

SAFFY LOOKS FOR THE ENTRY POINT INTO DIGITAL:  
SIMPLY READ BOOKS AND THEIR FIRST  
CHILDREN'S BOOK APP

by

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**in the**

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## A B S T R A C T

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Simply Read Books, an independent children's book publisher in Vancouver, BC, released their first interactive digital book, an iOS app based on their board book *Saffy Looks for Rain*, in August 2012. This report discusses the challenges inherent in entering the app world at that time and the key decisions Simply Read Books made during the development, distribution, and marketing phases of their app in order to minimize those challenges as much as possible with the limited resources available to them. As a result, the report provides a snapshot of the 2012 children's app market, and acts as a resource for other publishers entering that market.

The report concludes with an evaluation of the successes and failures of the *Saffy Looks for Rain* app from a sales and marketing perspective, and by looking ahead at the choices independent publishers may have to make when considering app publishing in the future.

## A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

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I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Dimiter Savoff and Kallie George at Simply Read Books, who gave me the unique opportunity to pursue this project, were invaluable fountains of knowledge during its implementation, and were always there when I needed support. It couldn't have happened without you.

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# T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

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## I N T R O D U C T I O N

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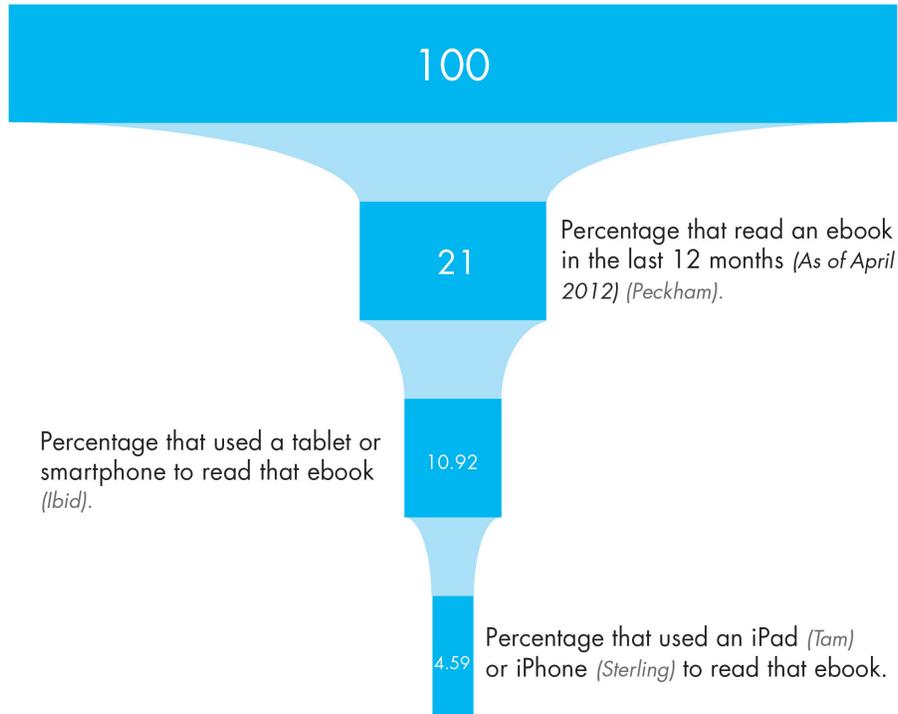
Relevancy, experimentation, reputation, expansion—there are many reasons an independent book publisher might choose to enter the complex world of interactive digital book-making. However, numerous challenges await a digital-first-timer. The 2012 *Publisher's Weekly* study of Canadian publishing says, “The coming of the e-book and digital publishing to the Canadian book industry can be compared to the approach of climate change” (Williams 3). This report will explore how one small Canadian publisher, Simply Read Books, came to launch and market their first interactive digital book in the midst of this tumult: an app called *Saffy Looks for Rain*.

Simply Read Books is a children's book publisher based out of Vancouver, BC, best known for its picture books with strong contemporary design and quality production, many of which have won awards from the Alcuin Society, the American Institute of Graphic Arts, the Canada Council for the Arts, and many more. It has only three permanent staff members: Publisher Dimiter Savoff, Editor and Accountant Gillian Hunt, and Editor Kallie George. The rest of the tasks, such as book design, are contracted out on a project-by-project basis.

Simply Read's *Saffy Looks for Rain* app is based off of a print book of the same name from their popular and award-winning Simply Small board book series, by Paola Opal. It has been available exclusively in the iTunes App Store since August 2, 2012 as a universal app, priced at \$2.99, so far in the English language only. Savoff and George coordinated the development of the app by TWP Digital Solution, an “integrated digital content service” based out of Singapore (“About Us,” *TWP Digital Solution*). The distribution and marketing of the app has been, and continues to be handled not by a digital or marketing department, but a summer intern (and author of this paper), with strong support and involvement from both Savoff and George.

Each decision Simply Read Books made as they moved through the development and distribution phases for *Saffy Looks for Rain* greatly impacted the audience they could then hope to reach as a result. Whether between enhanced ebook or app, Apple or Android, selling it for \$0.99 or \$7.99, each choice fragmented the app's potential audience further, and thus was made very deliberately, with the target market clearly in mind. Figure 1 shows how many of the larger preliminary

choices made around *Saffy Looks for Rain* have impacted the percentage of possible Americans above the age of eighteen who could conceivably download the app:



**Figure 1. Fragmentation of the potential audience for *Saffy Looks for Rain* in America**  
(Infographic by author. Data adapted from Peckham, Tam, and Sterling)

The diagram shows that roughly 4.59% of Americans (about fourteen million people) read books on a device where they could potentially download *Saffy Looks for Rain*. A percentage that is likely comparable, if not lower, in Canada, where total market share of ebooks has been reported by BookNet Canada at about 16.3% as of October 2012 (Oliveira), compared with the 20% market share reported in the U.S. in 2011 (Minzesheimer). Of course, this is only the beginning of the fragmentation of the app's audience. The choice to make *Saffy Looks for Rain* an app rather than an enhanced ebook means that it's only available for people shopping in the App Store rather than the iBookstore. Out of the remaining potential audience, how many are parents with children four-years-old or younger? How many of those parents are willing to buy book apps for those children? And, that not-to-be-underestimated question: how many of those willing parents will find *Saffy Looks for Rain* amidst the other 650,000+ apps in the App Store (Crook), 25,000+ of which are book apps? (Alter).

The *Publisher's Weekly* study states, “The digital translation of location, location, location, is discoverability, discoverability, discoverability” (Williams 15). Discoverability, this relatively new buzzword that already feels age-old, represents the largest challenge of the process. Once the development and distribution choices have been made, how to reach the resulting, very specific audience of the app through marketing? Mary Kole, Senior Literary Manager at Moveable Type Management in New York, has been noting on her *Kidlit Apps* blog, that this is where the next push in creativity will come in the digital book world: in ebook and app marketing (Kole, Digital Book World).

When it comes to creating a first enhanced ebook or book app, indies encounter other challenges in that they will find themselves not only competing with up-and-coming technology-focused companies like Vancouver's own Loud Crow Interactive, but also large traditional publishing corporations taking advantage of their dominance, in terms of a vast wealth of content assets (Barber), on the digital stage. For instance, Random House Canada has been investing in a large digital push in recent months, from the launch of their online-only magazine, *Hazlitt*, to their Kindle Singles-like initiative *Hazlitt Originals*, to the creation of the new websites *Crave*, *Appetite*, and *Random House Retreat*. Meanwhile, Penguin and Simon & Schuster planned to release fifty and sixty enhanced ebooks and apps respectively, in 2012 alone (Woods).

In comparison with corporations like these, independent publishers releasing their first interactive digital books typically have extremely small budgets, limited staff, and a lack of access to expertise. And along with the lack of resources, small publishers are dealing with a host of other issues that can represent a real barrier to entry: learning to work with programmers and programming, dealing with the “huge chore” of selling their product through corporate retailers that can seem colossal and faceless, and, of course, tackling the challenge of directing their specific potential customers to their book in a clunky, saturated marketplace like the App Store (Kole, *The Case*).

This report will act as a case study, detailing the decisions that Simply Read Books made throughout the development, distribution, and marketing processes of their first digital book in order to overcome these challenges as best they could with the resources at their disposal, and with the audience of the book always at the forefront of each decision. The choices Simply Read made throughout the process are not

the best or only choices that should be made by all indies deciding to enter this market—however, they were made with a deliberate consideration of what Simply Read knew of the digital book market *at the time*. The study will also discuss the merits of and benefits for small publishers like Simply Read in trying out the digital book creation process even though, as *Kidlit Apps* blogger Mary Kole says, “it’s a huge investment for, at the moment, a questionable return” (Kole, The Case).

