

# Impact of Technology on Genre Fiction

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**Abstract-** Genre fiction, which has been otherwise called popular fiction, began its development in the late 19th century due to the advancements of technological progress. Since the invention of various techniques in printing press, binding and circulation, the fate of genre fiction has completely changed. It has adopted various technical advancements to keep pace with the pressing needs of the time. In the present day consumerist culture, reader as a consumer considers the act of reading a novel consuming a product. Hence, genre fiction is more of reader centered. Now a novel can be read in different formats such as paper back, kindle edition, hard cover, mass market paperback, audio CD, audio cassette and flexi bound. Technology and its devices have provided unique platforms like blog, instagram, twitter and other social networking sites for renowned authors not only to express themselves but also to communicate to their fan base and get instant feedback about their creative work. The very production and reception of these popular novels are thus undoubtedly modified by technology. This paper attempts to focus on how technology and genre fiction grow in tandem forming a new elitist reader community.

**Keywords:** - Technology, genre fiction and elitist reader community.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The term 'Genre Fiction' became popular around 1890s. They represent the narratives which enjoy phenomenal sales over a short period of time. Now, they have acquired a significant place in literature globally. They began its development in the late 19th century due to the advancement in technological progress. This paper attempts to focus on how technology and genre fiction grow in tandem forming a new elitist reader community. Genre fiction is based upon a limited number of forms or genres of narrative pleasure such as romance, thriller, horror and suspense. Scott Mc Cracken defines popular fiction as 'fiction that is read by a large number of people'. He further adds 'contemporary popular fiction is the product of huge entertainment industry... that markets and sells popular narratives for film, radio, television and periodicals as well as in book form'(1). Many books are published every year on genre fiction which indicates the enormous growth of this field. The aim of genre fiction is not to discuss any philosophy or convey any message to the readers. It is written purely to amuse the readers while they travel by bus or train and when they wait in the airport lounge. A long-run debate on the superiority of literary fiction over genre fiction among theorists, scholars and critics has kept genre fiction always in the limelight. H.Thomas Milhorn points out the nature of genre fiction as follows: "Genre fiction is the fiction of emotion. Its primary function is to evoke feelings. The writers' goal is to entertain the reader. Any consideration of self explanation, if not exists, is secondary. Genre fiction is typically characterized by a great deal of dialog, characters that readers can easily identify with and plots are fast paced".

Technology impacts our lives more than any other discipline. It has altered the way in which we think. It has drastically changed the cultural, social and economical status of every human being. Science and technology has undoubtedly affected the production, distribution and reception of genre fiction. It has offered social networking mediums like Blog, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram for popular authors to communicate with their fan base. Popular writers can share their views with the readers through these social networking sites. The one to one correspondence between an author and a reader has been made possible only because of the development in the field of technology. Technology has offered a platform for writers to reach the masses. Active participation from the side of the readers is also made possible. Publishers provide online discussion forums in which the readers can actively participate. Budding writers can publish their manuscripts with services such as Createspace where space is given for them to have complete control over the design, font, color option of the cover page etc. Since the invention of various techniques in printing press, binding and circulation, the fate of genre fiction has completely changed. It has adapted various technical advancements to keep pace with the pressing needs of the time. The idea of genre started to evolve in the 19th century, when popular writings were published in serialized form. It was followed by the triple-decker or otherwise called three volume edition which was considered a significant stage in the development of modern form of genre fiction and it would be appropriate to call the triple-decker novel as an early 'best seller'. Lending libraries such as Mudie's started to influence in the publishing industry towards the end of the 19th century. A number of developments in the field of the publishing industry due to the influence of technological advancements accelerated the

**International Journal of Science, Engineering and Management (IJSEM)**  
**Vol 3, Issue 4, April 2018**

growth of the genre fiction. John Carey observes, 'a huge literate public had come in to being, and consequently every aspect of the production and dissemination of the printed text became subject to revolution' (5).

The number of novels published every year drastically increased due to advances in the printing processes. Some of the new technological advances which influenced genre fiction are the invention of carbon paper, the advent of type writer, the advent of faster rotary press and quicker drying glue. The first mass market paperback books were published in the year 1930 which allowed books to become a lot more affordable to readers. In Britain, the arrival of Penguin books was considered as paperback revolution. Now, printing presses could print books more easily and more rapidly. The buying and reading is no more a strenuous process. We no longer solely depend on bookshops and libraries to buy books. Instead, books are available in different formats such as paperback, kindle edition, hard cover, mass market paperback, audio CD, audio cassette and flexi bound. Readers can peruse internet sites to download e-books and can thus carry the entire library on small electronic device. Technology has modified genre fiction in such a way that the reading is only a mouse click away.

Though genre fiction is written in simple forms, the aim is to win the hearts of large number of people. So the author is compelled to behold the expectations of the readers. The situation is further complicated because these popular narratives do not just reach the audience through texts but also through many other advanced kind of media such as radio, television, film, computer games, comics and e-books. Technology has thus allowed genre fiction a wider base to reach the readers in various forms. The digitized 21st century has actually reshaped the reading experiences.

Popular narratives are produced in large numbers and sold with glossy covers. Just like the other forms of enterprise, the publishing industry has also become a place of commercial centre, where a novel is considered a commodity. This publishing industry depends much of its income on mass production. The very production and reception of these popular novels are undoubtedly modified by technology. In the present day consumerist culture, reader as a consumer considers the act of reading a novel consuming a product. Hence, genre fiction is more of reader centric. These popular novels are sold widely in easily accessible areas like super markets, departmental stores, railway stations and airports. Publishers usually aim for high sales in short period. With the help of technology, they employ different, innovative promotional techniques to endorse their products. Articles and interviews of the author appear in popular magazines during the time of release of the fiction. The author appears on television to promote the sales. Endorsements are made effectively to get the readers immediate attention. They aim at the instant clout in the

reader's mind. The author's name is considered as an important marketing tool. The market value is increased by adding the line 'by the bestselling author' in the cover page. The cover, the fonts used in the title, reviews from magazines at the back cover and blurb attract the consumer. Thus the advancement in the technology not only modifies production but also the marketing and advertising of these commodities which has subsequently become more and more important in achieving mass sales in short period.

Digital medium and social networks have affected genre fiction tremendously. Digitalization has in fact helped publishers and authors to reach as wide an audience as possible. Thus it could be said that beyond the shadow of any doubt technology has tremendous impact on genre fiction. Both the fields have grown in tandem. Because of this, genre fiction will continue to serve as an important social and cultural document of its time.

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