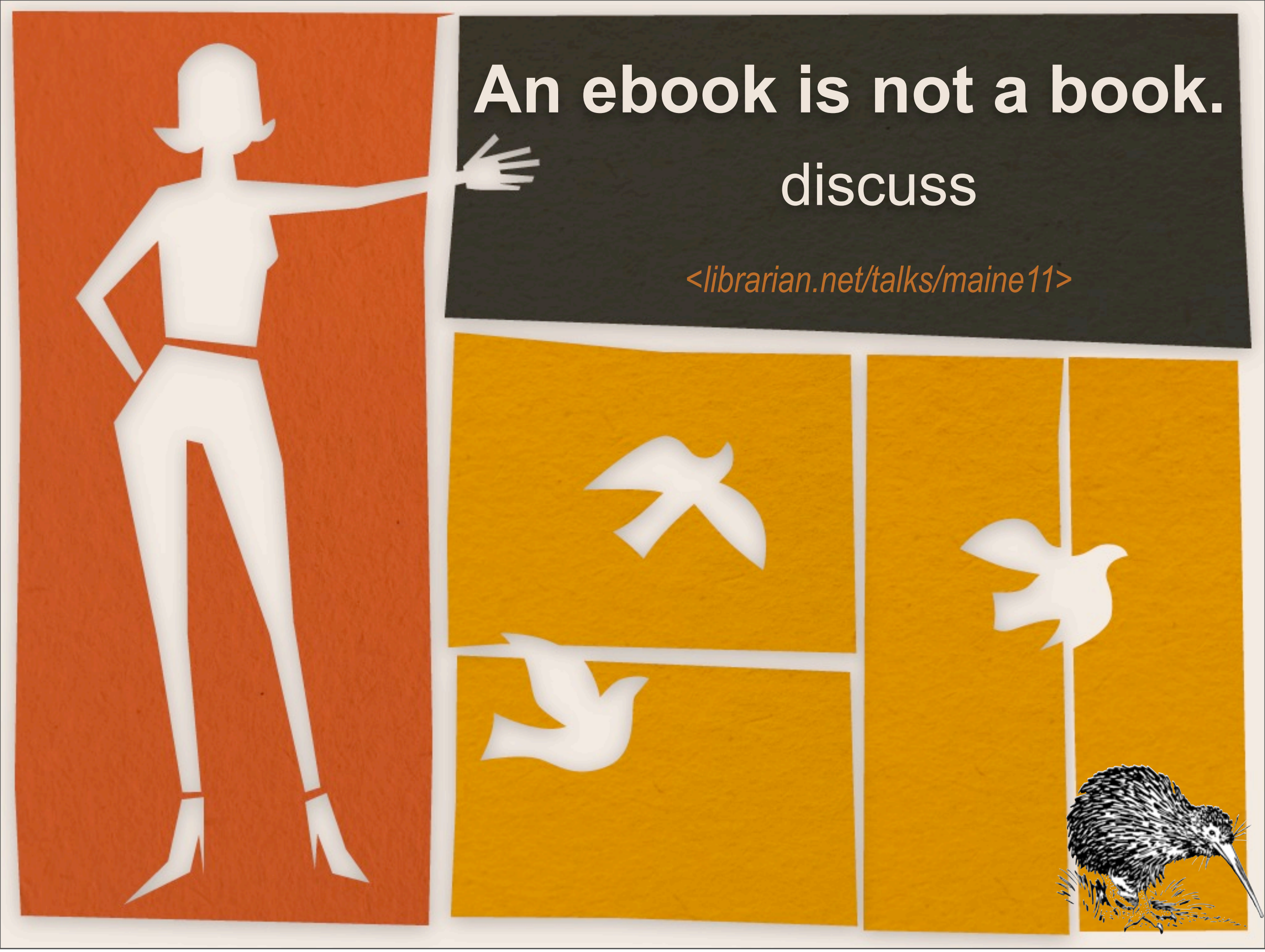
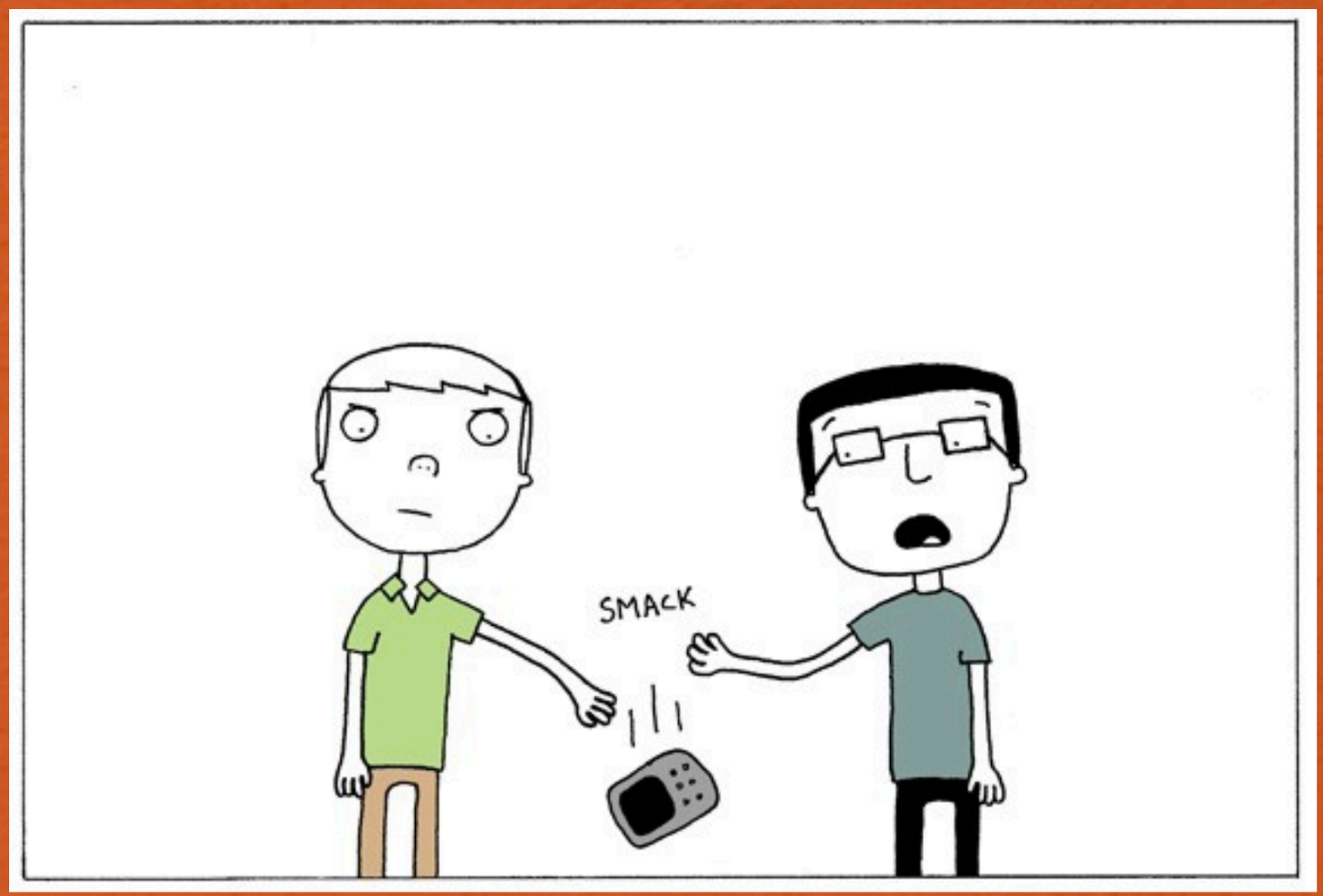


I changed the title some but the idea remains. When I passed this around Twitter I got a lot of what I might call "pushback" people who were like IT IS SO A BOOK. So I'm starting from the IT IS SO A BOOK perspective. Just like a kiwi is a bird, only it doesn't fly.

So I'm not a purist, but I do live in a place where ebooks really haven't caught on yet. Some people love them, those people are called "early adopters" where I am. I'm not here to problematize them, I love digital content, but to point out the many ways librarians are in this weird place, and maybe talk a little about what we can do.

