

eBooks for Education

Developing and using e-books to support and extend student learning beyond the classroom.

Robert Sharl, Birmingham Institute of Art & Design

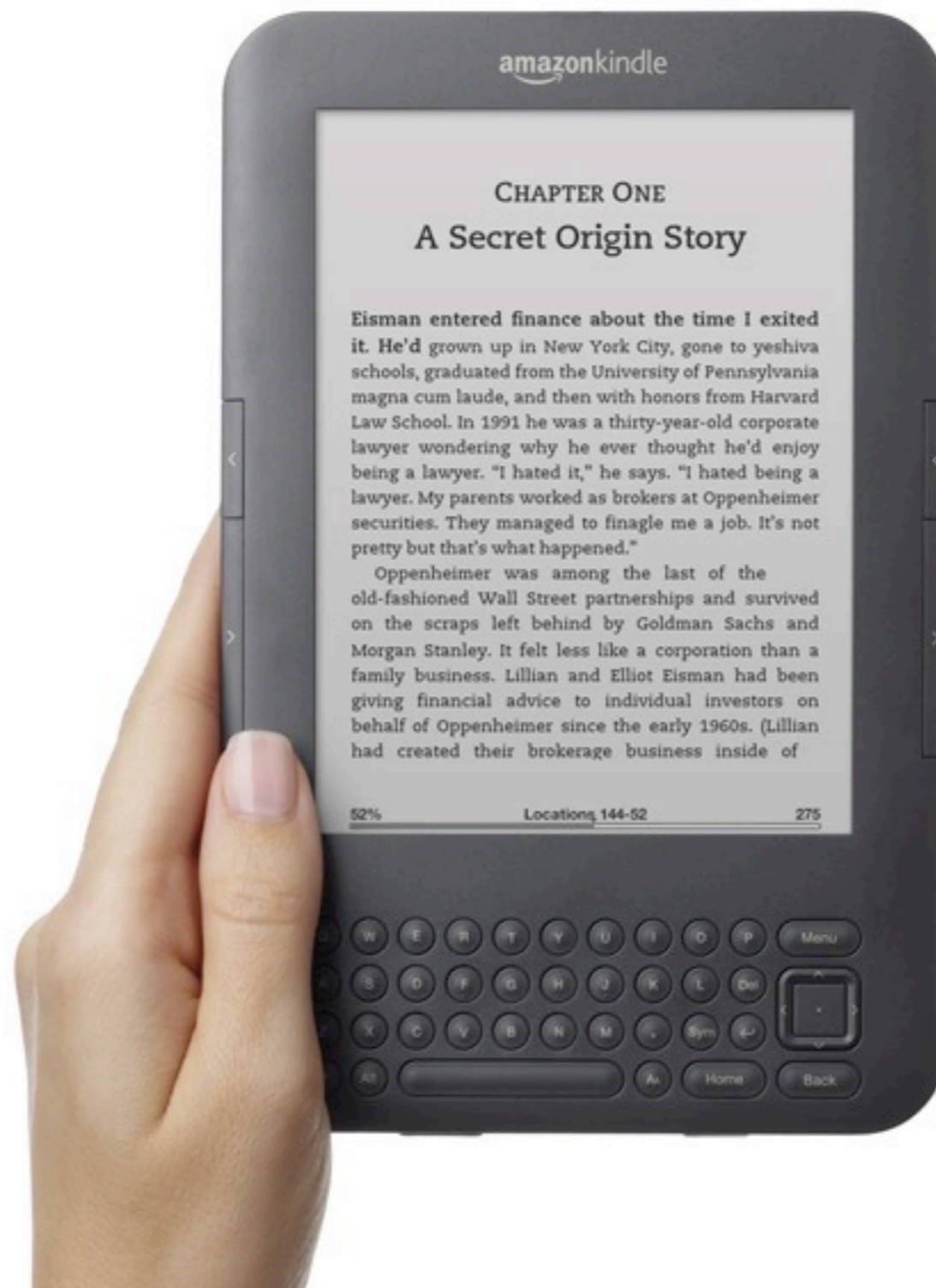
Hi, Robert Sharl here. I'm using these notes as a kind of highly condensed 'director's commentary' for those of you looking through the slides as a reminder of (or a replacement for) the presentation that I gave as part of the Advanced Academic Practice showcase this week. There's an audio recording available if you need more detail.

eBooks, iBooks: Some background.

Since some of the audience won't have used ebooks, I wanted to give an overview of what these are, and how iBooks differ somewhat from what you might be used to.

eBooks

Self-contained digital book format, primarily text, Publishing-oriented.



Regular eBooks, such as you might be familiar with from Kindle. It's a format for mostly-text books, ideal for fiction reading and for b/w devices, though as the ePub format evolves it's gaining richer facilities for display and formatting. Kindle books are a proprietary format from Amazon with copy-protection built-in. It's very much been driven by the traditional publishing industry as a format for publishing books that have already been made available in print, although that's changing too, as first-time authors look to go digital-first (or digital-only).

Apple iBooks

An e-book reader, and an e-book format, built for iPad. Text, image, video, interactivity.



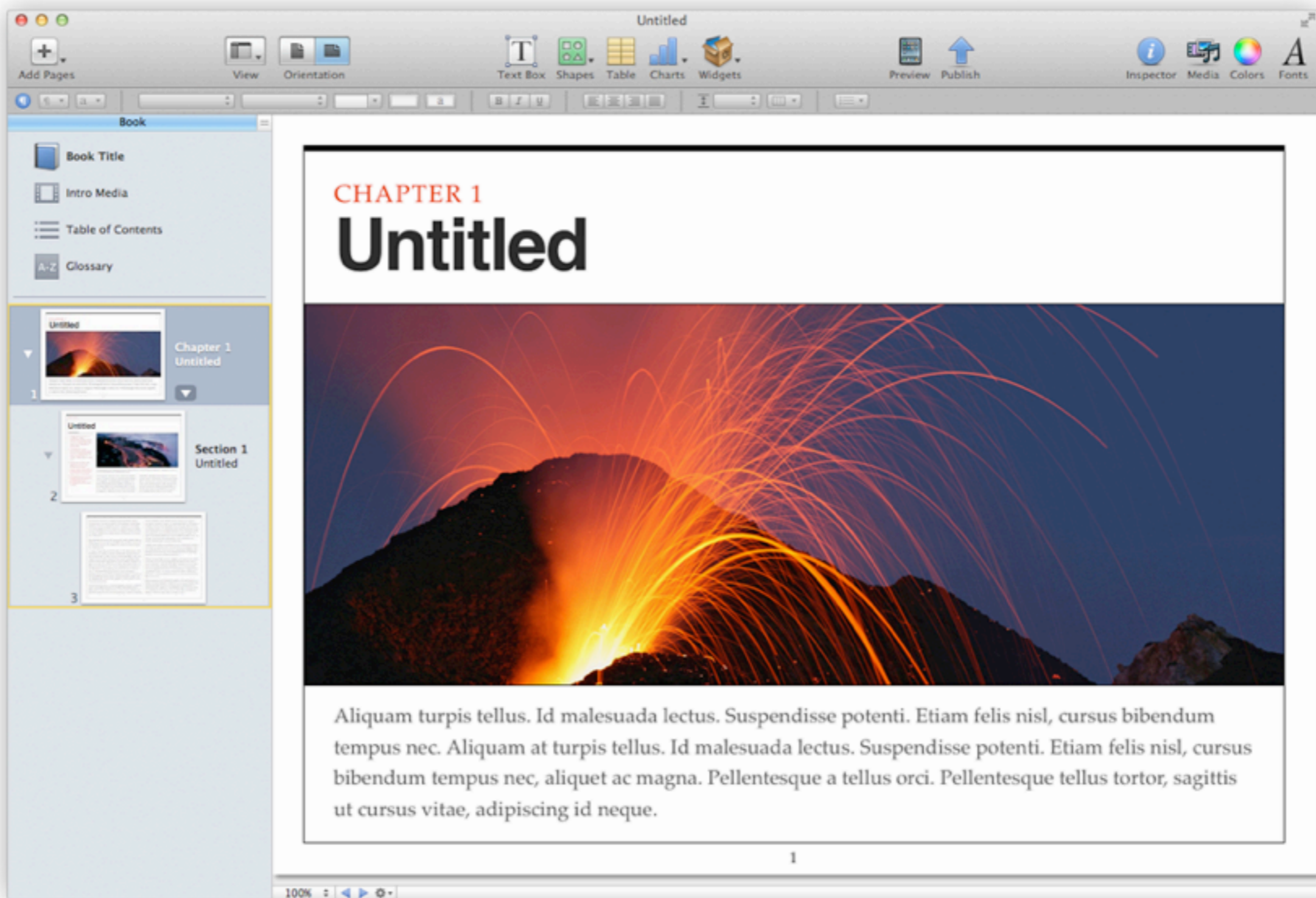
iBooks is Apple's take on the eBook. It's a book reader (that will handle formats like ePub and PDF), but it's also a proprietary format for richly formatted, interactive digital books, built for the big high resolution screen of the iPad. There's a version for iPhone too (which handles simpler books). It's built around touch, with taps and swipes to turn pages, and pinch/zoom to enlarge images/media. It works in both portrait or landscape format depending upon the material and what the reader wants to do.



