



Digital Magazines: Bonnier Mag+ Prototype

By Björn Jeffery on 2009-12-17
in

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This conceptual video is a corporate collaborative research project initiated by Bonnier R&D into the experience of reading magazines on handheld digital devices. It illustrates one possible vision for digital magazines in the near future, presented by our design partners at BERG.

The concept aims to capture the essence of magazine reading, which people have been enjoying for decades: an engaging and unique reading experience in which high-quality writing and stunning imagery build up immersive stories.

The concept uses the power of digital media to create a rich and meaningful experience, while maintaining the relaxed and curated features of printed magazines. It has been designed for a world in which interactivity, abundant information and unlimited options could be perceived as intrusive and overwhelming.

The purpose of publishing this concept video is first and foremost to spark a discussion around the digital reading experience in general, and digital reading platforms in particular. Thus, we would be more than happy to hear what you have to say regarding the concept and ideas expressed in the video: the magazine reading experience, digital browsing, text versus images, as well as hear about your own digital reading experiences and thoughts. We are all ears.

Follow the discussion in the comments below, in [our blog](#) and [on Twitter](#).

For additional information, please contact Sara Öhrvall at sara [dot] ohrvall [at] bonnier [dot] se (+46 (o) 8 736 4009) or Pontus Schultz at pontus [dot] schultz [at] bonnier [dot] se

Comments

Quite interesting. Looks like an e-reader coming from Apple ! One missing element is audio. Not only to be able to link audio and video content to the text based one, but also to remedy the reader's frustration when he/she has to interrupt the reading (get out of the train, change underground line, etc). Also, in order to make it accomodate more conveniently in the bags, pockets, etc. and to protect the screen, I would recommend to study a foldable version (having 2 closely joined screens is certainly mechanically feasible). Last, don't forget the note functionality, very precious to all readers.

Jean-Paul Bélud, December 21, 2009

Very interesting products. In my country many consumers will be have bay this reader. If you have a example version could you sent me info to the bayed one Mag+ and test. I give you the phone to the contact and mail. +48696457606

Arthur Kluska, December 21, 2009

@Sarah Öhrvall. Thank you for the clarification. As I said, I was confused and so was my comment ;) In a muddled way I was also trying to comment on the ideas regarding the reading experience; I believe it's important to think of your prototype as not limited to a specific device with specific dimensions. I have little knowledge about the software/protocol of these readers, but hopefully ideas developed with the advent of this new technology can be exported to a web/browser and other environments as standards evolve and vice versa. I also feel @zeroinfluencer is referring to a very important aspect of the (shared) reading experience. Magazines are objects often shared by or passed on within a group (a family, dentist visitors, workmates ...) The interface could contain elements to facilitate this. To share notes, comments, bookmarked pages and so on. Possibly with some kind of 'onion-skin' interface, so I can read it at different levels (of personas) and the magazine can be given a patina.

Fredrik Jönsson, December 21, 2009

WONDERFUL and perceptive points made in this video. Please allow me to introduce myself. I'm the CEO of CurtCo Media, publishers of Robb Report Magazine here in the US. We have 10 other international editions in countries such as China, Brazil, Russia, etc. Robb Report is the Journal of Connoisseurship for the most affluent audience in the world. We would be very pleased to help your project in any way. We have many readers that would be willing to pay for the privilege of being beta users of such a ground breaking device. We also have club members that we would want to purchase the device for..... Please feel free to contact us, in our headquarters office in Malibu California (310) 589-7700, bill

Bill Curtis, December 21, 2009

I didn't look through all the comments to see if anybody already have said this. I have two suggestions
1. Switching from portrait to landscape viewing should not be done by tilting the screen. Sometimes you want to lie down and read lying on the side. Then the text would go in the wrong direction. It would be better to have a simple button, like the one that turns on and off wireless connection on

laptops. 2. I like that thing about magazines and books that you have two pages and that you can close the book or magazine to protect the content. Two opposing screens that you open and close like a book, would more properly simulate real books and magazines.