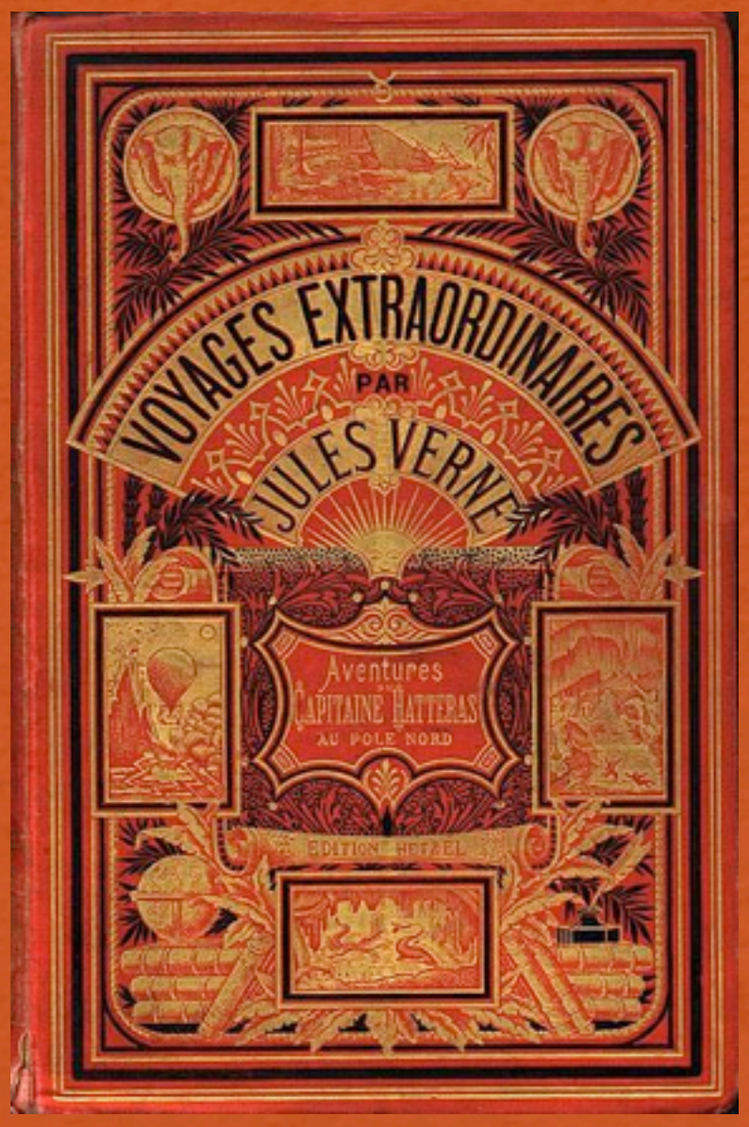


So I'm not a purist, but I do live in a place where ebooks really haven't caught on yet. Some people love them, those people are called "early adopters" where I am. I'm not here to problematize them, I love digital content, but to point out the many ways librarians are in this weird place, and maybe talk a little about what we can do.

So I'm not a purist, but I do live in a place where ebooks really haven't caught on yet. Some people love them, those people are called "early adopters" where I am. I'm not here to problematize them, I love digital content, but to point out the many ways librarians are in this weird place, and maybe talk a little about what we can do.

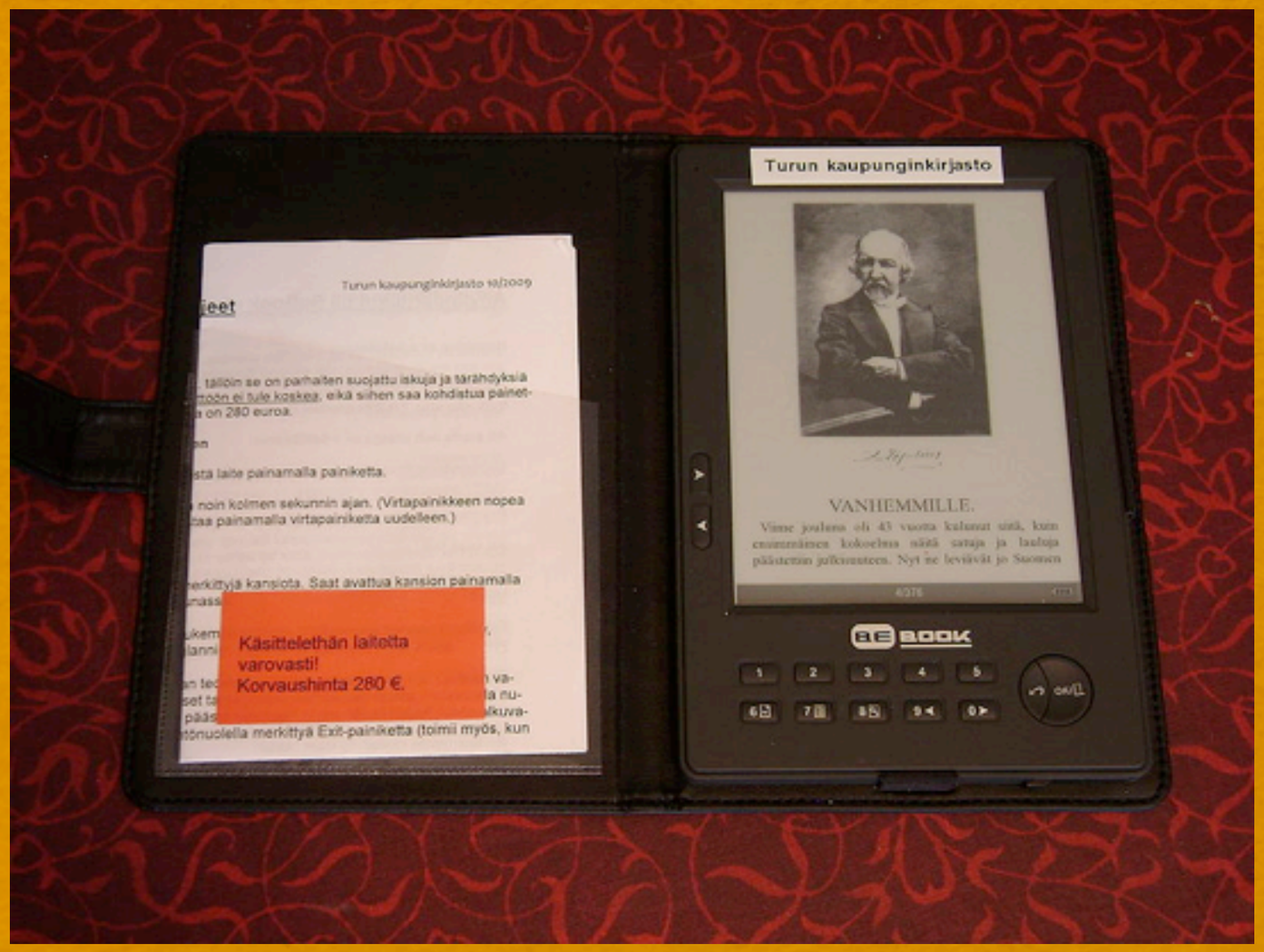
I have an undergrad degree in linguistics. We have a saying that explains a larger principle "The morning star is the evening star" Let me bore you briefly by explaining what this means... These are two "senses" of things [star in morning, star in evening] that really refer to one real world thing, Venus. ebooks and books on the other hand are two real world things that refer to one "sense" of a thing, a thing we can't totally nail down.

book



So the senses are confusing because one of them is a specific thing and one is less specific. What we call a book for the most part is specific. And while the idea of a book encompasses an ebook, the reverse isn't exactly true. So, book. You know, movable type, covers, pages in order, words. Get them at a store or a library. Susceptible to moisture, fire, that sort of thing.

ebook



Ebook. When most people say ebook they mean ebook reader because you can't really find a good photo on Wikipedia of an ebook just like you can't find a picture of an MP3. However unlike how an MP3 is a standard file type, an ebook is not. So this is an ebook reader (from Turkey) with an ebook loaded on it which is in some specific ebook format. This is a failure of language, it's not your fault that this is true. However you need to work within this context and know why it confuses the hell out of people.

Format	Filename extension	DRM support	Image support	Table support	Sound support	Interactivity support	Word wrap support	Open standard	Embedded annotation support	Book-marking
ArghosReader	.aeh	Yes	Yes	?	No	No	Yes	No	?	Yes
DjVu	.djvu	?	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
EPUB (IDPF)	.epub	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
FictionBook	.fb2	No	Yes	Yes/No[f 1]	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	?
HTML	.html	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Kindle	.azw	Yes	Yes	Yes[f 2][21]	Yes[f 3][22]	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Microsoft Reader	.lit	Yes	Yes	?	No	No	Yes	No	?	Yes
Mobipocket	.prc, .mobi	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Multimedia EBook	.exe	Yes	Yes	?	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
eReader	.pdb	Yes	Yes	?	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Plain text	.txt	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Plucker	.pdb	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Portable Document Format	.pdf	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
PostScript	.ps	No	Yes	?	No	No	No	Yes	?	?
Repligo	.rgo	?	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
TealDoc	.pdb	Yes	Yes	?	No	No	Yes	Yes	?	Yes
Tome Raider	.tr2, .tr3	Yes	Yes	?	No	No	Yes	No	?	?

So you've got a few different formats with a few differing characteristics. And then a few types of readers that will manage various subsets of these formats. This can go from nearly 1:1 [a Kindle 1 mostly only reads Kindle docs and text and Mobi, Kindle2 reads more] to an iphone or android device which can read most of them. If you're like me, you dread the "what ebook reader should I buy" question almost as much as the "which computer should I buy" I always tell people to get what their friends get.

