

My Nifty Fifty Kindle (K3) Wishlist

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Note: In less polished form, these items were sent individually, long ago, to kindle-feedback@amazon.com. I fear they may have “fallen through the cracks.”

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Flaws & Rough Edges

1. Fix Your Inappropriate “Click to Magnify” Prompt

When the cursor is over an image, the prompt is wrong. It should read, "Click to magnify." Instead it reads, "Begin typing to create a note or click to follow the link."

2. Fix Your Inappropriate Clipping Limit Message

There is a clipping limit on blogs. After a certain point, when I attempt to clip an article from them, instead of the article being deposited in My Clippings, a message is stored there that reads:

“You have reached the clipping limit for this item.”

However, the on-screen message that appears on my Kindle at the time of my attempted clipping is misleading and should be replaced. It reads:

“The selected item could not be opened. If you purchased this item from Amazon, delete the item and download it from Archived items.”

Incidentally, how about “graying out” the “Clip this Item” option from the menu if the limit has been reached?

3. Always Display the Page Number in Notes & Marks

The page number within a user’s Notes and Marks should be displayed in the lower left corner of *all* pages, not just on the first page, because it’s always useful to know where one is. The page number should not be *overlaid* by the current reminder-note about the use of the Delete and Alt + Return keys. The content of that reminder-note is so short that it need occupy only one-third of a line in the lower right. IOW, it could easily fit in *alongside* the page number, instead of on top of it.

4. Don't Overwrite the Location Number if the Menu is Open

Sometimes the “Location” number (and also, I presume, the page number) at the bottom of the screen is overwritten by extraneous-in-context messages, preventing the user from obtaining this information. This is annoying, because Location and Page-number data is vital to properly “citing” a quotation. Your software should erase those “overwritings” if the Menu key is active—which it would be if I wanted to see the location # or page #.

Here are the situations where the problem occurs:

- **When the cursor is on-screen.** (This is desirable, in order to position it just before the quoted passage and obtain the most accurate Location number.) The Location is overwritten by the dictionary-definition of the word the cursor is on.
- **When there are “public” highlights on-screen.** The Location is overwritten by the message “Press <return> to hide number of highlighters.”

~

5. Don't Expose the Hidden Text in E-Mailed-to-Kindle Texts

When I e-mail a Word document to my Kindle, my hidden text is made visible (unhidden). It shouldn't be. If possible, fix this flaw.

6. Fix the Left-Arrow's Ineffectiveness IN Chapter 1, Article 1, Etc.

Pressing the left arrow on the 5-Way should take the user to the start of chapter 1 when IN chapter 1, just as pressing it when in chapter 2 takes him to the start of chapter 2, etc. Ditto for going to the start of the first article in a blog when in it. The inconsistency is annoying, as is the absence of functionality.

7. Make the Down-Arrow Highlight the Last Line on the Page

When the user is highlighting text in the penultimate line, the screen's last line should be highlighted when he presses the down-arrow, just like all the other lines. At present, pressing the down-arrow while in the penultimate line does nothing. It's inconsistent and inconvenient. ~

8. Treat the Dash as a Word Separator When Highlighting

When highlighting, the dash should be treated correctly: as a word separator, not as part of a word (the way a hyphen is). It's annoying to have one's clippings prefixed or suffixed with an irrelevant and distracting word from the other side of the dash. The extra time it would take for the Kindle to diagnose the presence of a dash is small, given your current speedy processor. ~

9. Fix the Flaw in "View Downloading Items"

Let's say I turn on my Kindle and then Turn Wireless On to download the most recent blogs I subscribe to. Then I hit Menu and try to click on "View Downloading Items"—but it's dimmed (inactive). However, on the main screen I can see the little circular arrow in the upper left turning and downloading going on.

In order to follow the downloading process I have to exit the menu and then re-enter it. Now "View Downloading Items" is active and I can click on it—but I've missed the early part of the action, and get an incomplete list of what's happened.

I suggest that you "un-dim" "View Downloading Items" as soon as downloading begins when the menu is open, so that the feature works as advertised.

10. Place *Add/Remove Items* First in a Collection's Right-Click Menu

After highlighting the **name of a collection** and hitting the right-arrow key, the first (topmost) of the four options the user is given should be *Add/Remove Items* (the current second selection), not *Open Collection*.

That position would be consistent with the first option shown to the user when he clicks the right-arrow **after highlighting the title of an item**, namely *Add to Collection*. The user shouldn't be forced to *think* about where he should click to add an item. It *(Add)* should always be in the same position.

Even if this weren't a consideration, *Open Collection* doesn't deserve to be first. It should be a secondary, fallback option, available only to the rare user who forgot to "select" (click the center of the five-way) the collection to open it.

I think the long-term benefit from this position-change outweighs the momentary puzzlement it would cause a few users who are used to the current arrangement.

11. Select (Advance to) the Next Line after Adding an Item to a Collection

Perhaps, after a user Adds an item to or Removes an item from a Collection, the Kindle should advance to the next item in the list, **instead of remaining in place and forcing the user to hit the down arrow.**

12. Change Upper-Row Letters to Digits When "Loc" Values Are Entered

When the user is entering Go To <Location> numbers, an automatic mode-shift should occur that causes the upper-row letter keys to become **numeric**, removing the need for the user to press the Alt key in combination with them. Providing this shortcut would substantially soften the common lament that the K3 lacks a numeric key-row, because it would sharply reduce the instances where a numeric key-row is needed. ~

13. Save Users a Step When “Going To” a Location Number

After the user has typed in a Location number, let him “enter” it by pressing the center of the 5-way. It’s normal to be able to “enter” numbers this way on the web. It saves a step, avoiding the need to navigate to “Location” and THEN hit the center of the 5-way.