The Library side of the iBooks App lets you organise your books into Collections, keep bookmarks, and search.

iBooks Author

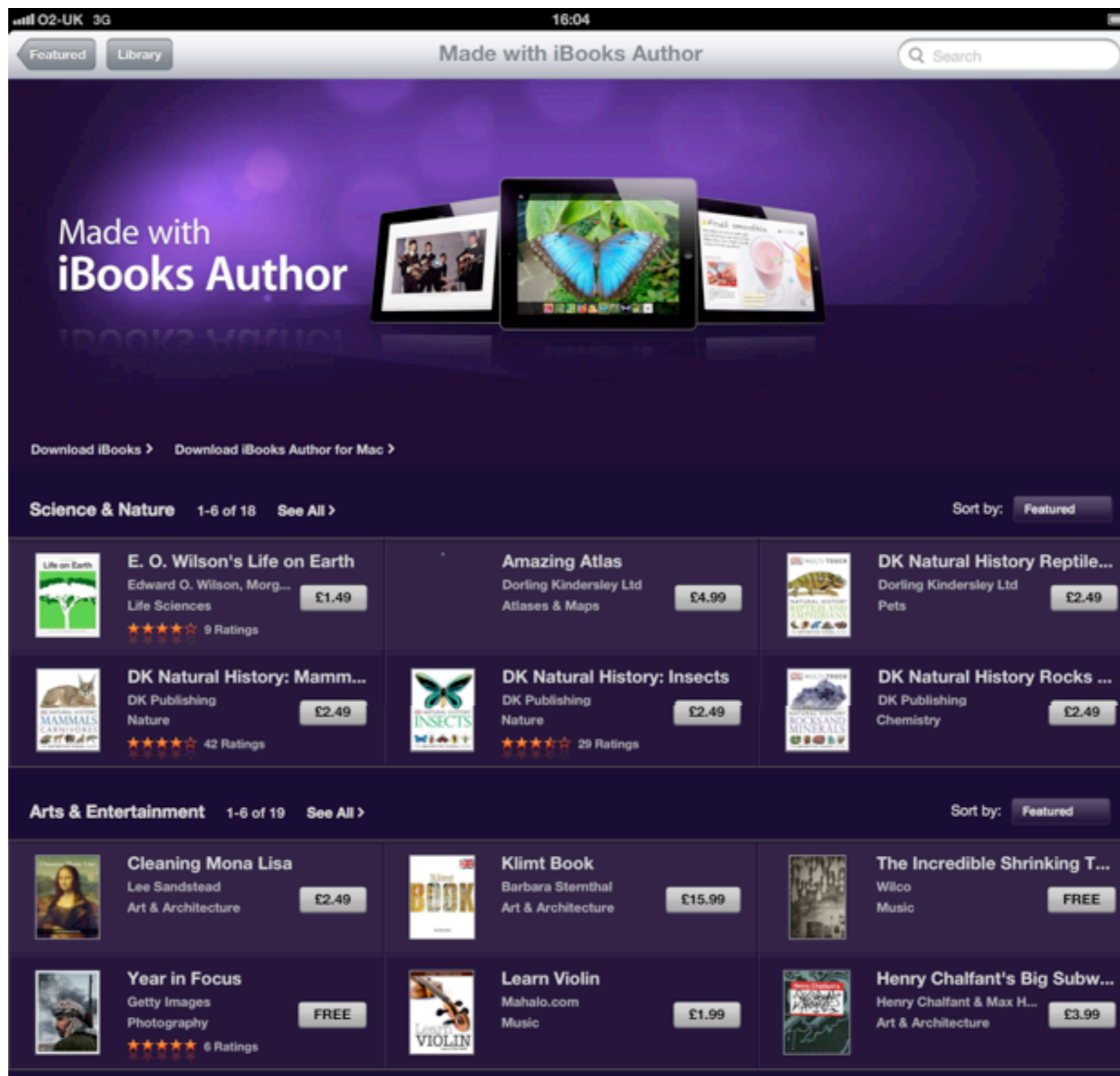
Free & easy production of multimedia books, with great features for educators and learners.



iBooks Author, released earlier this year, opens up production of rich-media books to the general user. It'll be fairly familiar to anyone who's used page-layout software, and it's easy to learn. It runs on a Mac (and it's free to download), and imports Word and Pages documents. Getting in media is just drag-and-drop. The interactive widgets (more of which later) are similarly easy to use. The finished iBooks that you create can be distributed for free however you wish, though the software license states that you can only **sell** them through the iBooks store (your content of course remains your own).

iBooks Store

Sell (or give away) your iBooks through the world's most successful digital distribution platform.



You can sell or give them away on the iBooks Store, where you'll find books from established publishers as well as new producers. If you sign up to sell through the store, you get 70% of the price you set, with Apple taking 30% to cover hosting, sales and distribution (the same deal developers get for Apps)

iTunes U

Design and distribute complete courses featuring audio, video, books and other content.



The whole thing links in to Apple iTunes U educational content 'store', where teaching academies of all kinds can distribute material to students (BCU is a provider on iTunes U). iBooks can form a part of structured courses, alongside audio/video podcasts, TV Shows and Apps.

An eBook strategy that works for teachers

There are plenty of proven approaches for authors to develop material into a format for iBooks, but we wanted something that would be readily applicable to the kinds of challenges that teachers and lecturers face. While many lecturers are more than capable of writing books, we wanted to recognise that supporting classes requires a different approach.

Our eBook Material

Three Classes, MA Visual Communication, PGDip

Web Essentials: Developing Online Strategies for Creative Enterprise

Prepared Material, Class Generated 'Legacy', Post-class Activity

Revision/Retention, Validate/Test Understanding, Apply/Extend

BIAD Web Essentials, Development, Dissemination

BIAD Learning & Teaching Fellowship

The material from which we're working is at Level 7 (Masters), and focuses in on three 3-hour sessions for the MA Visual Communication PGDip. The sessions connect together to help students develop strategies for effective use of the web in a professional context, and are being developed into something more broadly applicable across levels and disciplines. They use a range of different teaching approaches, and utilise material that is prepared in advance, as well as requiring the class to generate new ideas and material in the class and afterwards.

What roles might eBooks fulfill?

Remote Learning
Missed Classes
In-Class Reference
Incomplete Understanding
Revision & Retention
Validate & Test Understanding
Apply & Extend Learning

There is a range of potential functions for the eBook in the context of a course, from acting as an alternative to attending a class, to extending the learning established in the classroom.

What roles might eBooks fulfill?

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Apply & Extend Learning

We chose to focus in on this end of the functional spectrum. We're not interested in those things that act as substitutes to in-class learning. We're looking for our strategy to work for teachers, hand-in-hand with existing teaching. These three functions support that, and offers a range of approaches that might work at different levels.

Guiding Principles for our Approach

FOR TEACHERS

Complements & Supports Classes, Repurposes Teaching Material

FOR BROAD APPLICATION

Works across subjects and levels

LOW FRICTION

Easy to start, simple to develop, fast to deploy

Self-explanatory really, these are the guiding principles for what we're doing.

The Process

Deconstructing the Class

Introduction	Context setting, informal introduction to the structure of the class and programme, preview material.
Opening Lecture	Material presented, some participation/comment. Core concepts and principles presented with illustrative examples. Controlled class contributions contextualise principles.
Micro Seminar	Opening out a task to class contribution, recorded, examples solicited from class, creative thinking encouraged. A lead-in to and a guided rehearsal of the main class task.
Main Class Task	Working in small groups, by student specialism. Reviewing principles from the opening lecture.
Group Reflection	Reporting and reflecting on task.
Secondary Lecture	Strategies and practical approaches.
Follow-on Tasks	Goal Setting and expectations for next session.

We determined that the ‘class’ would be our basic unit of the eBook (as opposed to a module or course). This frees us from trying to do too much (eg. assessment), and lets us focus on the eBook as a follow-on to attending a class session (prior to the next class).

Of course there’s a level of complexity within even a single three-hour session, with a variety of different strategies employed, and a varied texture to the learning (partially to accommodate a range of learning approaches within a student cohort). These seven categories are used flexibly within the classes we’ve analysed. They’re not always all present, and the order varies according to session goals and length, but the basic types seem to crop up often in the classes we’ve looked at.

We’re very interested to talk to more people about how these ‘types’ relate to their own teaching.

Deconstructing the Class

Introduction	<i>Revise/Retain</i>	
Opening Lecture	<i>Validate/Test</i>	
Micro Seminar	<i>Revision</i>	
Main Class Task	<i>Apply/Extend</i>	
Group Reflection	<i>Apply/Extend</i>	
Secondary Lecture	<i>Revise/Retain</i>	
Follow-on Tasks	<i>Apply/Extend</i>	

Having settled on the eBook functionality we're interested in, we then allocated each section of the session a goal in terms of the eBook. This is very dependent upon the lecturer's goals for how the eBook will support the class. It will vary widely from one class to the next, partially as a result of the lecturer's evaluation of the specific needs of the cohort.

For example, it might be determined (from experience) that students have difficulty in applying principles to their own work (in which case the emphasis would be on Apply/Extend), or that basic recall and clarity of understanding of terminology is a problem (you might look then to favour the eBook as a means of student revision and validation). We might develop a series of 'prompt' questions which make these decisions easier for tutors. Would that be useful?

The important point is that this is a custom process for each class, driven by your goals, and by the needs of the cohort. You might decide that not all aspects of the class need to be represented in the eBook (though our intuition is that a more complete encapsulation of the class will be favoured by the majority of students).

