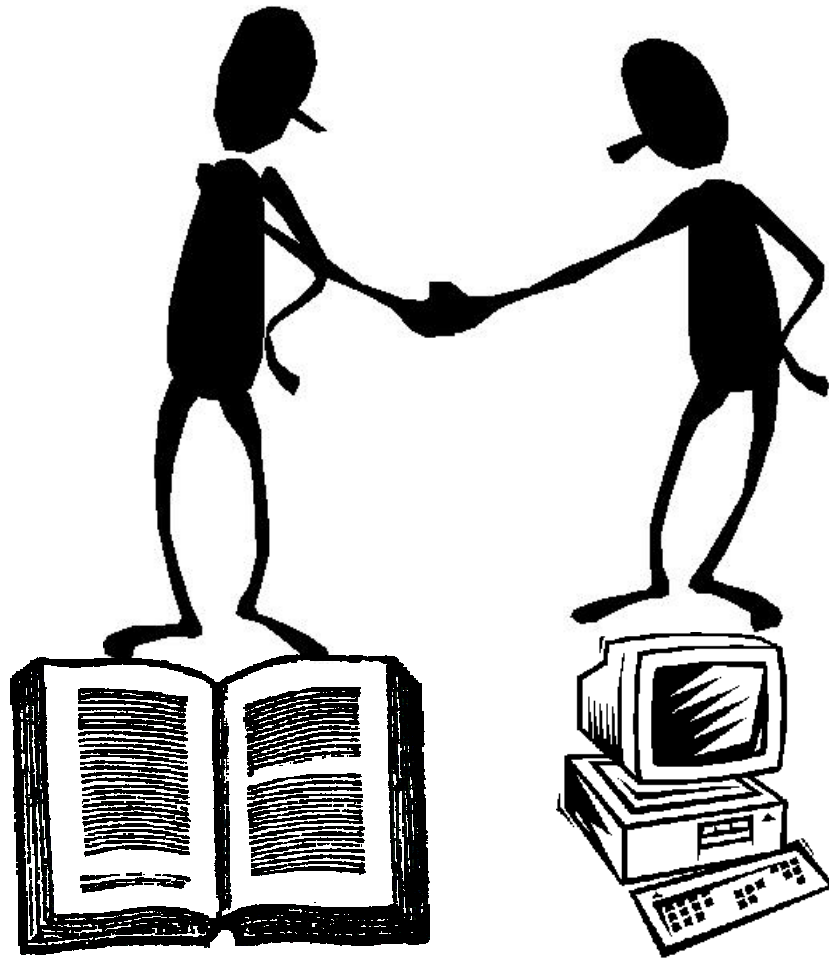

From printed books to e-books: (cultural) costs and benefits

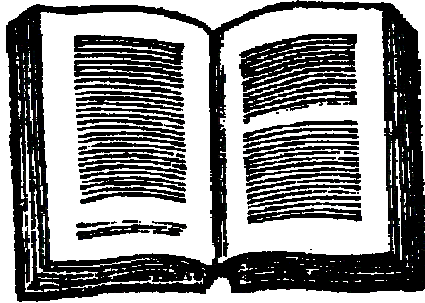
Gino Roncaglia
Università della Tuscia

An (almost) reassuring view...



printed book and
e-text are natural
allies...

An (almost) reassuring view...



Printed books offer:

- best reading experience
- unsurpassed ergonomics
- physical durability (under conditions)
- well-established models for rights management
- 'trusted' source