(Of course, the latter method would remain in place.)

14. Change “Wake” to “Waken” in Your Screensaver’s Message-Line

“Slide and release the power switch to wake” is ambiguous. It could be read as though there’s a “wake” position on the slider.

Or it could be read as implying only that if the user, for some unknown reason, wants to turn on the power, he can do so by snapping the slider.

And “Slide ... to wake” just doesn’t *sound right*. “... to waken” is more mellifluous.

Even better, move “To waken,” to the front of the sentence. It’s the “point” of the message and shouldn’t be buried at the end.

15. Perhaps Enable the Delete Key to Remove Content

Page 19 of the *User Guide* [1st ed.] states:

To delete content on your Kindle, use the 5-way controller to underline the item you want to delete. Press the left arrow on the 5-way to select ‘remove from device’ and then press the 5-way to complete the removal of the item.

The left-edge method is very non-obvious to newbies. The intuitive thing for the user would be to hit the Delete key. (I suggest allowing it as an alternative way of doing so.)

16. Include More Pauses After Paragraphs in Text to Speech

There should be longer pauses at the end of sentences and paragraphs. (Perhaps make the pause-length user-settable.) Currently there are too many run-on paragraphs.

Another possible option, although maybe this is getting into feature-itis, would be to let the user ask for the voice to pause (or even stop) at the end of a page.

Half-Finished Features

17. Provide Notes & Marks Headings That Differ Typographically by Type

When the user is inside View Notes and Marks, the first (heading) line of each item should *differ typographically* between Notes, Bookmarks, and Highlights. This would enable the user to (for instance) more easily ignore his bookmarks when he is scanning through his highlights, and vice versa.

Your current inclusion of the word “Highlight,” “Bookmark,” or “Note” in the upper right corner is insufficient, because the user’s attention is focused on the upper left corner, where the passage begins, and because the user can’t instantly interpret a message the way he can a typographic style, where he needn’t *read* anything.

18. Add a Book-Menu Option to Add/Remove a Book to/from a Collection

I’ve often found, after I’ve opened a new book, that I’d like to add it to a collection. But it’s awkward to do so at that point, because I have to exit the book and then track it down elsewhere on my home page. (It usually won’t be on the same screen as the one I find myself on after exiting the book.)

OTOH, putting the book into a collection first (before I open it) doesn’t solve all problems, because I’m not sure I even want to keep the book (it

may be a free book) until I've dipped into it, and because I'm not always sure which collection it belongs in beforehand.

I'd also like the ability to remove a book from its current collection from within the book, instead of exiting first, which can be also a bit awkward.

19. Provide Three Simpler Ways to Add & Remove Collection Items

After highlighting the name of a collection and hitting the right-arrow key, one of the four options available is *Add/Remove Items*. When *Add/Remove Items* is selected, it shows the user *all* his items, including those in other collections. But this can be overwhelming, if he has hundreds of items. If he didn't add items to his collection within a week or so after he bought them, their *NEW* flags will be gone, making it hard to locate them. And, if he has a great many New items, this adds to the confusion.

Here are three specialized alternative options:

1. ***Remove Item(s)***. This would show only the items in *this* collection, a manageable number.
2. ***Add Uncollected Item(s)***. This would show only items not yet in any collection, another manageable number.
3. ***Add Item(s) from Another Collection***. This would show only items from a single specific collection that the user would be given a sub-option to specify, once again a manageable number. Typically (I think), the user who is adding already-collected items is doing so from only one or two collections, and he knows which they are. (If that's not the case, he could continue to use the current *Add/Remove* option.)

20. Insert Bookmarks and Chapter Marks in "My Clippings"

Trying to locate anything quickly in a long My Clippings file at present is virtually impossible. Amazon should automatically insert a bookmark and chapter mark at the start of every item in My Clippings, to facilitate navigation therein. The customer could then view Notes & Marks to read

the first lines of each item and find the one he's looking for. Or he could use the left and right arrow keys to skip ahead rapidly, from one item to the next, since they'd be treated as "chapters." ~

21. Add an Advance-to-Bookmark Feature

This would allow users to jump ahead and back to important-to-them parts of the book, using the left- and right-arrow keys.

(The need for this feature would be lessened if users had a way to View Bookmarks **only**, as I suggest in the next item, because the absence of non-bookmark clutter in the View Notes & Marks pages would enable fast navigation by that means.)

22. Let the User View the Three Types of Notes & Marks Separately

When the user is in the "View My Notes & Marks" mode, you should provide the following additional Menu options:

- Notes Only
- Highlights Only
- Bookmarks Only

All three of these options would display "only" one category of item, enabling a user who is interested in only that category at the moment to avoid being distracted by the other two.

This would speed up the user's search for a particular Note or Highlight he was looking for. And it would enable the user's Bookmarks to sort-of perform a table-of-contents function, which they can't do well if they are dispersed among other categories of entries.

23. "Flag" Notes & Marks More Helpfully

You flag Bookmark entries with a little notch in their upper right-hand corner. This notch would be more helpfully located in the left-hand corner, because that is where the user is looking when he jumps to a new entry. He doesn't scan the whole heading line, or want to.

Possibly you could flag also Note entries—say with a dot (or some other dingbat) in the same corner. Then unmarked Highlight entries would implicitly be flagged by having *no* mark there, and you'd have given the user a helpful hint about the category of each entry.

