Amazon Kindles finally support the ebooks everyone else sells, sort of

This weekend, a report from *Good E-Reader* seemed to suggest something truly wild. After 15 years, Amazon was going to finally bow to competition and support the ePub ebook format used by the wide majority of online bookstores, publishers, and competing services. But it turns out Amazon isn't going to natively support the ePub format. Instead, per an update to Send to Kindle documentation, the Amazon Kindle will soon support using the Send to Kindle function to convert ePub files into an Amazon-specific digital book file format.

We were so close! And it's wild because we've been this close, and also this far, since the Kindle and the ePub file format both launched back in 2007. Sony, Barnes & Noble, and other e-reader makers were quick to support ePub, the primary technical standard for the International Digital Publishing Forum. Amazon elected to support other file formats, including .Mobi, which it acquired along with the French company Mobipocket in 2005, and .AZW, which is basically an Amazon-branded version of .Mobi.

What this has meant in practice is that, for the last 15 years, if you wanted to put an ePub file on your Kindle E-reader, you had to first convert it, usually using the very powerful but very frustrating and ugly Calibre software. It was a fine workflow, but it has felt more and more annoying over the last few years.

Publishers are now more regularly selling ebooks directly to consumers, often for less than Amazon, Rakuten, or Barnes &

Noble might charge. Smaller publishers have even made it something of a selling point – as authors will sometimes get a larger piece of a sale direct from the publisher than they might from a larger digital bookseller, so you can better "support" a favorite author by purchasing directly from the publisher. But where you can pretty quickly get those ebook files on an e-reader from Kobo, Barnes & Noble, Pocketbook, or one of the wide range of e-readers coming out of China right now, you still needed to stop and do the Calibre step if you wanted the same book on a Kindle.

Now, it will be a little easier to get an ePub on a Kindle. Amazon is going to allow you to send ePub files to your Kindle via the Send to Kindle function, and it should then convert the ePub into a KF8 file. Which, while technically an ePub is not *really* an ePub because it is only supported by Kindles.

I don't know about you, but I sort of feel like Amazon is putting up a big Amazon-branded glass wall between me and the content just so I never forget the Amazon of the e-reading experience. Which is one of many reasons I'm enamored with Android E Ink tablets. I can just put the ePub on the tablet without jumping through Amazon-branded hoops to do so.

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