The “Development” section of this report addresses the choices Simply Read made around the development of the *Saffy Looks for Rain* app. Namely, the choice to produce an app versus an enhanced ebook, but also the choice to make the app from a book that is part of an ongoing series, with the express intention to produce more apps based on titles from the same series.

Simply Read had only enough resources to pursue one platform. The “Distribution” section will examine why they chose to distribute the app through iOS, rather than Android or Microsoft, along with how they chose their \$2.99 price point.

The “Marketing” section addresses why Simply Read made the marketing choices they did and the context they were making those decisions from. Before publishing the *Saffy Looks for Rain* app, Simply Read, as a small print publisher with distribution, sales and marketing largely handled by Raincoast Books in Canada and Ingram in the United States, had focused the bulk of their marketing efforts on bookstores and libraries. Simply Read had no real means of reaching their readers directly, which is arguably the most effective way to market apps. This section will examine how Simply Read made the transition from focusing their effort on traditional marketing tactics to online multiple channel strategies, which was probably the largest challenge encountered throughout the entire process, and once completed has potentially become one of the greatest benefits.

The conclusion of this report discusses the successes and failures that resulted from making the app, including the benefits for small publishers like Simply Read in becoming involved with digital book creation and online direct marketing strategies now, rather than later.

Getting into digital book-making for the first time can seem an isolating task, especially when publishers picture their book floating along in the sea of Apple (or

Android), along with thousands of other products made by larger companies with dedicated digital departments. This report attempts to act as a resource and point of interest for other publishers who may be considering entering the digital publishing market, and as an argument for the benefits that can come from taking the plunge. The way that Simply Read Books did it and the choices they made are not for everyone. But the spirit of experimentation with which they approached the project is a testament to the exciting developments that can and are permeating the entire Canadian publishing landscape.

## D E V E L O P M E N T

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The staff at Simply Read Books made the initial decisions around the development of their first digital book near the end of 2011. There were many questions to be answered right out of the gate, before any coding could begin. Questions such as, which project to start with? Which format? Simply Read came to their answers deliberately, taking into consideration the digital book market at the time.

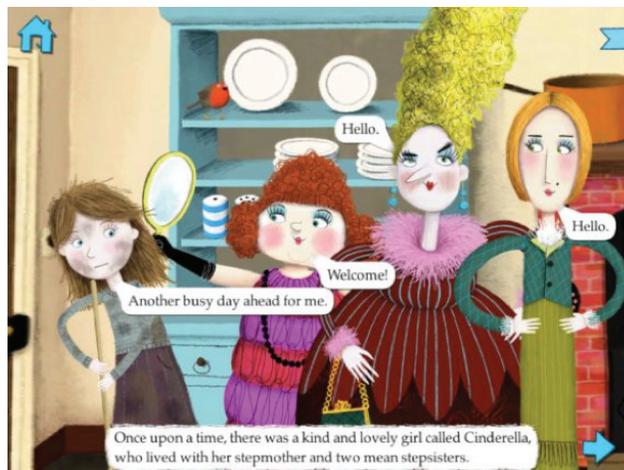
One of the most important decisions made at the start of the project was to select one of the board books from the Simply Small series by Paola Opal as the first title to be converted into an interactive digital book. The title was chosen for the following four reasons:

Firstly: cost. It may seem more natural that Simply Read, best known for their award-winning and innovative picture books, would choose to embark upon their first digital project using content from one of those successful titles, rather than a board book. However, Simply Read had a very tight budget for this initiative. Board books have fewer pages than picture books, and their audience demands less complex visuals and interactive elements. Children ages one to four will either be watching a parent operate the book for them on a device, or, for the three to four-year-olds that can hold a tablet themselves, are likely single finger tappers looking for a simple action to occur. Part of the charm of the books from the Simply Small series is that *they are simple*. Each page has only one or two dominant visual elements, and only one simple plot action. Take the spread from the *Saffy Looks for Rain* board book displayed in figure 2, for instance:



**Figure 2. Spread from the Saffy Looks for Rain board book**  
(Image from Opal, 16 to 17)

It's comparatively simple to code a reasonable amount of interactivity into the digital version of this page—the action of Saffy running 'cloppity-clop' down the hill when the user touches the character on screen, and the page swipe action proven to be intuitive to young children—in relation to the necessarily more complex interactions going on in the Nosy Crow *Cinderella* picture book app, as seen in figure 3.



**Figure 3. Screenshot from the Nosy Crow Cinderella app**  
(Image from Nosy Crow)

Of course, it's important, above all, to create a quality product—an interactive digital book should build on strong story and imagery with intuitive interactive elements that fit into the conventions of how people use the chosen device, are well thought-out and work in tandem with the story rather than distracting from it, and that function flawlessly. All the marketing efforts in the world can't save something that's just not working. Simply Read essentially faced the choice of whether to make a picture book with complex imagery into a mediocre digital book, or to make a board book with simple imagery into a great digital book. The idea was that the simplicity and boldness that are such strengths of the Simply Small books in captivating babies and toddlers could be enriched in the digital version, rather than done away with through the addition of complicated interactive elements.

Secondly: the benefit of an established series. As the 2010 Bowker and American Booksellers Association study *The Children's Book Consumer in the Digital Age* found, “brand characters and series content are more important than author in the children's market” (McLean). Simply Read, having harnessed the staying power of the series in their Simply Small books, hoped to take advantage of it in the digital marketplace with the idea that they can consistently produce Simply Small apps that will have a relatively predictable buyer base and sales. The same tactic was used in the early 1900s by the Stratemeyer Syndicate, who first popularized book series' directed towards children with *Nancy Drew*, *The Hardy Boys*, and countless other series'. The Stratemeyer lines were all tested out using three initial “breeder” books that were released simultaneously, and the success or failure of these breeders determined whether the Syndicate would continue with that series, or drop it (Greenwald 50). Simply Read is taking advantage of a time-tested print method on the digital stage—a method which has had encouraging apparent success for other book app series' in the App Store, such as the Boynton books by Loud Crow Initiative, and, of course, large franchises like the Franklin books.

Since Simply Read intended from the start to publish multiple digital books—the second Simply Small app, *Saffy*, is due to be released in early 2013—the additional benefit of publishing a series is a financial one. Mary Kole states on her *Kidlit Apps* blog, “we're getting to that place where we can't expect publishers or developers to build each app from the ground up... developers who are going to fail are those who code everything from the ground up each time, because that's a great way to run out of money or steam or creativity or all three” (Kole, Digital Book World). By working

with a developer on creating a framework for their first digital book, choosing to use series content meant that subsequent digitizations could be, if not cheaper, at least financially predictable.

Thirdly: the graphic design qualities of the Simply Small books. Paola Opal is a graphic designer, and while her digitally-created illustrations may have been originally intended for print, all the qualities that help them captivate toddlers in the board book series—the bold colours, the simple shapes, and the thick outlines—translate beautifully to the screen without requiring many alterations.

Fourthly: the opportunity for cross promotion. The Simply Small print series, which is made up of eleven titles so far, has been very successful, with many of the earlier books now in their third printing. Even though board books are not often critically reviewed, the series has also received much acclaim, honoured with multiple awards from the Canadian Toy Testing Council, multiple books included in *Canadian Children's Book News*' Best Books for Kids & Teens, and great reviews in *Canadian Family*, *CM Magazine*, *Resource Links*; etc. With discoverability such a huge challenge in the digital marketplace, it's a valuable asset to have already made connections with reviewers over the Simply Small titles in order to help get reviews for the digital versions, and to have already established connections with readers, to help identify and market to them. Simply Read hoped that once the digital version gained a following, the two formats could work symbiotically, one promoting the other.

With all of these aspects in mind, Simply Read chose to make *Saffy Looks for Rain* their first interactive digital book. And now the next pre-development decision needed to be made: would it be an enhanced ebook, or an app?