24. Let the User Highlight “Bad” Passages Differently

I suggest that you:

1. Provide users with a special mode of highlighting that is intended to flag "Bad Bits." I.e., notably poor passages. For instance: Navigate to first word; Press Enter (or the center of the 5-way); navigate to end; **press Alt**; press Enter.
2. Indicate these "Anti-Highlights" in a special way in the book and in the user's Notes and Marks section -- e.g., in italics, or a different typeface, or a smaller typesize, or all three.
3. Omit them from your Popular Highlights collection.

Benefits:

1. Users who are critically analyzing “opposition” documents won't find their least-favorite stinkers getting incorrectly classified as popular-highlight gems.
2. Users could typographically differentiate between the passages they consider Good and Bad—and who wouldn't want to do so? They would thus be able to skim through their favorite passages by browsing in their Notes and Marks w/o being blindsided by material of an objectionable character.
3. Eventually, perhaps, Amazon could create a new feature: UNpopular Highlights, which might be amusing and/or educational.

25. Add “Go To Highest Page Read”

“Last page read” is ambiguous. It could mean the *most recent page* read, or it could mean the *highest-numbered page* read. Amazon’s interpretation is *most recent page* read, which means that when one returns to the book one won’t be taken to the *last* (highest-numbered) page read, but only the *latest* (most recent) page read, provided one exited from the most recent location by pressing Home.

So it would help if Amazon added a new option in the Go To menu: *Highest Page Read*, so there would be a convenient way to get there if one wanted to.

In addition, when reading, one sometimes goes to a considerably later place in the book, but one that is lower than the *highest page EVER read*. If one has used *Back* to return from it to the home page, there’s often no way, or no speedy way, to get back to that highest-numbered page.

So it would help if Amazon added another new option in the Go To menu: *Highest Page Read in Current Session*.

26. Add a “Back Matter” Marker

This suggestion aims to solve the undesirable situation where someone clicks or taps an endnote, jumps to the end of the book...and then goes Home before going Back to where they were. This will set the “last page read” to the end of the book.

Here's a possible partial solution:

1. Allow publishers to insert a "back-matter" marker. It would come before any Bibliographies, Notes, Indexes, Appendixes, etc. Users should also be allowed to insert that marker, since existing books lack it.
2. Any time the reader made excursions beyond that marker, the "last-page-read" counter would not be updated.
3. Optional: A separate back-matter counter that would keep track of the most recent back-matter place visited.
4. Optional: A new menu option that would let the user Go To Most Recent Place in Back Matter—in case he wanted to return to an end-note or bibliography entry he was reading there. (It might give him an option to go to the start of the back matter as well.)

27. Add “Go To Index”

Serious nonfiction books include indexes. Serious readers consult them often. Therefore, they should be able to use Go To to get to an index, even if the index isn't an "active" one (with clickable page numbers)—provided the publisher has tagged his index as such.

An index has certain advantages over a search that make it still a necessity:

1. Sometimes a search will turn up too many irrelevant instances of a word, but an index will cite only meaningful instances. This would be the case when one wants only instances of the noun form of a common word, for instance, or where one doesn't want to see only passing references to it.
2. Sometimes one is unsure of the spelling of a word (especially a proper name, a place-name, or a high-tech product name). A look in an index will soon provide it, even if one is initially unsure of the spelling; a search is hit or miss. Worse, if one thinks one knows the spelling but doesn't, a search will miss the targets completely and one **won't** know it.
3. Typing on the Kindle isn't as easy as typing on a PC. On the Kindle, a lookup in an index would be easier than typing search terms, especially if the Go To feature were to provide “Index” as one of its options, as it ought to.
4. An index can provide cross-references (i.e., “see also”) to related topics in the index. So an index can allow the reader to locate discussions of vague or abstract conceptual “topics” that don't always contain any keyword.
5. An index can allow the reader to locate passages dealing with the same topic even though the keywords are different. (“Tomahawk” and “hatchet,” for instance.)
6. An index-entry can contain subentries that narrow one's search to the topic of interest. A biography might contain hundreds of instances of a person's name—a situation where a search would be overwhelmed with irrelevancies.
7. An index can typographically distinguish references to captions of illustrations, allowing one to home in on (or ignore) them.

8. By providing a page-range to indicate the span of the treatment of a topic, an index can alert the reader to keep reading beyond the first instance of a keyword that might have begun the passage. The user of a search might miss the continuation of the discussion, or the lead-in to it.
9. Browsing an index can suggest lookups one wouldn't have thought of searching for.

Etc. (I wrote this list off the top of my head, so there are surely more advantages than I've mentioned here.)

If Amazon brought indexes in from the cold, it would be able to crow about the Kindle's having these advantages over paperbooks:

1. Its indexes are "live" and don't require the user to manually search for the indexed page by page number.
2. They take the reader to the exact passage, not just to the page it's on (so the user doesn't have to search within the page).
3. A Kindle reader can easily—by hitting the Back button—return to his original spot after consulting the passages cited in an index. He doesn't have to awkwardly keep his finger in place there as a bookmark. (He can also review the previous indexed passages during the course of this Back-button unwinding, if he chooses to.)

Amazon could do its boasting in a "Kindle Friends" ad. The Gal could be shown with several fingers stuck into her p-Book (one at the original jumping-off page, one at the index page, and a couple at a pair of cited pages). She leads off the discussion with, "I bet your widget lacks an index." The Guy responds with a (polite) Perfect Squelch.

Indexes needn't contain page numbers. Location numbers would do, or even just an ordered sequence of references (e.g., A, B, C, etc.).

