Christian Gruber

Dr. Fredell

English 449

9 May 2016

<div align="center">Digital Publishing: Removing the Need for Anthologies</div>

Digital books have become a commonplace addition to today's society. Through different technological forms—be it phone, tablet, or computer—people have grown accustomed to being able to access stores of information almost instantaneously. This ability to easily access information calls into question the purpose and usefulness of anthologies. Compared to a computer's capacity to search for and locate information from several different sources, an anthology seems cumbersome. A specific anthology is no longer as helpful as it once might have been in comparison to how beneficial any digital platform can be. Digital publishing has taken the initial reason for the creation of anthologies and completely negated it.

Graves and Riding explain that the creation of anthologies was initially justified "as a secure portfolio for short poems that might otherwise have been lost" (Graves and Riding 11). Throughout their whole argument and analysis on anthologies, this claim is their focus. Lesser known poems face the risk of being lost and forgotten if they are not produced on a platform that is readily available and popular with the consumer. By anthologizing poetry, publishers create poetry that is "as safe from loss as a drama or epic equaling their combined length" (Graves and Riding 11). Anthologies were created as a means of accessing poems, and the method of anthologizing dates back to the classical Greeks. Taking a look at the development and purpose of anthologies, it can be argued that they might never have existed if the digital book was always in existence.

People are often saying that what goes on the internet never goes away. This sentiment alone is enough to undo the purpose of the anthology. Anthologies were first created out of the fear that some poems might be forgotten. By putting these poems in a larger, easy to purchase collection, publishers ensured that these poems would always have a place in literary history. However, digital publishing does just the same thing. By creating a web-based access point for literature, digital publishing has ensured that everything that is published digitally will always exist and be accessible in some manner. Gone are the forgotten poems and their nameless poets. Digital publishing guarantees that they will live on forever.

Graves and Riding list a slew of problems that they find with translation anthologies. One of their main gripes is that once a translation anthology is put together by a publisher, it is made up of "poems that do not so much represent the poetry of the language from which they are taken as the taste for the public for whose benefit they are translated" (Graves and Riding 21). They explain that this is a common principle not just among translation anthologies, but anthologies in general. The publishers deem their work in anthologizing to be good. After all, they are taking poems that might have been lost to the annals of forgotten literature, and making sure that they are not forgotten. However, their selection shows bias. Instead of choosing to anthologize the poems that truly have a chance of being forgotten, they choose the poems likely to find favor with the public. This is a marketing strategy that aims toward selling a form of literature that is not as popular as a traditional book. To sell a higher volume of anthologies, publishers must make the anthologies appealing to those who are buying them.

Digital books are different in that a digital collection is almost entirely about personal taste. A person could be forced to purchase a full anthology in order to read the works of just a single author. Digital publishing ensures that this does not happen. On a digital platform,

multiple works do not have to be sold together under the guise of appealing to a broad audience. Readers are able to pick and choose what they want to purchase and download. Anthologies are no longer the only way of saving lesser known literature. On a digital platform, this literature has a higher chance of surviving because it will never truly go away. Publishers no longer have to force certain works upon readers that might not be inclined to read those works. Readers can more easily read what they want to without having to sift through other works.

Graves and Riding put anthologies into two classes, one of which is a personal collection. The value of this type of anthology "diminishes with the increase in the number of persons for whom it is made" (Graves and Riding 24). This is a problem that no digital book will have. E-readers on their own can be considered personal anthologies. Graves and Riding explain that "in some cases the publisher even allows the public to make its own collection" (Graves and Riding 30). In these instances, however, the publisher is always on standby as a mediator. With e-readers, readers have no one controlling what they can and cannot add to their collection. E-readers represent the works that a reader deems important enough to save and read. Because an e-reader serves as an anthology to the person to whom it belongs, it becomes a personal endeavor. Any two people are unlikely to have the same collection. The value of these collections run no risk of diminishing because they are created by one reader according to that reader's specific tastes.

The other class is the rescue anthology, "the value of which is primarily historical" (Graves and Riding 24). As previously discussed, digital publishing removes the need for this class of anthology. With digital publishing, readers and publishers no longer have to fear the possibility of losing written material and works. Anthologies were once created to keep literature from falling off the map. Digital books remove the need for rescue anthologies by ensuring that

the published works will always exist. The purpose of rescue anthologies, "to include as much material as possible," again calls into question what the reader actually wants to read (Graves and Riding 24-25). If rescue anthologies exist for the purpose of publishing as much material as possible, then any one anthology is going to contain literature that readers neither want nor enjoy reading. Personal anthologies are the clear winner as far as the reader's desires go. Digital publishing takes these two classes, makes personal anthologies easier to create, and cancels the need for a printed rescue anthology.

Graves and Riding also complain about the many silly anthologies that exist. If there is a poem about something, chances are it is in an anthology with a number of other poems about that same subject. Digital publishing eliminates a need for these anthologies. So much of internet browsing and purchasing is done through keyword and context searching. If a person wants a number of flower poems, a simple search would yield more beneficial results to the reader than an anthology of flower poems. No matter how extensive an anthology is, it will never be able to contain the amount of information that can be found on the internet. Anthologies are also not as easy to search and to manage content as e-readers.

The only way for poetry to earn its keep with publishers is through textbooks. However, the problem is that "poetry textbooks, unlike scientific textbooks, take at least twenty-five years to go out of date" (Graves and Riding 26). The lack of new editions constantly coming out means a decrease in revenue. Digital books can change this. As technology evolves, publications run the risk of being incompatible with older publishing platforms and vice versa. New editions and publications may have to come out in order to keep up with the technology. This is an opportunity for publishers to earn profit from poetry without being dependent on textbooks. E-books are relatively easy to produce, and it is not difficult to change their information to ensure it

fits the platform being used to display it. By coming out with digital editions, publishers are able to earn profit in a way they are unable to with print forms that can last decades.

Graves and Riding go through the creation, evolution, and purpose of anthologies. All of their arguments lead back to the idea that anthologies only became a successful endeavor because they were in print form. If digital publishing had always existed, anthologies would never have grown as they did. In fact, they might not exist at all. As digital publishing continues to evolve and become a more permanent fixture within literature and society, anthologies might well become a thing of the past.

Works Cited

Graves, Robert and Laura Riding. *A Pamphlet Against Anthologies*. New York: AMS Press,

    1970. Print.