of the print cover as: a decoration, a souvenir, a nametag, a teaser and an advertisement.[12] Thus, publishers and designers began to utilise these advantages to beat the digital competition. This saw the resurgence of beautiful object books and coffee-table books.[13] But in Mendelsund's and Preston's arguments, there is the underlying concern that the relationship between print and digital is still competitive. Preston identifies the concern that there will be a repeat of publishing history, whereby digital will replace print.[14] Comparatively, Mendelsund writes, "Is the book jacket necessary? No".[15] Hence, with both critics focusing on the success of the print cover only, they fail to acknowledge or realise the potential of the digital book cover.

In contrast, there are some critics who stand by the belief that covers are still important in the digital world. This is because it has been proven that ebooks without a cover image on Amazon will not sell as well.[16] Betsy Morais agrees with this philosophy and uses the Nielsen White Paper to support her argument. According to the Nielsen White Paper, the inclusion of a cover image results in an average sales boost of 268%.[17] However, this is only considering the cover in terms of its marketing value. With regards

7 Jeff Gomez, 'Ebooks and the revolution that didn't happen', in *Print is Dead: Books in Our Digital Age* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp.115-133 (p.116).

8 Ibid., p.117.

9 Alex Preston, 'How real books have trumped ebooks', *The Guardian*, 14 May 2017 <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/may/14/how-real-books-trumped-ebooks-publishing-revival> [accessed 01 March 2019].

10 Tim Kreider, 'The Decline and Fall of the Book Cover', *The New Yorker*, 16 July 2013 <https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/the-decline-and-fall-of-the-book-cover> [accessed 01 March 2019].

11 Preston, 'How real books have trumped ebooks'.

12 Peter Mendelsund, 'What Is a Book Cover?', in *Cover* (New York: PowerHouse Books, 2014), pp. 110-118.

13 Preston, 'How real books have trumped ebooks'.

14 Ibid. Preston quotes Christopher de Hamel's comparison of the current state of publishing to the end of the 15th century, whereby the handmade manuscript lost to the printing press.

15 Mendelsund, 'What Is a Book Cover?', p. 118.

16 Clark and Phillips, *Inside Book Publishing*, p. 230.

17 Betsy Morais, 'Has Kindle Killed the Book Cover?', *Atlantic*, 16 April 2012 <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2012/04/has-kindle-killed-the-book-cover/255935/> [accessed 01 March 2019].

to the reading experience, the cover is not being used as much as it could be. When an ebook is opened on a Kindle, the first page to appear is the first page of text. The process of starting at the cover and flipping through the pages is removed.[18] It is for this reason that Daisy Ware-Jarrett declares that it is time to "re-write the rule book" regarding cover design, and begin to accept the differences between print and digital.[19]

1.4 A CHANGE IN ELEMENTS

In the online book marketplace, the application of the digital cover is limited to the front cover only. There is no longer a space for the spine or back cover. As a result, the blurb is separated from the book. This critically distances the content within the blurb from the text.[20] In this context, the function of the blurb is less peritextual (elements secondary to the main text, e.g. the cover) and more epitextual (elements provided by authors or publishers separate from the book, e.g. metadata).[21] This coincides with Morais' opinion that the digital book does not have a cover in the protective sense. Instead, the cover acts as a "visual portal" into a "webpage of data", i.e. metadata. Metadata includes: publication date, reader reviews, rating systems, price, and most notably, the blurb. These metadata-based elements arguably form the new cover.[22] So, with all these changes, what does the future hold for digital book covers? What is the potential of digital design?

2 METHODOLOGY

In order to collect qualitative data about the state of the cover in digital publishing, it became apparent that the most useful method available would be in-depth interviews with professional cover designers. In acquiring detailed information about their thoughts, it would open up the existing research to include direct perspectives on the digital cover as opposed to the print cover.

In choosing which cover designers to interview, it was important that they had some experience working in cover design during the rise of digitisation. This would enable them to add their own experiences of digital cover design or to share their awareness of it.