28. Provide Trial-Mode Password-Testing Before Activation

Allow a trial-mode test of the password before activating it—and possibly losing all content if the actual password doesn't match what the user thought it was. That's because the user will sometimes have set up the

password when he first received his Kindle, which might be months before he activates it—by which time he might have forgotten or misremembered it.

This would reduce the burden on customer support, because there'd be fewer users calling up who had locked themselves out. ~

29. Include a Down-Arrow in Your “To Wake” Screensaver-Message

When your 3.3 software for the Kindle 3 was released, I was disappointed that a very simple improvement suggestion I'd made by e-mail to your Kindle feedback address hadn't been included. Namely, the addition of a down-arrow in your “to wake” screensaver-message, as follows:

Slide and release the power switch↓ to wake

The ↓ would be positioned, by happy chance, directly above the power switch, so it would provide a helpful reminder to the new user who had forgotten, during the multi-hour charging process, what the instruction folder had said about its location.

That's one new reason for reconsidering my suggestion. Here's another:

It would be a helpful clue to a new user who was not the original purchaser of the Kindle, such as a member of the buyer's family or a buyer of a used model. It's not obvious from its appearance that the power switch IS a power switch, or what should be done to activate it. It's not even obvious to many such users that the bottom edge of the device is where a power switch, or any control button, might be located.

A little hint to that effect would hardly cost anything. It wouldn't hurt—i.e., it wouldn't add any complexity. And it could even help Amazon. Here's how I figure it:

- Number of KB Kindles, new and used, bought or given away this year: **3,005,000.**
- Cost of a coder's time to add an ↓: **\$50.**
- *Average* loss of goodwill per owner from the absence of the ↓: **1¢.**
- Intangible annual loss to Amazon: **\$30,000.**

Just.Do.It!

30. Provide an “Exact-Match” Search Option

An “Exact-Match” search option would be helpful when searching for multi-word terms. It would eliminate the current distracting “haystack” of unwanted near-matches. For instance, your *Kindle User’s Guide* contains 21 instances of the phrase, “on Kindle”. But searching for *on Kindle* yields 254 “hits,” which have to be sifted through to find the 21 needles one is looking for.

Google’s exact-match syntax is well known: the terms are surrounded by quote marks. Perhaps you could adopt their syntax.

Collection-Related

31. Flag or Dim Already-Collected Items When Adding to a Collection

... i.e., flag or dim those items that have been assigned already to some other collection. (Perhaps at user option)

When I’m adding items to a collection I’m looking only for *orphan* (unassigned, or uncollected) items. (In the rare cases where I’m not, I’m aware of the specific items I want to file under a second folder.)

32. Let Users Dim “Books-I’ve-Read”

I suggest that you allow users to “dim” books they’ve read, or to flag them in some other way, such as with an asterisk. IOW, the books would be (mostly) out-of-sight but still organized and easily retrievable. This can be superior to putting them into an “I’ve Read” collection because:

Some readers would prefer to keep books in their appropriate collections after being read, where one can reread them if moved to do so when browsing through that collection. If this is done, there needs to be a way to visually distinguish the unread books from them. Moving all the “read” books together into one collection means that in time it will turn into a big, messy jumble.

And it's superior to consulting the percentage of darkened dots below the title because:

1. The blacked-out-dots method isn't really "user-friendly." The user has to shift his focus to a different line and peer, especially if his eyes are older. It's not something a user, even with good eyes, can see "at a glance."
2. The darkened dots are not always a reliable indicator of whether the book has really been "read" (done with) as far as the user is concerned, because:
 - In non-fiction books, the dots won't all be blackened unless he's read to the last page of the Bibliography and Index, which is unlikely.
 - OTOH, the reader may have looked at the end of the book before finishing it (checking the Bibliography or Index or other end-matter) and exited from there by hitting Back, which would blacken nearly all the dots.
 - Or the reader may feel the book is still "live" even though he's "read" it—possibly because he's discussing it with members of a book club, or because he wants to re-read portions of it.

33. Let the User Flag on-Kindle Books as “Reading,” “Hope to Read,” Etc.

(This is a superior but more complex solution than the prior one.) A user who had acquired a new Kindle posted the following complaint on a Kindle blog site:

“my problem is that when I transfer my purchased books to the new [newly bought] Kindle, they will not be separated into already read (archived) and still to read (on the Kindle). ... Customer service couldn't help (they did look it up) ...”

If her “I’ve Read” books had been flagged as such, a flag character would make them visibly distinct and easy to separate from the unread ones.

After further thought, I’ve concluded that the user should be allowed to “flag” books into four categories that match the categories you’ve

provided to users on your website to categorize books in their library, namely:

1. **Reading:** Books he's currently reading, or only temporarily set aside. (These would be the ones he'd want to see first when he opens a collection.)
2. **Hope to Read:** Books he hasn't opened yet. (These are the next-most interesting to him.)
3. **Stopped Reading:** Books he's opened and partially read, but lost interest in.
4. **I've Read:** Books he's read. (And therefore finished with.)

These categories would be most helpful when collections grow large, as is happening for a growing number of readers.

In addition, the categories should sort, within collections, in the order shown. I.e., books that have been already-read would sort last, etc.

Currently, some users delete books from their Kindle to reduce the clutter, downloading them again when they want to reread them. This increases Amazon's expenses. Here, for instance, is popular blogger Michael Gallagher (Jan. 1 or 2, 2012):

My #1 reason for deleting books off of my Kindle after I have read them is this: my digital "to be read" pile at any moment in time is 100–150 books. I only want to focus on the ones I have not read.

