

## **Libraries Loaning E-book Readers**

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March 2010

## Libraries Loaning E-book Readers

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## ***Executive Summary***

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This report was written to investigate whether Canadian libraries are loaning e-book readers and to examine whether it would be beneficial to add e-book readers to the collections of the Cambridge Libraries & Galleries. It was found that libraries are pleased with their e-book reader experience and recommend that other libraries follow their lead. The following provides an overview of how libraries are loaning e-book readers.

Information from the following was reviewed:

- Canadian and American Library Listservs
- Canadian Library Associations
- Canadian and American Public Libraries
- Media and library literature

The following information was found:

- Larger late fees, replacement/damage fees are charged
- Restricted borrowers (adults only)
- Shorter loan periods (1-2 weeks)
- User agreements/waivers required
- Usage restrictions (no or limited downloads allowed)
- High circulation and holds
- Positive patron and staff feedback

### **E-book Reader Types and Titles**

Libraries are currently providing patrons with either Sony Readers or Kindles. The majority of libraries appear to loan Kindles regardless of the type of library. However, Canadian libraries were found to be planning to loan Sony Readers. Libraries who are loaning e-book readers are providing the reader with a preloaded selection of titles (either mixed or by genre) and are restricting the patron from downloading additional titles. Patrons are restricted from downloading due to software restrictions (see footnote 1 p. 11).

Of those that responded, only four public libraries in Canada were found to be planning to loan e-book readers, these include: Greater Victoria Public Library, Toronto Public Library, Innisfil Public Library, and the Region of Waterloo Library. Canadian academic libraries were also found to be loaning or planning to loan e-book readers these include: Memorial University Library, University of Winnipeg, McGill University Library and the SIAST Libraries.

### **Recommendation**

As the Cambridge Libraries would like to use Overdrive to download titles to an e-book reader, the Kindle which is restricted to Amazon titles is not option. Due to the restrictions that the Adobe Digital Editions software imposes (see footnote 1 p.11), further investigation is required in order to determine if it is practical for the Cambridge Libraries to loan Sony Readers to patrons.

## ***Libraries Loaning or Planning to Loan E-book Readers***

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### **Survey**

A request for information was sent to a selection of Canadian and American libraries in order to find libraries that are currently or planning to loan e-book readers. Requests were sent via listservs, email, or library websites. Searches were also performed via Google and library literature.

**N.B.** The following list includes a select group of Academic libraries, for a fuller list please refer to: E-book Readers in Libraries Facebook Group  
<http://www.facebook.com/posted.php?id=14473239090&start=50&hash=463a6dd978484aa0519c2117b4be5630#!/posted.php?id=14473239090>

NCSU Libraries - Kindle  
<http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/techlending/ebooks.html>

Palm Beach Community College - Kindle  
<http://pbcc.libguides.com/kindle>

A&M Texas University - Kindle  
<http://library.tamu.edu/services/media-reserves/borrow-a-kindle>

SIAST Libraries – Sony Reader  
<http://siast.ca.libguides.com/content.php?pid=49459&sid=363529>

University of Winnipeg – Sony Reader  
<http://cybrary.uwinnipeg.ca/>

FerrissHodgett Library, Memorial University Libraries – Sony Reader, IREX &Bookeen  
<http://www.library.mun.ca/swgc/ebookreaders.php>

Suffolk University - Kindle  
<http://www.suffolk.edu/sawlib/sawyer.htm>

Oregon State University -Kindle  
<http://osulibrary.oregonstate.edu/>

Frank L. WeyenbergPublic Library - Kindle  
<http://flwlib.blogspot.com/2009/03/kindle-2-reader-frank-l-weyenberg.html>

[http://www.easicat.net/polaris/search/searchresults.aspx?ctx=1.1033.0.0.1&type=Browse&term=kindle&by=TI&sort=PD TI&limit=TOM=\\*&query=MTE=%27659038%27&page=0](http://www.easicat.net/polaris/search/searchresults.aspx?ctx=1.1033.0.0.1&type=Browse&term=kindle&by=TI&sort=PD TI&limit=TOM=*&query=MTE=%27659038%27&page=0)