Hardware Reader	Plain text	PDF	ePub	HTML	Mobi- Pocket	Fiction- Book (Fb2)	DjVu	Broadband eBook (BBeB)[h 1]	eReader[h 1]	Kindle[h 1]	WOLF[h 1]	Tome Raider[h 1]	Open eBook[h 2]
Amazon Kindle 1	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Amazon Kindle 2, DX	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Amazon Kindle 3	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Android Devices	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes[h 3][23]	Yes	Yes[h 3][24]	No	Yes[h 3][25]	Yes	No	Yes[h 3][20]	Yes[h 3]
Apple iOS Devices	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes[h 3]	Yes[h 3]	Yes[h 3]	No	Yes[h 3]	Yes[h 3]	No	Yes[h 3]	Yes[h 3]
Azbooka WISEreader	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Barnes & Noble Nook	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
Barnes & Noble Nook Color	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Bookeen Cybook Gen3, Opus	Yes	Yes	Yes[h 4]	Yes	Yes[h 4]	Yes[h 5]	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
COOL-ER Classic	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Foxit eSlick	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
Hanlin e-Reader V3	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Hanvon WISEreader	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
iRex iLiad	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
Iriver Story	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes[h 3]	Yes[h 3]	No	No	No	No	No	No
Kobo eReader	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Nokia N900	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
NUUTbook 2	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
OLPC XO, Sugar	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
Onyx Boox 60	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
Windows PC	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	?	Yes	?	Yes	Yes[h 6]	?	?	Yes
Pocketbook 301 Plus, 302, 360°	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
Sony Reader	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Viewsonic VEB612	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Windows Phone 7	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No

So you've got a few different formats with a few differing characteristics. And then a few types of readers that will manage various subsets of these formats. This can go from nearly 1:1 [a Kindle 1 mostly only reads Kindle docs and text and Mobi, Kindle2 reads more] to an iphone or android device which can read most of them. If you're like me, you dread the "what ebook reader should I buy" question almost as much as the "which computer should I buy" I always tell people to get what their friends get.

yeah

yeah

yeah

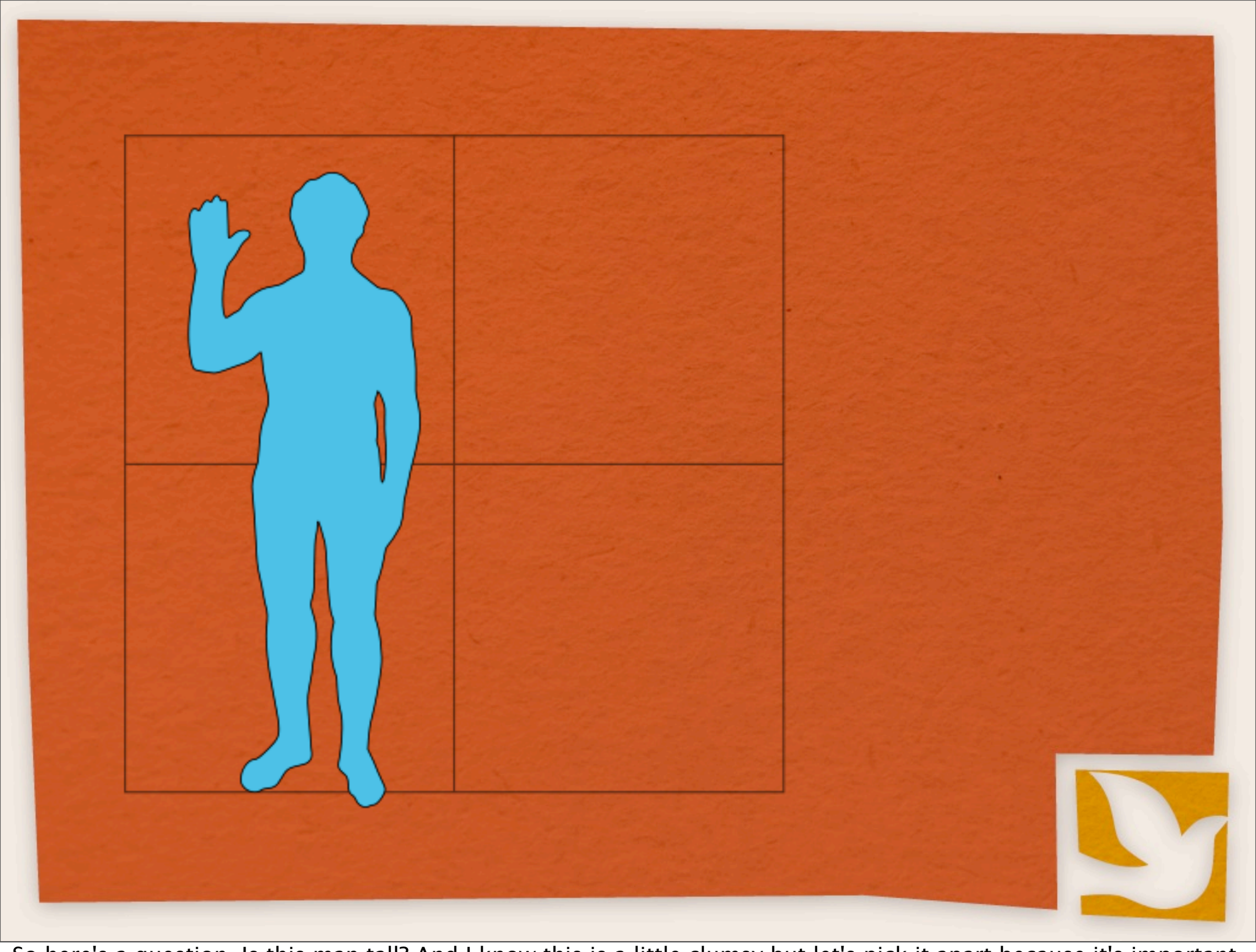
yeah

At some level I think you know this, but if you don't know this, it's important. You know, like how a platypus is a mammal ... except that it lays eggs and is venomous. It’s the exceptions that determine the outline of the thing. So let’s talk.

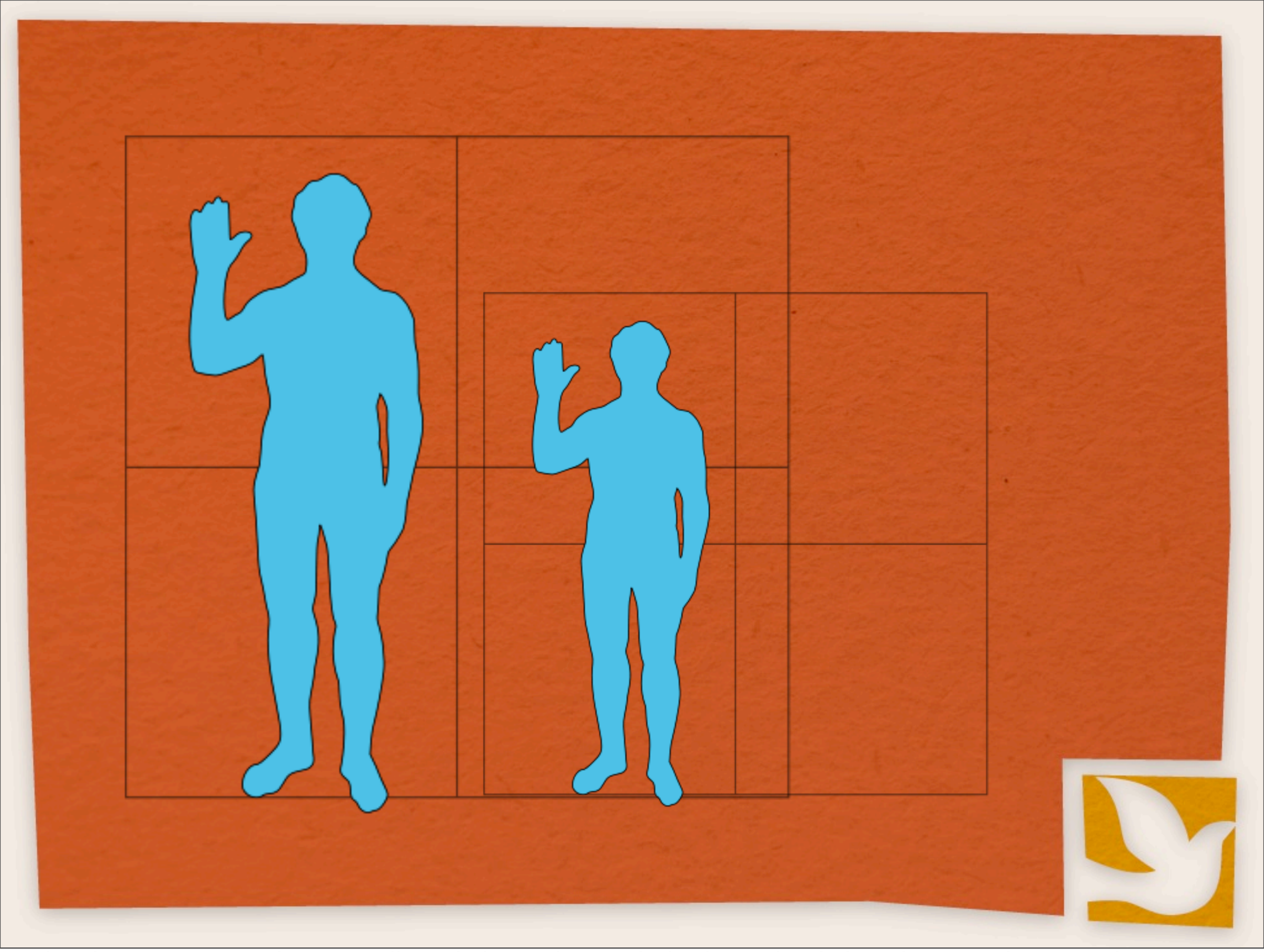
content vs. container

But simplified, we're looking at this. And NOW WE ARE IN METAPHOR TERRITORY. I think it's been so long that we forget that the printed word is sort of an abstraction, of sorts, of our thoughts, of storytelling and recordkeeping. But for a lot of people, **difficulty in managing metaphors is one of the things that makes technology complicated for them**. We are dealing in abstractions and it's unclear which parts are "real". I can tell you a digital file is real, of course it is, but I can't hand it to you without using both a container and a metaphor.