As it is important to avoid yes/no questions during in-depth interviews,[23] a semi-structured approach, with open-ended and broad questions, seemed the most applicable. Two subjects were interviewed: Designer A and Designer B. One of the interviews was conducted in person. The other, due to unavoidable circumstances, was a written-response interview. In the absence of natural prompts, this interviewee was encouraged to elaborate on answers as much as possible. The limitations of the in-depth interview method are that the information is qualitative and personal to the specific interviewees. As such, the information cannot be quantified.[24] In terms of the number of subjects, Carolyn Boyce and Palena Neale state: "The general rule about interviewing is that you will know when you have done enough when you hear the same information from a number of stakeholders".[25] The two interviews very clearly produced a pattern of similar information and therefore the limited number did not have a great impact.

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18 Ibid.
19 Daisy Ware-Jarrett, 'Re-imagining the book cover for digital publishing', *Page Lizard*, 14 December 2014 <http://www.pagelizard.com/digital-book-cover/> [accessed 01 March 2019].
20 Weedon, 'In Real Life: Book Covers in the Internet Bookstore', p. 121.
21 Morais, 'Has Kindle Killed the Book Cover?'.
22 Ware-Jarrett, 'Re-imagining the book cover for digital publishing'.
23 Carolyn Boyce and Palena Neale, 'CONDUCTING IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS: A Guide for Designing and Conducting In-Depth Interviews for Evaluation Input', *Monitoring and Evaluation*, 2 (2006), p. 4, <http://www2.pathfinder.org/site/DocServer/m_e_tool_series_indepth_interviews.pdf>.
24 Ibid., p.8.
25 Ibid., p.7.

3 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 THE DIGITAL THUMBNAIL

During the interviews, both designers confirmed they tend to use one universal cover for both print and digital books. Designer A explained that the question of whether the cover will be used on a physical book or remain on the screen is irrelevant for a designer.[26] Hence, it is not what the designer creates that differs between print and digital book covers, but rather how the publisher uses them. The significant change between the use of print covers and the use of digital covers stems from the introduction of digital thumbnails.
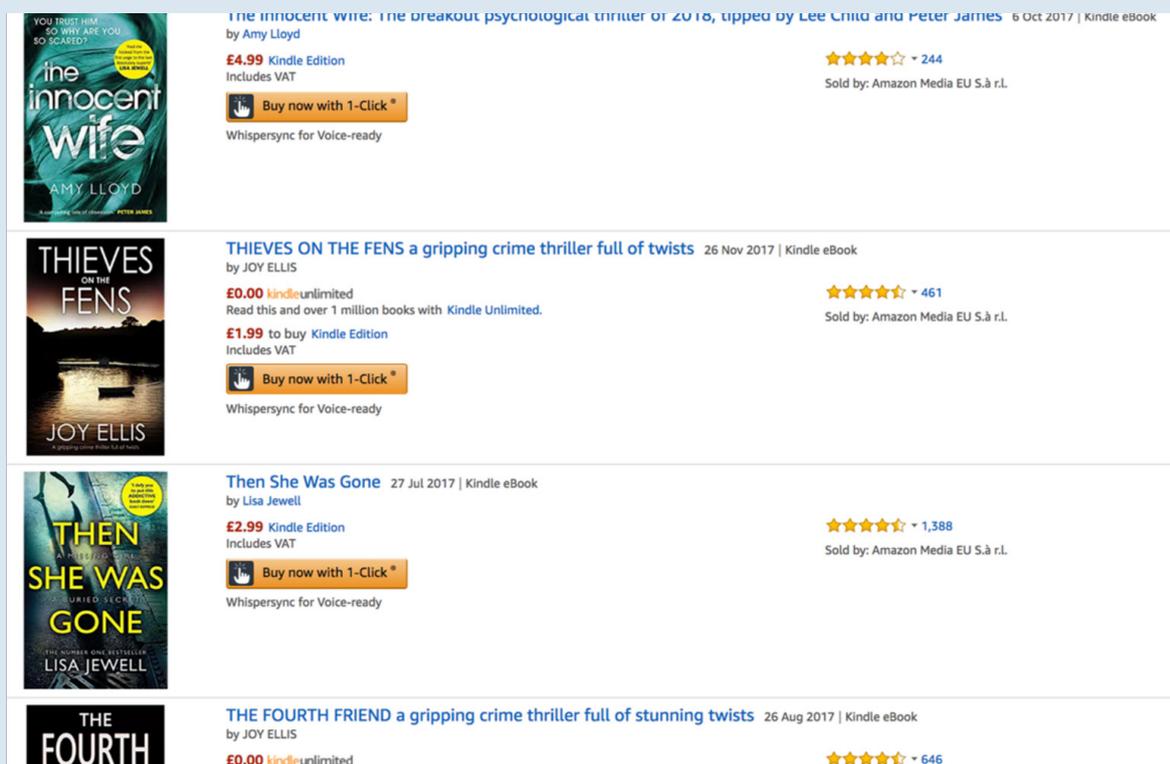

