

'Fahrenheit 451' finally out as an e-book

November 29 2011, By HILLEL ITALIE , AP National Writer



Writer Ray Bradbury, pictured in 2007. Publisher Simon & Schuster is releasing an electronic edition of Bradbury's classic science fiction novel "Fahrenheit 451" after the 91-year-old author lifted his objections to a digital version.

(AP) -- At age 91, Ray Bradbury is making peace with the future he helped predict.

The science fiction/fantasy [author](#) and longtime enemy of the e-book has finally allowed his dystopian classic "Fahrenheit 451" to be published in digital format. Simon & Schuster released the electronic edition Tuesday at a list price of \$9.99.

First published in paperback by Ballantine in 1953 and as a hardcover by Simon & Schuster in the 1960s, "Fahrenheit 451" has sold more than 10 million copies and has been translated into 33 languages. It imagined a world in which the appetite for new and faster media leads to a decline

in reading, and books are banned and burned. Bradbury himself has been an emphatic defender of traditional paper texts, saying that [e-books](#) "smell like burned fuel" and calling the Internet nothing but "a big distraction."

"It's meaningless; it's not real," he told The New York Times in 2009. "It's in the air somewhere."

A phone call to Bradbury was not immediately returned. A pre-recorded voicemail message, a woman's voice, warned that the author doesn't usually check his messages.

Bradbury's agent, Michael Congdon, said Tuesday that rights for Bradbury's book were expiring and that the growing digital market, estimated at 20 percent or higher of overall sales, made a deal for e-books inevitable. A wave of former e-holdouts have changed their minds recently, notably "Harry Potter" author J.K. Rowling.

"We explained the situation to him (Bradbury) that a new contract wouldn't be possible without e-book rights," said Congdon, who added that six publishers had been interested. "He understood and gave us the right to go ahead."

In a statement released Tuesday, Simon & Schuster publisher Jonathan Karp said the new e-book was "a rare and wonderful opportunity to continue our relationship with this beloved and canonical author and to bring his works to new a generation of readers and in new formats."

Simon & Schuster also announced that a new paperback edition of "Fahrenheit 451" would go on sale in January. New paperbacks of two other Bradbury favorites, "The Martian Chronicles" and "Illustrated Man" will be available in March.

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