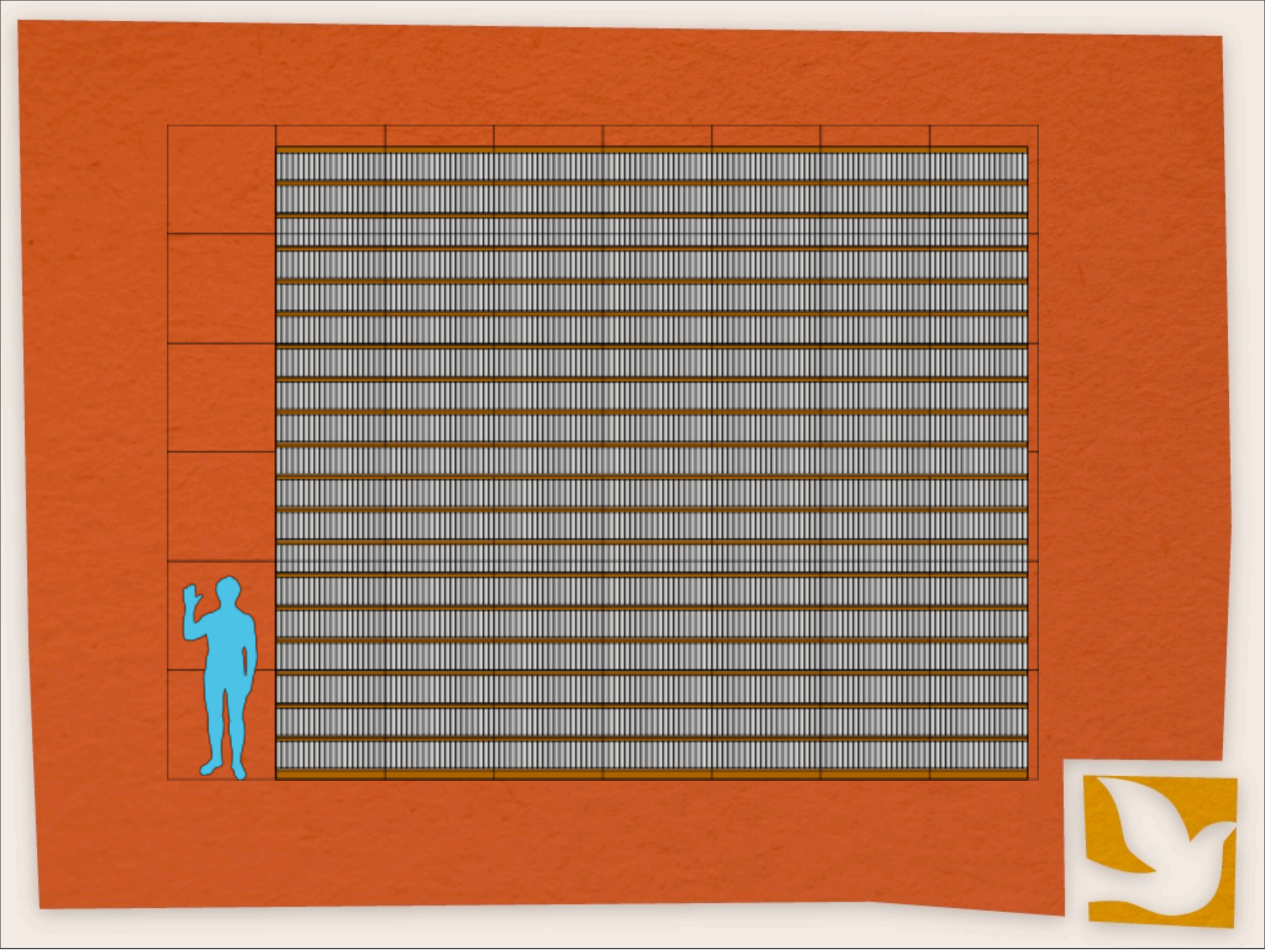
I really think the hardest metaphor here is perspective. An ebook is a book ACCORDING TO WHOM? And for what? We never really had to think about the "for what" part before. Books are for use. Right? But they’re also a product, and this is where things get weird.



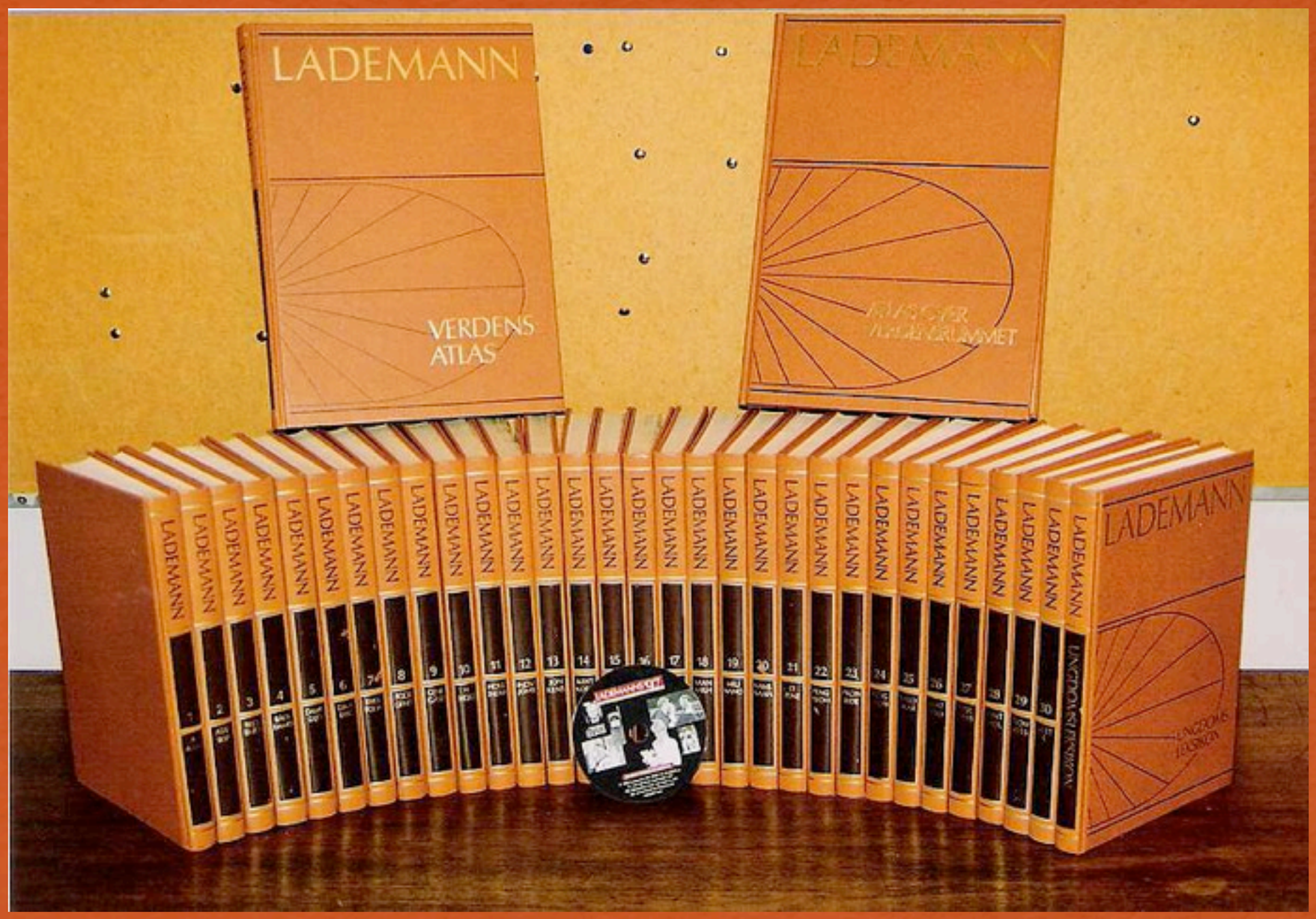
So here's a question. Is this man tall? And I know this is a little clumsy but let's pick it apart because it's important. Tall is a mostly relative assessment. Relative to both other things and some sort of platonic ideal. So is he tall? [click] how about now? I always think about this when I talk about something being easy, or being inexpensive. Relative to what? A guy can be tall relative to other guys, or relative to the guy he’s standing next to, or relative to a forest, or his family. There is no generalized “tall” without context. This is what I say about ebooks.



So here's a question. Is this man tall? And I know this is a little clumsy but let's pick it apart because it's important. Tall is a mostly relative assessment. Relative to both other things and some sort of platonic ideal. So is he tall? [click] how about now? I always think about this when I talk about something being easy, or being inexpensive. Relative to what? A guy can be tall relative to other guys, or relative to the guy he’s standing next to, or relative to a forest, or his family. There is no generalized “tall” without context. This is what I say about ebooks.



So let's dig into specifics. Look, there's our guy again. This is a basic diagram comparing English wikipedia in Aug 2010 as text when printed and how it would look as a bookshelf. 15GB of content. 2660 volumes, give or take. 15GB would fit on my key drive. When people get excited about ebooks, that's one small part of why.