Figure 1: A screenshot of the Amazon search list for crime fiction kindle books. Source: https://www.amazon.co.uk.

The function of a digital cover lies purely in its aesthetics and information. This is why it is only needed in the sense and size of a thumbnail on a webpage. But, as its main function in the bookselling process, a cover's 'thumbnailability' is crucial to a book's success.[27] As Morais explains, this reliance on shrunken images produces a certain pressure on the designer.[28] This was confirmed in the interview process as it became clear that this desire for covers to be more multifunctional altered the designers' approaches to cover design. Designer A creates multiple JPEGs for designs, in order to produce a simplified version with stronger colours and a higher saturation.[29] This ensures that the cover still stands out in the restricted size. Similarly, Designer B tests out their final cover designs in the thumbnail size used by Amazon. However, the

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26 Designer A, interviewed by Sophie Darling, 26 July 2018.
27 Kevin Tumlinson, 'The Psychology of a Good Book Cover', Draft2Digital, September 2016 <https://www.draft2digital.com/blog/the-psychology-of-a-good-book-cover/> [accessed 01 March 2019].
28 Morais, 'Has Kindle Killed the Book Cover?'.
29 Interview with Designer A.

primary concern here is that the title is legible when the cover is limited to 218 by 218 pixels.[30]

It is clear from this example of the Amazon Kindle search list (*Figure 2*) that the cover is the first thing to draw the attention of the reader. Despite being a thumbnail size, the cover takes up the most space and the vertical alignment creates the appearance of front-facing books in a physical bookshop. This resolves a common issue for physical bookshops, where front-facing is the ideal position to sell books successfully, yet there is not enough space to achieve this with every book.[31] Therefore, in the digital shopping space all books can be 'front-facing' through the use of the front cover. The consumer gathers the key information about the book – such as the title and author – from the thumbnail of the cover, whilst the written details on the right-hand side act as secondary information. Designer B supports this notion in their argument for the cover's importance. Designer B explains that the cover "helps to tell a small part of the story or theme of the book before you have opened it or read the blurb. It might convey a genre, a feeling, a message, a plotline, a period of time or an appropriate audience".[32] As such, the thumbnail cover image is vital to the success of an ebook.
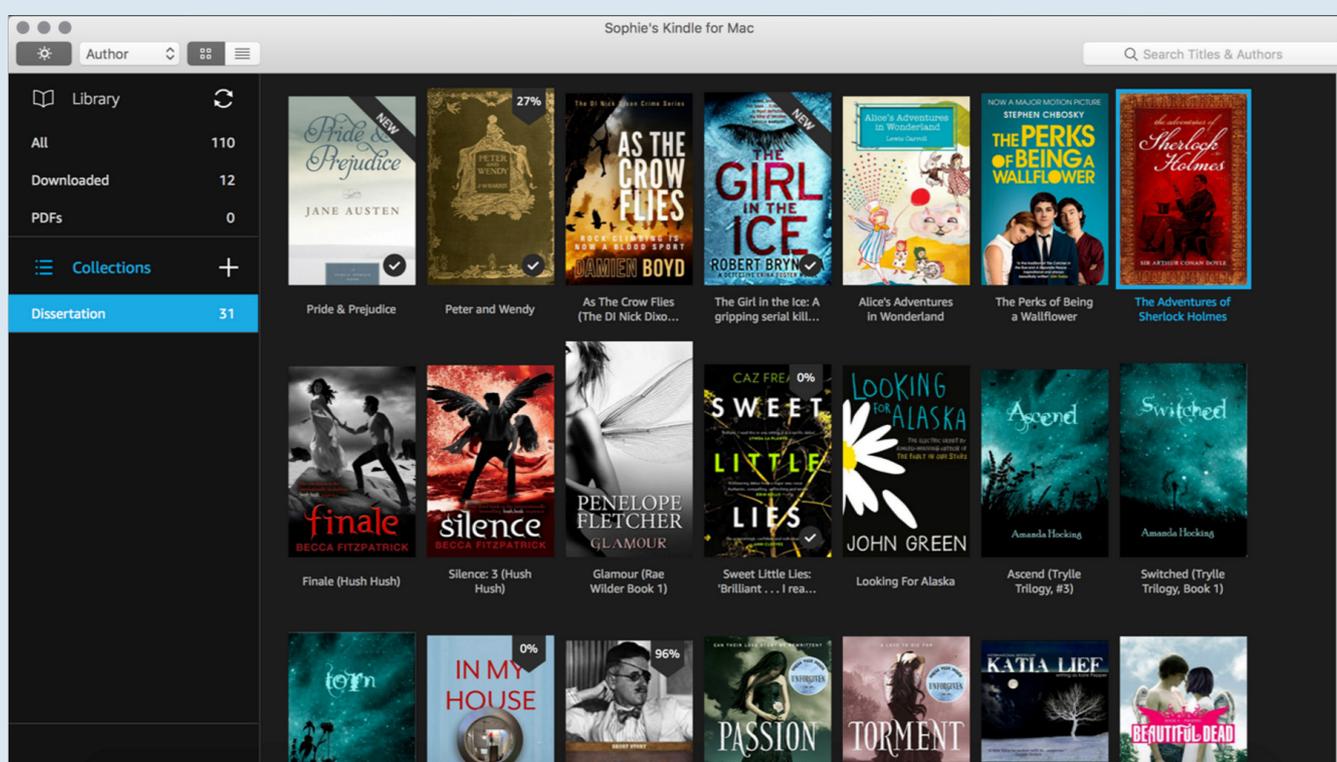