Helena Karlfeldt, December 20, 2009

Wow! What terrific design. So much to comment on... One of your readers posted a link to a similar Sports Illustrated concept. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ntyXvLnxyXk> At 1:08 mins into this clip they demonstrate what they call their "Flip View". When watching the Mag+ I got a sense it may get claustrophobic if I weren't able to see beyond the edges of the article (like the Sports Illust. Flip View), yet I still liked the way the articles went right to the edges. May I suggest... by dragging two fingers from the top the view zooms out the further you drag your fingers down the page. When you've zoomed out to where you're comfortable you can scroll left/right, then click on an article to zoom back to full page. I'm running out of room in this comments box. I'll continue on my blog: <http://planetmat.blogspot.com/>

Mat Brady, December 20, 2009

Awesome! Let me know when I may buy one!

Lars, December 19, 2009

Great presentation and not difficult to see how much better an experience like this is when compared to current mag / newspaper forms. However, I do tend to agree with a few comments above on how far to stretch in conceptualizing what the future looks like. Investigating content creation is important. In a digital world where users demand some level of autonomy, purpose and ownership over the places they engage, what's being offered here? Where's the sense of community or opportunity to impact direction that spotify offers with playlists or twitter offers with its API, hash tags etc. Investigating the role video could play should also be a consideration - for some/most, a much easier form of media to consume that creates a better visual experience. Perhaps bite sized summations of the article in addition to headline/sub headline copy. With the investment and time execution of the idea will require, stretching out further probably makes sense. I'd also suggest considering what kind of additional value magazines and newspapers could deliver their audiences in the future. Lines are becoming blurred with some many forms of media, and to make it truly viable a subscription and ad based model may not entirely produce the right margins. Single hand keypad operability could also be going against a learned experience many users appreciate with PC's, laptops and mobs (mentioned here when I blogged about it: www.pholsgrove.posterous.com).

@pholsgrove, December 19, 2009

I forgot to mention this in my previous post. You need to be wary of the eye strain from extended reading on a super glossy screen. I am very critical of the drawbacks (extreme reflections, eye strain etc.) from super glossy screens that have been ignored by most of the hardware vendors. My earlier blog post about pros and cons of matte vs glossy screens can be found here: <http://www.mobileforesight.com/2009/08/criticism-super-glossy-pc-screens/>

Jonas Lind, December 19, 2009

@steve. Thank you for your interesting thoughts about advertising in digital magazines. Our research insights show that ads in digital magazines could be very immersive and we've seen a very positive response from readers as they value ads in magazines much higher than on web sites (less interruptive and a more important part of the magazine content). Would love to discuss more about your

experiences:)

Sara Öhrvall, December 19, 2009

@Fredrik Jönsson. Thank you for your comment (and that you find the presentation engaging:). Just to clarify. We are only prototyping the reading experience, the actual digital magazine, not the hardware device. The project is focused on developing the content that will be sold in the colour e-readers to come. We are not advocating exclusive content to exclusive devices. In 2010, the market expects the arrival of approximately 52 (!) new e-readers. We are building a digital magazine prototype so that we can be flexible and sell our products on different devices of different sizes from a variety of suppliers. We will sell our products on smart phones, tablet PCs as well as netbooks, all of them will be as interesting platforms for digital magazines as the much hyped e-readers:)

Sara Öhrvall, December 19, 2009

While I find the presentation engaging (especially if comparing to the SI fake hands – so funny! – video) and the UX work very impressive, the product makes me really confused; From reading Sarah's comment below, the idea seems to be that I am buying a tablet only to read Bonnier's (and/or licensed) magazines. Now, the extension of that would mean that an avid magazine reader like myself will end up with stacks of Readers on the coffee table, as more publishers will follow?! Are there now any ideas on how the software/protocol relates to current web and/or browser standards? I can't help but feeling that the industry is trying to create tie-in products/platforms to fend off small/independent players eating market share. (The monetizing model – which is not much discussed here – ultimately more important than all the 'shock-and-awe' UX.) Is that the right approach? I think I'm not clear on how these Readers relate to the Internet. At the same time as they are 'closed' environments they contain elements of, and connect to the Internet. How do they 'give back'?

