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Interactive Textbooks: What the Future Holds

June 4, 2018 | By Natalya Koehler
Educational Technology

Many educational publishing companies are creating digital textbooks, and like their traditional print counterparts, e-texts can be expensive. The common complaint about commercial textbooks is their high cost. Between 2006 and 2016, the prices of textbooks used in higher education increased by 73 percent (Senack & Donoghue, 2016).

What about interactive textbooks? These encompass not only content but also assist in teaching the material. An interactive textbook most closely resembles a software application, and while textbooks are already expensive, the addition of interactive content may result in a product that sells for even more money. That's the perception, anyway, but what's the reality?

Trend #1: Publishers take the lead

Let's look at an introductory economics textbook that retails in print form for \$250. Pearson recently partnered with IBM Watson to integrate artificial intelligence with the book's content. This digital alternative costs \$90, but the students can use it for a semester only.

A student collected the four adult male insects shown in the specimen jars. The student created this identification key to identify the insects. Examine and identify one of the insects in the jars. Click on the appropriate scientific name in the key to correctly label the specimen jar for the selected insect.

- Body length greater than 2.5 cm.....Go to 2
 Body length less than 2.5 cm.....Go to 3
- Body color grayish-brown with black spots.....Go to 4
 Body color bright green with metallic silver stripe.....Go to 5
- Body color metallic coppery red and green.....Go to 6
 Body color yellowish-brown with black stripes...[Leptinotarsa texana](#)
- Long black horn on head of adult male....[Dynastes granti](#)
 Long black horn absent on head of adult male.....Go to 7
- Head metallic green.....[Chryseina gloriosa](#)
 Head black.....Go to 8
- Long black horn present on head of adult male...[Phanaeus vindex](#)
 Long black horn absent from head of adult male.....Go to 9

On the other hand, the built-in A.I. allows the book’s content to be personalized. The software offers customized quizzes, instruction, and suggestions tailored to students’ personal needs (Roddy, 2017). In this case, we’re relying on publishers to provide appropriately designed interactive textbooks. But what if they don’t offer materials that fit students’ needs?

Trend #2: Instructors create interactive textbooks using authoring software

You can create your own interactive textbook by using various authoring software tools. In this case, the sky is the limit.



For example, you can use [Kotobee Publisher](#) to create your own interactive text by supplementing any reading materials that you have compiled on your own with integrated video, audio, 3D interaction, interactive animations, mathematical formulas, comprehension questions, swappable images, galleries and slideshows, and so on.

Trend #3: Professors create platforms for reusable, open-source interactive textbooks

The opposite of the commercial closed-source textbook is the open-source textbook, which means it is released under license that permits reuse.



For example, professors from The Ohio State University have designed Ximera, a system that links to interactive textbook content stored on GitHub and captures the resulting learner interactions with xAPI.

Trend #4: Interactive textbooks become stand-alone web sites

Forecasts that the process of designing ebooks will become more interactive (Agent X, 2009) have already been proven correct. A trend has been established toward more stand-alone sites and mobile apps taking the place of static viral downloads. The past decade has seen the emergence of a variety of creative ebook offerings made available in varied

formats by both publishers and e-tailers. These more attractive alternatives have quickly taken precedence over the scanned PDFs that have been so prevalent (despite the fact that they often violate copyright law) and easily obtainable since the earliest days of online posting and file sharing.

Considering these trends, what would be your choice?

References

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