Figure 2: A screenshot of the Amazon Kindle app for Mac to demonstrate the library layout.
Source: Amazon Kindle app for Mac.

The application of the cover as a thumbnail significantly separates the cover in the digital market from the print book cover. However, there is a further complexity to this relationship. Designer A refers to the way in which "everything is an electronic version of an existing thing".[33] The digital is more often than not a replication of the physical equivalent. This is specifically the case with the Kindle app.

Upon opening the app, the consumer is presented with their library of books. The layout of this library directly simulates a bookshelf, or book stand, in a library, shop or house. It is achieved primarily

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30 Designer B, interviewed by Sophie Darling, 13 August 2018.
31 Josie Leavitt, 'Face Out or Spine Out: One Customer's Opinion', *Publishers Weekly*, 27 September 2011 <http://blogs.publish-ersweekly.com/blogs/shelftalker/?p=6148> [accessed 01 March 2019].
32 Interview with Designer B.
33 Interview with Designer A.

through the use of the thumbnail cover images. An interesting element of the Kindle app as a simulation is that it can be customised – one can adjust the extent of the simulation. For example, if the consumer wants an exact replication of a book stand, they can hide the book titles from underneath the thumbnails. Alternatively, they can change the size of the thumbnails and adjust how the books are sorted on screen. This demonstrates that the digital cover is still used in the same way that a print cover would be. The consumer still wants to view their books aesthetically and arrange them as they would physical books on a bookshelf. The simulated effect allows readers to do this. However, the ebook experience can only be a replication of the physical book to a certain extent; the challenge is in the publicity of the book.

3.2 A LACK OF PUBLICITY

A key element of the book cover is its ability to publicise the book to other consumers whilst it is being read. For ebooks, however, this is no longer possible. All the public sees when someone is reading an ebook is the type of eReader it is being read on – a phone, a tablet, a Kindle. Whilst the digital cover is useful as an initial marketing tool during the bookselling process, the purpose of promoting the book to other readers in public spaces is no longer possible.