Toronto Public Library – Sony Reader

<http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/>

Howe Public Library - Kindle

<http://www.thehowe.org/interior.php/pid/2/sid/4>

<http://216.177.20.50/search/Xkindle&searchscope=6&SORT=D/Xkindle&searchscope=6&SORT=D&SUBKEY=kindle/1%2C7%2C7%2CB/frameset&FF=Xkindle&searchscope=6&SORT=D&2%2C%2C>

Sparta Public Library– Kindle& Sony Reader

<http://www.spartalibrary.com>

Rancho Mirage Public Library - Kindle

<http://www.ranchoiragelibrary.org/>

Cochrane Public Libraries – Kindle

<http://www.cochraneagle.com/2009/12/local-library-launches-digital-reading-with-kindle/>

Glencoe Public Library - Kindle

<http://www.librarybeat.com/whatsnewinlibraries/show/112>

Reedsburg Public Library - Kindle

<http://reedsburglibrary.blogspot.com/2009/11/amazon-kindle.html>

Manchester MA Public Library- Kindle

<http://www.manchesterpl.org/>

Boxford Library – Kindle

<http://www.wickedlocal.com/boxford/news/x870218010/Boxford-library-welcomes-the-Amazon-Kindle>

<http://www.boxfordtownlib.org/>

Wilmington Memorial Library - Kindle

<http://www.wilmlibrary.org/>

Maine's Camden Public Library - Kindle

<http://www.librarycamden.org/>

Mead Public Library - Kindle

<http://www.meadpubliclibrary.org/>

Palm Harbor Library - Kindle

<http://librariangene.blogspot.com/2010/01/kindles-now-at-your-library.html>

Belmont Public Library - Kindle

<http://www.belmont.lib.ma.us/>

Perrot Memorial Library – Kindle

<http://www.perrotlibrary.org/>

Lacrosse Public Library - Kindle

<http://www.lacrosselibrary.org/>

River Forest Public Library - Kindle

<http://www.rflib.org/books-and-media/kindles>

Greater Victoria Public Library – Sony Reader

[www.gvpl.ca](http://www.gvpl.ca)

Innisfil Public Library – Sony Reader

<http://www.innisfil.library.on.ca/>

### ***Response from Libraries***

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As far as I know, none require any security deposit. One of the first libraries circulating e-books did require patrons to sign a credit card voucher for \$700 Canadian dollars, but this requirement was dropped. Some libraries require signing user agreements stating that patrons will be charged replacement costs.

Chris Rippel [crippel@ckls.org](mailto:crippel@ckls.org)

Central Kansas Library System

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We currently loan out 5 Kindle 2's and 1 Kindle DX with an assortment of titles on each. They are available only to cardholders of our library, are listed in our online catalog (including content) so patrons can search by Kindle or author or title. Currently they loan for 1 week though we are anticipating expanding that to 2 weeks. We do not charge, excepting for late fees or loss/damage. The latter has not happened in the 8 months we have been circulating the items. We do have patrons sign a waiver acknowledging such costs when they check out the Kindle. We package the Kindle in a cover, then in a carrying case which holds the Kindle, power cord, and a simple instruction sheet provided by Amazon. We do not allow patrons to add

content. Our patrons are very pleased, as are we. If you need more information, please contact me.

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262-478-3200 fax  
[www.flwlib.org](http://www.flwlib.org)

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Windsor Public Library did experiment with loaning out an e-book reader back in the Rocket E-Book era (it seems a long time ago). We did not charge any fees or deposit for the loan but the E-book readers were loaned only to adult users and there was very clear signage on the case that indicated the borrower was responsible for any damage to the e-book reader, up to and including the full replacement cost. The Rocket e-books were not a success at our library, perhaps because of the limited number of titles we had on download and lack of budget to add new ones. We will, shortly, be adding Overdrive to our collection but I am not aware of any plans afoot to loan out e-Readers. I hope this information is helpful.