And there's the weird scale thing. And the accompanying money thing. Both of these are things people buy. Print books less and less, but still...

When we think of "how much things cost" in the library world we're looking at both the publisher's cost and the margin, right? Books an debooks both take time to design, lay out, deliver, distribute, etc. Two sets of books costs more in paper, shipping, all the stuff. Two CDs costs the incremental cost of an additional CD and the time to copy it. Two ebooks costs the copying time and a vanishing amount of money [storage really is essentially free] for the space. And yet publishers need a revenue stream. We work with them, we work on this. We're not at a comfy happy place where everyone feels like they're coming out okay in the deal. We're not even feeling we agree on the rules yet.

ABC CLIO

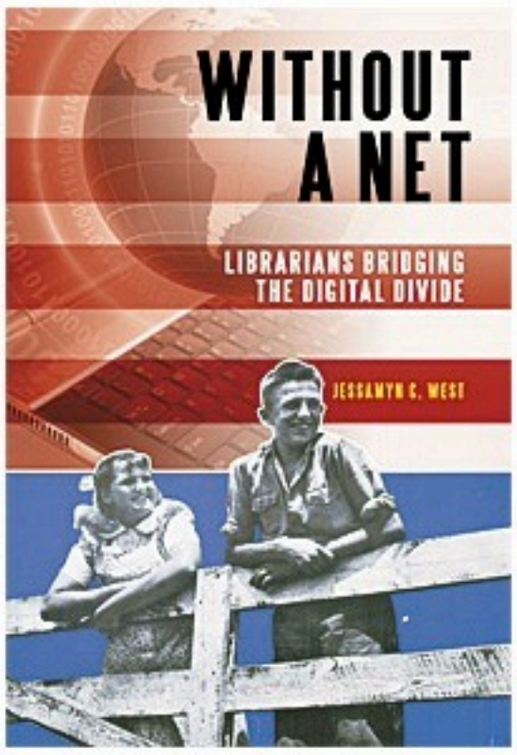
PRAEGER · LINWORTH LIBRARIES UNLIMITED · ABC-CLIO GREENWOOD · DIGITAL COLLECTIONS

HOME / HELP / ABOUT

Search Our Catalog | ADVANCED SEARCH | CART / CONTACT US

Topic: Library and Information Science / Adult Services (General)

Print Page



Without a Net

Librarians Bridging the Digital Divide

Jessamyn C. West

May 2011
Libraries Unlimited

Cover	Paperback	ISBN	978-1-59884-453-5
Pages	258	eISBN	978-1-59884-454-2
Volumes	1		
Size	6 1/8x9 1/4		

Print in Stock

$40.00

Add to Cart +

eBook

Call for pricing.

Add to Cart +

Description | Author Info | Related Materials

Jessamyn C. West teaches technology classes in rural Vermont, helps run MetaFilter.com, and is the editor of librarian.net. She coedited *Revolting Librarians Redux: Radical Librarians Speak Out*.

Just to give you a laugh, here's my book. When I asked about an “ebook” this is what they sent me. [this is not an ad, feel free to never buy this]

ABC CLIO

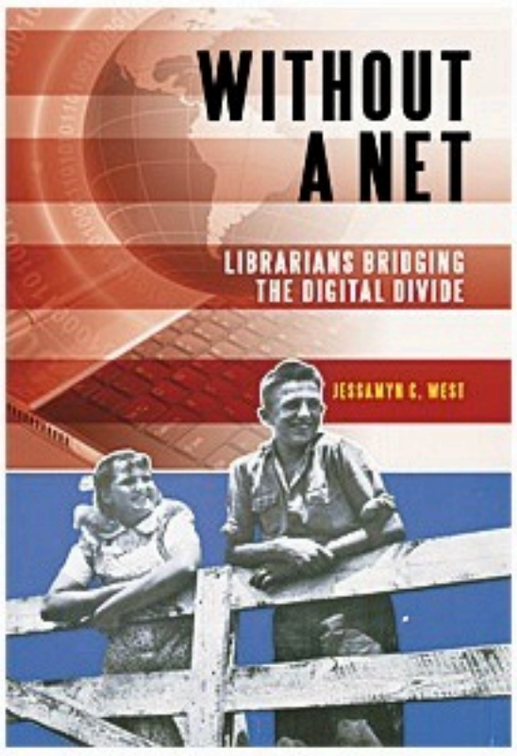
PRAEGER · LINWORTH LIBRARIES UNLIMITED · ABC-CLIO GREENWOOD · DIGITAL COLLECTIONS

HOME / HELP / ABOUT

Search Our Catalog | ADVANCED SEARCH | CART / CONTACT US

Topic: Library and Information Science / Adult Services (General)

Print Page



Without a Net

Librarians Bridging the Digital Divide

Jessamyn C. West

May 2011
Libraries Unlimited

Cover	Paperback	ISBN	978-1-59884-453-5
Pages	258	eISBN	978-1-59884-454-2
Volumes	1		
Size	6 1/8x9 1/4		

Print in Stock

$40.00

Add to Cart +

eBook

Call for pricing.

Add to Cart +

Description | Author Info | Related Materials

Jessamyn C. West teaches technology classes in rural Vermont, helps run MetaFilter.com, and is the editor of librarian.net. She coedited *Revolting Librarians Redux: Radical Librarians Speak Out*.

Just to give you a laugh, here's my book. When I asked about an “ebook” this is what they sent me. [this is not an ad, feel free to never buy this]

ABC CLIO

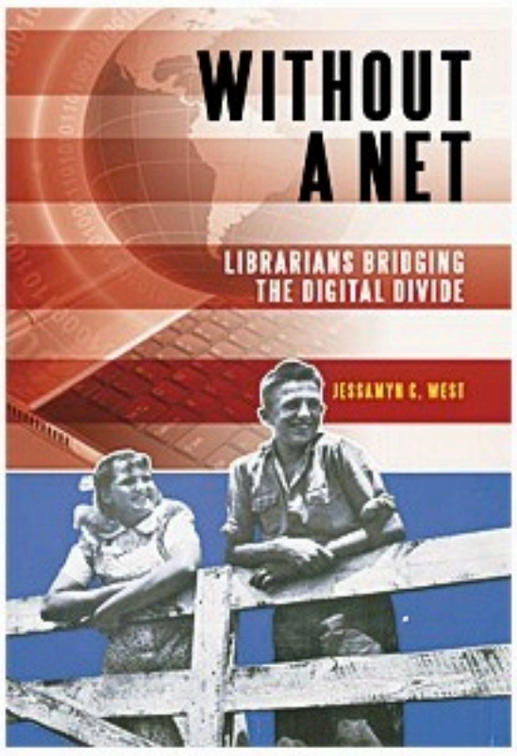
PRAEGER · LINWORTH LIBRARIES UNLIMITED · ABC-CLIO GREENWOOD · DIGITAL COLLECTIONS

HOME / HELP / ABOUT

Search Our Catalog | ADVANCED SEARCH | CART / CONTACT US

Topic: Library and Information Science / Adult Services (General)

Print Page



Without a Net

Librarians Bridging the Digital Divide

Jessamyn C. West

May 2011
Libraries Unlimited

Cover	Paperback	ISBN	978-1-59884-453-5
Pages	258	eISBN	978-1-59884-454-2
Volumes	1		
Size	6 1/8x9 1/4		

Print in Stock

$40.00

Add to Cart +

eBook

Call for pricing.

Add to Cart +

Description | Author Info | Related Materials

Jessamyn C. West teaches technology classes in rural Vermont, helps run MetaFilter.com, and is the editor of librarian.net. She coedited *Revolting Librarians Redux: Radical Librarians Speak Out*.

Just to give you a laugh, here's my book. When I asked about an “ebook” this is what they sent me. [this is not an ad, feel free to never buy this]

ABC CLIO

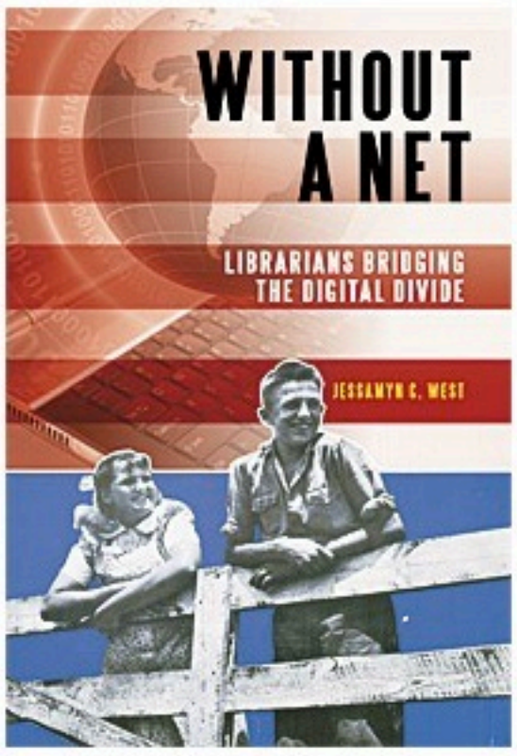
PRAEGER · LINWORTH LIBRARIES UNLIMITED · ABC-CLIO GREENWOOD · DIGITAL COLLECTIONS