As the book cover no longer serves the publicity function, a key question arises: Does the appearance and aesthetics of the book cover matter anymore? This is something which both designers considered within their interviews. Designer B argues, "The cover is less important as an object of beauty as it is not on show as much. It doesn't sit on the coffee table or get seen on the bus".[34] In this respect, the aesthetic appeal of a book cover is directly connected to its role as a marketing tool. Similarly, Designer A works predominantly with physical book cover design. In their opinion, "a Kindle sort of seems like a crap version of a book".[35] Designer A's main reasoning behind this statement is the lack of aesthetics attached to a digital book. Therefore, from both interview subjects, there is a sense that the aesthetic beauty of a digital book cover is not as much of a concern beyond its use as a thumbnail. The way a digital book cover is used in the marketing of a book has consequently affected how it is used within the reading experience. In 2012, Morais wrote an article in which she discussed the reader's experience of an ebook:

> The early ebooks tossed readers right into the text, without ceremony. This is still true in many cases. On a standard Kindle, for example, you can buy a book and pop right over to the first page of the introduction. There is no procession through the cover, title page, and so on. To see the cover at all, you have to manually click backwards, perhaps more than two dozen times.[36]

Morais is arguing that by skipping over the cover and preliminary pages, the Kindle's creators (Amazon) are emphasising that the digital cover is purely a marketing tool for the bookselling process. It is clear that after its initial purpose as a marketing tool has been served, the cover loses all relevance in the ebook.

3.3 DIGITAL COVER DESIGN AND METADATA

The findings from the interviews, supported by analysis of Amazon's website, emphasise that the digital book cover is not concerned with the aesthetics of design. The primary responsibility is to inform and persuade the consumer to purchase the ebook. As a result, the relationship between digital cover design

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34 Interview with Designer B.
35 Interview with Designer A.
36 Morais, 'Has Kindle Killed the Book Cover?'.

and a book's metadata is extremely important. As evident from the review of the existing research, the main function of any book cover is to attract the consumer and improve its publicity. Eleanor Jones explains that the two main duties of metadata are to make a book discoverable online and to make it look appealing to the consumer.[37] When this definition of metadata is compared to the definition of the book cover, it is clear that the two have very similar responsibilities. The only real difference is that one works best in physical bookselling and the other thrives online. Metadata has greatly affected the sales of books in recent years and, as a result, has gained much attention within the publishing industry. As a recent topic of research carried out by Nielsen, there is plenty of information available concerning the correlation between the use of complete metadata on a webpage and the sale of books. In its report,[38] Nielsen uses the Book Industry Communication (BIC) Basic elements as the foundation of metadata necessary for each book. The BIC Basic elements include:

- ISBN
- Title
- Product form
- Main BIC subject category
- Imprint name
- Publication date

- Cover image
- At least one supplier name
- Availability status
- GBP retail price including VAT
- Statement of rights relating to the UK