Eric Freese, Director of Digital Solutions at Aptara, argued in his talk *The Difference Between Apps and eBooks* at Intelligent Content in 2011, that enhanced ebooks are “ebooks that go beyond a digital snapshot of a printed book” (Freese 4). They allow for: collapsible tables of contents, hidden searchable text, internal and external linking, audio, video, and interactivity (Freese 8). Enhanced ebooks have many visible similarities with ebooks themselves, such as pagination and flowable text, as they rely on the programs installed on e-reading devices to be read, and are thus limited by the functionality of those programs (Freese 7). These programs include Apple's iBooks on the iPad and iPhone, and e-reading programs on other tablet

devices such as the Barnes & Noble Nook, Kindle Fire and Kobo Vox. Enhanced ebooks are typically built using the EPUB 3 file format, and though they may require some tweaks to work on multiple e-readers, especially Kindle, with its proprietary Mobi format, they're fairly transferable between devices (Freese 6). However, enhanced ebook functionality is limited when compared with apps, because of the capabilities of the programs they're tied to—the extent of their enhancements is limited to audio, video, and internal linking, with less animation and interactive elements.

Book apps are sometimes considered a form of enhanced ebook, since they tend to provide similar types of digital enhancements. However, there are some core differences. Apps are “programs written to run on a specific platform” (Freese 5). A book app must be built for Apple, *or* Android, *or* Microsoft, in order to function using each of those distinct operating systems. Though the programming of an app is typically more expensive and more complex than that of enhanced ebooks, they are generally thought of to be more feature-rich and interactive (Freese 6). Another main difference is that apps are distributed through app stores, such as the Apple App Store, as opposed to ebook stores, such as the Apple iBookstore.

Publishing technology engineer Sanders Kleinfield of O'Reilly Media, in a September 2012 interview, advocated for building digital books as native apps as opposed to enhanced ebooks, arguing that making them as enhanced ebooks isn't very innovative, that even the term enhanced ebook “is somewhat of a transitional concept, as publishers start making baby steps in rethinking how they produce content for the Digital First World” (Wikert, HTML5).

In late 2011, at the time Simply Read was making their choice between these two options, there was a vast amount of change going on in the enhanced ebook realm. The Kindle Fire came out in September 2011 (Teicher), the Kobo Vox came out in October 2011 (Reid, Kobo), and the Nook came out in November 2011 (Reid, B&N). EPUB 3, the code which had the capability to produce enhanced ebooks containing multimedia such as audio and video, became the “the EPUB standard,” in October 2011 (EPUB 3, International Digital Publishing Forum).

Meanwhile, the iPad had been out since early 2010, with over one million apps sold on launch day, and children's books holding “six of the top 10 paid iPad book-app sales spots as of press time” (Springen). With the iPad and App Store came the iBookstore

as well, of course, but without an EPUB standard that supported features like audio and video, the simple ebooks available there seemed much less sophisticated compared to their app counterparts.

The technology behind enhanced ebooks was clearly going through a volatile period at the time Simply Read was making their digital book decisions. In addition, the success of enhanced ebooks on the sales side seemed much less proven at the time than app sales. Though information about app sales is notoriously scarce, near the end of 2011 there was at least *some* talk that *some* children's apps were making money.

According to *iLearn: A Content Analysis of the Education Category of the iTunes App Store's Education Section*, a study conducted by the Joan Ganz Cooney Center, as early as 2009 almost half of the one hundred top selling apps in the education category of the App Store targeted preschool or elementary aged children (Shuler 6). And according to the Common Sense Media report *Zero to Eight: Children's Media Use in America* performed in Fall 2011, over a quarter of all parents in their study (a segment of parents with children aged zero to eight living in the United States) had at that time downloaded apps for use by their children (Rideout 9).

At O'Reilly Tools of Change Bologna in 2011, the general manager of Edizioni Mondadori disclosed that their best-selling children's app had sold 2,000 copies, and the developers of the *Nursery Rhymes with Storytime* app tweeted in response that they sold that amount every day (Rochester). In January 2012, *National Geographic* reported that their "Weird but True" app for kids had sold about 50,000 copies since September 2011, making them about \$100,000 and earning a profit (Greenfield). Evidence that children's book apps were selling was also readily accessible in the App Store, where the top of the "books" category was and is at the time of writing this report, dominated by books directed towards children, including paid apps. While the evidence of book app sales was sparse, there was next to nothing being shared on the enhanced ebook side at that time.

As Dimiter Savoff, publisher of Simply Read Books stated at the time, "even though the retail price is lower for apps versus enhanced ebooks, there are way better sales numbers for apps." And thus, the idea for the first Simply Small book app was conceived.

No app can be developed without first making some major decisions around distribution. Unless they're building a free online web app, developers and publishers are entirely reliant on vendors like Apple's App Store, Google Play and Blackberry's App World to sell to their customers and organize the download process. However, since apps are fundamentally different depending on which operating system they're developed for, and each of these vendors sell apps for a certain operating system (the App Store for iOS and Google Play for Android, for example) one or more vendors have to be chosen before programming can begin.

Because Simply Read had a small budget for building the app, they had to focus on one distributor. This section looks at the factors behind the decision to make an iOS app to be distributed by the App Store, as well as the reasons behind another major decision—pricing.

Near the end of 2011, there seemed to be a fairly even split in the tablet and smartphone market between devices that used iOS and Android operating systems. Sure, Apple had a distinct lead in sales of their own brainchild product—the tablet—about seventy-two percent of tablet owners in the United States used an iPad in 2011, with just thirty-two percent using a comparable Android device (Tam). However, the Android operating system held thirty-nine percent of the market share for smartphones, compared with iOS's twenty-eight percent, according to Nielsen data from June of that year (“In U.S. Smartphone Market, Android is Top Operating System”). Android's app downloads were also catching up with Apple's at the time, having reached ten billion downloads near the end of 2011, compared with Apple's eighteen billion (Bonnington).

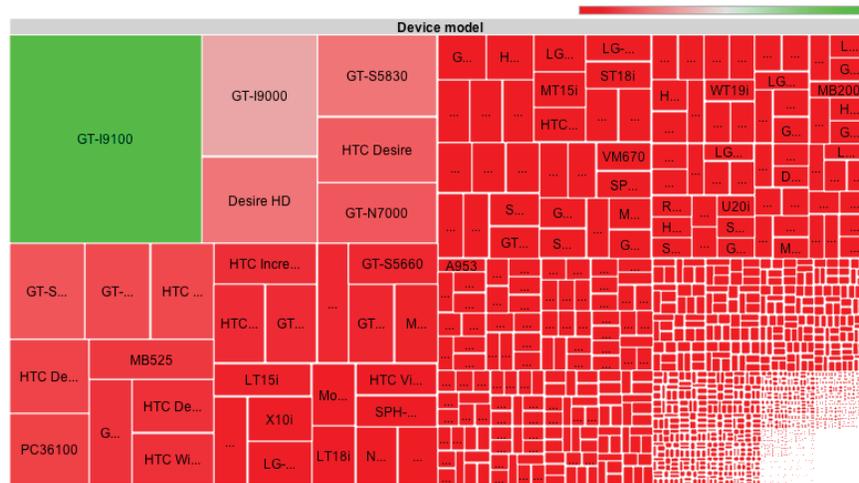
In the end the decision came down, of course, to sales figures. Though the iOS and Android systems seemed to have comparable market share and comparable app downloads, and far more types of tablet and smartphone devices were using Android, Apple simply had more proof that apps sold on their operating system. Near the end of 2011, *Wired's* Gadget Lab reported estimates that Apple had “85 to 90 percent market share in total app revenues...the iOS App Store has provided developers with \$3.4 billion in revenues, while the Android Market has delivered only \$249 million to its developers” (Bonnington).

Why this huge discrepancy in earnings, when the number of downloads of apps for both operating systems wasn't nearly as polarized? Most experts assume it has to do with the fact that it's easier to buy apps through the App Store than Android vendors like Google Play, suggesting that many of the Android downloads are free apps.

Simply Read hadn't just learned that the iOS app revenues were superior, but also that the App Store was the vendor of choice for children's book apps. The authors of *Digital Storytime*, an industry-respected children's book app review website, reported in March 2012 that out of 485 book apps reviewed for iPad, only eight percent of those titles were available for Android ("The New iPad"). And testimonials had been popping up about how much better children's book app availability was on iOS, such as this one from Wilson Rothman, Deputy Technology & Science Editor at *MSNBC.com*:

On the iPlatform, kids' apps are very high quality — and in the Android Market they're almost totally nonexistent. Seriously, I can't find any of my favorite kids' apps for Android.

Peegos Publishing, Duck Duck Moose, Agant, Toca Boca, and Nosy Crow are just a few of the children's book publishers that have reported prioritizing, if not exclusively targeting iOS for their apps. It's not only because Apple's sales figures look more promising—most of these publishers realize that there's a big enough market for children's apps on Android that they could make a significant amount of money there. However, Android is an extremely fragmented, and thus a more expensive and labour-intensive market to develop for. One app developer, OpenSignal, has spotted 3,997 distinct Android devices—they illustrated this fragmentation in an infographic (see figure 4), which shows the market share of each Android device, and which they posted to their blog under the title "Android Fragmentation Visualized."