HOME / HELP / ABOUT

Search Our Catalog | ADVANCED SEARCH | CART / CONTACT US

Topic: Library and Information Science / Adult Services (General)

Print Page



Without a Net

Librarians Bridging the Digital Divide

Jessamyn C. West

May 2011
Libraries Unlimited

Cover	Paperback	ISBN	978-1-59884-453-5
Pages	258	eISBN	978-1-59884-454-2
Volumes	1		
Size	6 1/8x9 1/4		

Print in Stock

$40.00

Add to Cart +

eBook

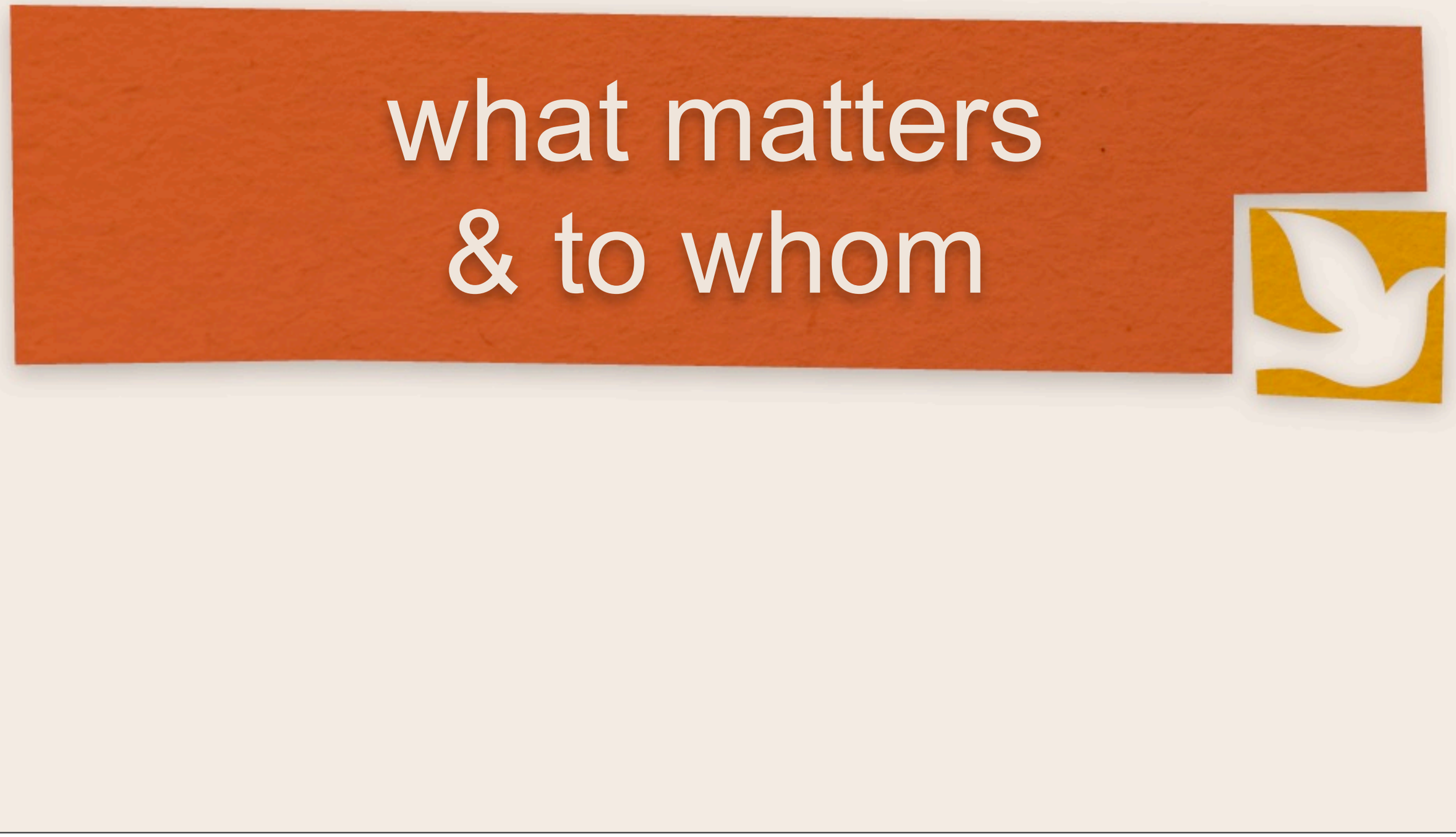
Call for pricing.

Add to Cart +

Description | Author Info | Related Materials

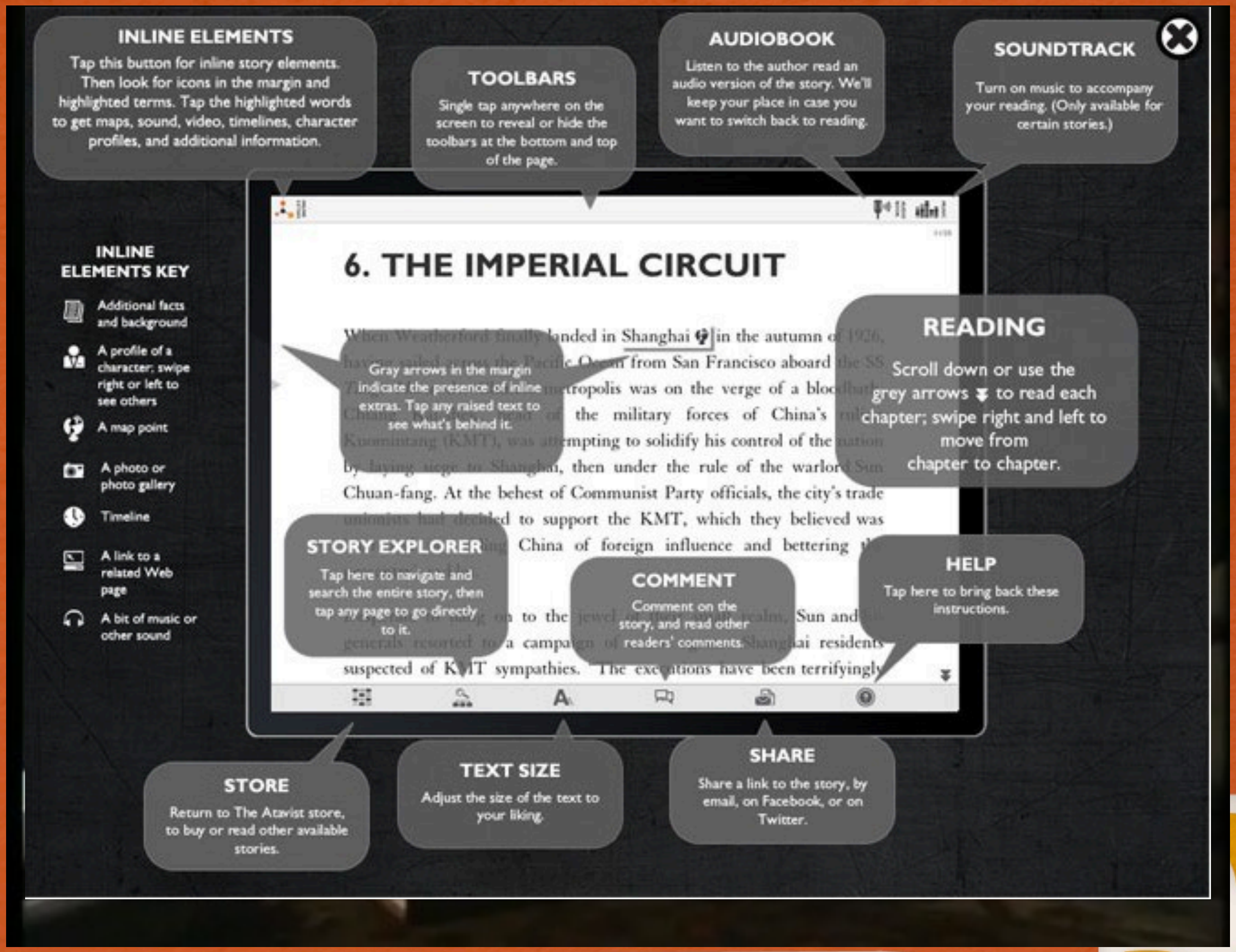
Jessamyn C. West teaches technology classes in rural Vermont, helps run MetaFilter.com, and is the editor of librarian.net. She coedited *Revolting Librarians Redux: Radical Librarians Speak Out*.