If this suggestion of mine, or the prior one, were implemented, he would be able to focus on his unread pile without deleting his other books, because they would be at the end of his collections, and dimmed.

34. Allow the User to Select from Built-In Sets of Collection-Names ...

... so that he can import individual collection-names, or whole sets of collection-names. (E.g., the user could scan a hundred or so built-in candidate collection-names and place check marks on those that would be imported, without doing any typing. Or he could check a heading line over a group of collection-names, which would automatically apply check marks to all its subsidiary names—which the user could selectively

unchecked.) For instance, the user could check on candidate-names like Mysteries, Romance, How-To, Cooking, Technology, Religion, etc.

Some “basic” sets might have a few coarse categories. The “maximum” set could have hundreds of finely grained categories.

This would save a lot of work, head-scratching, and subsequent tedious reclassifications to add categories initially overlooked—and would enable family members who share an account to better sync with one another. Ditto with book club members.

Further, if collection-categories were matched up with the categories publishers assign to books, then books could automatically or semi-automatically be plopped into their correct collections during fill-up occasions from the Kindle online site. Or the user would at least have a helpful hint where to put them.

35. Add a Cover Slideshow

Similar to the Fire’s Carousel, a cover slideshow would allow the user to show off his library to visitors, and to savor it himself. The user could:

- Set the pause length.
- Select the collections to be displayed or not-displayed.
- Select the individual books to be displayed or not-displayed.
- Stop the show by clicking on any cover.
- Open a book by clicking again on the cover.

Other slideshow features might include:

- A message at the bottom telling users to click Menu to control or exit the app.
- Menu items and/or on-screen buttons to pause or reverse the show, etc.
- An option to omit books that haven’t been read—or, alternatively, those that HAVE been read.
- An option to resume the slideshow at the point where it was last suspended (or exited).
- An option to stop the show after the first run-through, or after some number of minutes, or to “recycle” it endlessly. (In all cases it would stop if the Kindle issued a battery-low warning.)

Bookmarks & Chapter Markers

36. Allow Users to Activate Inactive Chapter Titles

Allow users to activate inactive chapter titles in books, and even perhaps to simultaneously create an active-link table of contents (TOC) consisting of & linking to such chapters. Here's how:

- The user would “select” the (non-active) chapter title and/or chapter number with his 5-way. If both were absent, he would move the cursor to an empty line above the chapter.
- He would then press a certain key-chord or a special sequence of keys to insert a chapter marker and to create a one-line entry consisting of the selected material in a “user’s own” TOC somewhere in the book. (The Kindle would do this automatically, the same way that Word builds TOCs from “headings.”) I.e., the chapter title would become a clickable line in an “active” TOC.
- If the Kindle detected that no content had been “selected,” it would prompt the user to type in his own chapter title in a pop-up box.

Activated chapter headings would allow the user to skip forward and backward from chapter to chapter by pressing his 5-way. TOCs would allow him to get an overview of the contents of the book and to go directly to a chapter of interest.

Notes & Marks

37. Let the User View Entire Notes and Highlights in Notes & Marks

If the suggestion above were accepted, an additional user option would be to display the “full” Note or Highlight, not just its first four lines. (Entries in Notes & Marks would be variable length, IOW.) This would make reviewing one’s Notes or Highlights less of a chore, and thus more enjoyable. There’d be no need to click on half the Highlights to see them

in full (as one wants to), and then to click Back to return to the View screen. And there'd be no irksome process of finding one's place again after each click and Back.

After I've read a book, I rarely want to re-read it in full. But I very much enjoy skimming through and re-reading the passages I've highlighted. The Kindle's View Marks function lets me avoid having to look at every page in a book to find the highlighted passages. This makes the Kindle "better than a book." Such advantages will help to "sell" the e-reader concept to dubious and wavering traditionalists. But only if the advantage is not offset by a flaw. (Like not providing a way to see each highlight in full when skimming.)

38. Make Users' Notes Available to Notepad-Type Apps

Here are the reasons the Kindle should allow Notepad-type apps to import users' "notes":

- Allowing the user to import his intra-book notes would make it easier to create a book review from them for a school assignment or a book club. (In the latter case the user could read out his report off his Kindle without printing it out.)
- Being artificially walled off from access to their own notes will feel "wrong" to some users. (I suspect most users will eventually buy a Notepad-type app—especially at only \$1—so there could be many aggrieved users.)
- Amazon designed the Kindle to work independently of the user's computer. E.g., it allowed him to buy books without going through the computer. A recent further manifestation of this philosophy was enabling the WiFi purchase of Audible audiobooks. It would feel like a natural, logical step for the Kindle to be self-sufficient enough to facilitate book-review creation.

(In addition, it's natural for readers to make their initial notes while inside the book itself, while reading it. And it's natural for them to write a review separately, while outside the book.)

- Making it easier for users to create book reviews means that more book reviews will be posted on Amazon's site, and more book-

related chatter will be posted on Amazon's author page. (Maybe provide an API to automate those postings.)

- Note-importation is something some mainstream book reviewers would appreciate—and perhaps tell the world about.

Here's how it might work.

