BOOK FORMATTING
FOR SELF-PUBLISHERS

By Carla King

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INTRODUCTION

This booklet will help you to understand the basics of formatting your book both for print and e-reading devices, so that you can distribute it for sale to the online retailers and brick-and-mortar bookstores. The path you take will depend on your budget, technical abilities, and time available. Costs can range from free, do-it-yourself solutions to hundreds of dollars for most books, or even thousands of dollars for very complex book (like cookbooks) you want delivered to the new tablet devices. Here are your basic options:

- Do it yourself using various free or low-cost software
- Contract an independent book design and formatting specialist
- Hire a full-service book design, formatting and distribution service

Once your book is formatted, you can upload the print and e-book files to **IngramSpark** for wide distribution.

HOW YOUR READERS SHOP FOR BOOKS

Before explaining how book formatting is achieved I'd like to provide a view of how your readers shop for books so that you have a clear picture of the supply chain (sales channels) and the formats associated with each one.

First of all, it's worth noting that despite all the excitement about e-books, print still dominates as the preferred format type in terms of units sold in the marketplace today. So as an indie author, you will want your book in print for delivery to online retailers and brick-and-mortar bookstores, as well as in e-book formats for delivery to all the various kinds of e-readers.

Resist the temptation to go exclusive, because your customers are everywhere. They should be able to find your book wherever they like to shop, whether in a particular online store, within their e-reading device itself, in an actual brick-and-mortar bookstore, in a library, from your own website and even in non-bookstore markets like specialty catalogs.

You'll centralize distribution and save time by using a service like **IngramSpark** instead of through each channel's publishing platforms, which can be rather time consuming. There are several major sales channels: (Ingram with its 39,000 retail and library partners), Amazon, B&N, Kobo and Apple) and many minor sales channels.

HOW CUSTOMERS READ YOUR BOOKS

Format matters to your customers, as many will read in print while some shop for your book on a dedicated e-reader like the B&N Nook or the Kindle Paperwhite. Others will read your book on a multi-purpose tablet device like the Apple iPad, Samsung Galaxy, or the Amazon Kindle Fire. Many people really do read books on their Apple iPhone and Android-powered mobile devices.

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DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BOOK FORMATS

Now that you understand where your readers shop and how they read, let's take a look at the most common book formats:

- PDF for print books
- Standard EPUB Format
- Standard Kindle (MOBI) Format for Amazon
- Fixed Layout EPUB for complex and color books targeted to the tablet devices
- Fixed Layout for Kindle for complex and color books targeted to the tablet devices (Kindle Format 8, or KF8)

There are many other e-book formats besides those mentioned above but they've fallen away as EPUB and MOBI have dominated the market.

Still, you may want to deliver your book (or a special edition of it) in HTML5 for the web, and provide versions of your book in doc, rtf and other text formats. These formats are popular with authors who are seeking beta readers to give them feedback on their writing. (Good beta publishing platforms include Leanpub, Wattpad, Gumroad or Selz, and even your own WordPress website.)

Standard EPUB Format

EPUB is to digital books as MP3 is to digital music. In 2007 the International Digital Publishing Forum released the first EPUB standard and everyone agreed to use it. That is, except Amazon, which uses the Kindle MOBI format instead. (More on MOBI, below.) EPUB can be read on dedicated e-readers and via apps like Stanza, the Kobo app, and Adobe Digital Editions.

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- Kindle MOBI e-book format
- Kindle e-reading device
- Kindle app

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HOW TO CREATE A STANDARD, TEXT-HEAVY E-BOOK