Lea Burton  
Information Services  
Central Library  
Windsor Public Library

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We began our Kindle project last Spring. One class had the Kindle out for the semester while others were restricted to a 3-hour checkout. Our conclusion was that the 3-hour checkout was not sufficient time and the semester checkout would only be for specific programs. Most of the Kindles are checked out for 7 days, and are renewable unless someone is requesting it. Students, faculty and staff may request titles to be added. We supplement our print collection with these Kindle titles, both as a new title added and as a duplication of a title in our collection. We offer the Kindle title as a quick return for an ILL request by our students and staff. Interest is building in our Kindles. Circulation is increasing. We do charge fines consistent with our Reserve Room fines. If a Kindle (or any accessory) is lost, the student must pay the replacement cost plus processing. We also are purchasing the Nook and the Sony in the Spring, so we can compare the three e-Readers. If you haven't already discovered our blog and LibGuide, go to <http://pbcc.libguides.com/kindle> and <http://www.kindlepbcc.blogspot.com/>.

Estaline Rogers, Librarian  
Palm Beach State College

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You'll find Borrowing Regulations for the eBook Reader at the bottom-left of this page:  
<http://siasst.ca.libguides.com/content.php?pid=49459&sid=363529>

There is also a PDF link to our user agreement. (Although borrowers are in our ILS, we also have them agree to this form. It was first developed 2 years ago when we began lending laptops -- and their replacement cost was/is very steep: \$2200. We now use the form to lend 3 device kits. In the same way as it was with the laptops originally, it's an alert to students re: higher overdue fines and replacement costs.) We have only been circulating the devices since September, so we don't have a lot of circulation information or feedback to evaluate the service. The first feedback forms I just received (we include a feedback form each time the kit goes out) were filled in by instructors rather than students. Both said they really liked the device, and the service. One said borrowing made him more interested in buying one. The other said he is definitely buying one. We asked this question, about intent to purchase, because we felt a by-product of lending technology is providing borrowers - as consumers with a "test drive." (And that test-drive opportunity, if feedback is strong, may point to some sort of retail partnership in future.) Please let me know if you have additional questions.

Best wishes,  
Mike Sainsbury  
Librarian  
SIAST Libraries & Testing Services  
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<http://gosiast.com/libraries>

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Our program is very casual. At this time we don't intend to load much content onto the Kindles but rather are using them to let patrons explore this newer technology. We have the same 14 titles on all four of our Kindles. Patrons haven't complained about the content, or lack thereof. They seem to understand that we are just letting them play with the devices. We contacted Kindle Support before we bought our Kindles (September 2008) and made it very clear what we were going to do. No one said we couldn't do that. A few weeks ago I emailed Drew Herdener, Senior Public Relations Manager at Amazon to ask for clarification and told him we would cease and desist if they said so. I never heard back from him. More and more libraries are getting Kindles, so I think it's too late for them to stop this if they so choose. We lend our Kindles for one week - and only one week - no renewals - because we have such a long waiting list. Fines are similar to our AV fines. We haven't had any problems. I've attached our Borrower's Agreement for you as well as a photo of how we package them in camera bags (**see Appendix A**). As you can see, we are very casual. We have had no damage. We do not let patrons download from Amazon because we don't have the funds to buy willy-nilly. One library, the first public library that I know of to lend Kindles (Sparta PL in NJ) lets each patron add one title for free and I like that idea but right now don't have the staff time to load content each time a

