

Apple unlikely to be major seller of Jobs bio

HILLEL ITALIE - AP National Writer - Associated Press

Blockbuster sales are expected for Walter Isaacson's authorized biography of Steve Jobs when it comes out late this month, with independents and chains alike expecting it to be the biggest nonfiction release of the year.

But one seller, announced with great publicity a year and a half ago and very close to Jobs' own story, is unlikely to have a major impact in e-book sales: Apple's iBookstore.

Isaacson's book, which debuts Oct. 24 from Simon & Schuster, jumped to No. 1 on Amazon and to the top 5 on Barnes & Noble.com within hours of Apple's announcement Wednesday that Jobs had died. "Steve Jobs" also went to No. 1 on the iBookstore, but the number of sales will be comparatively small for the iBookstore. Publishers had hoped that the iPad and the Apple store would counter the power of Amazon.com, which had dominated the growing e-market through its Kindle device. But Apple's effect on books so far has not approached its force in the music business.

Amazon's share has been cut, less by Apple than by Barnes & Noble's Nook, widely believed to have more than 20 percent of e-sales despite initially poor reviews. Amazon still has some 50 percent to 60 percent of the market, while Apple generally is believed to have from 10 percent to 15 percent. Publishers and analysts say the iBookstore still is relatively unknown to the general public, especially compared with all the other apps on an Apple screen. Apple also was slowed because Random House Inc., publisher of Stieg Larsson and John Grisham, did not initially sell through the iBookstore.

"A year ago, if I had to have guessed, I would have said that Apple would be where the Nook is and the Nook would be where Apple is," says Brian Murray, CEO of HarperCollins Publishers. "They're growing at the same rate everybody else has been growing, but that first year, with a partial catalogue, was a challenge."

"Our surveys have shown that only 49 percent of iPad owners read e-books on them, which suggests that although the iPad is a blockbuster device, it doesn't necessarily lead to book reading for even a majority of its owners," says James McQuivey, an analyst at Forrester Research. "And even when it does, what we know about the success of the Kindle store and app suggests that more Kindle books are being read on iPads than iBookstore books. And why not? If you're a book lover and are predisposed to reading e-books, you are almost guaranteed to already be an Amazon customer, and you are likely to continue that Amazon relationship on your iPad."

Apple spokesman Jason Roth declined comment.

Apple unlikely to be major seller of Jobs bio

Published on Electronic Component News (<http://www.ecnmag.com>)

Apple's influence has been less on sales so far than on cost and the kinds of books that can be downloaded. The "agency" pricing model did enable publishers to start charging more than \$9.99 on new and popular releases on Amazon, a shift that the online seller bitterly opposed. And the iPad helped make illustrated books more widely available in electronic format, a market Amazon hopes to reach when it begins selling its own color device, the Kindle Fire.

Maja Thomas, senior vice president for digital publishing at the Hachette Book Group, believes Apple is looking beyond the U.S.

"It's a long-term game for them," she says. "It's all about the international market and all the Apple stores around the world. Apple can compete internationally with Amazon in a way that it hasn't in the U.S., because its footprint is already so huge overseas. You could have a player in the U.S. with modest success compared to the big boys making a huge impact internationally."

From the start, Isaacson's book project was an almost certain success. Jobs was not only an iconic businessman, but had revealed little about his private life and was offering full cooperation and access to family and colleagues. He had battled cancer for years and was aware his book would stand as a last testament. And Isaacson is a proven best-seller as a biographer, with popular books on Benjamin Franklin and Albert Einstein.

The book was announced early this year, although Isaacson had been working on it for a couple of years. In an essay published this week on Time.com, Isaacson wrote that he was first approached by Jobs in 2004, when Isaacson was starting his Einstein book. Isaacson said that initially he was surprised that Jobs suggested the project, assuming he was not going to retire for a long time. He later realized that Jobs knew he was sick and did not know how long he would live.

They last met a few weeks ago, at Jobs' home in Palo Alto, California. The Apple executive was in obvious pain, Isaacson recalled, but his spirit was strong as he talked about his childhood and showed the biographer some family pictures. Before leaving, Isaacson had a final question.

"Why had he been so eager, during close to 50 interviews and conversations over the course of two years, to open up so much for a book when he was usually so private?" Isaacson wrote.

"'I wanted my kids to know me,' he said. 'I wasn't always there for them, and I wanted them to know why and to understand what I did.'"

Source URL (retrieved on 09/17/2014 - 10:19am):

http://www.ecnmag.com/news/2011/10/apple-unlikely-be-major-seller-jobs-bio?qt-recent_content=0