1. The app passes the title of a book to the Kindle and asks the Kindle to show the user's notes.
2. The Kindle responds with a display similar to "View Notes and Marks," except that only "notes" are shown. An on-screen checkbox alongside every note says, "Copy-and-paste this note?"
3. A menu accessed by the Menu key, and/or visible along the bottom line, gives the user the additional option to "Check all boxes?"
4. When the user presses an Exit button, the Kindle passes the selected notes to the app. (It passes their full contents, not just the portion in the four-line window shown by "View Notes and Marks.")
5. An optional wrinkle would be to allow the app to invoke the Kindle with a second parameter—a cutoff date & time. Notes created before the cutoff date would not be "returned" by the Kindle. This would allow the user to be shown only his new notes—the ones he'd made since his last visit. (The app would have the task of storing and retrieving these cutoff dates—which shouldn't be hard.) ~

39. Preserve Users' Notes & Marks after a Revised Edition Is Issued

Previously I suggested to Amazon (by e-mail) that it should solve the Notes-and-Marks migration problem with a re-do of its basic data structures--which would cost a lot, take a year, slow down the Kindle, and probably not be totally flawless and compatible.

Now I've had another idea. How about if Amazon were to provide "relocation helps" or "migration aids" for users who want to retain their old Notes and Marks when an author issues a revised version? That would be a hundred times easier for them, and still provide 80% of the benefit of their trying to provide a 100% solution.

For instance, suppose a user invoked the "Help me migrate my Notes and Marks" option after downloading a new version of a book. The "app" (as I guess it might be categorized) would try to find a match in the new version for the textual context that surrounded the old Note or Mark. That context is what pops up in the four lines one can see when one invokes "View My Notes and Marks," so Amazon could easily access it. The user would then be prompted, "Is this a Match?" I.e., does this correspond to where you'd like your associated info to be anchored in the new version?

The app would work sequentially through all these N&Ms. It would be a lot of work for the user if he had 100 N&Ms—maybe an hour—but he doesn't HAVE to perform it if he doesn't want to.

Another negative is that in some cases a match wouldn't be found, because the author had rewritten the passage, or deleted it. In that case there would be three options:

1. Dump the material into a Lost & Found bucket for the user to try to find a home for later on. (And give him a tool for re-anchoring it conveniently.) This should be the default option if the user does nothing.
2. Invoke a sophisticated Amazon routine that would try to find a "best fit" candidate for the user (subject to his approval).
3. Throw up its hands and delete it. (Subject to user approval.)

This would be an imperfect solution--i.e., an 80% (at worst) solution. But it would be much, much better than nothing.

But I fear that what I've suggested has already been considered and rejected by Amazon's programmers, because it has characteristics that tend to raise coders' hackles: It's fuzzy and incomplete; it doesn't "solve the problem"; it has "loose ends"; and it's messy. Coders tend to think of those characteristics as damning--and they are, in almost all coding situations. But they aren't in a human-interaction situation like this one. Amazon should offer a Best Effort option to its users who don't want to lose the value they've added to their purchases. This is very, very important, IMNSHO.

Highlighting

40. Perhaps Let the User Distinctly “Flag” or Display Popular Highlights

If there's no way to do different styles of underlining, perhaps insert a pair of special symbols to set off the start and end of such passages. (In addition to their underlining.) Some users would like the two types of highlighting to be more distinct.

41. Add a Typo-Feedback-to-Authors Feature

I suggest that you:

1. Provide users with a special mode of highlighting, using an extra keystroke, that is intended to report "typos" and other errors to authors and publishers. For instance:

- Navigate to first word;
- Press the center of the 5-way;
- Navigate to end of the word or phrase;
- **Press Shift;**
- Press Enter;

Users also ought to be allowed to type an optional note (after pressing Shift, say), because some errors require a bit of explanation. E.g., “Actually, he was born in 1851.”

2. Collect these typos online the same way that you collect popular highlights.
3. Perhaps add a menu item to each book that would display its typos to users who clicked it. (Books with no submitted typos would have the menu choice dimmed.)
4. Encourage publishers and authors to regularly check and clear out their typo boxes by applying fixes to their books. (This would include removing incorrect “corrections,” along with an optional explanation of why it was incorrect.)

Here are the benefits:

1. Users would be able to vent and thereby relieve their frustration. (This is likely the reason that certain software companies give users the option to notify them when a crash occurs. It's unlikely that the software providers actually diagnose a dump of the user's machine to see what went wrong.)
2. Amazon would get a feather in its cap, PR-wise, from meeting a long-felt need: enabling corrective feedback into society's knowledge-transmission process. This would warm the hearts of intellectuals and book reviewers worldwide, an intangible benefit whose payoff would greatly exceed the cost of the feature. Amazon would be the only EBR provider public-spirited (and wealthy) enough to do so. Other e-book providers would look comparatively "cheap," uncaring, and even "evil."
3. Some publishers would actually take action. This would create a more favorable public image of e-books, benefiting Amazon indirectly.
4. Publishers might pay Amazon \$5 for every typo found. (I'm just joking, because it would never happen—but it ought to, because they ought to be perfectionistic.)

(NB: Typos in e-books don't all come from OCR conversion. E-books taken from publishers' digital files contain the typos that were present in the printed versions—and there are more of those than most people realize.)

Until now there's been no effective fixup-feedback mechanism to wring errors out of books. In part that's because a printed book is "cast in concrete," and so sending in a correction can't actually "correct" it. Consequently, virtually no one does so, because it's futile.

Errors aren't a minor problem. The average book has at least a couple. Some have none; some have a dozen. (They don't "jump out" at everyone, of course.) Encountering them is as unpleasant as crunching into a bit of eggshell in an egg salad sandwich.

