**Prompt**

Change in reading habits has always been constant - the e-book revolution is only the most recent manifestation of this change.  What is lost and what is gained when there is a change?  Are any more people enfranchised by a change in reading habits, either through increased literacy or access to reading material?  What do you think Merkoski's opinion is and how would Lansky react to it?  Back up your opinions with facts.

**Response**

Change is essential. Without change, culture becomes stagnant. That is not to say that it is necessary totally abandon a system in order to create something better, but it is possible to discover new applications of an idea or belief. In regard to reading, the advent of ebooks has served to make reading more inclusive and less exclusive, a change that I think Merkoski embraces whole-heartedly. His text is filled with possible ideas of how to improve the ebook experience and expand it to an even greater audience.

 The article I located on Amazon is an excellent example of this. The author, Stant Litore, grew up in a rural town and had little access to books. Now, however, “A little over an hour… and you own a library” (Litore, 2014). That is the power change can have. Reading, and the ability to wrestle with abstract ideas through reading, is an important part of American culture. We are a society rooted in ideas regarding social status, plagued by poor economic conditions, and exiting an era where reading was not an emphasis for many. The onset of changes like the advent of ebooks has changed all of this.

 Litore continues, “The number of rural people who are reading regularly is growing fast” (2014). I would hazard a guess that the number of urban people from poor and underprivileged families that are reading now as never before is also growing. Books are so much more accessible now! We can now more freely and easily exchange ideas, even across oceans and continents. We can be exposed to belief systems that have held true for centuries that we may never have known existed before! That is the power of change. It might now always be good. There is bound to be conflict between cultures and ideologies. Even here, though, we have a chance to rise to the occasion, to reason and understand and learn from one another. This will allow an increase in respect for our fellow man.

Merkoski specifically mentioned the sharing of books as a personal experience (Merkoski, p. 79).  As he pointed out, the major drawback to how this is accomplished is that it is a cold and impersonal method.  There is often little or no interaction between the parties involved.  He is optimistic that this will change as the technology advances.  In a sense, this is adapting culture and yet preserving certain vital aspects of it.  I would be happy to hear some of the examples that stuck out to my peers regarding Merkoski's view on the evolution of reading; this particular example was one of the most poignant for me, as a person who enjoyed spending hours in a book store and chatting about the literature.

Lanksy, I feel, would have battled mixed feelings regarding this technology.  He would not have had to search so long and hard to find books with which to study Yiddish.  In addition, it would have been much easier preserve Yiddish literature (on a sidenote, I do wonder if he is using the technology now as part of his efforts).  However, I think he and Merkoski would be in total agreement about the impersonal nature of ebooks and the ways they can be shared.  Part of the magic for Lansky, a main drive for his work, was the variety of stories and personal histories he came to experience.  He didn't just take books; he took part of the owner of those books with him.  Whether he was able to meet the owner(s) or not, he gained a sense of history and perspective.  For Lansky perhaps more so than some others, the books were a historical anchor to the past of his people, a culture that was beginning to recede and fade away.  So, on one hand, Lansky would have been thrilled at the increased accessibility of literature, but on the other saddened by the loss of personal history and perspective that attended such an increase.

This is a bit of my own opinion, and perhaps others will want to elaborate or debate this, but I have noticed that the more available something is, the less worthwhile it becomes.  For lack of better terminology, we begin to take for granted things that are readily available to us.  For example, to stick with the example of reading, it might eventually become "something everyone can do" and therefore won't hold as much power over us as it currently does.  Thoughts?

Litore, S. (2014). *What digital publishing really means.* Amazon.  Retrieved 30 January 2014 from http://www.amazon.com/gp/feature.html/ref=amb\_link\_390904642\_4?ie= UTF8&docId=1001500701&nav\_sdd=aps&pf\_rd\_m=ATVPDKIKX0DER&pf\_rd\_s=center-B1&pf\_rd\_r=1RPPVNP1WEJCZTRGYDXZ&pf\_rd\_t=101&pf\_rd\_p= 1715839002&pf\_rd\_i=507846