Deconstructing the Class

Introduction	<i>Revise/Retain</i>	
Opening Lecture	<i>Validate/Test</i>	
Micro Seminar	<i>Revision</i>	
Main Class Task	<i>Apply/Extend</i>	
Group Reflection	<i>Apply/Extend</i>	
Secondary Lecture	<i>Revise/Retain</i>	
Follow-on Tasks	<i>Apply/Extend</i>	

It's important to draw a clear distinction between those things that are 'done' before the class actually runs, and those things that generate material in the class that needs capturing (photo, audio, note-taking etc) during the session, or needs creating and annotating afterwards. This means that we can create 'place-holders' in our iBook template into which to slot the updated material, and ensure that we've sufficient scheduled time after the class to update and publish the material.

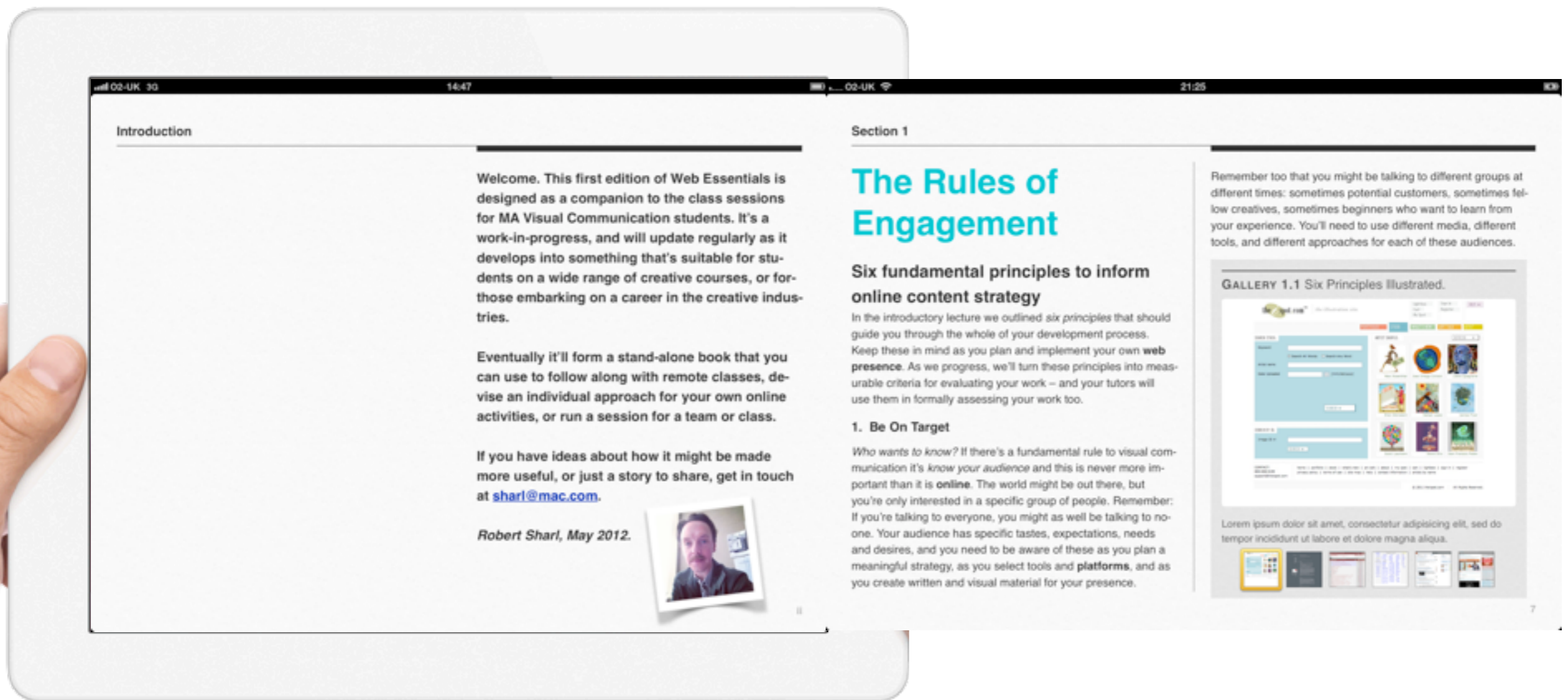
Some of the most useful 'class legacy' material in our case is likely to be in material generated by the class. We need to ensure that we have the most efficient methods in place to capture this material and ensure it's not lost. This might mean appointing students to gather information in usable form (digital images, text files, audio recordings), and building this into the structure of the class.

Deconstructing the Class

Introduction	<i>Revise/Retain</i>	Textbook functionality
Opening Lecture	<i>Validate/Test</i>	Review (interactive quiz)
Micro Seminar	<i>Revision</i>	Gallery (images captured in class)
Main Class Task	<i>Apply/Extend</i>	Gallery/Keynote/PDF Workbook
Group Reflection	<i>Apply/Extend</i>	Audio/Gallery/Glossary
Secondary Lecture	<i>Revise/Retain</i>	Interactive Image
Follow-on Tasks	<i>Apply/Extend</i>	Note-taking & Integrated Email

Having worked out what our goals are for the sections of the eBook, we've mapped this to specific features of iBooks. I don't want to go into too much detail about this here, but we'll be looking to provide clear guidance to help you identify what kind of things are useful for which goals. Some kind of feature/benefit matrix might be a first step as a tool for you to use in planning. As a starting point, the next few slides look at specific functionality, though it's far from an exhaustive review.

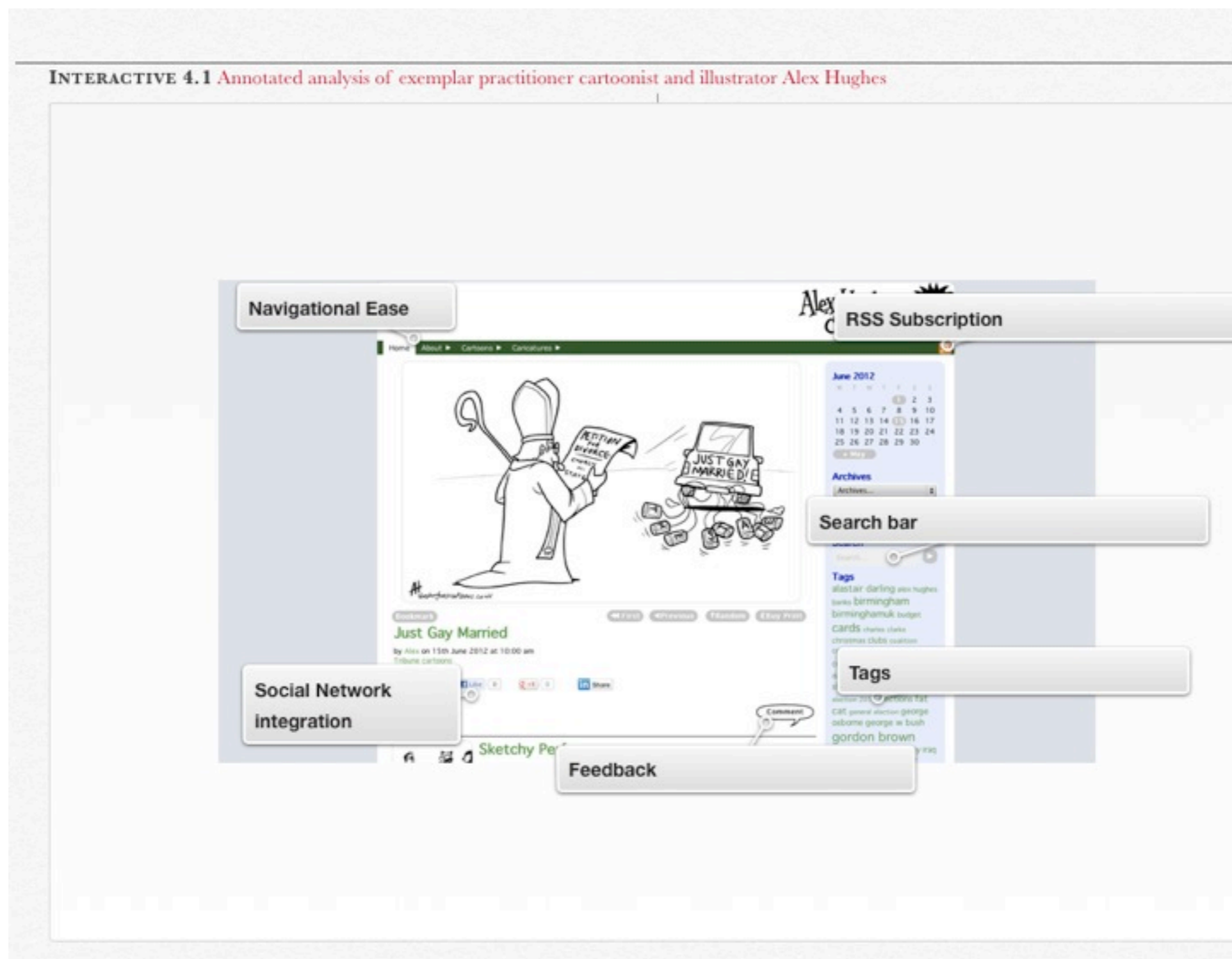
Textbook functionality



We mustn't forget the basics, and even the standard text/image functionality of our iBook can give us a lot of value. Remember you're writing to accompany a class, not writing a standalone textbook, so it's perfectly acceptable (and expected) to refer to things covered in the class (I'm finding that writing about the class in the past tense is a useful approach, even though you're preparing the text in advance), and to use a tone-of-voice that's consistent with the one you use in class.