**Figure 4. Android Fragmentation Visualized**  
 (Image from “Android Fragmentation Visualized,” *OpenSignal*)

Though this means there is a greater diversity of devices with Android, Caroline Hu Flexer, co-founder of Duck Duck Moose, summed up nicely in a 2012 interview how this can be problematic for smaller, independent app publishers when she said, “So far we haven’t developed for Android primarily because of the wide range of devices that we would have to design for and test on... This would be very costly for our small team of three” (Rothman).

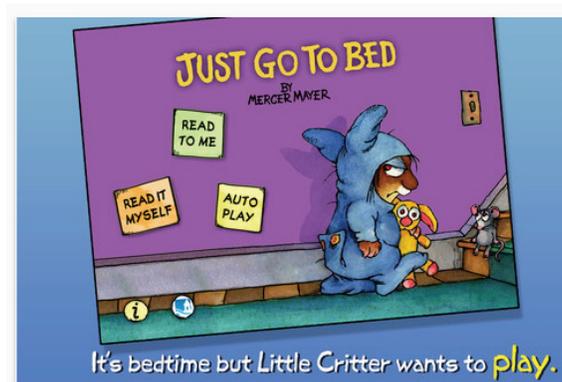
Even for larger companies, the decision to focus on iOS as opposed to Android often revolves around this fragmentation. As Dave Addey, Managing Director of mobile app developer Agant, has said, “It comes down to this: do you port [translate] to Android, or do you develop another app for iOS?” (Arthur and Dredge).

And so, armed with the advice of many respected children’s app developers and all of the sales info they could get their hands on, Simply Read made the final choice to make their first app for iOS.

Once the App Store had been decided as their distributor, Simply Read’s iOS app could be put into development by the out-of-house Singapore company TWP Digital Solution. Then it was time to make their next major decision around distribution of the app—what should they price it at?

With little or no data being shared in the industry about which price points were proven to work for selling children’s book apps, their initial pricing decision was for the most part based on a close look at the competition. Children’s book apps at the time typically ranged anywhere from free to \$8.99. Free was not an option, as Simply Read certainly didn’t want to include advertising to children within their app as a revenue source, but did want to make back their investment, hopefully with change to spare. So they looked at where their app fit within the paid app market. Luckily, a publisher can change their app price in iTunes at any time, which takes a lot of the pressure off when making this decision.

Apps in the lower range of paid children’s book apps at the time—from \$0.99 to \$1.99—were typically limited in their level of interaction and the amount of enhancements they contained. Apps that fit in this range can be exemplified by those from Oceanhouse Media’s *Little Critter* series, which feature page swipe, read-along functionality where the words of the story are highlighted as the narrator says them, and the ability to zoom in on the artwork (see figure 5).



**Figure 5. Screenshot from one of the Oceanhouse Media Little Critter apps**  
(Image from Oceanhouse Media, Just Go to Bed)

The middle range—from \$2.99 to \$4.99—typically included apps that contained all of the narration and read-along options of their less expensive counterparts, but also showed a higher level of design quality, and a higher level of interaction. Vancouver’s Loud Crow Interactive’s Boynton Books, for instance, including *Barnyard Dance* at \$3.99, are for a very young audience, as they’re based off of Sandra Boynton’s board books for babies (See figure 6). *Barnyard Dance* boasts that, “little listeners can move the violin bow to play the cow’s fiddle. Now—with a touch or a tap or a pull—you can help

the farm animals bounce, twirl, strut, spin, hop, leap, turn and, of course, promenade” (Loud Crow Interactive Inc., Barnyard Dance).



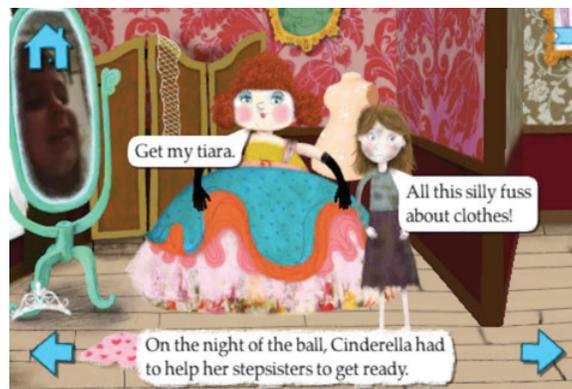
**Figure 6. Screenshot from the Loud Crow Interactive Barnyard Dance app**  
(Image from Loud Crow Interactive Inc., Barnyard Dance)

Also in the middle range, Loud Crow’s Peanuts book *A Charlie Brown Christmas* at \$4.99, targets a slightly older, picture book-reading audience and has won several awards (see figure 7). The app boasts “original dialogue from the 1965 animated classic,” “narration by Peter Robbins, the original voice of Charlie Brown,” objects that can be touched and dragged, as well as additional games where kids can decorate their own Charlie Brown Christmas tree and participate in contests to unlock rewards (Loud Crow Interactive Inc., *A Charlie Brown Christmas*).



**Figure 7. Screenshot from the Loud Crow Interactive A Charlie Brown Christmas app**  
(Image from Loud Crow Interactive Inc., *A Charlie Brown Christmas*)

The higher price range—from \$5.99 to about \$8.99— includes apps that contain all of the narration and read-along options of the low range, as well as all of the interactivity of the middle range, but are typically for an older audience that demands more complex interactions, and include something extra that makes the app somehow remarkable or exemplary. On the lower end of this range are some Nosy Crow Apps, including *Cinderella* at \$5.99, in which every page contains very sophisticated interaction (see figure 8). In this app, many pages of the fairytale are set up as a separate game for the user. When Cinderella is getting her stepsisters dressed for the ball, for example, the user has to help her; when the Fairy Godmother makes the carriage, the user has to build it (Nosy Crow).



**Figure 8. Screenshot from the Nosy Crow Cinderella app**  
(Image from Nosy Crow)

At the higher end of this range sits Atomic Antelope's famous *Alice for the iPad* app at \$8.99, which has 250 gorgeously designed pages, 20 very sophisticated animated scenes, and uses the iPad to its full potential by having pictures that animate when the user tilts the device (see figure 9).



*Figure 9. Screenshots from the Atomic Antelope Alice for the iPad app*  
(Images from Atomic Antelope)

Simply Read waited until they had reached the testing stages of the *Saffy Looks for Rain* app before deciding exactly how to price it. They knew the interactivity was a significant enough feature to justify pricing their app above those in the lower price range—there are animations on each page triggered by touch as well as a simple colouring book and puzzle game that can be played after the story is over. However, the level of interaction, designed with toddlers in mind, was more simplistic than the higher end of the middle range apps. The page count of the story itself was also low—just twelve pages. In the end, the initial price was set at \$2.99.

The next, and perhaps most difficult part of the process, would be to help their intended audience find *Saffy Looks for Rain*—a process that would start before the app was even finalized and uploaded for approval by Apple, because it would start with the establishment of a direct-to-consumer online marketing initiative.

## MARKETING

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As with any product, developing and distributing *Saffy Looks for Rain* was in no way enough to ensure its success in the book app market. Mary Kole puts the reason best when she says, “On the Internet, if you build it, they will NOT come” (Kole, Digital Book World).

Marketing the app, like organizing its development and distribution, required making many decisions, large and small, that would affect how many people had a chance to discover it. The first and largest of these decisions was to pursue a more direct-to-consumer marketing strategy than Simply Read had ever put into place with their print books. Their marketing efforts for print had focused on the bookstores, libraries, wholesalers, and other channels that are so influential in placing physical books on the radar of customers. But iOS apps have only the monolithic App Store for retail exposure, and there they compete with hundreds of thousands of other apps with no discernable way to distinguish between them apart from the “New and Notable” section, or placing in the top two hundred downloads. When it comes to apps, customers have to be reached directly.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

The first step Simply Read took in finding and contacting those potential customers was to create a new online presence for themselves through social media. The campaign began four months before the app was launched, in the hopes that they could develop a community of followers who they could tell about the launch and the new app. Simply Read focused their efforts on Facebook, because that’s where the parents are; Twitter, because that’s where the other developers, publishers, and reviewers are; and Pinterest, because the tool works so well for showing off beautiful design and artwork, exactly what Simply Read is known for fostering as a company. Simply Read researched the influential reviewers, publications, developers, and gurus in the app world that were in contact with the audience identified for *Saffy Looks for Rain* and started following or liking the people and companies they wanted to target on each platform.