In these elements, there are numerous overlaps with Genette's definition of the book cover. The inclusion of an ISBN, cover image, imprint name and title are all on Genette's list of components for a front and back cover.[39] This further emphasises a correlation between the book cover and metadata in that they both serve the same purpose.
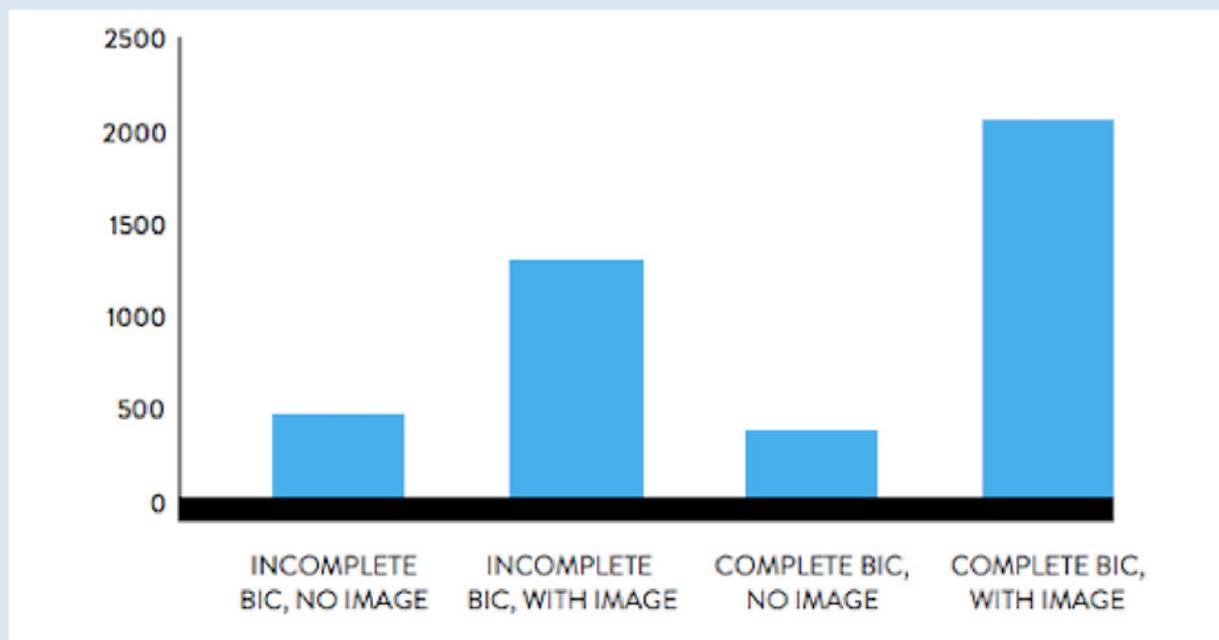
Figure 3: Nielsen graph of the average sales per ISBN for records with complete or incomplete data and image.
Source: David Walter, Nielsen Book UK Study: The Importance of Metadata for Discoverability and Sales, p.8.

37 Eleanor Jones, 'It's time for publishers to get serious about metadata', *The Bookseller*, 19 June 2017 <https://www.thebookseller.com/futurebook/metadata-dos-and-donts-book-trade-569696> [accessed 01 March 2019].
38 David Walter, 'Nielsen Book UK Study: The Importance of Metadata for Discoverability and Sales', Nielsen Book Services, 30 November 2016, p.7, <https://www.editeur.org/files/Events%20pdfs/Supply%20chain%202016/Nielsen%20Book%20US%20Study%20The%20Importance%20of%20Metadata%20for%20Discoverability%20and%20Sales.pdf>.
39 Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 24-6.

The results of the report are also pertinent regarding the relationship between the book cover and metadata. For example, the Nielsen report establishes that the use of a cover image in the metadata of the book increases its sales. The cover image refers to the use of the front cover as a thumbnail-sized image on the book's webpage or online selling space.[40]

In terms of metadata, the two designers differ in their opinions. Whereas Designer A criticises the incorporation of quotes into a cover design and the inclusion of author, title and subtitle,[41] Designer B acknowledges the importance of the book cover image in its portrayal of metadata, such as the blurb and title.[42] The statistics revealed by the Nielsen report uphold the opinion of Designer B about the importance of metadata within cover design. When the data and experience is collected together, it is evident that metadata is used within both print and digital cover design to improve the discoverability of the book and to provide the consumer with all of the important information.

The Nielsen report only provides a general overview of the book industry. It does not consider the inclusion of enhanced metadata. Enhanced metadata includes elements such as author bios, excerpts of the text and media reviews — the additional information that directly influences someone's decision to buy the book.[43] But some types of enhanced metadata are limited to the digital space. This is because in the digital bookselling space, certain elements of the epitext are on the same page as the peritext; for example, reader reviews.[44] Whilst these are not inputted by the publisher, they contribute to the process of selling books. Similarly, in the digital space, it is easier to follow keywords. Whilst on a physical book cover design the blurb would include key words which a publisher can add to an Advanced Information database for booksellers, this information does not necessarily aid the consumer's search for a book. However, in the digital space consumers often use keywords in their searches. As a result, keyword-rich content is vital for the digital market.[45]

All these elements of metadata contribute to the overall digital book cover. However, it is important to note that the digital cover is not limited to the same space that a physical cover is. Instead, the digital book cover is a deconstructed version of its physical counterpart. It does not have to physically protect the book. Instead, it is spaced out across a webpage and consists of the thumbnail, BIC Basic metadata and enhanced metadata. This emphasises the importance of metadata within the digital market and, specifically, in relation to digital 'cover' design.