For instance, I just finished reading *Amazon.com: Get Big Fast* by Robert Spector. It was a best-selling business book in its day (2000). It sold so well that it was reissued in a revised edition in 2002. Sixty-two customer reviews can be found on its Amazon listing, here:

http://www.amazon.com/Amazon-com-Get-Fast-Robert-Spector/dp/0066620422/ref=sr_1_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1303848011&sr=1-3

And yet, despite having been vetted for over a decade by a hundred thousand (or so) readers—including dozens of the author’s friends—the following glaring typos persisted into the Kindle edition, indicating that they were never brought to anyone’s attention:

“To find additional forms of revenue, Amazon.com worked on selling downloadable information-based products in a physical form that ~~had~~ **[didn’t have]** to be picked, packed, and shipped. Bezos dubbed this initiative ‘Digital Delivery.’”
[\[Read more at location 4063\]](#)

“Jeff Bezos has always been able to buy himself three more months ~~at a~~ **[of]** time.”
[\[Read more at location 4074\]](#)

The Kindle has often been praised for enabling books to be updated to correct errors. But that solves only 5% of the problem. The bulk of the problem is the friction involved in reporting errors to publishers. This is where the Kindle could really shine, if it went the extra mile. It could make the process painless and inexpensive for publishers. Here’s how I envisage it:

Once a month (say) the book’s original copy editor could look through the newly received suggestions and apply those that were correct. Amazon’s software would present each “typo-highlight” in the context of its entire paragraph. He would need to fix only the typo (or misspelling or misused word) on-screen to have it tentatively applied to his master copy, the way Word’s Markup feature applies suggested changes. When done, after 10 minutes, he’d click a button and a copy of all the changes he’d made would be e-mailed to the author and to his boss (for the records).

The author would click Yes or No on each change (similar to how he handles changes suggested using Word’s Markup feature), and write a reply to any of the editor’s queries about changes he’s undecided about (similar to replying to Comments in the Markup feature). This would just be an extension of the ordinary give-and-take of copy-editing. It would be similar to the work currently involved in incorporating error-fixes into a new printing. It wouldn’t be very labor intensive, compared to the effort that went into the original book.

Most of what’s needed in Amazon’s software could piggyback on (or borrow code from) the “@author” facility or the public highlights feature. Other parts of it could piggyback on Word’s Markup feature.

The extra copy-editing wouldn’t be taxing. I doubt there would be thousands of suggestions. (There aren’t that many “sticklers.”) I guess

there might be 50 or so in the first month after publication, diminishing thereafter as fixes are applied and sales tail off. (A huge best seller would get more suggestions, naturally.)

There would, of course, be many **duplicate suggestions**, but Amazon's software could bundle all suggestions affecting the same word or sentence together, so that the editor would only need to take care of the one at the head of the line; the rest would be skipped over by the software, unless the editor chose to peek at them.

There would also be some **incorrect suggestions**, but again those needn't detain the copy editor for more than an instant, and might lighten his day with their absurdity.

None of the suggesters would be sent a **response**—they'd be informed up front that this would be too time-consuming.

If there are only 18 fixups needed, **the cost** would be minor—an hour's work apiece for the copy editor and author. **The benefit** would be major: the elimination of *faux pas* that devalue the book in the eyes of the cognoscenti and make the author and publisher squirm when they are pointed out, as they can be in print or online. ("A poet can survive anything but a misprint"—Wilde.)

The above applies to traditionally published books—which have been professionally copy-edited—where nearly all the necessary corrections have already been applied. These are generally the books with the greatest impact on scholars and society (especially if they're best-sellers), and thus the one's most in need of corrections. (Although I've sometimes sent in dozens of suggested fixes about professionally published books—but these are the exceptions.)

Independently published books haven't been as stringently nit-picked; so surely they'd draw more corrections if feedback from the peanut gallery were enabled. These books are often only one step up from raw manuscripts. I'm aware that raw manuscripts need hundreds and hundreds of corrections and that it's a lot of work. I've copy-edited several such manuscripts. If independent publishers feel that it would cost too much to apply fixes, or that a sloppy job is good enough, they can ignore fixup-feedback.

If there are 50 or more fixups needed, that is because the publisher skimped on copy-editing at the front end. If he has to pay for it at the back end, that doesn't impose an *extra* cost on him. (Actually, the publisher will be saving money, by getting the public to do his copy editing for free.)

The number of fixes a book deserves is fuzzy. A copy editor is justified in making stylistic or "borderline" improvements. These would not be requested as part of an error-correction-feedback arrangement. In fact, the public could be warned off making such suggestions.

One drawback is that *some* users wouldn't benefit from these fixes, because they wouldn't want their highlights and notes to be lost by acquiring a revised version. Amazon apparently uses fixed offsets to determine where readers' notes and highlights start and end. Any change to a book's length would throw these off. (This is why corrected Kindle editions currently can't be automatically downloaded to owners of earlier, uncorrected versions.)

I suggest that Amazon should not make this a stumbling block. Most readers (who haven't entered notes or made highlights) would benefit from being able to update their versions, or from having a previously updated version available when they decide to buy it.

Ideally, Amazon could eliminate the problem by reworking its fixed offset setup. This would be expensive—but the silver lining is that it would be too expensive for competitors to match. ~

Other Software Improvement Suggestions

42. Provide One-Letter Passwords for Collections and the Archive

Password protection at a fine-grained level is, I gather from the Discussion forum, a much-requested feature. Its downside—and the reason it hasn't been offered, probably—is the burden it would impose on Kindle's Customer Support from the numerous locked-out users who'd forget their passwords who'd call in bawling for help.

Here's the solution:

1. Allow such items to be protected by a single-letter password.
2. Allow only two password-entry attempts per day (24 hours).