Kristen McLean, former president of the Association of Booksellers for Children (ABC), said in an interview with the author of this report that it is most important in social media not just to ask for things from your followers by marketing to them all the time, but to give them something of value. Simply Read made their posts, tweets and pins with this in mind, hoping to develop a quality and loyal community of followers. They shared interesting and funny articles, images and insights on children's writing and illustrating, writers and illustrators, as well as digital children's books and the app-making process itself, all with a non-formal conversational tone, and all with the goal of relationship-building. As part of this effort, Simply Read interacted with the contacts they'd targeted directly as much as possible, by thanking them for follows or mentions, giving feedback on their blogs, articles, and posts, joining established conversations through popular hashtags like #kidsapps, #appfriday, #fridayreads, #kidlit, and #canlit, and, as much as possible, encouraging genuine conversations.

Simply Read Books started the summer of 2012 with only an underused Twitter account with 62 tweets, the last of which was in July 2009. They ended the year with 761 tweets and 742 followers on Twitter, an active Facebook page with 70 likes, a Pinterest account with 138 followers, and above all an interactive relationship with developers and reviewers that are part of the children's book app community and an important entry point into the all-important word of mouth momentum Simply Read hoped to create.

Through this social media interaction, one of the important discoveries Simply Read made was that a very tight, helpful and organized community of independent children's app developers exists online. This was a refreshing discovery, in contrast to the isolating experience of developing and selling apps through a large etailer like Apple, and the contacts made through it were very helpful in marketing the app. For children's apps three main organizations work in tandem to create this atmosphere of support online—Moms with Apps, Parents with Apps and App Friday. Moms with Apps has a blog that “supports family-friendly developers seeking to promote quality apps for kids and families” (“About.”) by providing all kinds of helpful app news, support, and tips through articles such as “Legal Considerations for App Developers,” and “Writing an iTunes App description.” They also run an influential Facebook page with just under fourteen thousand followers, where they post children's app news and allow developers to post their own news and deals. Moms with Apps also started an online forum for children's app developers, publicists and reviewers, which is now run by Parents with Apps.

Developers can join the Parents with Apps forum by filling out a simple application form, and can then exchange information and share news with other developers, and find out about exclusive publicity opportunities from reviewers' postings. It is in this forum that Simply Read Books found out about App Friday, a website that organizes a weekly deal event for children's app developers. Each Friday developers can sign up to put their app to free or 80% off in the App Store and have their deal and app included in the promotion on the App Friday website, which reaches a combined audience of about 43,000 people through the #appfriday Twitter hashtag, and on their Facebook account, as well as through Moms with Apps' and Parents with Apps' social media channels, and the blogs of some reviewers that are closely connected to the Moms with Apps community, including *The iMums*. Simply Read made concerted efforts to be an active participant in all of these communities as a way to learn from people who had already been through this process, as well as to generate interest in the app through word of mouth.

## THE APP STORE

The App Store is limited in how much support it gives to publishers marketing their apps. The most significant direct marketing tools it provides are metadata and visuals, so Simply Read considered each of these seemingly small details very carefully.

Apps can only be searched for in the App Store using the app name, the developer name, and the keywords the publisher inputs into the app's metadata on iTunes Connect, the interface publishers use when managing their iOS apps behind the scenes. This makes for a limiting search algorithm, a far cry from the flexibility of Google. Adding to those limitations, publishers can only input one hundred characters-worth of keywords, each of which must be separated with a comma and space, consuming precious characters.

There were two potential strategies Simply Read considered when choosing how to fill their keyword quota. One strategy would be to choose the keywords that people most often use when searching for children's book apps, such as "kids book," "children's app," etc. At first that seems like an obvious enough approach. However, the problem is that tens of thousands of apps show up when these search terms are used and unless the app already has more downloads than the competition, it will show

up so far down the list as to be unlikely to be found except by the most persistent of users. The second strategy evaluated was to choose keywords that fit the app much more specifically, such as “simply small.” This would give the app a better chance of showing up on the first or second page of a search, with the downside that these keywords are used as search terms far less often.

Simply Read decided to implement the second strategy, with the hope that although the keywords selected may be searched less often than something like “kids apps,” they would also yield more clicks since the searcher would be more likely to be looking for something specifically like *Saffy Looks for Rain*. Table 1 shows a list of the keywords that Simply Read implemented, and the search rank of the app under that search term within iPad apps as of January 2013. Within the data it can be seen that even though they selected the strategy of specificity, the level of specificity varied a reasonable amount, with some keywords like “saffy” so pointed they would likely only be used by people who were previously familiar with the Simply Small books, and other keywords like “toddler” more general in an attempt to help buyers not familiar with the brand discover the app.

*Table 1. The search rank of Saffy Looks for Rain in the App Store by keyword*

KEYWORD	SEARCH RANK
Saffy	1
Simply Small	1
Paola Opal	1
First App	21
Giraffe	23
Baby Book	76
Storybook	86
baby animals	98
toddler	472

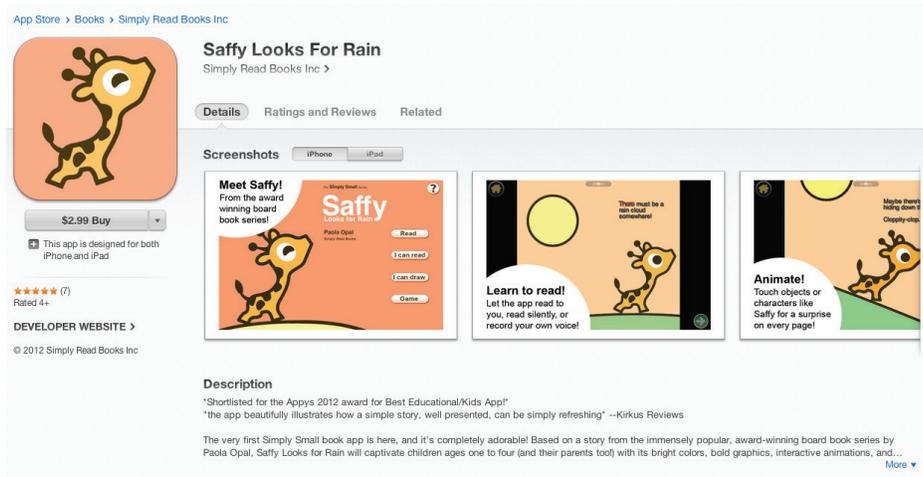
The app icon is another important tool to be carefully chosen. Like a book cover, an app’s icon has the potential to entice browsing searchers to “pick up” the app based solely on whether it makes a good first impression and is an accurate representation of the product within. Unlike a book cover, it is a small square made up of 512 x 512

pixels that will show up on an iPhone screen at just over a square centimeter. Moms with Apps suggests a good way to put an app icon to the test: “Would your icon pop out if it were on the Top 200 page?” (Robertson). With this in mind, Simply Read created an icon that reflected many of the strongest qualities of the app itself: its clean lines, bold colors, and adorable baby giraffe protagonist, which immediately indicate the graphic design quality of the app, as well as hinting at its content and intended audience (see figure 10).



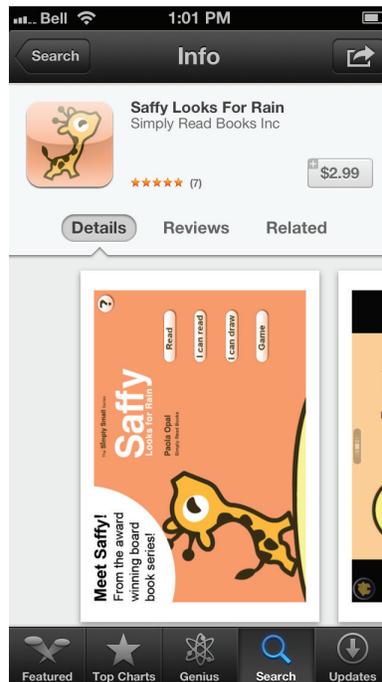
**Figure 10. Saffy Looks for Rain app icon**  
(Image from Simply Read Books)

When a user clicks through to the Saffy Looks for Rain download page, they will encounter the screen shown in figure 11 in the App Store on their computer.