patron borrows a Kindle. That might come at a later date. If we did this, we might charge the patron the price of the title. We prevent patrons loading content by de-activating our account once we have loaded the content. Kindle Support was very helpful with pointers on how to do this so I recommend you give them a call. We package our Kindles in padded camera bags. This prevents them from being returned in the book drop. We do lend the power cords and simply write the Kindle barcode number on it. We haven't lost any bits and pieces. I think that this is a great service that all libraries should try. I like that fact that we keep it simple and casual. Sometimes libraries get so bogged down in the process that they don't move ahead fast enough. But, I recognize that Hanover is an unusual community with very strong library support and very responsible patrons. What I like about our program is that we are offering something new and trendy without any additional staff time. Patrons don't need any troubleshooting help, etc. GO FOR IT! Start with something simple and then tweak it later on if you wish. Let me know if you have more questions.

Mary H. White, Director  
Howe Library  
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We do not yet circulate e-book readers but are about to put forward a proposal to our Friends of the Library group to fund 10 Sony Readers to be preloaded and circulated. Each reader would be preloaded with approximately 10 ebooks of a single genre—mysteries, romance, sci-fi-fantasy, biography, bestseller NF etc. This would allow us to introduce staff to the devices and allow the public to try them out. We project a budget of about \$7000 for the readers, ebooks, covers, and AC adaptors for recharging units. Funding of this collection would be outside the regular materials budget, and entirely contingent on approval of this project by the Friends. We propose to purchase the e-books so there will not be any issue around them expiring, although we do subscribe to Overdrive. Initially, we wanted to only load the devices ourselves, creating genre packages, making them essentially like playaways with 5-10 choices on each reader.

However, after talking to a salesperson at the Sony Store, I'm not sure we can prevent patrons from downloading material; it would be pretty hard to block this activity. The USB cord is not proprietary, so even though we don't intend to supply one, anyone with a cord at home could hook it up. It does seem to be fairly quick and straightforward to delete notes and any unwanted ebooks downloaded by a patron (although we might have to reload the original books after deleting "all" – otherwise you need to delete each note/item separately)

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Greater Victoria Public Library  
[www.gvpl.ca](http://www.gvpl.ca)

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Due to extenuating circumstances, we have not had an opportunity to start our pilot project (providing readers to homebound patrons) in this area. We have purchased Sony Readers (both audio and text versions) and are working on getting another device called the Navigator which is audio only. Our hopes are to download ebooks and audiobooks from Netlibrary and Overdrive. Since most of our customers are seniors, and not usually computer savvy, it is expected that staff will be undertaking the downloading for customers.

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Thank you for your inquiry about our Kindle program. The Kindles are part of a new pilot program and we just began circulating them within the last two months. We only have five Kindles that check out for three weeks so the turnaround has not been quick. Since the Kindles have been circulating for such a short period of time we have not experienced any technical difficulties which would lead us to seek maintenance assistance from anyone including Amazon. I can answer your question about patrons inappropriately ordering/deleting books which happens to not be an issue. Before we checkout the Kindle, our staff deregisters the library's Kindle account which prevents anyone from purchasing books on our account. Patrons can however log onto their own Amazon account and download books they have purchased onto the Kindle. When the Kindles are returned to us we clear the books from the Kindle in preparation for the new patron's use. There is no issue with patrons permanently deleting the Kindle books because by deregistering the Kindle before checkout, we prevent them from fiddling with our archived books.

Claire Semadeni  
Circulation Technician  
The Valley Library  
Oregon State University  
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Attached is a copy of a piece I wrote over the summer detailing our experiences with the Kindle (**see Appendix B**). I've added some updates just now to cover our impressions of the DX and the Nook. I hope it answers most of your questions. We've yet to have a Kindle break on us. Our patrons have been pretty careful with them. The most 'damage' done was one student went on a mini-shopping spree, but as we fund our Kindle books with giftcards, there was only so much

damage he could do before we canceled the orders. If you have any further questions, just drop me a line! Hope this helps.

Drew Meger  
Mildred F. Sawyer Library  
Suffolk University

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We just began an eBook reader pilot loan project here at the Ferriss Hodgett Library. We have 3 eBook readers available.