If you're writing to accompany slides then use the main headers or bullet points as sub headings or section headings. Images can be inserted at the relevant points, or combined using iBooks' Gallery widget, which allows readers to tap or swipe through several visual examples, and zoom them up to full-screen for a closer look. It's worth considering that your students may be (or may become) more familiar with the various metaphors for interacting with an iBook (or iPad App) than you yourself are. Resist the temptation to explain how to use functions within the text unless you're creating something completely unique (you're almost certainly not).

Interactive Image (pre-prepared)




The Interactive Image widget gives us an opportunity to do a couple of things. The first, and most obvious, is that it can act as a revision aid for parts of the class where we're annotating or deconstructing visual images. In our class we spend some time looking at the paradigms of 'blogs', and use several examples to show how design patterns recur within successful blogs for creative practitioners. Within the iBook we can provide these examples in an annotated form and allow the user to swipe through them in sequence, or tap a label to see the annotation.

Interactive Image (pre-prepared)

INTERACTIVE 4.1 Annotated analysis of exemplar practitioner cartoonist and illustrator Alex Hughes

Navigational Ease
This may seem obvious but it is often over looked. To regularly is ease and clarity of user interface replaced by aesthetic design considerations. If people are not able to find what they require they will leave your site, and quickly.

Home About ▶ Cartoons ▶ Caricatures ▶



The cartoon shows a hand holding a large, ornate key and a document labeled "PETITION FOR DIVORCE". The document also has "CHURCH" written on it. The drawing is a simple line drawing with a hand holding a large key and a document labeled "PETITION FOR DIVORCE". The document also has "CHURCH" written on it.

Interactive Image (pre-prepared)

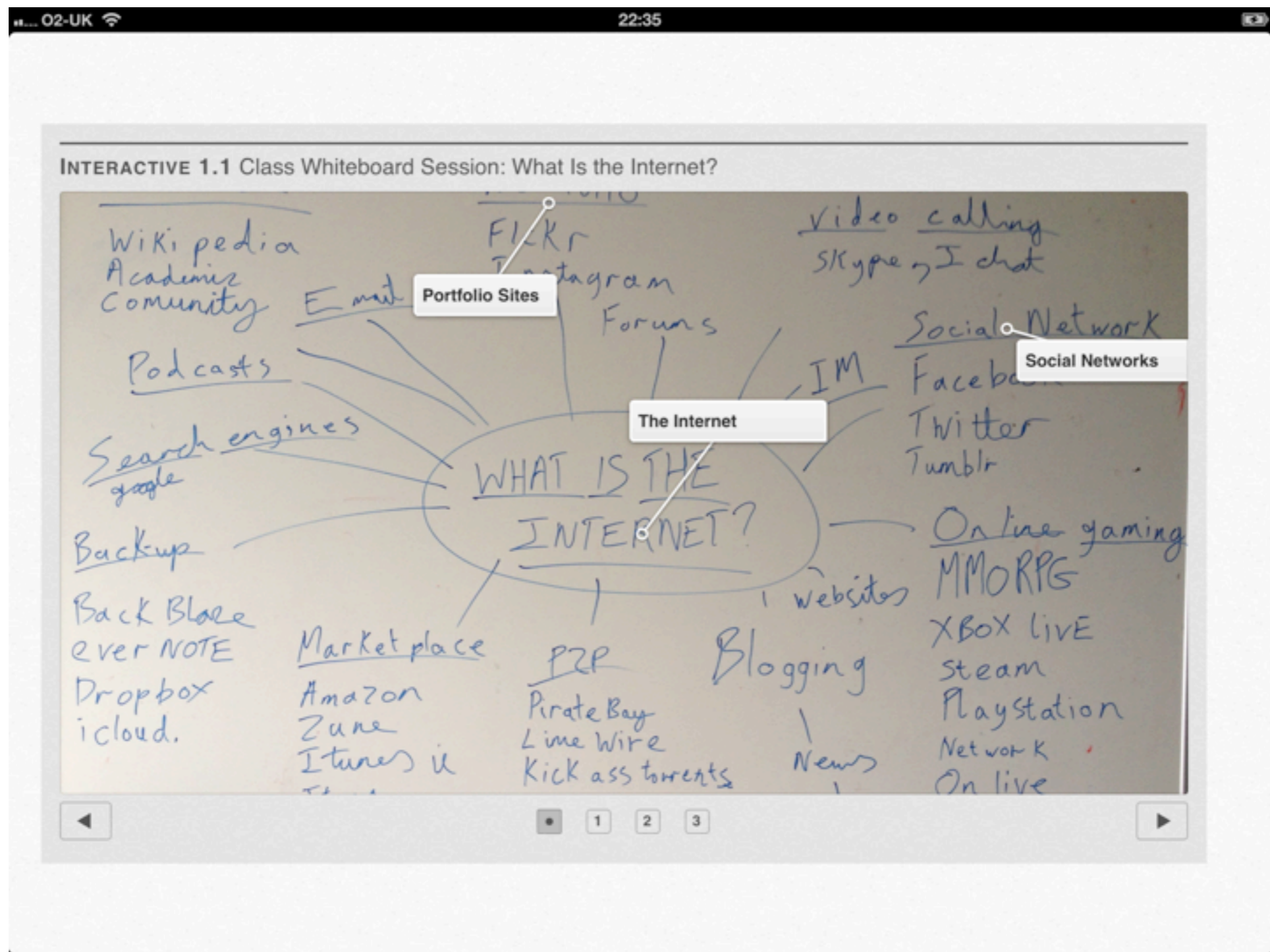
INTERACTIVE 4.1 Annotated analysis of exemplar practitioner cartoonist and illustrator Alex Hughes



The image shows a screenshot of a website or presentation. On the left, there is a cartoon illustration of a man with spiky hair, glasses, and a beard, looking surprised. To his left, the text 'ghes' and 'ons' is visible. Below the cartoon is a green bar with an orange RSS icon. To the right of the RSS icon is a callout box with the title 'RSS Subscription' and a paragraph of text. Below the cartoon and RSS icon is a calendar showing the days of the week (W, T, F, S, S) and the numbers 1 through 10. The number 1 is highlighted in a grey circle.

RSS Subscription
A beautifully elegant solution to keeping people up to date with the your current activities. An RSS feed can be integrated and fed into external RSS readers such as Pulse, this will automatically push notifications to the end user and keeping you on the conscious mind of your target audience, whilst taking pressure of you as a content provider to maintain mailing lists/news letters etc.

Interactive Image (images captured in class)



The second way we decided to use the Interactive Image widget was to capture the whiteboards produced during the “Micro Seminar” part of our class. This is done as a guided class task, and there’s frequent need to clarify terms as we capture them for the benefit of the whole class. In this example, we’ve begun to identify terms on the whiteboard that warranted further explanation, and provided them for review in the iBook.

Interactive Image (images captured in class)

O2-UK 22:35

INTERACTIVE 1.1 Class Whiteboard Session: What Is the Internet?

The Internet

The Internet is more than the WWW! A 'network of networks', it encompasses a huge number of systems which can connect and communicate because they share the same basic protocols.

WHAT IS THE INTERNET?

The Internet

◀ 1 2 3 ▶

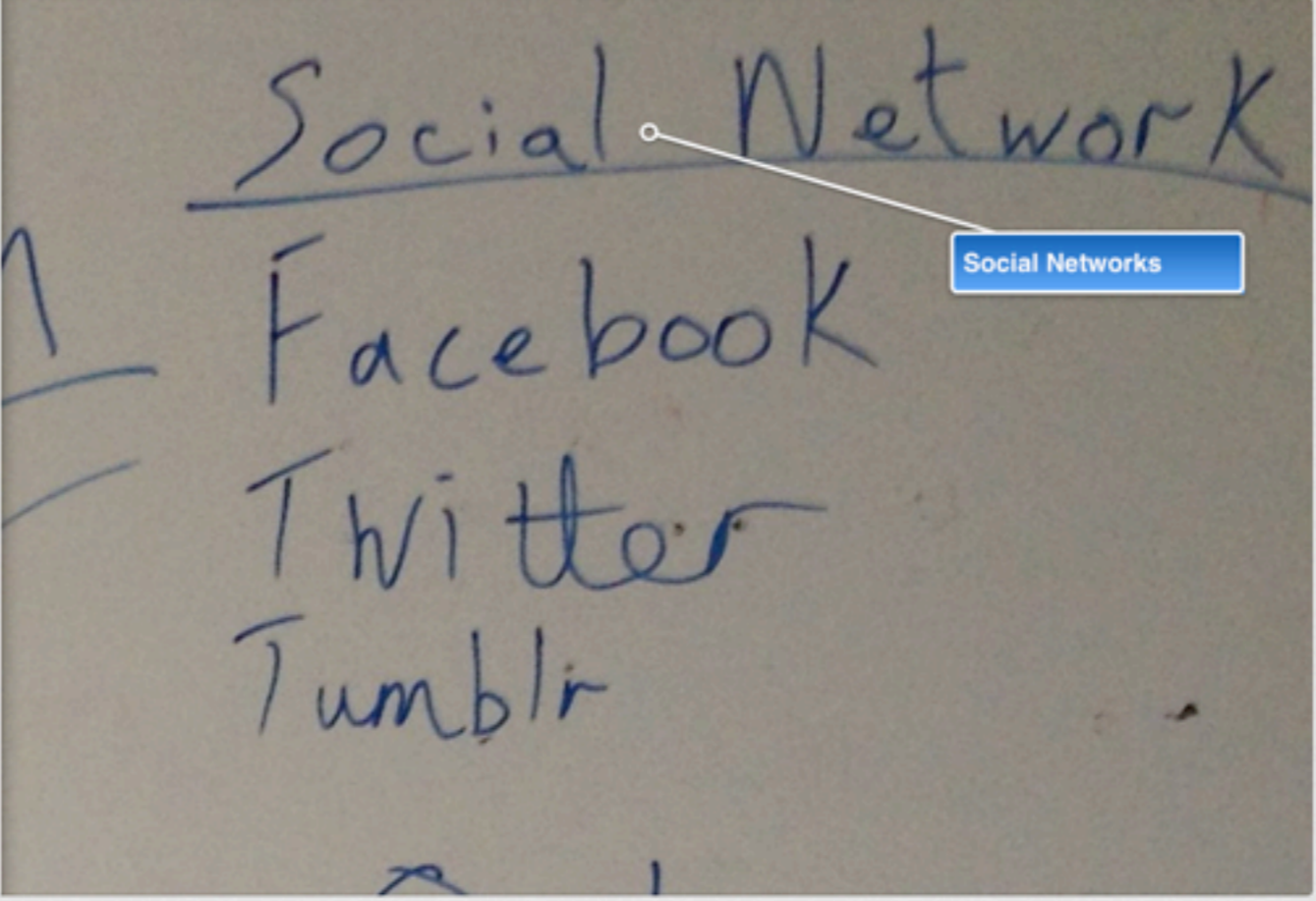
Interactive Image (images captured in class)

