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Readers are now buying more e-books than printed books.

Readers are now buying more e-books than printed books, Britain's biggest bookseller announced yesterday.

Amazon said that for every 100 physical paperbacks and hardbacks, customers had downloaded 114 titles to its Kindle e-reader.

The online giant's UK website – which started selling books in 1998 – reached the tipping point quicker than it did in the US, where it took almost four years for “e” to outsell “p”.

While the news does not mean that e-books are now outselling physical books across the UK, it does mark a turning point for the printed word. High street bookshops are struggling amid the dominance of the US online giant and e-reading devices, notably the Kindle.

By driving down prices [...], Amazon has been accused of undermining the value of literature and endangering the future of publishers.

Many Kindle titles are a fraction of the price of printed books, while classics by Jane Austen and Charles Dickens are free.[....]

The audience applauded Mr Billingham, author of Tom Thorne detective stories, when he said books were devalued if they were sold for “less than half the price of a cup of tea”.

Amazon suggested that the Kindle had led to more people reading books and had expanded the whole of UK publishing. [...]

“Customers in the UK are now choosing Kindle books more often than print books, even as our print business continues to grow”, said Mr Van der Meulen, vice president of Kindle EU.