<http://www.library.mun.ca/swgc/ebookreaders.php>

Crystal Rose, Public Services Librarian  
Ferriss Hodgett Library, Sir Wilfred Grenfell campus, Memorial University  
(709) 637-6236 or (709) 637-6200 ext. 6120

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We recently received a grant to initiate a pilot e-book reader program at the University of Winnipeg. We are looking at introducing 3 circulating e-book readers (Sony PRS-505s) during the summer term. I'm still working on a plan and supports (i.e. training and documentation) for the program, but if there are any questions you have that I can answer I would be happy to do so!

Alex Homanchuk, M.F.A, M.L.I.S.  
Head of Digital Initiatives  
Collection Manager for Environmental Studies, History of Art and Politics.  
University of Winnipeg Library  
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McGill University Library is about to begin a pilot project lending Sony e-book readers at one branch, for a two-week loan period.

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Currently, RWL owns two Sony Readers (touch and pocket editions). For the past couple months, I have used them for training staff - both hands on and demo format - and they are now available for staff to check out for one week. This one week allows staff time to practice on the eReaders and become more familiar with the downloadLibrary EPUBs. The eReaders are also available for in-library use only if a patron would like to try out the technology or ask staff questions. Branch staff must request the eReader from me and then make it available in their library. So far, branches have not requested a reader for public use. I gave staff two options: I could pre-load eBooks onto the reader, or send a laptop with the reader so people can download and transfer (or both). My preference is to pre-load books onto the reader, but most people like the experience of actually trying the download process. I have also held open information session on eBooks where I set up our lab and the eReaders. I gave a short presentation on eBooks and then had the participants practice with downloadLibrary and eBooks. People came with a lot of questions!

Please let me know if you have any other questions,

Lisa Gayhart

Coordinator, Library Communications & E-Services

Region of Waterloo Library

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<http://www.rwl.library.on.ca>

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We have Sony Readers and are just about to start loaning them out. The plan calls for starting the pilot in March. ***The Sony Reader has to be associated with only one computer. It is not possible to download to it from multiple computers***<sup>1</sup> therefore we will be preloading them. One will be reserved for homebound customers, and for it we will select titles based on their reading interests. For the others, we plan to assign each one a genre, so while people cannot request a specific title, they will be able to request the mystery, romance, or biography one (just for example - we haven't pinned down the genres yet).

Mandy Pethick

Reference Librarian [askalibrarian@innisfil.library.on.ca](mailto:askalibrarian@innisfil.library.on.ca)

Innisfil Public Library (705) 431-7410 ext. 203 <http://www.innisfil.library.on.ca/>

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<sup>1</sup> The software used to download titles from Overdrive – Adobe Digital Editions automatically detects the presence of your Sony Reader and offers to authorize it with your Adobe ID. The Adobe ID only lets you use ***the same ID on up to 6 computers***. Therefore, patrons cannot use the Sony Reader on their home computers.

Refer to:

<http://www.downloadlibrary.ca/403A7CCC-7648-4708-9E9B-A3D2398D916C/10/389/en/Help-FAQ-Format410.htm#question-2551>

[http://www.adobe.com/products/digitaleditions/help/#transfer\\_sony\\_reader](http://www.adobe.com/products/digitaleditions/help/#transfer_sony_reader)