O2-UK 22:35

INTERACTIVE 1.1 Class Whiteboard Session: What Is the Internet?

Social Networks

We could have filled a whiteboard just with examples of 'social' online services and sites. What specific services might support the development of a professional creative's online presence and how might you use them on a day-to-day basis to develop and promote your expertise and authority? Don't forget about networks in your specific regions (China? Thailand?)



Social Network
Facebook
Twitter
Tumblr

Social Networks

◀ 1 2 3 ▶


Interactive Image (images captured in class)

O2-UK 22:35

INTERACTIVE 1.1 Class Whiteboard Session: What Is the Internet?

Portfolio Sites

This is probably what most of us think of first when we think about a creative web presence. An important component of a professional's online activity, but look for tools (like Flickr) that integrate with your existing ways of working and allow you to easily plug the media you publish into your wider internet activity (blogs, social media, store, etc.)



Web Folio

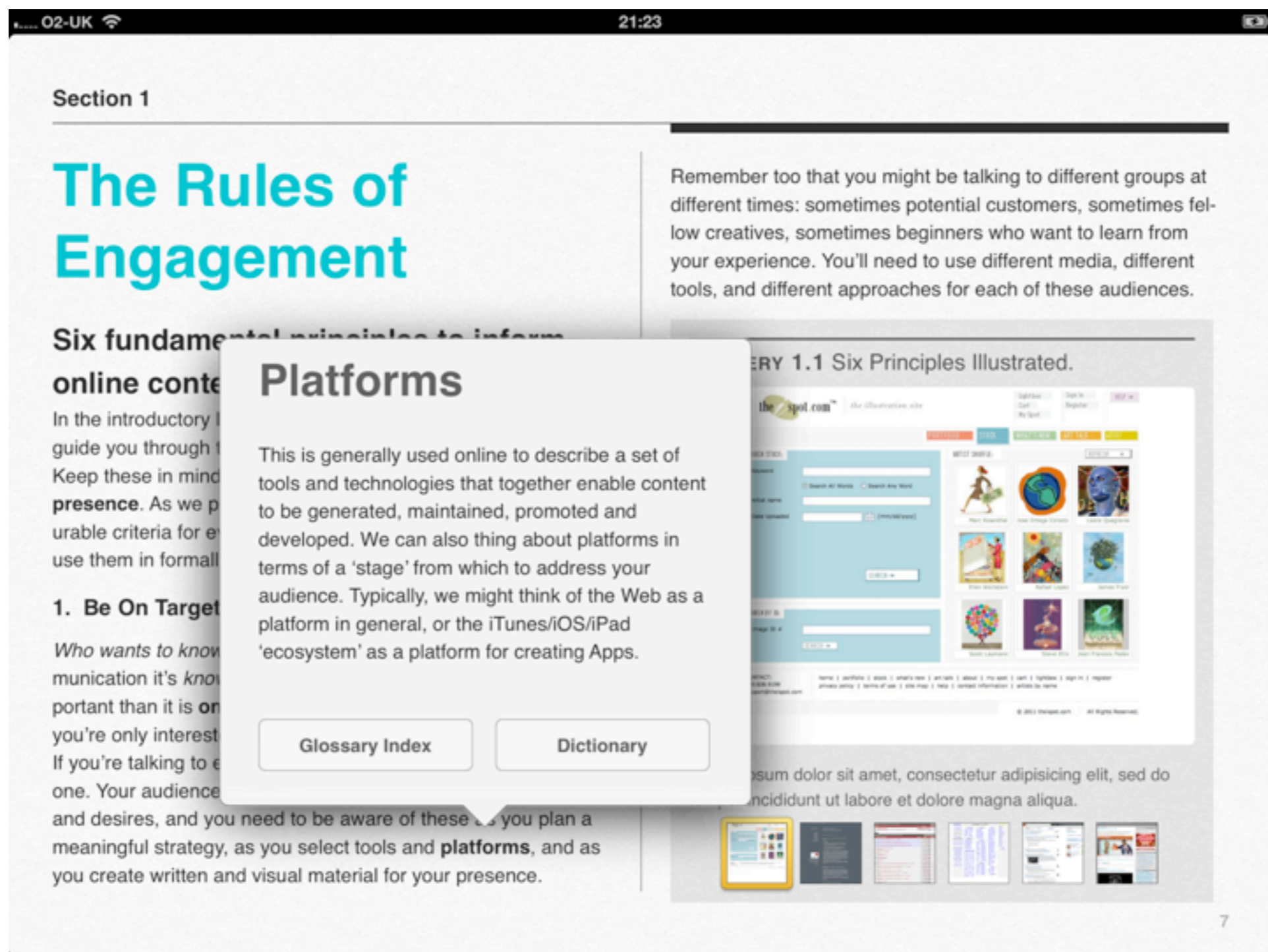
Flickr

Instagram

Portfolio Sites

1 2 3

Glossary



The Glossary feature is one of the most valuable and immediately usable aspects of iBooks. You can very easily add Glossary entries within iBooks Author, and these are accessible with a tap on the word in question within the iBook.

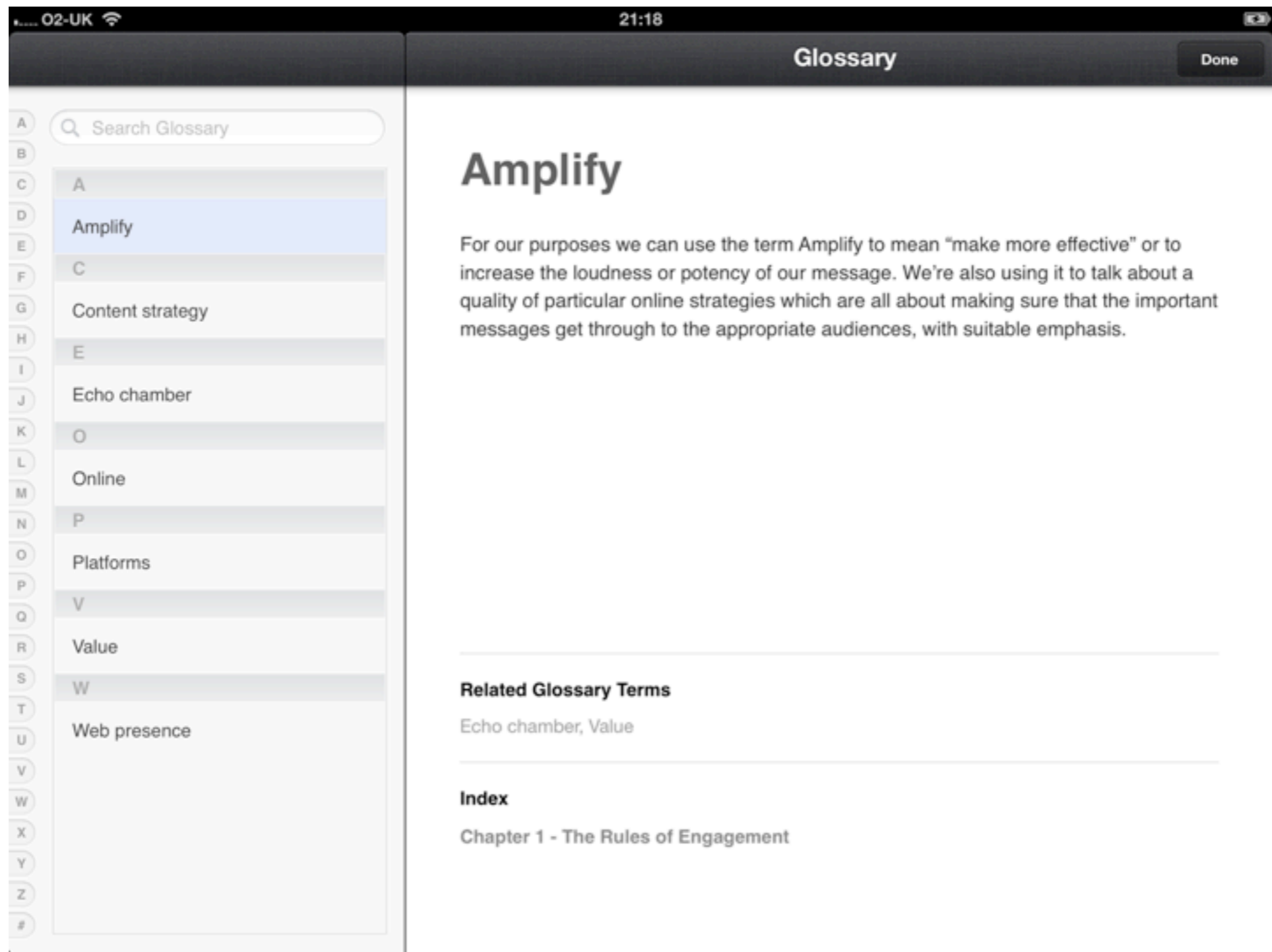
I recommend reviewing the pre-prepared material after you've run the class, adding glossary items for terms which required extra explanation in the class.