3.4 BLIND DATE WITH A BOOK: A CASE STUDY

In order to fully understand the way in which cover design is utilised within the ebook market and its potential use in the future, it is important to consider other ways in which the cover is used – or in this case, not used – in the bookselling process. In particular, ways in which metadata is used alongside or within cover design. Through investigating an unusual case study such as Blind Date with a Book, it is possible to explore the success of using metadata in the bookselling process as a replacement for the traditional cover. This can then be directed towards the digital market and reveal potential ways for the ebook market to adapt and develop its relationship with book covers and metadata.

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40 Walter, 'Nielsen Book UK Study', p. 8.
41 Interview with Designer A.
42 Interview with Designer B.
43 Hannah Johnson, 'How to Sell More Books with Metadata', *Publishing Perspectives*, 27 January 2011 <https://publishingper-spectives.com/2011/01/sell-more-books-with-metadata/> [accessed 01 March 2019].
44 Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 10.
45 Johnson, 'How to Sell More Books with Metadata'.

3.5 ALL ABOUT BLIND DATE WITH A BOOK

Blind Date with a Book began as a concept at Elizabeth's Bookshops in Australia.[46] The idea was initially a response to consumers asking the booksellers for book recommendations. In an attempt to encourage people to pick up a book that they might not have chosen to read, the staff members began curating a selection of books that consumers may not have heard of. These were then wrapped up in the iconic brown paper now associated with the company, with a few hints on the front. The current director, Rory Schmitz, stated that it was "an instant hit with the consumers".[47]

3.6 THE PRODUCTS

The products themselves are another key element of the company's business model in terms of their emphasis on aesthetics. Despite not having the aesthetic appeal of the print book cover design, the aesthetics of their products are captivating. The books' covers are replaced by the signature brown paper packaging, tied with string and attached with the iconic Blind Date with a Book logo.
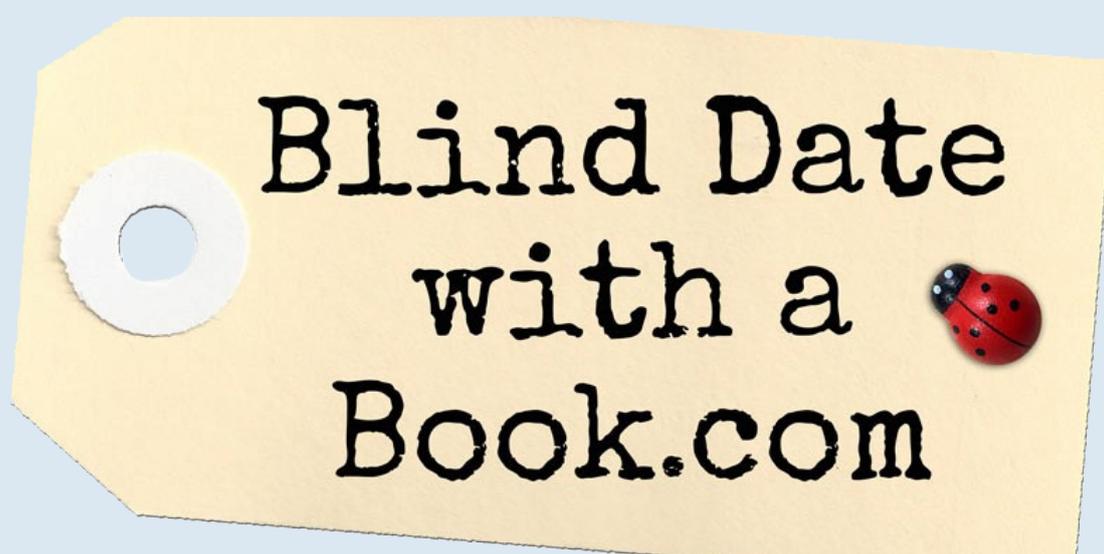

Figure 4: Blind Date With A Book.Com Logo.
Source: https://Blinddatewithabook.com/.