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The Kindles (we have 2) are loaned for 2 weeks at a time to patrons 18 and older. A driver's license or other ID must be presented at checkout. Patrons are allowed to download one title from the Kindle store onto the device on our nickel; after that they pay for the titles. We circulate the Kindles in their original packaging inside one of our totes, complete with charger, usb cable, etc. We recharge the Kindles when they're returned. We add titles to their MARC records as titles are added. There is a form with replacement fees and late fines information, so there are no surprises at check-in. We charge \$5 per day late fees. We have never had anyone abuse the downloading policy, and there has never been any damage to the equipment (go figure!) Patrons love the Kindles, which are always out (there's currently a reserve list too) We've been circulating them since November 2008 and they are still as popular as ever. We now circulate a Sony Reader as well.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> I spoke with Dave Costa (Systems Administrator, Sparta Public Library [admin@spartalibrary.com](mailto:admin@spartalibrary.com)) who told me that when they loan the Sony Reader's they are preloading the reader with the title of the patron's choice. They have the patron place a hold on the title and when the title is available the library staff downloads the title for the patron before check out. Patrons will not be allowed to download titles. – Sian Waterfield

## ***Sony Reader Loaning Options***

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### **Option 1: Sony Reader with Preloaded titles**

Due to the restrictions outlined in the footnote 1. p. 11 the Cambridge Libraries would loan Sony Readers to a patron with a preloaded selection of titles downloaded from Overdrive. Patrons would get to choose by genre or a mix of genres, they would not be allowed to download any titles.

### **Option 2: Sony Reader and Patron Downloading Titles**

It still remains to be determined whether a Sony Reader could be loaned to a patron in order for them to download titles from a home computer. With this option we would propose to loan the deactivated reader and instruct the patron to activate the reader under their personal Adobe ID. **N.B. The feasibility of this option remains to be investigated by the Cambridge Libraries automation staff.**

### **Option 3: Sony Reader and the OverDrive Digital Kiosk**

Overdrive just released new information regarding their plans to offer a new version of their download software. I was informed by Overdrive staff that this software may allow patrons to download titles to a library owned device from their home without the use of Adobe Digital Editions. We were instructed by their staff to wait for further information as this is a project they are currently working on. Information will be available during the Public Libraries Conference, the American Library Association Conference and the Canadian Libraries Association Conference.

*OverDrive Digital Kiosk & Library eBook Devices: OverDrive will release the next version of its OverDrive Download Station™ software, which provides direct access to eBooks and other popular media inside hundreds of schools and libraries. OverDrive is also working with several PC, Tablet, Netbook, and eReader device manufacturers who will introduce products specifically designed for use in schools, libraries, and institutions to access OverDrive catalogs of eBooks, audiobooks, music, video and enhanced content.*

Overdrive Inc. (2010). OverDrive Announces New eBook & Digital Distribution Services for 2010. [http://www.marketwire.com/mw/rel\\_us\\_print.jsp?id=1119871&lang=E1](http://www.marketwire.com/mw/rel_us_print.jsp?id=1119871&lang=E1)

## ***E-book Readers in Literature and the Media***

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## Appendices

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### Appendix A



#### Howe Library Kindle Borrowing Agreement

You are responsible for damage, loss or theft of the Kindle while it is checked out to you. You will be responsible for the entire replacement cost of the Kindle (\$360.00) as well as a packaging and processing fee (\$\_\_\_\_) for a **total of \$\_\_\_\_\_**.

Do not leave the Kindle unattended when it is checked out to you,

Use of the Kindle is restricted to the content installed. Downloading additional content is not permitted.

You must be 18 years old or older in order to borrow this item.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone #

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Howe Kindle #** \_\_\_\_\_

Howe Public Library -Kindles in padded camera bags



## Appendix B

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### A Kindle in the Library

The end of the school year is a great time for academic libraries. Not only do we get to celebrate the end of another semester, raising our glasses in thanks that the stacks didn't catch fire or that student riots were avoided, but we also get to start planning for what we want to do the following year. When the spring semester comes to a close and the last student heads off campus for summer fun and the library goes quiet(er), librarians have a chance to channel some of their free time into new projects.

This year, we decided to take a look at what sort of role e-book readers, such as the Sony PRS and Amazon Kindle, could have in an academic library setting. Academia tends to change slowly and it is still a bit early to tell if these devices will be around for the long haul, but given the library's role in providing access to information of all sorts, we felt it was worthwhile to test the waters.