Fredrik Jönsson, December 19, 2009

I have been publishing digital magazines for the past two years and have found the proprietary platforms to be too expensive and usually poorly conceived. Did you take a look at the Sport Illustrated tablet? <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ntyXvLnxyXk> Developed by Wonderfactory, it provides another good illustration to support your points and would also be a no brainer to encourage people to switch to digital readers. I found that after an initial scepticism readers were happy to consume their digital content in an eMagazine, provided it was no more than a 10 minute experience. The business model is simple that of strong engagement, although advertising does not fit well with eMags - the click through rate is much less than conventional web advertising. This is because the magazine environment provides a more relaxing way of consuming a feature and whilst in this state most readers don't want to interrupt this by being sent to a company's website (away from the page). After trying all the page turning platforms, we found that the slide/scroll method is by far the most natural to use. No gimmicks, just the easiest possible method to read an article and engage with the multimedia on the page.

Steve, December 18, 2009

The "Warming the Atoms" screen scrub is a superb evolution of User Interaction which dismisses the mouse mentality. All manners of timed screen tapping, rubbing, stroking and caressing would open up a richer experience for a 'reader' and in turn inform the range of information that is appropriate for tablet/tableaux productions. Addressing a 'magazine' as a catalyst for gestural interactions starts to address how print based products exist around us - how we leave them on tables, tuck them into our bags, pass them to another person. They are messy social objects - unlike a laptop, phone or iPod which are very much still deemed as private personal spaces.

zeroinfluencer, December 18, 2009

This is amazing. I love the simplicity, the big images. Also the concept of package - limited length is GREAT! I would buy this kind of magazines!

Pece, December 18, 2009

Great. You are really on to something in your vision to re-create the visual experience of a high-end glossy lifestyle magazine. In a world dominated by real time chatter, a firehose of information overload, trashy celeb gossip, and fast sloppy news reporting there is a growing market for the opposite niche. There are plenty of people who still enjoy a calm, minimalistic aesthetic experience. A well crafted story, superb command of the written language, reflection, interesting facts, compelling arguments and beautiful photos. In a magazine, the limit in size and pre-determined format force authors to focus and concentrate. This is good for both quality and creativity, just look at the strict rules in classical poetry or the 140 character limit in Twitter. If the Mag+ is designed with stunning colors and excellent readability it will imbue the magazines you read with a sense of quality and importance that is lost on the web where everything is one click away. Think of National Geographic, Nature, the Economist, Condé Nast Traveller, and Vogue as the magazines you would read on the Mag+. More about this on my blog Mobile Foresight: <http://bit.ly/5ebKST> P.S. Don't forget the zoom function, I am near-sighted and prefer larger text, but I also want to zoom out to see the length of the entire article.

Jonas Lind, December 18, 2009

Great video. Although it is supposed to capitalise on the finite nature of magazines, for me it would make Feedly (for RSS) an incredible tool. I could catch up on my news whilst the other half struggles with broadsheet newspapers on a Sunday morning.

Mark, December 18, 2009

As editor of a print magazine I'm – first time ever – fascinated about the digital magazine progression. Right now, the Internet is taking some of our readers, but definitely without offering a substitute to print. Especially the so called »Internet-magazines« don't offer, what magazine buyer`s really look for: entertainment. Your idea does it! It gives the »reader« a real magazine substitute and much more. I do say this, even if I have to admit that Doug Damerst is right in his comment! Your idea points into the right direction, because your content is edited like a magazine and not just a huge collection of »unpersonalized« web-content. In doing it »the magazine way« the editor/publisher will be able to ask money for his digitalized content, without spending huge amounts for paper, printing and newsstand-distribution. That really can be a »first« in my eyes, as all the other paid Internet-content is more or less a hoax. Only the final question keeps me arguing: Will the new magazine be monthly, daily or real time? What does the reader get for his money? Please be careful, this is not an easy question, because you might take a lot of fun away in waiting for the next issue! Anyway, I'm very eager to see your idea (and/or the »Sports Illustrated« one) develop and I'm finally prepared to set my team of editors, photographers, videographers free, to put together the first ever »dive-magazine« on this new Apple-Tablet. Thank you! I just hope Bonnier isn't ready with theirs yet ;-)

Dietmar W. Fuchs, December 18, 2009

@ 8 armed pet: You've gotta be kidding me! It is just as easy to do with this, as it is with paper! Just pricier, that's all.

