Books locked, loaned or open?

Digital Publishing Forum
3 December 2009
“A library of a million volumes could be compressed into one end of a desk”

Vannevar Bush 1945
Michael Hart began Project Gutenberg
1971
We should work toward a universal linked information system....

Tim Berners Lee 1989
Larry Page and Sergey Brin start doing some digital library research
1996
And we still don’t know what a digital book is
And we still don’t know what a digital book is.

There are competing paradigms.
Google
The Amazon Model

• Digital books are eBooks
• They are ASCII files
• Dedicated reading platform?
• Illustrations?
• Colour?
• Design?
Digital Books are Digital Editions

- Digitize the book as a complete object
- Even the bindings
- Database the lot
- Digital books can be universally available as a service
- Digital books are accessed not ‘owned’
- Loaned
10+ million books in Google Books

- Public Domain 18%
- Out of Print 75%
- Commercially Active 9%
Most books published since 1900

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- Out of Print 75%
- Commercially Active 9%
Will the next 10 million books be Googlized?
Probably

- But that is not the end of story
- May only be the end of the beginning
The Google project is surprisingly retro

- A library of all the books that have been published
- Or a bookshop for all the books that will be published
- But will the next 10 million, mostly digital books, sit on the shelves in orderly rank with the last 10 million books published?
A library of the books that will be published

• But we don’t yet know what digital books can do.
• This library would be easier to plan if digital books were in all/most crucial respects like printed books
Does Apple have a view on digital books?
Apple appears to be more open to digital book innovation
Apple appears to be more open to digital book innovation

But you never can tell with Apple
Digital Books are Applications

• Digital books will respond to touch
• .....to orientation
• .....to location
• To the intention and circumstances of their reader/user and to

• .....other network resources
Digital Books are Applications

• Digital books are themselves computational resources and their future is open
Temerity in citing Apple as a standard-bearer for openness
What would it mean for digital books to be more open?