3. Display a notice of any failed entry attempt on the Home page. (This would discourage Nosey Parkers from trying a brute force attack.)
4. As part of the prompt for the password, state that such a prominent notice of a failed entry attempt will be posted. (This would also discourage Nosey Parkers.)

At worst, a user would be locked out of his collection for 13 days. (That's the time it would take to try out all 26 letters, at a rate of two per day. More commonly it would be only a couple of days, because the user would usually have a few likely candidates in mind. Thus, customer support would not be burdened.)

PS: it might be a good idea to give users the option to store a longer password on the Amazon site, with a means of recovering it by answering obscure questions like the make of their first car, etc.

Or perhaps Amazon should offer to unlock the Kindle if the user sends it in to them and pays postage + \$25. It's too catastrophic to allow the user to lose his non-Amazon contents and have to reload everything if he forgets his password—assuming you allow him to use one.

43. Add a “My Vocabulary” Document (of User-Extracts from the Dictionary)

This document would contain word-definitions taken from the dictionary that the user wants to refer to later as reminders, to enlarge his/her vocabulary. Amazon's software would let the user conveniently add dictionary items to it as follows:

1. With the cursor on a word, the user would press the return button to view the full definition of a word the cursor rests on.
2. The bottom line on-screen, beneath the definition, would contain a new option, *Add to “My Vocabulary”*. (There's room there for that message.)
3. The user would navigate to it with the right arrow and click on it. An additional, faster way would be to let him hit the return key again—which could be explained in the *User Guide*, as a shortcut.

44. Let the Cover of the Book-Being-Read Display as a Screensaver

Discussion-thread commenter James Orr says:

“I actually do kind of miss covers. That's why I'd like it if when it went into sleep mode from within a book it would use the cover image as the screensaver if the book has one.” ~

This would be at the user's option, of course.

Hardware Suggestions

45. The Lettering on the Keyboard Should Be Larger, for Readability's Sake

Eschew the hip minimalism, please!

46. 1-9 & 0 Should Be Imprinted Above the Upper-Row Letters (Q–P).

Without such imprinted cues, the user is liable to make a mistake, especially about digits in the middle of the range.

To the left of these numerals, a hint as to how to obtain them should perhaps be imprinted, such as “Alt +”. ~

47. The Non-Letter Keys Should Be Visually Distinct from the Letter Keys

It would help the user, especially the new user, or the potential buyer in a store, for the small non-letter keys to advertise their nature at a glance.

There are three types of non-letter keys:

1. **Kindle-specific keys: Sym and Aa.** These are similar in that they both bring up menus. Their similarity strengthens the case for using the same visual indicator on them. I suggest “reverse” lettering—i.e., black-on-white.
2. **Carryover keys from the PC: Shift, Alt, Del, and Return.** I suggest that these be square (with rounded corners).
3. **Special character key: the Period.** Its imprint is a tiny dot that’s easy for users to overlook. I suggest that it also be made to stand out with reverse lettering and/or squareness.

PS: A semi-blind friend of mine, Greg Wright of New Civilization Network, points out that **providing distinct visual landmarks on the keyboard** makes it easier to “navigate” and thereby **improves “accessibility.”** (OT, he adds, “One particularly egregious example is the black-on-black and grey-on-grey of car door handles, which sometimes need to be worked in a hurry in an emergency, in dim light.”)

48. Let the User Disable the Page-Turn Buttons on One Side of the Kindle ...

... to reduce accidental page-turns. Alternatively, perhaps allow users to specify that page-turns require double clicks.

49. Make the Imprinted Orientation-Identifier Prominent on Your USB Cable

The two flat sides of the ends of the USB cable should be visually and/or tactually distinguished from each other. That’s because the ends must be properly oriented before being inserted—i.e., one particular side must be “up.” There is currently an embossed diagram on one side of each end to assist the user, but it is faint and hard to see and feel. It would be better if that one side were colorized or “texturized” somehow. (Sent Oct. 5, 2010)

For example, if the current imprint were raised above the surface, instead of being impressed below it, the user could easily tell by feel which side of the plug should be “up.” In addition, a “raised” imprint would be more visible.

50. Provide a Reward-If-Found Sticker

Amazon ought to provide a sticker that users can, if they wish, attach to the back of the Kindle, that says, "Guaranteed \$___ reward from Amazon if found. Call Amazon's reward center number at _____ to obtain a pre-addressed, postpaid shipping box. You will be sent a payment upon our receipt of the device."

Users would fill in the amount field with a Sharpie marker. Or, perhaps, Amazon could include a half-dozen labels for the user to choose from, five with filled-in amounts like \$25, \$50, \$75, etc. and one empty for the user to fill in. When registering, or thereafter on his "Manage Your Kindle" page on Amazon, the owner would tell Amazon the reward amount he would pay.

The finder would give his address to Amazon, who would send him the shipping box, while contacting the owner (if he hadn't already notified Amazon) to verify that it had been lost. Upon receipt, Amazon would either send the finder a check or make a deposit to his credit card.

Amazon would charge the owner \$25 beyond the amount of the reward to compensate it for its overhead and hassle.

This "got your back" feature would be a selling point and build goodwill for Amazon. For example, after a year Amazon could run an ad about the *nnn* people it had reunited with their lost Kindles via its lost-and-found service, perhaps with some accompanying heart-warming testimonials and photos.

Amazon could exclude stolen Kindles, at the owner's option.

There are companies that provide this service, like TrackItBack, but it should be bundled with the device. (Maybe Amazon could acquire them.)~