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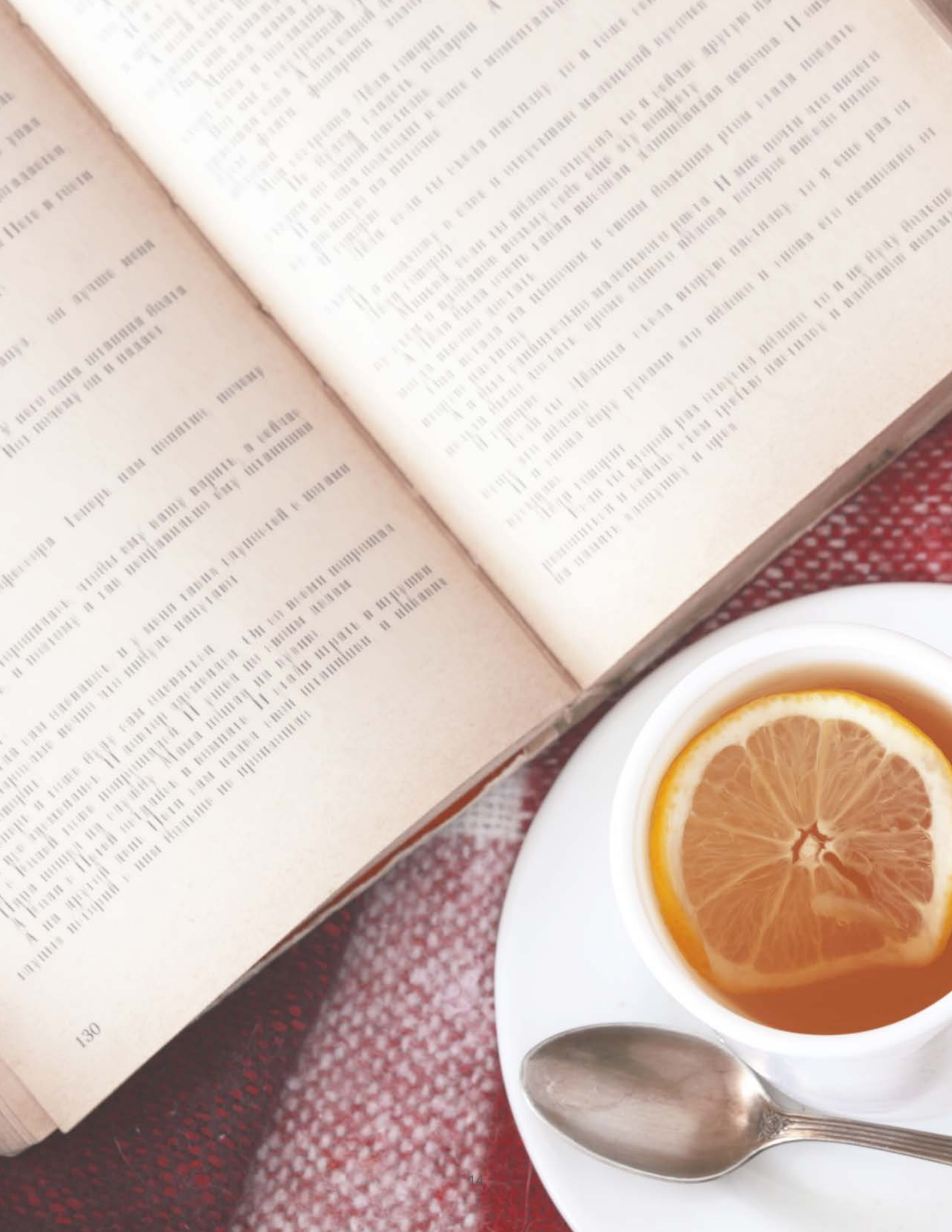
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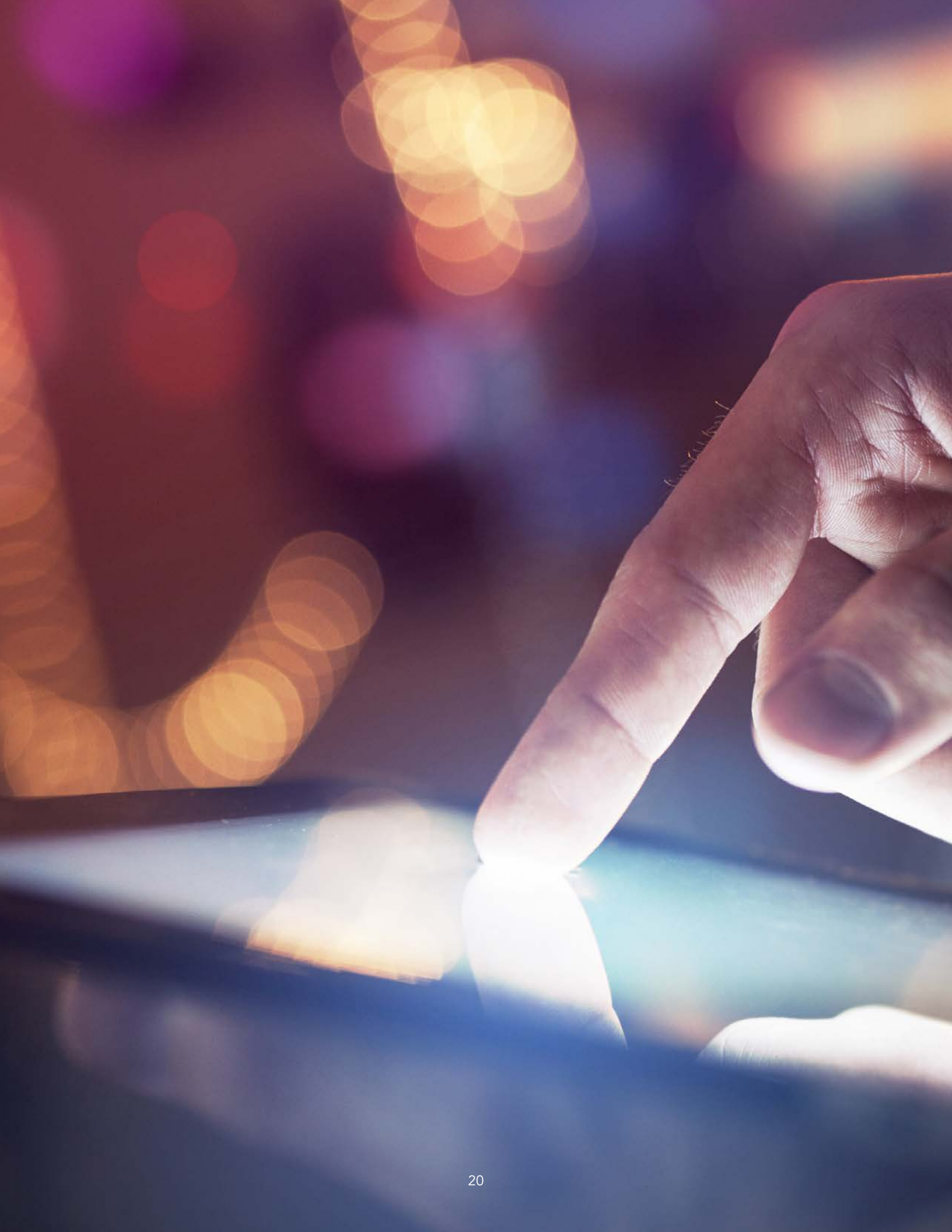
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