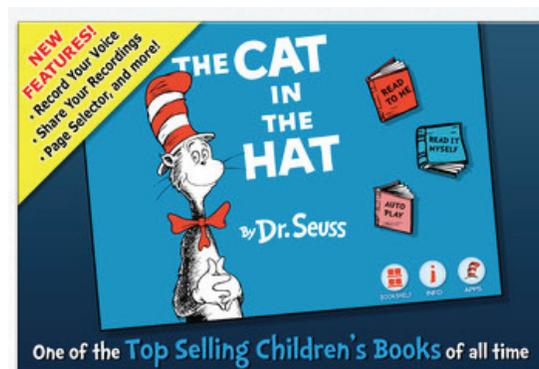
**Figure 11. Screenshot of the Saffy Looks for Rain download page in the App Store as seen on a computer**  
(Image from Simply Read Books)

Or the screen shown in figure 12 in the App Store on their iPhone:



**Figure 12. Screenshot of the Saffy Looks for Rain download page in the App Store as seen on an iPhone**  
(Image from Simply Read Books)

With the visual importance given to the screenshots rather than the app description in the App Store, it is understandable that many people look solely at the screenshots before deciding whether to download an app. Thus, the shots are an incredibly important marketing tool, especially for a product as visually driven as a children's book app. Because of this, many app designers recommend not just posting screenshots as they appear in the app, but altering them with added blurbs or other visuals that will help contextualize them. That way, if the user never makes it to reading the app's description, they will still have a full idea of its functionality. To test this approach Simply Read looked to examples from other children's book app developers like Oceanhouse Media, with *The Cat in the Hat* (see figure 13).



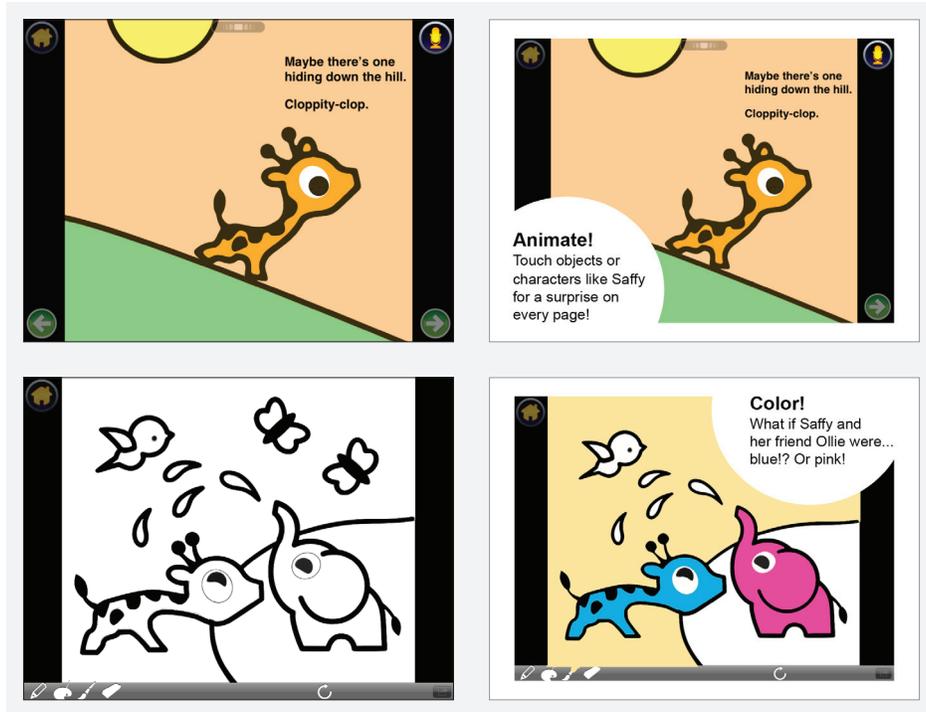
**Figure 13.** App Store display screenshot for the Oceanhouse Media *The Cat in the Hat* app  
(Image from Oceanhouse Media, *The Cat in the Hat*)

And Random House Digital with *Pat the Bunny* (see figure 14).



**Figure 14.** App Store display screenshot for the Random House Digital *Pat the Bunny* app  
(Image from Random House Digital)

Figure 15 shows two of the resulting edited *Saffy Looks for Rain* App Store screenshots on the right, compared with their un-edited counterparts on the left.



*Figure 15. App Store display screenshots for the Saffy Looks for Rain app, compared with their un-edited counterparts*

(Images from Simply Read Books)

Adding blurbs helped to put the screenshots into a context without distracting from the imagery they were trying to show off.

As can be seen from the App Store interface screenshots in figures 11 and 12, only four lines of the app's written description show up on a desktop version of iTunes before the user has to click "more" to read on. And on an iPhone, the user has to scroll down before they see any part of the description at all, and then only sees two lines before "more." Thus, these first lines are the most important part of the description and need to act as a hook to either get the user to download the app, or at least read on. Once the app receives acclaim or reviews, many app publishers top their descriptions with excerpts from these in an effort to show the quality of the app right away. Simply Read followed this formula for *Saffy Looks for Rain*, with their first two lines reading:

\*Shortlisted for the Appys 2012 Award for Best Educational/Kids App!\*  
“The app beautifully illustrates how a simple story, well presented, can be simply refreshing.” —*Kirkus Reviews*

The App Store restricts the full written description to four thousand characters in length. Moms with Apps has a very helpful article on writing this text. The article suggests the description should answer the following questions about an app: “What is it?...How does it help?...Who is it for?...Why should I care?...Where do I press?” and “Are you telling me everything?” (Akemann, Writing an iTunes App Description).

With that in mind, the description of *Saffy Looks for Rain* continues with a short two-sentence summary of the story itself, a one-line suggestion to look for the next Simply Small app (coming soon!), two short bulleted lists of the app’s “Features” and “What’s Inside,” then more review quotes, and lastly a detailed list of Simply Read’s contact information. For children’s apps in particular, this contact information is important to show that there is someone to turn to for support when using the app, that Simply Read is an established and reputable company, and to encourage parents to follow their social media accounts. See Appendix A for the full app description of *Saffy Looks for Rain*.

Another marketing tool that the App Store provides is the reader reviews. As Moms with Apps warns developers, “Reviews matter, and a bad review on the iTunes store can hamper sales” (Akemann, Mobile App Checklist). To Simply Read, that meant thinking about customer experience right away by working to ensure the high quality of their app, and then by opening channels of communication with users through social media, easy-to-find contact information, and an app support email address, hoping that any feedback, good or bad, would flow through those channels and give the company a chance to respond. Simply read also consistently encouraged App Store reviews from people who liked the app.

## PROMO CODES

There is one more vital tool the App Store provides that helps publishers market their apps—promo codes. Each uploaded app or app update garners fifty codes for the developer that can then be given away as review copies of the app. These codes

can be retrieved by the developer from iTunes Connect at any time and in batches of any number up to the maximum. However, once retrieved, the codes are valid only for twenty-eight days, after which they expire.

Because of the limitation presented by having just fifty copies of the app to give away, the decision of where and how to send these codes must be made very carefully. There are two strategies for dealing with the codes: to simply send them to a list of reviewers and bloggers hoping that they will download and review the app upon receiving a code, or to target those reviewers and bloggers with a publicity campaign and only provide the promo code upon request. Though many reviewers understandably prefer the first strategy for expediency, Simply Read chose the second option since they were unsure what the response would be like from app reviewers they had never dealt with before, and how many would be likely to actually review the app.

To that end, Simply Read created a press release promoting the app (see Appendix B for a copy of the release) and sent it to a heavily researched list of reviewers along with personalized email messages. The list included publications that had reviewed one of the Simply Small print books, including *CM Magazine* and *Canadian Family*; professional children's app review websites including *The iMums* and *Digital Storytime*; print and online parenting magazines including *Urban Mommies* and *Parents Canada*, mommy blogs that review apps including *The iPhone Mom* and *Imagination Soup*, publishing and technology news magazines including *Kirkus Reviews* and *Wired*, as well as larger general professional app review websites and TV shows, such as *PadGadget* and *App Central*.

Because professional app review sites, including children's app review sites, are now so highly in demand, many of them offer expedited reviews at a cost, which will be given priority and posted within a certain time frame. Not paying for these reviews makes it very difficult to organize one concentrated push for publicity around the launch of the app, as it can take months before reviewers look at a non-expedited app. However, Simply Read, with a limited marketing budget, chose to target only non-expedited unpaid reviews with the hope that the relationships they built with the reviewers through social media would help push the review through as fast as possible.