This creates a strong brand for the company, whilst also appealing to consumers visually. Along with this, the company has used their beautiful packaging to tap into what Designer B refers to as the hashtag #bookstagram.[48] Their Instagram account, @ablinddatewithabook, documents some of the books which they have or have had for sale. The page has 27.2k followers[49] and simultaneously has set up its own hashtag — #blinddatewithabook. This hashtag has been used by over 20k posts. Thus, Blind Date with a Book has proven that the removal of the cover does not mean a decline in the aesthetic appeal, nor the decline of publicity and word of mouth marketing. They successfully uphold their motto: "Don't judge a book by its cover".[50]

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46 'About Us', Blind Date with a Book, website, <https://www.blinddatewithabook.com/> [accessed 01 March 2019].
47 Zoe Warncke, 'Blind Date with a Book, Perfect for Easter Break', *Irma's World*, 29 March 2018 <https://www.irmasworld.com/blind-date-with-a-book-perfect-for-easter-break-2414339> [accessed 01 March 2019].
48 Interview with Designer B.
49 Now 36.2k, at time of publication.
50 'About Us', Blind Date with a Book.

Figure 5: On the left: 'Burnt-out detective'. On the right: 'Amnesia'. Source: www.blinddatewithabook.com

It is important within this case study to analyse the products themselves in order to fully understand and evaluate the model's potential in the digital market. The two examples above – 'Burnt-out detective' and 'Amnesia' – perfectly demonstrate the packaging in terms of its aesthetics and practicality. As previously discussed, aesthetics are essential to the branding of the company and its appeal to consumers. However, it is necessary to consider the informative nature of the design too. The only information available to the reader is printed on the packaging in the form of clues. These clues are essentially the metadata of the book: they are a set of keywords used to market the book to the reader. In this respect, the book cover is entirely replaced by a selection of metadata deemed necessary to sell the book.

3.7 THE BLIND DATE WITH A BOOK CONCEPT AND THE DIGITAL MARKET

In a digital thumbnail image, certain elements of the book cover are no longer necessary. The blurb, subtitle, awards and author reviews are found and read in the accompanying metadata; they are detached from the cover image as they cannot be seen in a thumbnail-sized image. If the book cover is as Genette defines it, then the digital book cover is not found in the single thumbnail. Instead, it is the entire webpage of enhanced metadata; in other words, the elements of the BIC Basic standard.[51] As such, the digital book cover is a deconstructed version of its physical counterpart.

This relates very clearly to Blind Date with a Book's own concept of using metadata and keywords in replacement of a cover design within the selling process. The success of this company in the print market raises a question as to whether a similar model would work for the digital market. This is something for publishers to consider as an alternative to traditional bookselling.

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51 Walter, 'Nielsen Book UK Study', p. 7.

4 CONCLUSION

This study aimed to fill a gap in publishing and bookselling research with regards to cover design. The majority of research involving cover design overlooks recent digital developments. When it is explored, critics regard the developments of cover design from one of two perspectives: a history of the book or publishing. The two are never considered together to establish a complete picture of the digital book cover and its application. This study rectifies this in its consideration of previous research to create a clear outline of the book cover's history up to the present day, alongside interviews with professional cover designers.

In terms of its findings, the study provides additional academic support to recent articles on the use of book covers in the digital market. It highlights the significant differences between the physical print book cover and the digital book cover, as well as the contrasts in how they are utilised. Most notably, the way in which the digital cover is a deconstructed version of its physical counterpart. Rather than a single cover which comprises all of the necessary information for successful marketing and selling, the elements of the 'cover' in the digital market are not limited to one space. Instead, the front cover is transformed into a thumbnail to capture the consumer's attention. This is then supported by important metadata, which would appear on the back cover of a physical book. The deconstructed nature of the digital book cover demonstrates its potential. It highlights the importance of simulation within the digital market and the advantage of adapting key elements of print covers for digital.

To conclude, this study considers the relationship between print and digital book cover design in order to explore the potential of the book cover in the digital market. It does not provide publishing companies with a specific solution to using the book cover as an aesthetic and marketing tool in the digital space. However, it does open up space for discussion about which components of the print cover design translate successfully and are most applicable to the digital market. For further research, it would be important to also consider all types of digital publishing, including the audio book market and its use of cover design.

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