TheOldSchool, December 18, 2009

If you go towards colorscreen and not eInk, please make an option in the OS/SW for all text to be read as "white text on black background".

Harald, December 18, 2009

My suggestions comes a bit from left field and doesn't pertain to the interface (which I don't think can really be judged without personally using it). The device itself should be water-proof, as in, "oops I just dropped it in the bath tub and it's totally fine." Part of the experience of reading a magazine for me is not having to care too much about the product itself.

R.A. Ray, December 17, 2009

@fdqps: Exactly - we think the sense of completion is key to getting closer to a magazine experience. I spoke to @orvet yesterday, and he mentioned similar behavior within GTD. People like finishing things. @Johan Larsson: It's not real hardware in the video, although we intend to make prototypes that will work on a variety of platforms soon. @aspelund: We aren't keeping old formats, we are keeping and enhancing experiences. That's not the same thing. The whole point of the prototype is to show how new formats can capture the essence of magazines in a digital environment. We fully recognize that people show their identity in many different arenas - but this isn't trying to replace them. On the contrary, it is running parallel, and branches over when appropriate. The exact formula is yet to be developed of course, but publishing this first prototype is a part of that process.

Björn Jeffery, December 17, 2009

looks amazing! a few comments: 1. as someone mentioned above, the blurred out art behind the text of the article is somewhat bothersome. Blurry images will make the reader's eyes tired. When reading a magazine, I usually go back and forth to what I'm reading and the images attached to it, so I could see having to click on the image to get it to focus and then having to click back to continue with the article becoming a hassel. 2.the nice thing about a print magazine is being able to see everything on a spread: how long each article is, all the art. being able to decide how long it will take to read an article before you commit. but with this concept template, it seems as though the default zoom level gives me a claustrophobic feeling. not being able to see the edges of each page's content before i start might make me less apt to start in on one.

Denise, December 17, 2009

I publish a digital magazine (<http://www.givingcityaustin.com>) and I'm on the edge of my seat after watching this demo. I agree with the person above who said that maybe it lacks a suitable place for ads. I saw a BMW-looking ad in there but only because the demonstrator slid backwards. Let's not forget that ads are part of the pleasure of reading a magazine, too (Sept Vogue). And publishers sure like 'em. Other than that, I'm just not seeing many holes in this concept. Love that you've identified - and not ignored - all the things people love about reading mags. Love that it's lovely.

Monica Williams, December 17, 2009

If this device, if that's what you would want to call it, is actually implemented on a large scale level; a

great service would have been completed for the field of computer science. A great service indeed!

Howard Sueing, December 17, 2009

..."possible vision for digital magazines in the near future...." ...near?...what, 5-6 years?...don't be like Barnes and Noble with that pathetic "Nook" touchscreen that takes 2-3 seconds to respond and crashes every 20-30 commands...just make sure whatever is developed actually works before presenting it to consumers...

rrtzmd, December 17, 2009

Great work! Laptops are getting smaller, thinner and more easy to handle, touch-screens are getting better and all content online is seen as free-to-use. How do you see the laptop/mobile as a competition against this? best, Magnus

Social media marknadsföring, December 17, 2009

It's simply what I'm waiting. Let everybody develop and sell contents for the device and the success will follow.

Spataro - IusOnDemand, December 17, 2009

Great concept! Although the one page format seems limiting. Why not keep a 4 pager format which would allow more room for content and create a better user experience? That would also make the display of ads easier :)

Antoine, December 17, 2009

I think you have it almost nailed on the head there. My only thoughts are that maybe darkening the image would be better than blurring it (blurry images always make my eyes feel like they're out of focus) and that the sliding animations feel a bit too quick. I really hope this happens one day soon!