Simply Read had the most success in their publicity campaign with parenting magazines, getting promo code requests from 25% of the magazines they contacted, all of whom went on to review the app. They received promo code requests from 33% of the professional children's app review sites they contacted, but at the time of writing garnered reviews or mentions from just 14%. They received promo code requests from 13% of the mommy bloggers they contacted, resulting in reviews from 9%. And they also had a 9% success rate with large publishing and technology magazines. However, Simply Read found the more general professional app review sites to be a complete waste of time, with a 0% success rate, showing that a publicity campaign targeting publications of more relevance to their specific audience was much more fruitful. In the future, they would not invest time in contacting general app review sites.

Simply Read also used a certain number of their promo codes from Apple to submit to app rewards programs in an effort to gain exposure, including the Cybils Award (Children's and Young Adult Blogger's Literary Awards), and The Appys, with relative success, as The Appys went on to shortlist the app in the Best Educational/Kids App category, though it didn't go on to win.

## EXPERIMENTING WITH DEALS

Simply Read went on to launch a second publicity push about four months after the app's launch around their participation in a December 2012 App Friday campaign, where they experimented with offering the app for free for one day in the App Store, hoping to gain exposure, generate word of mouth, and encourage more paid downloads in the days immediately following the experiment. They sent out news releases about the promotion in an effort to get press coverage, and used it as an opportunity to follow up with reviewers that hadn't reviewed the app yet, and an opportunity for a social media push. In terms of press and social media coverage, the promotion was successful. It garnered a news item on *The iMums* review website, a feature on the *Canadian Family* magazine website, an agreement by *ParentsCanada* magazine to post the deal to their Facebook and Twitter accounts as a pre-promotion for the review they already had planned, a review in *We Want Apps*, a downloadable app that recommends children's apps to parents, along with the usual App Friday social media leverage. It also gave Simply Read the opportunity to post the press release to app deal news sites such as *AppySmarts* and *iPhone Life Magazine*, publications that they hadn't been able to establish a relationship with before.

From a downloads point of view, the App Friday promotion was also successful on the day of the deal, with 1,480 people from ten countries downloading the app. However, the promotion was not successful from a sales perspective. The paid downloads held at a steady two a day for a week or two after the promotion (this was after a long drought of inactivity), and that was the only quantifiable sales result. It remains arguable whether the experiment was worth it from a general promotion and brand awareness standpoint, or whether it hurt Simply Read's potential financial gain too much, since some of the people who may have otherwise paid for the app got it for free. Simply Read has discussed trying the promotion again for subsequent apps by putting the app at a discount, as opposed to making it completely free, in the hopes of capitalizing more on the downloads the deal can garner.

## FUTURE MARKETING PLANS

In the aftermath of their experience with App Friday, Simply Read has plans to experiment with several other marketing tools in the future with both *Saffy Looks for Rain*, and the next Simply Small app, *Saffy*. The first new strategy to be put into use will be concerted in-app and cross-app marketing efforts. Simply Read has created a publisher info page that they will be putting within the Saffy app to promote themselves and other upcoming Simply Read apps (see figure 16).



**Figure 16. Publisher info page for the Saffy app**  
(Image from Simply Read Books)

It's their hope that this will be the most direct possible way to reach their specific audience of app buyers about their other products. Within this info page will also be an area where users can easily sign up for Simply Read's social media accounts and their next new marketing tool: a newsletter. Compiling a list of email addresses for people they know have actually bought or used one of their apps will be a huge asset, as Simply Read will be able to promote future digital products directly.

Simply Read also hopes to create app trailers in order to give users a solid preview of what they'll be getting if they pay for the app, and reviewers a better idea of whether requesting a promo code would be worth their time.

For similar reasons, Simply Read has also considered experimenting with free content as an avenue for promoting their paid apps. This could perhaps take the form of a free Simply Small iOS or web app that introduces children to the various Simply Small characters, allowing them to choose their favourite and play games with them, without having free access to the books themselves. Introducing the books as in-app purchases would be a possibility with this model.

Another important marketing strategy Simply Read pursued lightly with the first app, but would like to concentrate on much more with future apps, is keeping Apple in the loop about their marketing efforts. Any marketing material created for iOS apps, especially if it includes one of Apple's signature "Download on the App Store" badges, is supposed to be sent to their marketing department at [appstoremarketing@apple.com](mailto:appstoremarketing@apple.com) for editing and approval according to their App Store Marketing and Advertising Guidelines for Developers. Simply Read complied with this to a certain extent. However, at O'Reilly's mini Tools of Change for Publishing conference in Vancouver in late October 2012, Brenda J. Walker, who is on the cutting edge of apps, having been Vice President of Zumobi Inc. and now co-founder of ACT Local Media, gave a very helpful presentation called "Discovery in the App Marketplace." The most salient point of her talk was that the best way to get downloads is to get featured by Apple, and the best way for a publisher to get their app featured by Apple is to keep them in the loop about any marketing efforts and simply ask Apple to feature the app. This shows Apple that the publisher is serious about putting promotional weight behind their app. And according to her, Apple is not overly biased when it comes to this featuring based on whether the app is developed by a large established brand or a small independent developer (Walker, Discovery). In the future, Simply Read plans

to put much more effort into establishing a regular marketing contact with Apple in an attempt to get their apps featured.

The overall process of marketing *Saffy Looks for Rain* was heavily informed by the advice of other app developers, publishers, and publicists, and taken on with a spirit of experimentation, such as in the case of the App Friday promotion. Though some aspects of the experience, such as that promotion, were not successful from a sales point of view, the effort helped Simply Read to establish a workflow for marketing other apps and digital products, build relationships with important developers and reviewers in the app world, and create an online presence and branding that can, in the future, help with the promotion of their printed as well as digital titles. This long-term branding benefit, along with the wider audience that became aware of Simply Read as a result of the publicity campaigns, are arguably the most beneficial outcomes of the entire exercise.

## C O N C L U S I O N

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This report has discussed the decisions made around the development, distribution, and marketing of Simply Read Books' first children's book app for iOS, from its conception at the end of 2011, to its release in August 2012, to the writing of this report at the start of 2013. It's possible that if this process had begun in 2013, the decisions made would have been vastly different ones, and certainly they were not the same decisions that every company in their position would have made. However, when considered as a whole, it can be seen that the most important factor in every decision has always been the audience. What stories do they like? What enhancements do they want? What format do they read in? What platform do they use? Where can they be found? How can we communicate with them? Above all: *what do they want?*

As of 2013, would the *Saffy Looks for Rain* app be considered a success? Perhaps not. It hadn't made back anywhere close the \$6,500 development investment, though it was hoped that continued promotion around the second Simply Small app (to be released in Spring 2013) would help increase the number of downloads.

However, there were immense gains made in many other areas that should not be overlooked. In the process of developing this app Simply Read established a digital workflow, developed a working relationship with a software developer and learned their production requirements, discovered what capabilities were possible in an app, acquired a sense of cost, and learned how to work through the app upload and approval process with Apple.

Simply Read also created, for the first time, a direct marketing workflow. The consumer contacts established through social media, much of the relationship-building achieved with reviewers and other publishers/developers, and the infrastructure they developed to market the apps, including starting to ask for email addresses and contact info, became extremely useful in marketing their print children's books as well.

This one project has helped Simply Read to rethink their entire online presence. They're starting to gather email addresses and hope to reach out directly with targeted newsletters. Simply Read is also rethinking some elements of their website,

including a plan to alter the entry page so that it shows prominent links to their social media accounts and newsletter sign up—ways to contact Simply Read, and allow Simply Read to contact them directly.

One of Simply Read Books' sales goals with their print books is to gain significant reach outside of Canada, especially into the United States. In digital they found a product that knows no geographic bounds, only linguistic ones. During the free App Friday promotion, of the 1,480 people from ten countries that downloaded the app, the majority were from the USA (1,244), then Canada (89), Australia (33), and the UK (17). And the majority of the social media, review, and developer contacts were also from the US. It created one more entry point into a market that they are trying to target with their other products.

And lastly, the work on the app has helped Simply Read to stay relevant with the current trends in children's publishing. They're certainly not the only Canadian house to have taken on this type of project: Anansi, Annick, Orca, Owl Kids, and many others have all started incorporating digital projects into their lists. Keeping up with the Jones' in the digital arena not only helps to attract authors, illustrators, interesting projects, and makes Simply Read eligible for different types of funding, it also opens up new ways of thinking about children's books as content and reaching the burgeoning "digital native" audience. The 2010 Bowker Pubtrack survey *The Children's Book Consumer in the Digital Age* says "the children that are reading these books are truly 'digital natives' and will be especially open to the blurring of content between a book, a game, a website, a toy. We predict that traditional silos between types of content will continue to break down, and so publishers must start fundamentally thinking of themselves as trans-media content creators" (McLean).