Glossary

The screenshot shows a mobile application interface. At the top, there's a status bar with 'O2-UK', signal strength, Wi-Fi, and the time '21:23'. Below that, the document content is visible, including a section header 'Section 1' and a main heading 'The Rules of Engagement'. A glossary entry for 'platform' is overlaid on the document. The entry includes the word 'plat·form', its phonetic transcription, and a definition: 'a raised level surface on which people or things can stand'. It also lists three examples: a stage, a railroad track, and an oil/gas well structure. At the bottom of the glossary entry are two buttons: 'Search Web' and 'Search Wikipedia'. The background document text is partially obscured but includes phrases like 'Remember too that you might be talking to different groups at different times...' and 'Six fundamental online content...'. A small number '7' is visible in the bottom right corner of the document page.

Just one of many examples of features you get for absolutely no additional work: Glossary entries offer a single-tap dictionary definition and access to extended web search features.

Glossary



From the iBook readers can view all of the Glossary entries in one place, and you can easily link related terms together.

Review (Interactive Image Quiz)

REVIEW 4.2 Application basic of principles of an introduction page.

Using the labels on this diagram place the corresponding labels beside the applicable assets found on this page. Place them to the right of the asset and check your answers using the button at the bottom of the page.

The screenshot shows a webpage with several key elements: a logo 'SUPERCOOL.' in the top left; a navigation menu in the top right; a main text block starting with 'Hello, we're Supercool - we create brand identities...'; a 'LATEST NEWS' section featuring an article titled 'MUSIC BY MICHAEL NYMAN'; and a 'FEATURED PROJECTS' section. The quiz interface includes labels in callout boxes: 'Visible branding/logo' points to the logo; 'Accessible Navigation' points to the top right navigation; 'Concise Introduction' points to the main text; 'Current projects' points to the 'LATEST NEWS' section; and 'Visible examples of work' points to the 'FEATURED PROJECTS' section. A 'Check Answer' button is located at the bottom center of the quiz area.

While you can easily incorporate multiple choice quizzes into iBooks, a better option for our purposes is the option to incorporate an image into the Review widget. Here, we've extended the previous Interactive Image example by asking readers to drag labels to the appropriate parts of a webpage. Clicking the "Check Answer" button indicates correct and incorrect choices with a tick or a cross.

While this doesn't allow for deep or complex tasks, it serves our purposes here of letting students check that they've understood basic paradigms and how to identify them within an example. It's a core skill that they need to be confident of in order to build upon it in their journal work for the module.

Note-taking & Integrated Email

O2-UK 22:29

Section 2

Surveying The Online Landscape

What's out there in Cyberspace?

In class we worked together to build a list of all of the different services and systems that we use on the Internet. In this section we've annotated the whiteboard image we captured in class, and pulled out some of the most important.

Before the next class, highlight some of the categories below and add them to your notes, along with lists of the specific examples you've found and some ideas on how you might use them in your own context. Email the notes to your group members to share ideas before the next session.

Categories: *Blogs, Email, Portfolio Sites, File Sharing, Photo Sharing, Podcasts, Reference Sites, Surveys/Forms, Social Networking, Intranets, Chat Spaces, Video Conferencing, Forums, Collaboration Tools, Video Sites, RSS Feeds, Location Services, Payments, Maps, Weather services.*

Add your own within your notes and Journals!

Blogs	Email
Portfolio Sites	File Sharing
Photo Sharing	Podcasts
Reference Sites	Surveys/Forms
Social Networking	Intranets
Chat Spaces	Video Conferencing
Forums	Collaboration Tools
Video Sites	RSS feeds
Location Services	Payments

9

Another extremely valuable 'for free' feature allows readers to highlight and annotate the books themselves. Dragging a finger over the text pops up a choice of coloured highlighters, and inserts a notes icon onto the page.

Note-taking & Integrated Email

The screenshot shows a mobile application interface. At the top, the status bar displays 'O2-UK' and '22:29'. The page is titled 'Section 2' and features a large blue heading: 'Surveying The Online Landscape'. Below this, a sub-heading reads 'What's out there in Cyberspace?'. The main text discusses building a list of online services and systems. A yellow sticky note is overlaid on the text, containing the question: 'What's an intranet? A site for use inside a company? How might this be useful to us as designers?'. To the right of the text is a table with two columns and 14 rows. The first row contains 'Blogs' and 'Email'. The second row contains 'Portfolio Sites' and 'File Sharing'. The third row contains 'Photo Sharing' and 'Podcasts'. The fourth row contains 'Reference Sites' and 'Surveys/Forms'. The fifth row contains 'Social Networking' and 'Intranets'. The sixth row contains 'Chat Spaces' and 'Video Conferencing'. The seventh row contains 'Forums' and 'Collaboration Tools'. The eighth row contains 'Video Sites' and 'RSS feeds'. The ninth row contains 'Location Services' and 'Payments'. The remaining five rows are empty. At the bottom right of the page, the number '9' is visible.

Section 2

Surveying The Online Landscape

What's out there in Cyberspace?

In class we worked together to build a list of all of the different services and systems that we use on the Internet. In this section we've annotated the whiteboard image we captured in class. The categories below are the categories in the categories below. Some of the specific examples of the specific examples you might use are listed to your group members. Add your own within your notes and Journals!

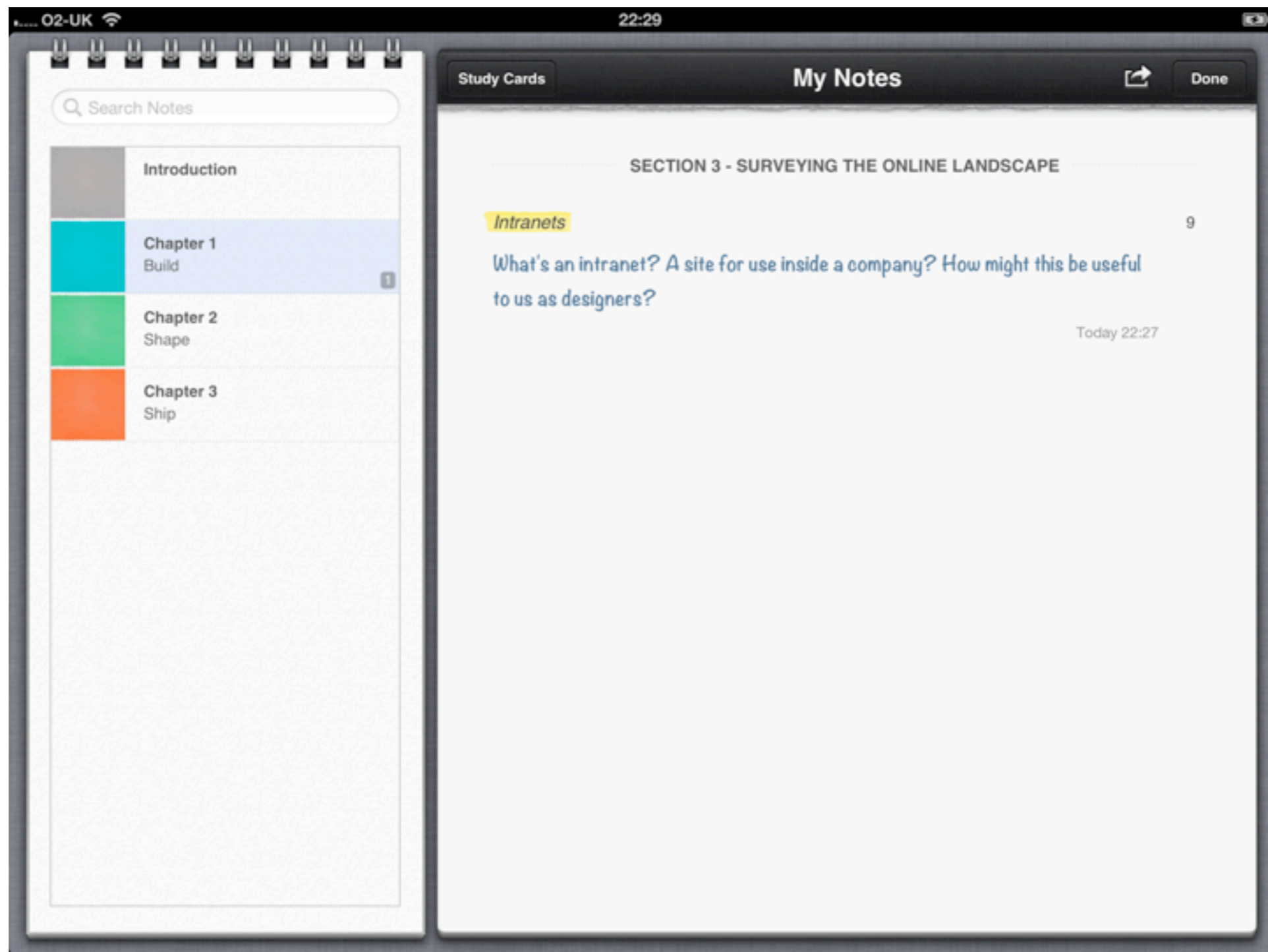
What's an intranet? A site for use inside a company? How might this be useful to us as designers?