Alex Nelson, December 17, 2009

We are very grateful for your interesting input. Some thoughts and ideas about your comments: @Kevin Falvey: We envision a digital magazine that is so attractive that readers would like to pay for the product. We think it is fundamental to find a sustainable business model not only built on advertising. However, this is not our attempt to close our content from the web. We will continue to have web sites as a running parallel to these digital magazines. @Richard A Green: We see that some physical parameters in traditional print magazines will not enhance the digital magazine reading experience (as for example the page turning logic). Most important to us, has been to try to capture the essence of what people love in the print magazine reading experience, as the silent mode; a relaxed moment to myself immersed in great visual storytelling ☺ But you're perfectly right that this is one of the main challenges in transforming a beloved print product into a digital world. @pwikstrom: It doesn't seem like our magazine content is the problem, but rather the need to develop a new experience of the very same content. @Michel Wanger: We are waiting for Steve to call ☺

Sara Öhrvall, Bonnier R&D, December 17, 2009

I think you have some good ideas about a reading and browsing interface which doesn't get in the way, but the concept of a magazine as a stack of 40ish pages is surely dead (even if it hasn't stopped moving

yet). While you rightly eschew making fake paper, you're busy making a fake stack of paper stapled together. Pie menus are great. I like the idea of using them for a touch interface. but yours appear way too slowly. Don't let fancy animation get in the way of usability either! And kudos for a well produced video.

Richard Brooksby, December 17, 2009

I'm a designer and I think that you'll have done a wonderful job thus far, but the key to taking this to the next and being a major ball player. Is your prototype software and building not just a app store for it but a community and making it accessible. You've got everyone else attention now, so act on it. I do believe that you device could be the iphone of ebook readers for magazine and books. Your GUI is brilliant.

SKETCHKID, December 17, 2009

Brilliant adaption of magazine functions to electronic touch. Love the many sensational add ons too, such as heating up the content for drilling and jumping. And, of course, there are great possibilities for monetizing the product. However, one fundamental magazine experience needs to be included: a deeply satisfying and mostly serendipitous exploration by the human mind. A great magazine satisfies curiosity, a hunger of the mind which is impatiently pursued at a lightening pace and on an unpredictable path. As magazine pros we know this and our best print products cater to curiosity with easy and plentiful entry points and high speed messaging that strives to keep pace with fingers and minds. In short, your reader—for all its functions—is still too slow, too demanding of fingers, to please curious, passionate minds. Once that experience is delivered, then people will find print boring and your revenue models can become reality. You are getting so very close.

Doug Damerst, December 17, 2009

Lovely video, great work!

Ganda, December 17, 2009

Are we 'talking about' QUE proReader of Plastic Logic?

xap, December 17, 2009

I like the fact that magazine publishers are starting to look at the opportunities afforded by different mobile devices. The tablet or smartpad is intriguing - some of the challenges will be to get to a price point and mass market distribution that makes it attractive for advertisers / marketers - the smartphone is a no-brainer because it's already a mass media device but it has screen size limitations so cannot replica a magazine well although there are companies trying to do it. I also support the comments above that publishers need to really push the envelope and take full advantage of the features of the tablet and the UI/UX and that fact it's a mobile environment - it about location, contextual relevancy and personalization - if the approach is just to justify saving print in a mobile digital replica format - it will be a niche not mass market solution. The use cases for books, newspaper and magazine and the verticals within these main categories varies considerably so a wide degree of experimentation and testing is necessary to find business models that work

Colin Crawford, December 17, 2009

The tech is going to outpace the publishers and advertisers. In many ways it already has. Make the

publishing platform open, flexible and easy to use so the indie community can participate. Add search engine capability and get ad revenue from Google or Bing who would be able to push ads into the appropriate boxes in the layout

Bob Dow, December 17, 2009

One of the reasons I have been reluctant to purchase an e-reader is the current lack of ability to handle magazines and photographs. It might take me a while to switch over to electronic books, but I'd jump at magazines delivered in this format in a heartbeat. And, as a journalist working in print magazines for 10 years, I love that you've put so much thought and consideration into the core reading experience. Get this thing out there (and to the States) ASAP.