The fact is that an app is *not* a book. Even *Saffy Looks for Rain* incorporates two simple games in addition to the story because Simply Read believed that the story alone, which is only twelve pages, wouldn't be enough content for the audience to want to buy it as an app. Children's books in print are often 'gamified'—think *Where's Waldo?*—to capture children's attention and imagination. It seems that those books placed into the digital book market where they compete on the same level as Angry Birds, must be gamified even further to be successful, using the story as both the main impetus behind the game and an attractive element for parents who want their kids to learn while they play.

To succeed in the app market publishers need to not only rethink how they're presenting their content, but whether the apps can even be sold successfully as a single 'product' in the same way a book can be. While the Simply Small board book series sells well as a print book, it was only been proven to be taken up by the app community when it was priced at free.

Brenda J. Walker said in her presentation, "Mobile & eCommerce: Marketing & Discovery in the App Marketplace" for the SFU Master of Publishing Program, that she has seen mixed success for companies just selling apps as a product—that her company, ACT Local Media, suggests companies use apps for growing and expanding their market/brand instead. They see these types of apps, as well as apps with in-app purchases, as becoming more successful for companies and publishers than the traditional sales-oriented apps. She used as an example Louis Naviere's *Investor Place Media* app. For this app, which recommended users buy or sell a certain stock each day (the content all flowed in from Naviere's website and blog), the final goal was to collect email addresses and find new users for his company, not to make money off of the app itself. They conceptualized the app in such a way that it fit perfectly into the way people use their smartphones, and Naviere's company got 10,000 new users as a result (Walker, Mobile & eCommerce).

So perhaps down the road the success of many book publishers' apps, with the possible exception of apps that feature iconic brands and characters like Franklin, won't come from an ROI in terms of sales, but whether \$6,500, or much less than that as app-making software begins bringing down the cost of app creation, is a justified investment for expanding their direct marketing base. Even *Saffy Looks for Rain*, as it is now, has benefited Simply Read Books more from the less tangible sides of the business, including digital workflow, direct marketing, expansion into new markets, long-term branding, and as a stepping stone to new ideas and ways of thinking about their products. For publishers to find success with interactive digital books it seems they will need to rethink both how they can best adapt their content to that context, and how these products can be leveraged to the greatest effect—and that effect may not necessarily be direct sales. This doesn't mean, however, that a traditionally-oriented independent publisher has no place in the app market, only that the process should be entered into with a clear understanding of the goal they hope to achieve with the project, and with an understanding that sales must not define that goal in its entirety.

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## APPENDIX A: APP STORE DESCRIPTION

\*Shortlisted for the Appys 2012 award for Best Educational/Kids App!\*

“The app beautifully illustrates how a simple story, well presented, can be simply refreshing” —*Kirkus Reviews*

The very first Simply Small book app is here, and it's completely adorable! Based on a story from the immensely popular, award-winning board book series by Paola Opal, *Saffy Looks for Rain* will captivate children ages one to four (and their parents too!) with its bright colors, bold graphics, interactive animations, and charming story.

It's a hot day and there isn't a cloud in the sky. Saffy, however, is determined to find rain. Her search ends when she finds something even better . . . a friend who helps her cool down.

If you or your little one can't get enough of *Saffy Looks for Rain*, look for the next Simply Small app, *Saffy*, coming soon!

### FEATURES:

- Simple to use, and visually captivating!
- Designed with toddlers and young children in mind.
- Fun, cute animations on every page help emphasize the plot.
- Children can choose to get read the story by the app, read silently, or record themselves reading it aloud!
- Two additional games help your child's fun with Saffy continue long after the story is over!

### WHAT'S INSIDE:

- “Read” automatically reads the story to you.
- “I Can Read” allows you to read the story silently, or record your own voice.
- “I Can Draw” is an in-app coloring book using pages from the story.
- “Game” is a simple puzzle game where children can piece together a page from the story.

### MORE REVIEWS FOR THE SAFFY LOOKS FOR RAIN APP:

“*Saffy Looks For Rain* is simply adorable. Saffy searches and searches for a sign of rain. She gets a big surprise when she finds that what you are looking for may not be what you need! The narration and graphics are terrific and the simplicity

of the book just makes the app perfect. In addition to the story, there are coloring opportunities and a game center to keep your kids coming back. All of our

educational apps teach some aspect of life and also include strengthening eye-hand coordination, observation skills, and much more! This one is a keeper!”  
—*Best Apps for Kids*

“It is engaging and interactive and I love that we can also touch the objects in each page on the screen and there are also animations which catches our attention! My 3 years old boy had fun tapping the Ollie the elephant’s trunk which then splashes water to Saffy the giraffe.”  
—*I’m a Full-Time Mummy*

#### REVIEWS FOR THE SAFFY LOOKS FOR RAIN BOARD BOOK:

Best books for Kids & Teens 2010 Chosen Title, The Canadian Children’s Book Centre

“Saffy, an adorable baby giraffe, proves less is more in this sweet and simple board book, perfectly sized for little hands.”  
—Recommended Reads, *City Scene Magazine*

“*Saffy Looks for Rain* is a story to which many children can relate. Most preschoolers can identify with an impatient Saffy and to not wanting to wait for something to happen. The message about the value of making new friends adds a didactic element to the story. Like Opal’s other board books, *Saffy* and *Totty*, Opal’s illustrations are colourful and outlined in bold black lines. *Saffy Looks for Rain* is a strong sequel to *Saffy* and is an asset to a library or home library for infants to preschool-age children.”  
—*Books That Heal Kids*

“Paola Opal’s illustrations are done with sharp contrasting colours—ideal for even the youngest babies—and there is great potential for making this an expressive read-aloud—with plenty of sound effects: tweet tweet! flutter flutter! clippity clop!”  
—*We Heart Books*

#### CONTACT US

The Simply Small app and board book series’ are published by Simply Read Books.

For more information:

- Visit to our website: [www.simplyreadbooks.com](http://www.simplyreadbooks.com)
- Follow us on Twitter: @simplyreadbooks
- Like our Facebook page: <http://ow.ly/aYMv1>
- Email us: [apps@simplyreadbooks.com](mailto:apps@simplyreadbooks.com)

## APPENDIX B: PRESS RELEASE

**SIMPLY READ BOOKS** *presents*



# Saffy

## Looks for Rain

**NEW**  
**Simply Small**  
APP SERIES

The very first Simply Small book app is here, and it's completely adorable! Based on a story from the immensely popular, award-winning board book series by Paola Opal, *Saffy Looks for Rain* will captivate children ages one to four (and their parents too!) with its bright colors, bold graphics, interactive animations, and charming story. It's a hot day and there isn't a cloud in the sky. Saffy, however, is determined to find rain. Her search ends when she finds something even better... a friend who helps her to cool down.

**PRICE:** \$2.99  
**CATEGORY:** Books  
**SIZE:** 38.3 MB  
**LANGUAGE:** English  
**SELLER:** Simply Read Books  
**AGES:** 1 to 4  
**REQUIREMENTS:** Compatible with iPhone, iPod Touch, & iPad. Requires iOS 5.0 or higher.

**OTHER BOOKS IN THE Simply Small SERIES**



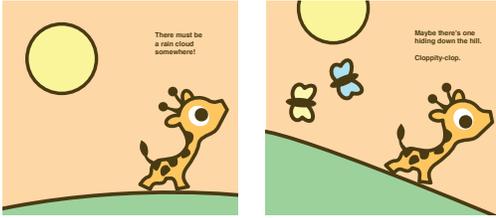
**WHAT'S SPECIAL ABOUT OUR APP?**

- Based on a popular children's board book with an established audience.
- Designed to be shared and experienced with a parent.
- Everything from the graphics and colors to the interactive animations and games have been designed with toddlers and young children in mind and are both simple to use and visually captivating.
- Fun, cute animations on every page help emphasize the story's plot.

**WHAT'S INSIDE?**

- "Read" automatically reads the story to you.
- "I Can Read" allows you to read the story silently, or record your voice.
- "I Can Draw" is an in-app coloring book using pages from the story.
- "Game" is a simple puzzle game where children can piece together a page from the story.

**Click here to view in iTunes!**



[www.simplyreadbooks.com](http://www.simplyreadbooks.com) | [publicity@simplyreadbooks.com](mailto:publicity@simplyreadbooks.com)

**Figure 17. Saffy Looks for Rain Press Release**

(From Simply Read Books)