

You Are the Product: Amazon in the Publishing Industry

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Introduction

The intent of this paper is to expand upon the work of Squires and Murray by interrogating how and why Amazon has embedded itself in the publishing industry.

Amazon has aggressively moved into the publishing, purchasing and book reviewing sectors. Simultaneously they have begun agglomerating user data about the practices and discourses of consumers and publishers.

Amazon has grown so large and embedded within the publishing economy that Murray and Squire's model needs to be completely reworked, with Amazon as a digital platform situated at the epicenter of an increasingly dependent web of actors. This is demonstrated through a graphic depiction of Amazon-owned products related to its publishing wing.

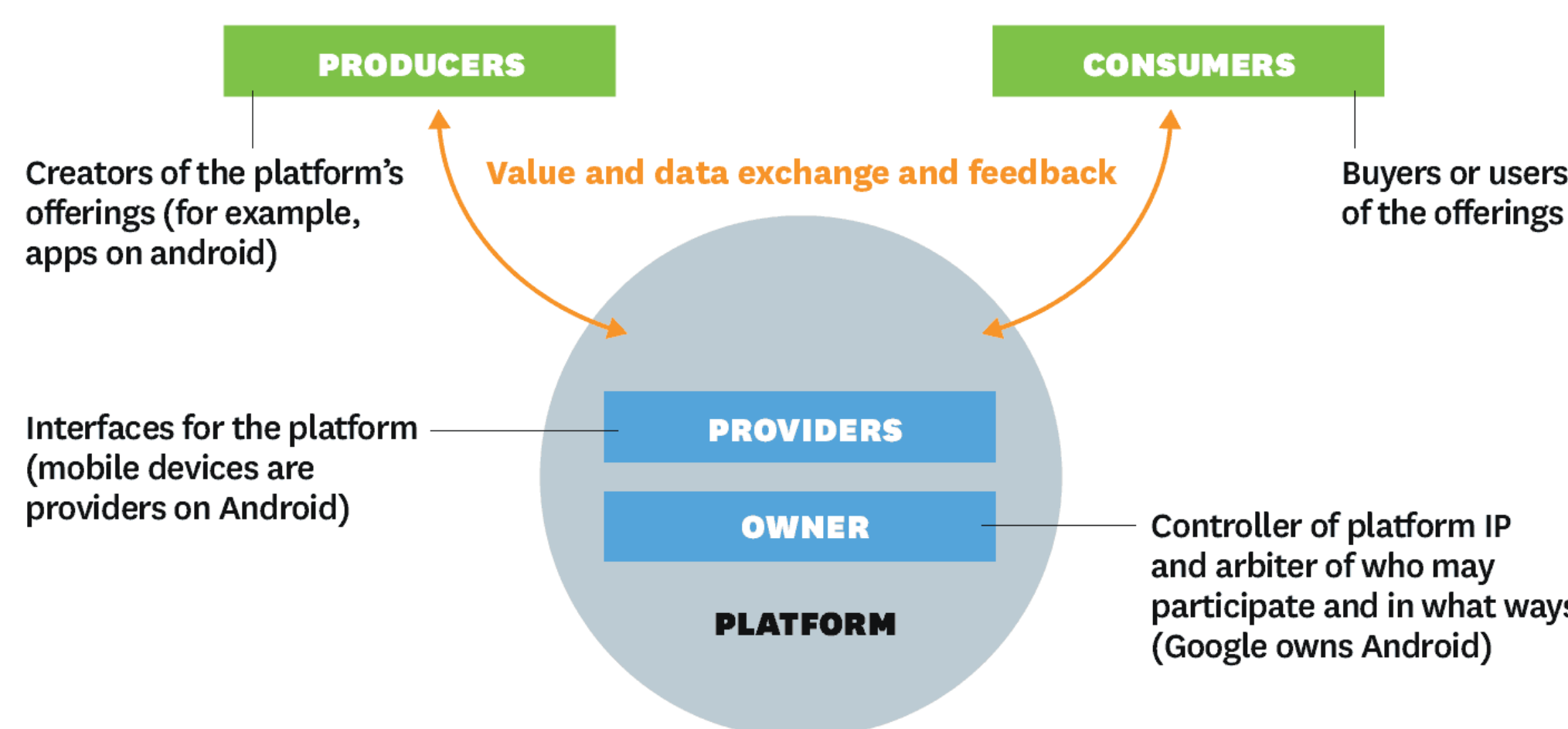
The entire publishing industry is now forced to work with Amazon in some manner, as either a marketer, distributor, advertiser, manufacturer or some combination of those roles, making Amazon the primary intermediary between customers and written works.

Discussion

What is an online platform? How do they work?