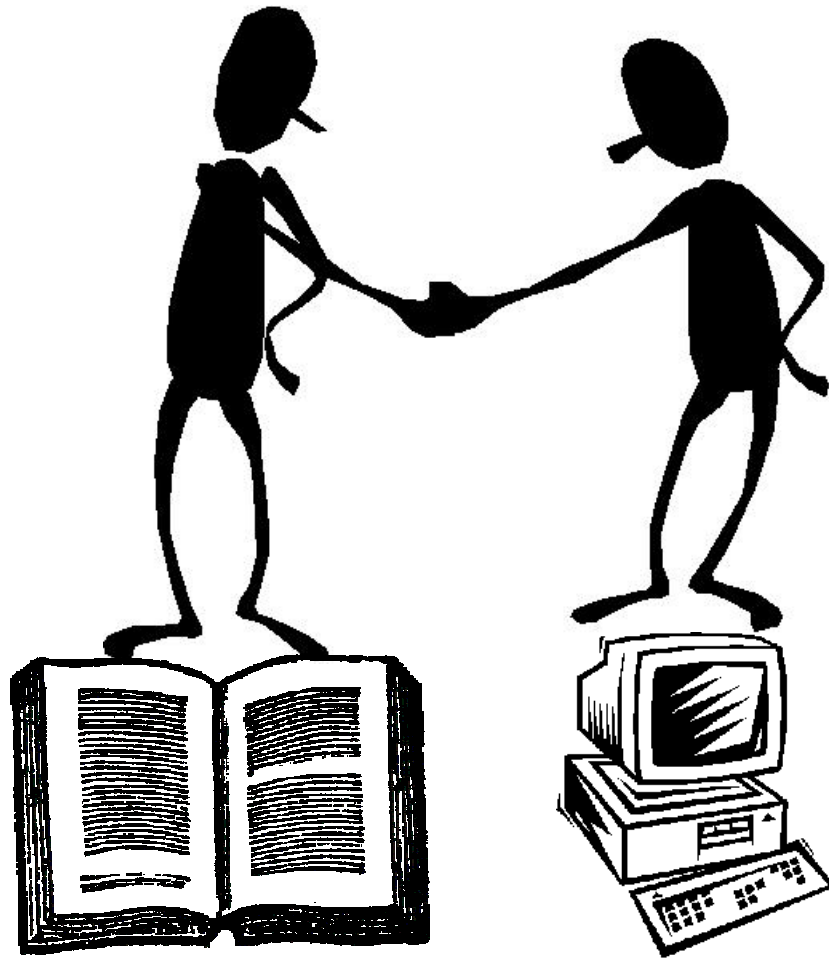
An (almost) reassuring view...



E-texts offer:

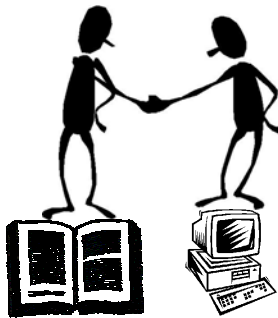
- tools for text manipulation, analysis, search, encoding...
- easy distribution and duplication
- few physical constraints
- digital durability (under conditions)
- multimedia integration

An (almost) reassuring view...



...the pros of one medium are often the cons of the other

An (almost) reassuring view...



a recent (interesting) example...



The e-book threat...



e-books seem
both to stem
from and to
threaten this
alliance

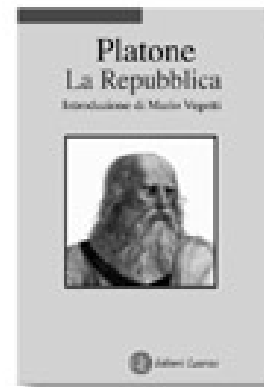
What is an e-book?

- Four wrong or only partial answers
 - ❑ e-book = electronic text of a book
 - ❑ e-book = electronic text simulating the layout of a book
 - ❑ e-book = portable reading device
 - ❑ e-book = oxymoron



What is an e-book?

- To get a 'good' e-book we need
 - ❑ electronic text (encoded, marked-up and with added metadata)
 - ❑ user-friendly (hardware) reading device
 - ❑ user friendly (software) reading interface



Is the e-book a threat?



- the e-book is a challenge to the ergonomic perfection of printed books
- the e-book aims to be an evolution of *our* (book-centered) cultural tradition
- if the ergonomic challenge is won, the e-book might actually pose a threat to *printed* books (not to books as cultural media)

Is the e-book a threat?



- But *there is* a real threat: the de-objectification of the book
 - ❑ due to the fluidity of electronic texts (and hypertexts)
 - ❑ due to the perspective of web-based e-books
 - ❑ due to software obsolescence
 - ❑ due to 'turn-it-into-ebook' tools
 - ❑ (most important) due to 'rent-a-book' policies of Digital Rights Management (DRM)