eBooks: Great Expectations Workshop – Statement of Interest

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Participant's Interest

Microsoft has a strong interest in, and has been a long-standing participant in, standards work across the range of Web and eBook technologies. Through the Internet Explorer team, we are deeply involved in web rendering standards. Within Office's eReading team, we are engaged again on the standards for ebook content. We have a long-standing interest in the accessibility of both content production and consumption tools. We also have a long history of delivering our work with support for a broad set of the world's languages.

Personally, I bring experience from building the original Windows Media DRM, delivering advanced OpenType typography and Math features in Office, delivering fixed format output from Office as PDF and more recently engaging with the epub 3+ working groups.

Point of View

The eBooks ecosystem is best served by tight alignment of core rendering between web standards and ebook standards. While there are ways in which ebooks have unique needs, we should use these to push the web standards forward and resist the urge to get out ahead of them.

As the ebook ecosystem grows, we seem to be at a moment of divergence among the various rendering engines. This is familiar from the browser world. Diverse, rich content will flourish best when rendering across systems is predictable. What are the next steps we need to take to help support this for the apps we call rich books in the execution environments we call reading systems?

DRM is clearly a requirement at the moment for many participants in the ebooks ecosystem. While the use of DRM may diminish over time in some consumer scenarios, it seem to have legs for at least many education and library scenarios. I am optimistic that in getting clearer definition of the problems that we as an industry need DRM to solve, we can apply appropriate technologies and business structures to them.