Blogs	Email
Portfolio Sites	File Sharing
Photo Sharing	Podcasts
Reference Sites	Surveys/Forms
Social Networking	Intranets
Chat Spaces	Video Conferencing
Forums	Collaboration Tools
Video Sites	RSS feeds
Location Services	Payments

9

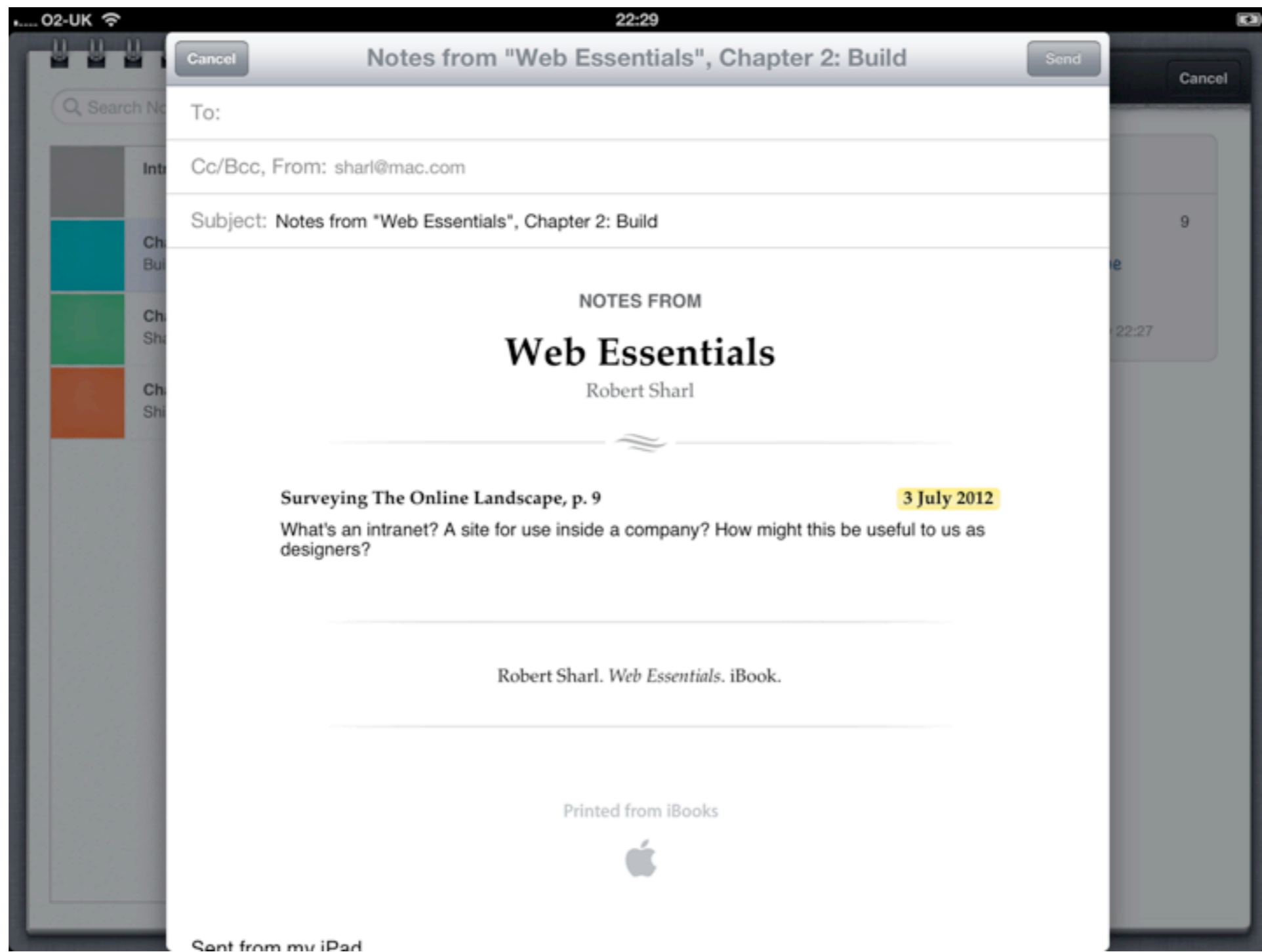
It's easy for a reader to add their own notes and annotate any part of the text. We suggest that the text itself should encourage this activity where appropriate as a means of students extending the ideas presented into their own domains. We'll be asking students to develop ideas for their own 'micro projects' and exercises directly within notes in the text.

Note-taking & Integrated Email



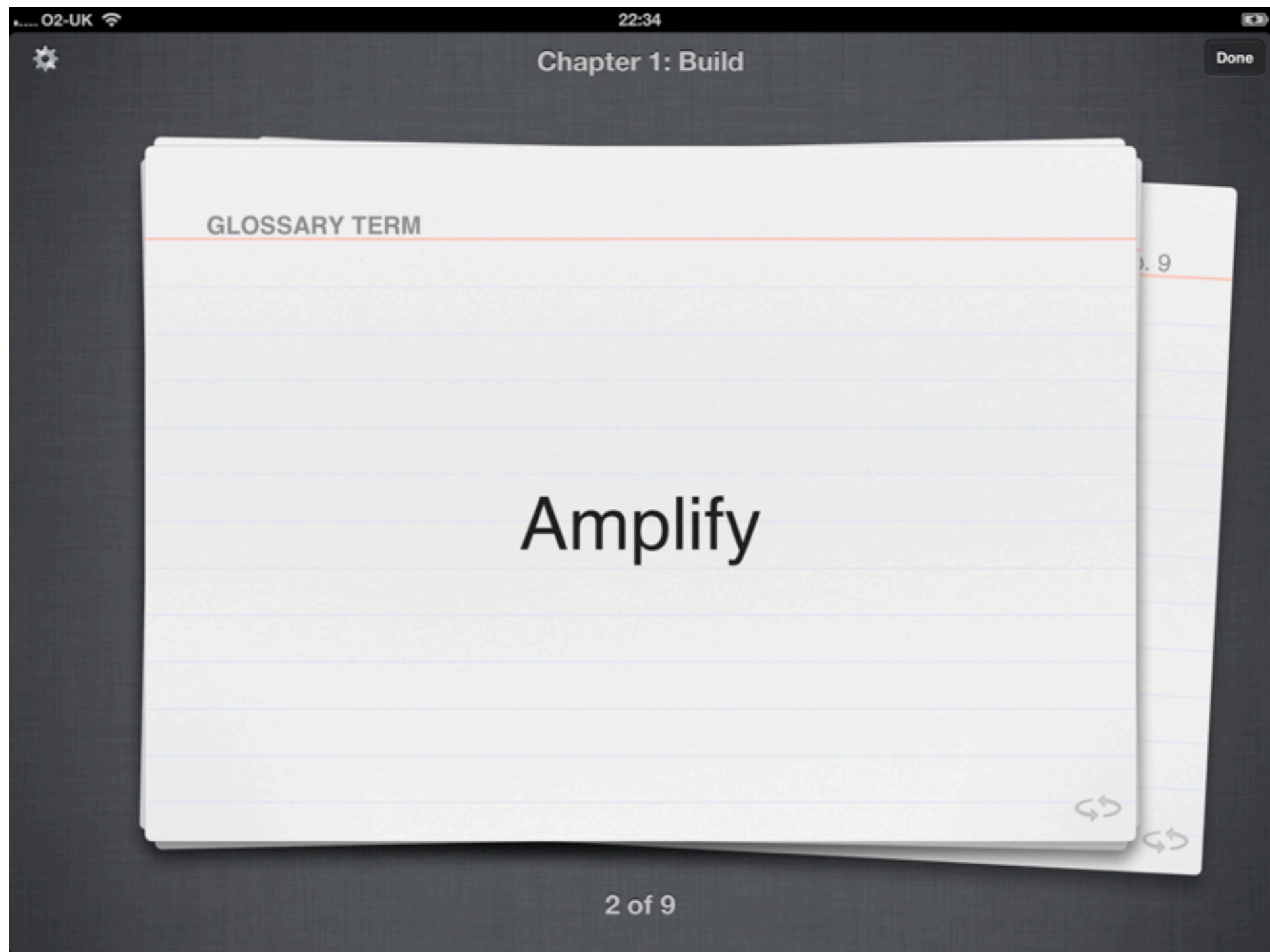
These Notes can all be reviewed from a single interface in iBooks..