Steve, December 17, 2009

...photography is so critical to the future of media, I can't overstate how well it works to communicate ideas quickly and helps you navigate a ton of information. <http://fwd4.me/8g2>

APhotoEditor, December 17, 2009

Love the vid and the comments from @supergroobi. I do miss more thoughts/research on links though – What place does such webby features have in this format? Would I rub the device to see references and further reading?

@gustavsvensson, December 17, 2009

Very intriguing. I too, would like to hear the proposed business model. Also, how might this affect editorial workflow--would every article, indeed every issue, be an continually-updated work-in-progress? Kevin

Kevin Falvey, December 17, 2009

Excellent initiative by Bonnier and I think BERG have done a great job with the concept design. What I like about it is that it combines the best of both media, and doesn't force unique attributes of individual media on the other inappropriately (particularly like the fact that they haven't used the page turning technology which is not suitable for digital UX in my opinion). Good stuff

neilperkin, December 17, 2009

Just great!!! Please make a deal with Apple

Michael Wanger, December 17, 2009

So the biggest problem, I have felt, with e-book readers these days is that they're obsessed with attempting to replicate books on a digital level while still providing features. Instead of trying replicate physical books, you should instead try to replicate the book reading experience. Your group here seems to have grasp that idea. Hopefully you will extend it beyond the concept of magazine reader, since I am not a magazine person myself. But your concept model is the beginnings of what I perceive will be what the web and HTML was originally envisioned to be: A new kind of media where words, images, sound, and possibly video and other output sources work together to tell a story or provide information, rather than being necessarily separate objects embedded next to each other.

Nojh, December 17, 2009

Hi... While the tablet concept is very "Sci-Fi" there are some fundamental issues not being addressed with these products. Firstly this should not be a revolutionary design but an evolutionary design. An evolutionary design would use the best of the physical parameters of the printed book which is primarily the more natural resting in the hand of an opened book and the unbroken continuity of reading across two pages. In the case of a magazine it is a natural process to scan both open pages in order to select the information that one wishes to read or view. In the case of manuals and catalogs I know few people that prefer to view a catalog on-line vs a hard copy as the appropriate product variants are usually available on the opened pages which enables a better decision choise. While cost effectiveness may be an issue with these products it appears that the available software has caused the product packaging guys to ignore some basic human interface issues.

Richard A Green, December 17, 2009

Looks very fancy and the UI seems intuitive. But you are stuck in your old paper magazine thinking. It seems like the question has been "how to create a new platform for distributing exactly the same kind of content we have created during the last couple of decades?.." I believe the magazine biz is up for a transformation which is more radical than this. But maybe this is a process all old media has to go through before they learn how to master a new media tech. Good work though.

@pwikstrom, December 17, 2009

What is the business model for electronic magazines? I guess someone must be able to see increased revenues and cost savings compared to the current situation, but in the medium term at least I'm struggling. Doesn't what's shown in the film just increase the publishers' costs, because they need to create yet another format. It's not like print is about to disappear any time soon (or is that the plan?) so that cost will remain. I just get the feeling that by the time all of the investment has been done to make this film a reality, and switch enough readers on to it so that the cost of printing and distributing paper can be removed, someone will have worked out how to edit and package the internet to achieve the same thing on whatever new e-reader technology we will have by then. I'd love to find out what the business thinking is behind this. Anyone know?

Ian, December 17, 2009

very cool! very well done! was real pleasure to look at it! how far future we were taken? year? two years? three years? The device - what is the cost of that? Why only magazines? Why not the papers as well?

Andrus Vaher, December 17, 2009

@aspelund ...and it's foolish for anyone to cling to the web and the current conventions of online design, too.

Ian Betteridge, December 17, 2009

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