#### Selection

We started by acquiring both an Amazon Kindle 2 and a Sony PRS-505 in order to take them each for a test drive. We decided against giving the Sony PRS-700 a go after reading about problems with its touch screen. This may have been a bit unfair to Sony as we were testing what was then the latest generation of Kindle against the old PRS. Maybe we'll go back and give it a try after the kinks get worked out. We also skipped out on some of the other e-book readers out there like the iLiad or CyBook. Perhaps we're biased against inTernalpuncTuation.

Once we had the devices in hand and began to test them out in the real world, there was very little competition between the Kindle 2 and the PRS-505. The Amazon device was preferable almost across the board. The main strength of the PRS was that it played well with PDFs and didn't require a special process to upload PDF files to it, unlike Amazon's email pay-for-conversion scheme. We considered retaining the PRS for course article support, but then the KindleDX with its native PDF support was announced and the Sony device quickly fell out of favor.

So why did we go Kindle? One of the biggest factors was the form factor of the Kindle 2. It is much easier to hold than the PRS, one feels like they won't drop it while turning pages. Big page turning buttons were a definite plus. The Kindle 2 turned pages faster with a bit less of a "flash" that some of our testers found distracting. The included keyboard on the Kindle 2 and its ability to accept user-generated notes was nice, but not something we felt was a must have. Librarians have never been too keen on letting patrons scribble in our books.

Another aspect of the Kindle 2 that I, as the person who would be running a larger pilot program, enjoy is the ability to manage Kindle content from my desktop. I can purchase and send books wirelessly from our purpose-created Amazon account to all the linked devices without the tedium of plugging each one in. Given that both the PRS and the Kindle have similar restrictions as to the number of devices that can carry a given book, the ability to manage content remotely is a huge timesaver.

I should also note that it was during this testing period, after about a weekend with a Kindle, that I decided that I needed one of my own. It took about a week of watching me read on my new toy before my wife wanted one of her own as well. A friend of ours who is a Sony PRS-505 user made some jealous grumblings.

## **Role**

Anyways, once we decided that the Kindle was the device we were going to work with, we needed to figure out exactly what we were going to work. We had a lot of ideas. Given the increasing number of textbooks available on the Kindle, we considered using them as supplements to our already massive Reserve collection. Textbooks cost money, lots and lots of money, and students tend to be either poor or more interested in spending their money on things other than books. So Sawyer Library collects two copies of every book required for every undergraduate class at Suffolk University in order to help alleviate the strain on students' (and their parents') pocketbooks. Besides, have you seen the size of textbooks nowadays? They're huge. Never arm-wrestle an accounting major – they are surprisingly strong from semesters of lugging around *Intermediate Finance* or *Federal Taxation*. So we felt the Kindle might have a role in supplementing our textbooks.

The problem with that, though, is that the library has little say in what textbooks are required for class. Not all texts are available via the Kindle Store, so some classes might benefit from the Kindle while others would not. We did find that a significant amount of texts required for the more liberal arts courses - English, History, Political Science, and so on - were available on the Kindle, so the device would definitely have a role in Reserves.

One other idea was to use the Kindles as our Popular Reading collection. Sawyer Library had one of those years ago before it was lost to space and budget demands, so there certainly was precedent. The trick there was selecting what books to download. Would we pick new releases? Best sellers? Would we have to download (ugh) *Twilight*?

In the end, we decided to let our patrons decide. With every loan of the Kindle comes a download of your choice. The library will pay for the download, the patron gets to read what they want, and our collection of e-books grows. Given the cost of a Kindle book hovering around \$10 (more for some textbooks or computer books, less for classics and stuff that can be found in mass market paperback) that comes to \$60 a month or so across all six devices, with the added bonus that each book can be spread amongst other devices. One book becomes six pretty easily, so a \$720 annual cost for 72 books is pretty nice.