Note-taking & Integrated Email



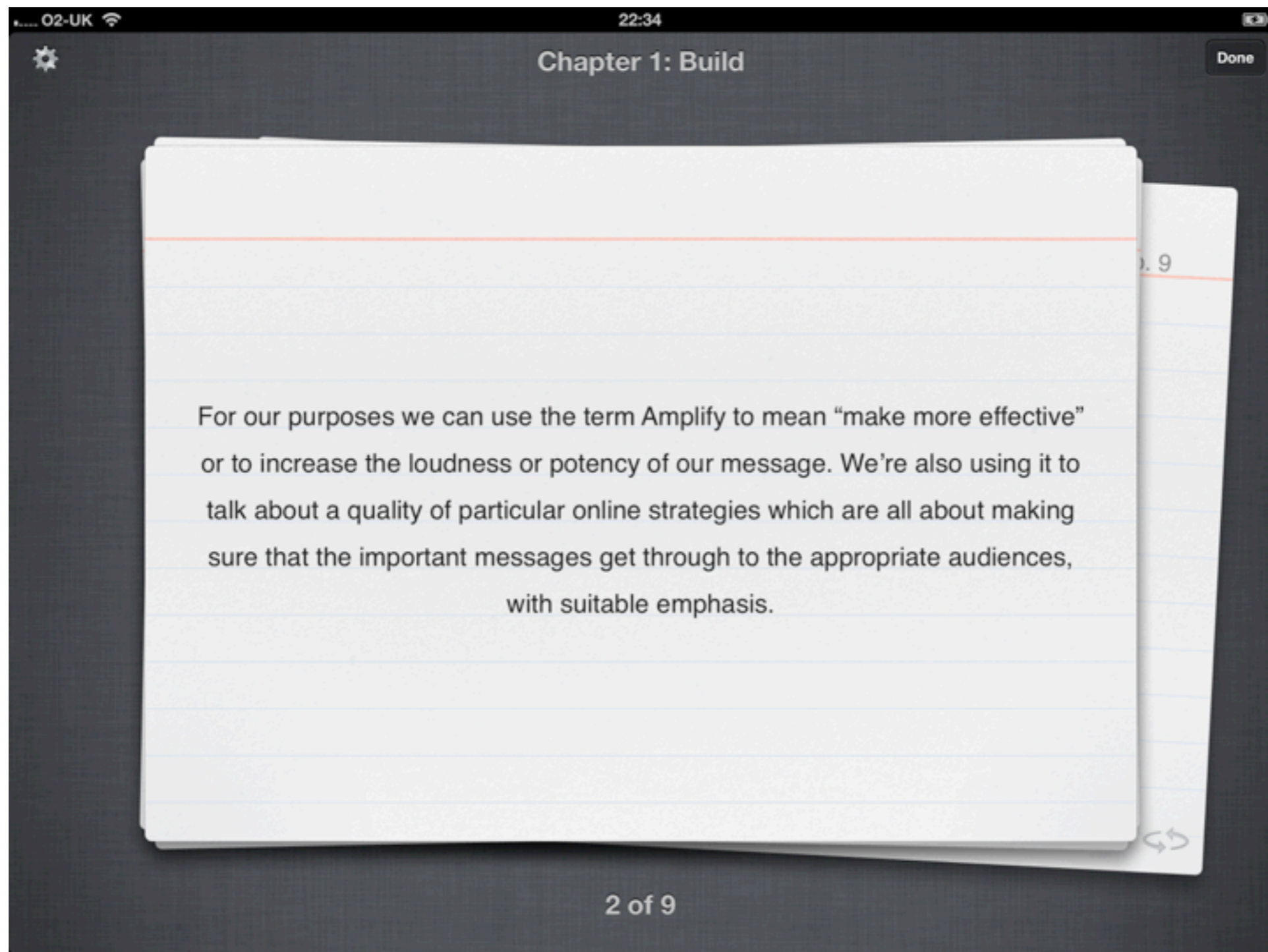
...and they can be individually (or collectively) emailed to tutors or group members (or a forum that accepts posts by email, such as Minigroup). We think we'll be making extensive use of this over time.

Study Cards & Quiz



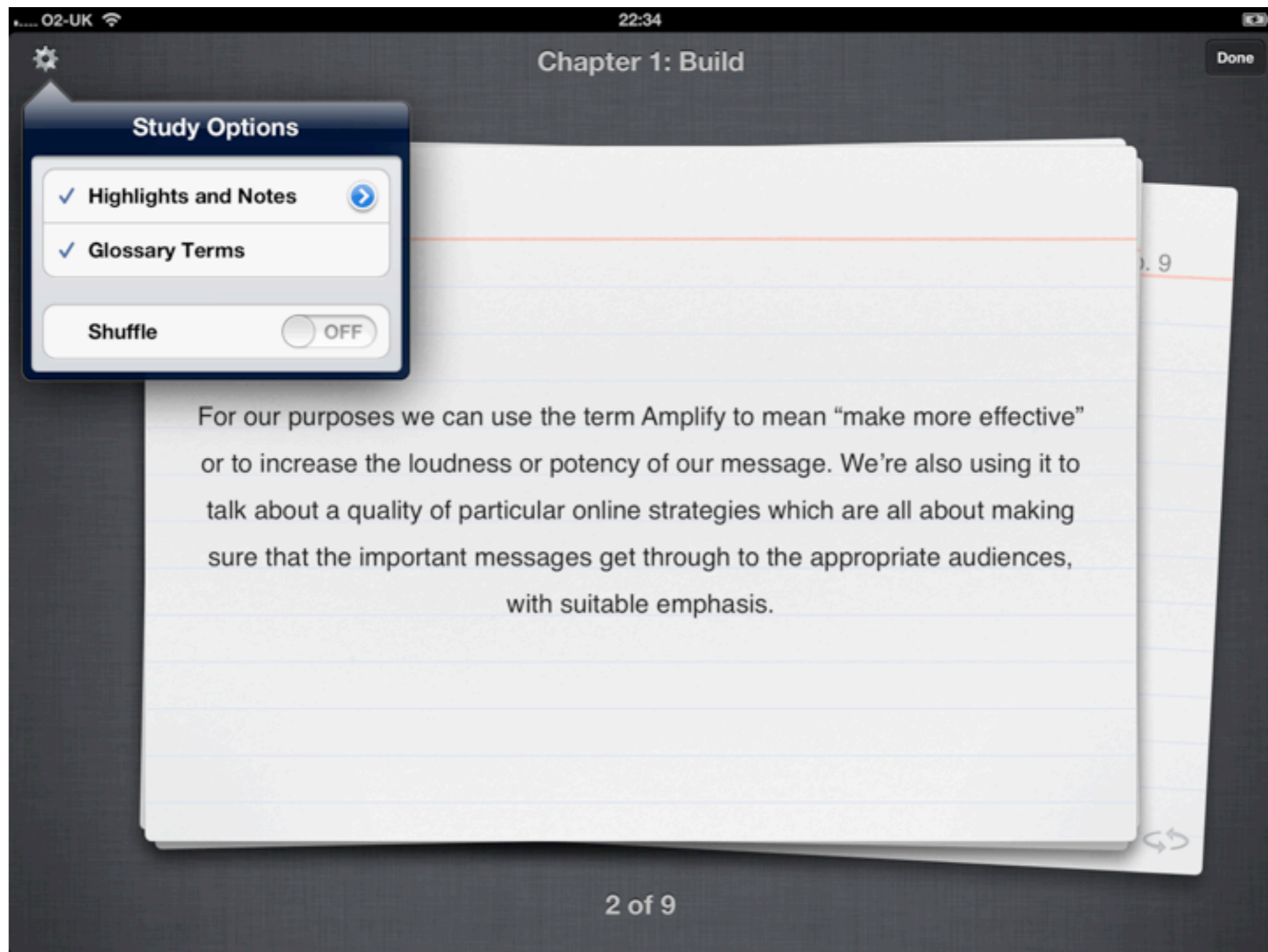
One additional neat use of Glossary entries and Notes is the ability to quickly view them as 'Study Notes'. The indexed text is on one side, and they can be flipped around..

Study Cards & Quiz



..to view the definition or note text.

Study Cards & Quiz



Study Notes can be shuffled for random review and testing, and you can choose what exactly gets used to create them.

Our Prototype iBook

Available to MA Visual Communication students later this month.



Our prototype is nearing completion, and we're aiming to distribute it to students at the end of July 2012 for testing and feedback.

Where are we heading?

Publishing Initial Guidelines for tutors as a podcast and a series of blog posts.

Developing the approach for BIAD Web Essentials.

Seeking teachers/classes with which to test the approach.

These notes are, in fact, the first step in making some of our recommendations available, and we'll soon begin publishing more formal guidelines. Initially this will come as an episode (or perhaps two episodes) of an audio podcast. See the web address at the end for more details.

Since the AAP Showcase presentations we've been approached by a number of different faculties and courses with a view to developing iBooks with them, or just advising. Email me at robert.sharl@bcu.ac.uk if you've any questions or thoughts on the topic.

<http://futurilla.squarespace.com>
robert.sharl@bcu.ac.uk

Here are those contact details. Thanks for reading!

Robert Sharl, July 2012