Just to give you a laugh, here's my book. When I asked about an “ebook” this is what they sent me. [this is not an ad, feel free to never buy this]

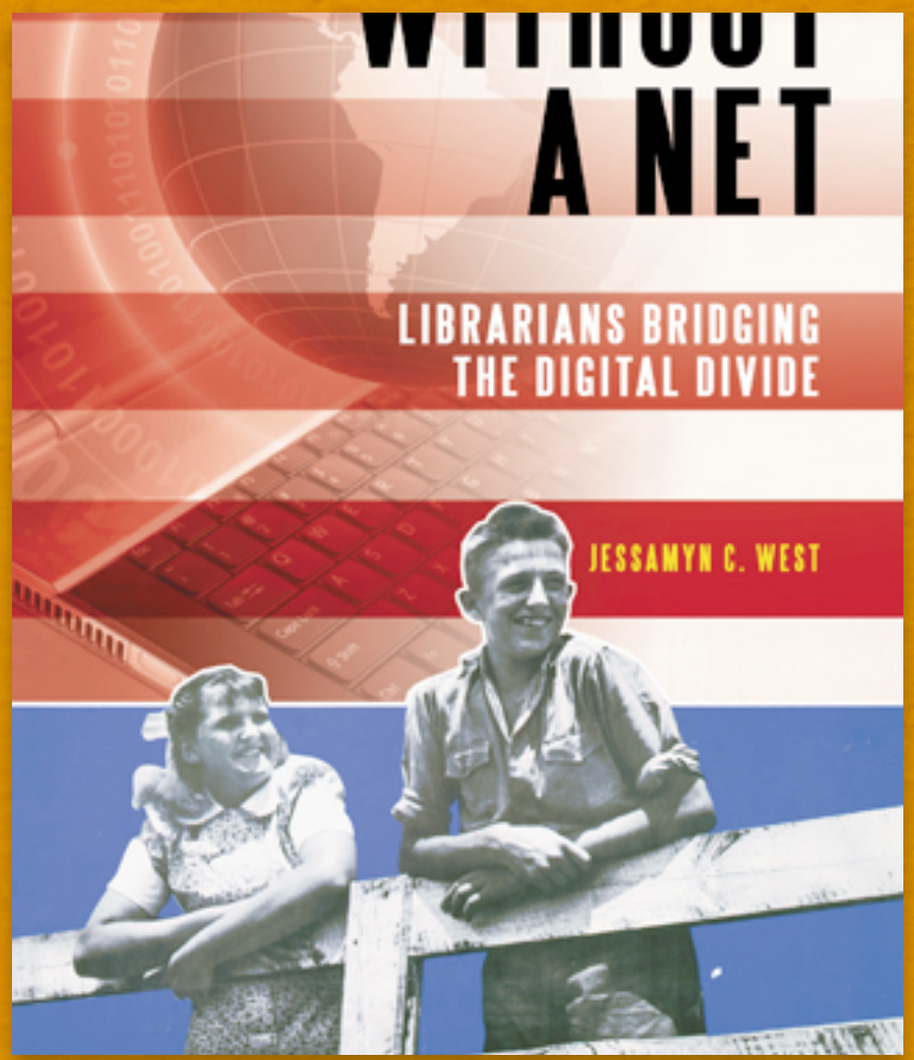


So as I've said I work where there aren't many ebooks, where I get to teach someone how a mouse works every week. I love my work. I so think, however, that one of the reasons this is all so complicated is because we're all coming at it from different angles.

The joke is that no one needs a manual for a book. But we do teach people how to read, and to comprehend. A lot. Teaching someone to use an ebook is teaching them tech comprehension in addition to reading comprehension. And yet the dump things are often so context insensitive you can't read an ebook about how to use your ebook device [sometimes you can]. I'll outline some other issues, from various perspectives.



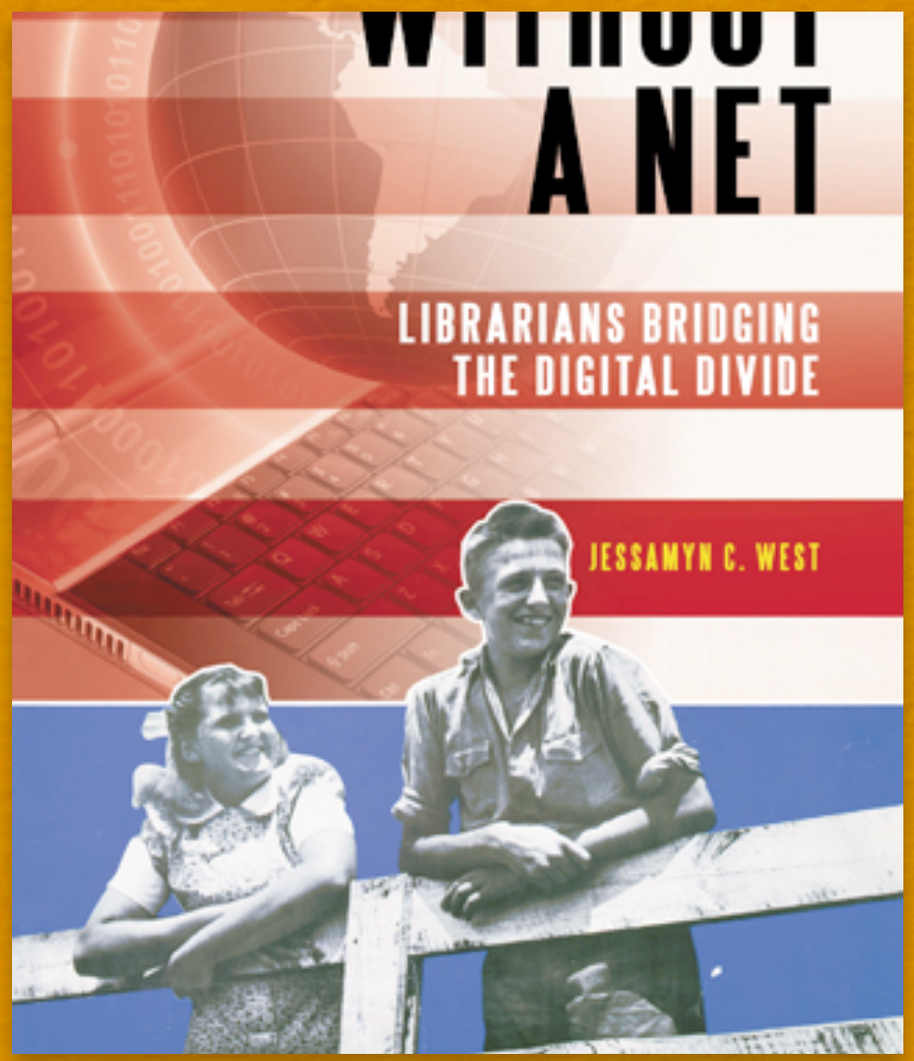
The joke is that no one needs a manual for a book. But we do teach people how to read, and to comprehend. A lot. Teaching someone to use an ebook is teaching them tech comprehension in addition to reading comprehension. And yet the dump things are often so context insensitive you can't read an ebook about how to use your ebook device [sometimes you can]. I'll outline some other issues, from various perspectives.



Authors

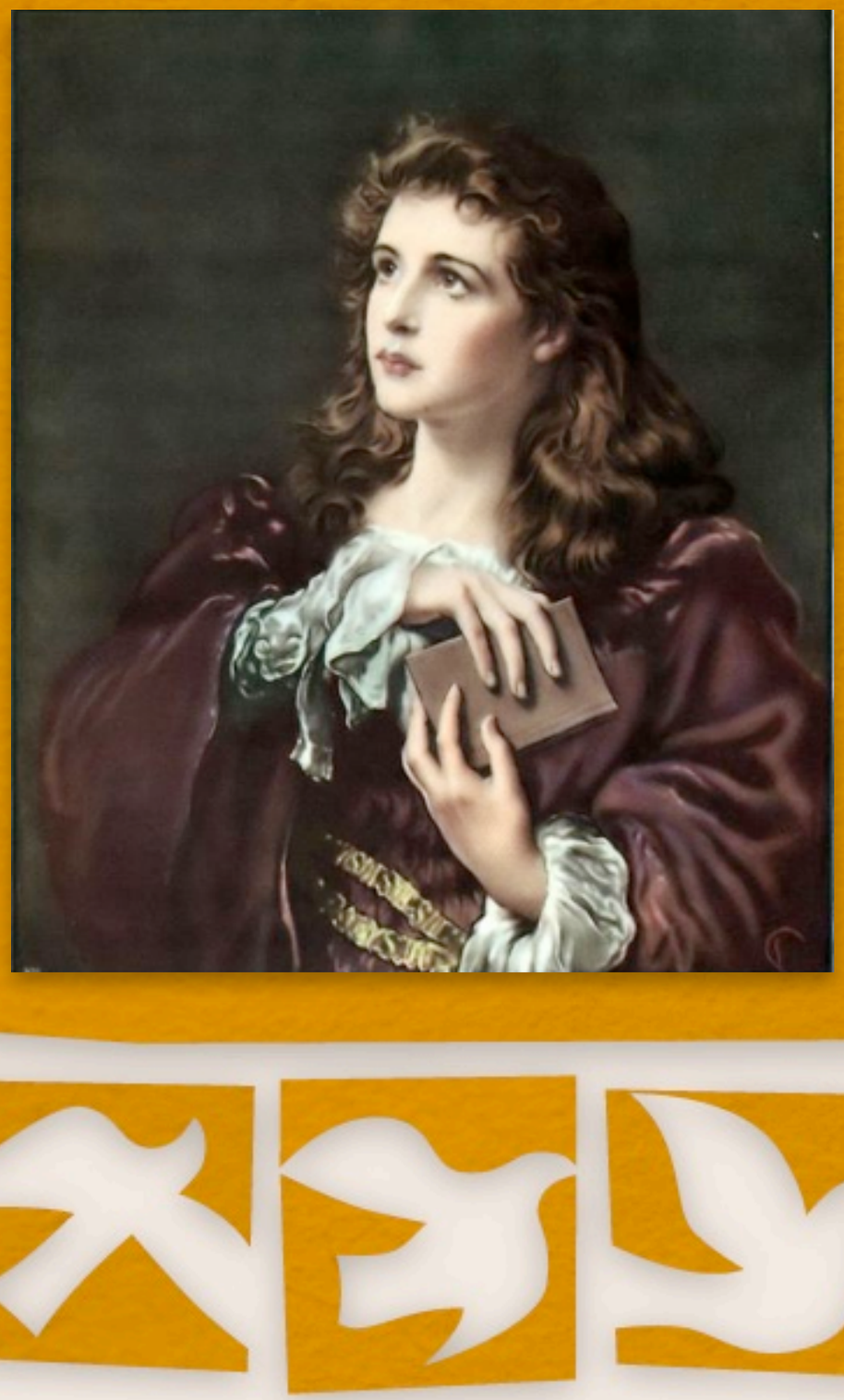
- ebook is code for “never goes out of print”
- ebooks mean “have no control over design”
- ebooks mean telling your friends “I don’t know” a lot
- ebooks are tough to sign
- many publishers don’t quite “get” ebooks

I said I wanted a copy of my book in every format, has not happened. No easy signings.