The Players in a Platform Ecosystem

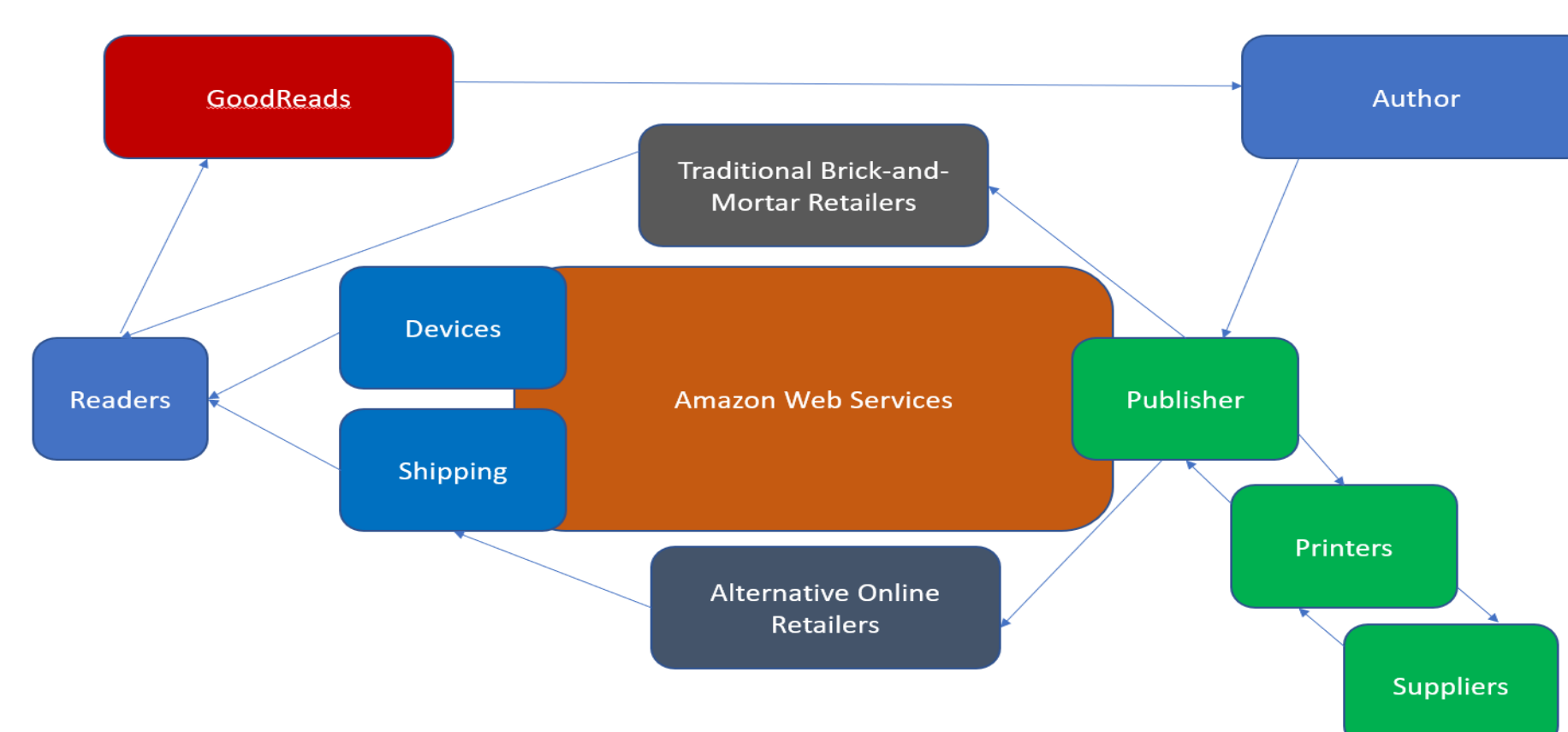
A platform provides the infrastructure and rules for a marketplace that brings together producers and consumers. The players in the ecosystem fill four main roles but may shift rapidly from one role to another. Understanding the relationships both within and outside the ecosystem is central to platform strategy.



Source Marshall et al. 2016

Online platforms provide a place for data and services to be exchanged. They record these exchanges along with all user data and sell that information to third parties. This is their revenue model.

What does an amazon centric publishing model look like?



Tomorrow may see Amazon or AWS change in fundamental ways, or even the appearance of a new player, which then requires this design to be altered. Understanding the publishing ecosystem in this regard is in many ways a Sisyphean task, never meant to be finished or completed but constantly in a state of semi-comprehension. This project hopefully offers a useful heuristic device.

Key Points

- Amazon is building an online publishing ecosystem that is expanding
- The goal of this is to gain a large market share and then to monetize user data
- User data and advertising is becoming a large part of Amazon's revenue

Conclusions

Information professionals need to be aware that the web 2.0 landscape is shifting rapidly in favor of large platform ecosystems. Understanding how these systems impact us and how they utilize our data for profit will be a key issue in the future that we need to be prepared to help our stakeholders understand.

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