Authors

- ebooks mean a chance for more revisions & updates
- ebooks can let you skip the publisher
- ebooks mean true multi-media, not a book & a CD
- ebooks can be greener



Readers

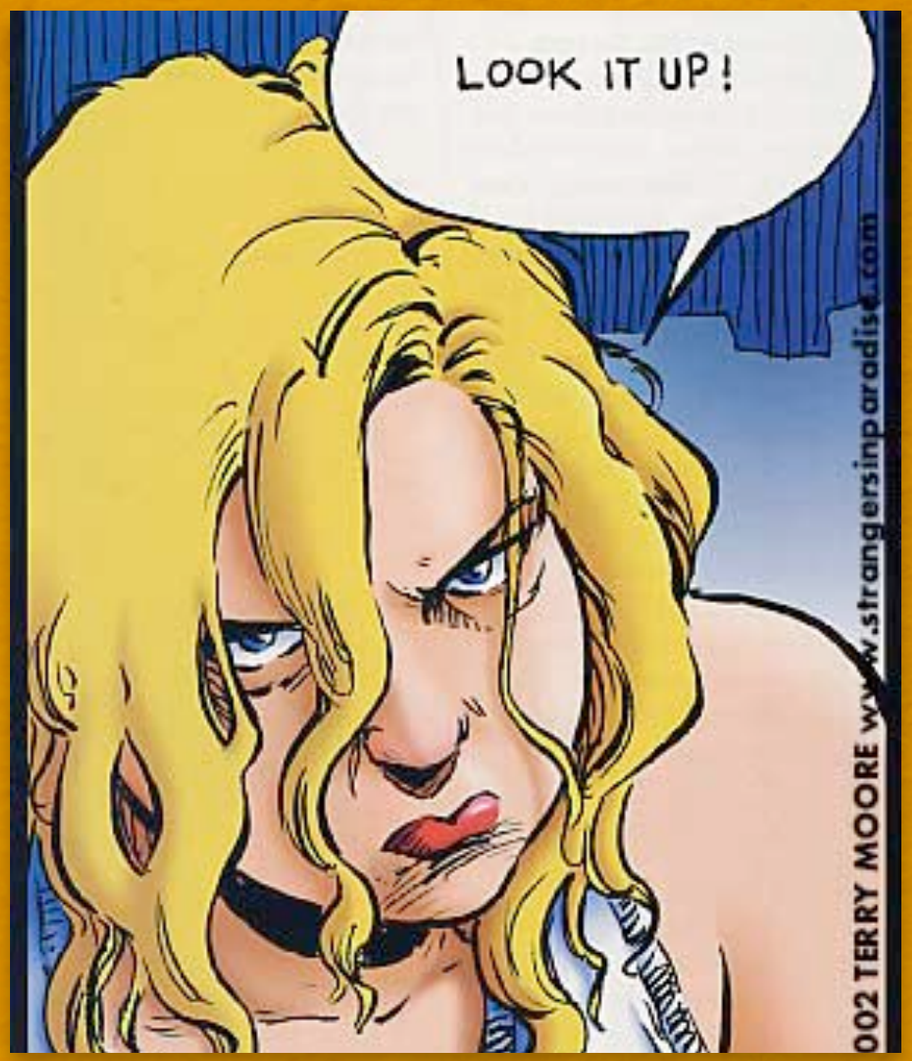
- ebooks require investment & tech understanding
- ebook formats change*
- special stores for different ebooks
- ebooks can be recalled*
- ebooks are tough to browse
- others can’t see what you’re reading
- reading in the tub sucks

Readers? No used market, no tactile engagement w/ text, gifts?

Readers

- can carry 10,000 ebooks at once
- lots of free content
- lots of pirated content
- books that are computers and vice versa
- cool factor
- any book can be large print or read aloud

Readers? No used market, no tactile engagement w/ text, gifts?



Librarians

- leasing not buying
- no right of first sale
- unclear privacy policies
- terms can change
- lending restricted
- “one user” model tough to adapt
- must choose vendors/ partners

librarians

Librarians

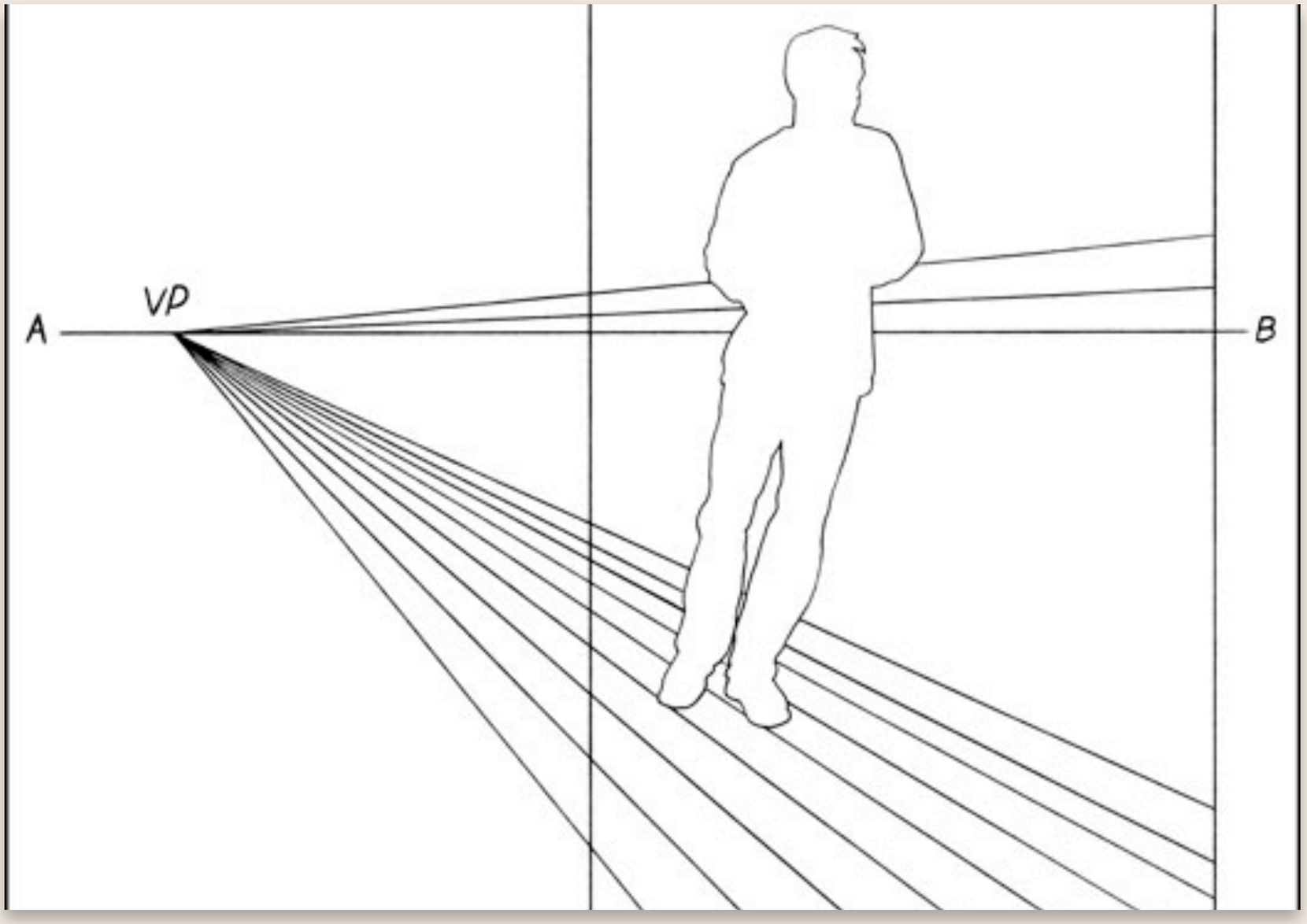
- ability to get granular stats on usage
- short-term purchasing for popular titles
- easy storage
- opportunity for much more autonomy
- user/patron-generated content possible

librarians

honestly?

- standards
- real business models
- stewardship of the new cultural environment
- cultivation of container & content

maintain perspective



carry on

Thanks!
<librarian.net/talks/maine11>