## **Permission**

Next, we had to figure out if Amazon would even let us do this. I called up their customer support and navigated around the menus for awhile until I found a customer representative who would tell me. I was told that as long as we were not putting books from non-Kindle store sources on the Kindle (so no Calibre, no jailbreaking), we should be okay. That was fine with us and given the number of other libraries who have Kindle programs of some sort and we've yet to see a plague of lawyers descend on

anyone we figure we'd be safe. And if worse comes to worst and we get a Cease and Desist letter, at least libraries will know where they stand when it comes to Kindle lending. Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

### **Cost**

The whole pilot program cost us just over \$3,000. That's for six Kindle 2s, six cases, and a years worth of \$10 downloads. We did have to purchase an extra charging cable after one of our testers lost theirs, but that was not too expensive.

The biggest potential cost is what happens if a patron decides to just start downloading new material? Since the Kindles are linked in to an Amazon account and there is no way to lock down the Buy Now button on the device. We opted to follow the example of some of the public libraries where were the first to lend the first generation of Kindles – we used gift cards.

We created a new Amazon account for the Kindles, one not linked to the library's credit cards in any way. We purchased several Amazon gift cards (50\$ increments) and added one to the account. When a book is purchased on the Kindle it's charged to the gift card balance, thus limiting any damage a patron shopping spree could cause. Before checking out a Kindle to a new patron, I check the gift card balance and refill as needed. Large purchases (there are some \$120+ texts in the Kindle Store) need to get approval of our Acquisitions folks, but beyond that, the patron is free to pick whatever they like.

We don't check the charger out with the Kindle. With the wireless turned off, a Kindle can last the full 28 day loan period on a full charge. With the wireless on, that time is reduced to five or six days tops. This helps to keep patrons from accidentally buying books by removing a bit of the temptation to browse the store. Some browse anyways and it's not uncommon to find a few of the free samples of books Amazon offers on a returned device. So far we've had no unauthorized purchases. I make it clear at time of checkout that any books bought beyond the first one will be charged to the patron's account.

### **Content**

It has been interesting so far seeing what our patrons want to read. We do all our checkouts by appointment only, so I'm the one that actually downloads the patron's chosen item. No *Twilight* (so far), but we have had some popular fiction (*The Lovely Bones*, *Bridge of Sighs*), some classic literature (*Crime and Punishment*), nonfiction (*Team of Rivals*, *Outliers*), and even some technical books (*Spring Recipes*, *A Concise Introduction to Econometrics*).

No textbooks yet, but with the majority of our students off campus until September, that's to be expected. It will be interesting to see students' responses to the device come the fall. (*December 2009 Update*: One of the biggest weaknesses of the Kindle we've found so far is that it is hard to cite a Kindle book as there are no page numbers. There are some work-arounds, particularly if the book is a 'Search Inside' Amazon title, but this does dampen the usability of the Kindle for research purposes.)

When a book is purchased, Amazon automatically sends an email receipt to the email attached to the Amazon account. Our head of technical services then checks this account and enters the book into our

integrated library system with a location reading 'Kindle'. That way, patrons can search for books using our OPAC just as they always did. The Kindles themselves have item records so it is pretty easy to see how many are checked out and when they are due. I also keep a log as part of my checkout procedure so I know who has what and which book they selected.

## **Response**

So far, the response to the pilot program has been very, very positive. It's been interesting to see the flow of patrons who come into the library to check a Kindle out. We've done very little on-campus advertising – just a sign at the Circulation desk and a blurb in the university news – but all of our Kindles are checked out for the foreseeable future. Being the person who runs the program and check out the Kindles, I see the spread of interest in the Kindle as it moves through the Suffolk community. A grad student sees her professor with one and is curious, a staff member listens to a coworker talk about it. Seeing the Kindle in use is perhaps the best advertisement for the device. The waitlist for a Kindle is roughly two months.

At least one patron has purchased a Kindle of her own after borrowing one of ours. Several more have added them to their holiday wish lists. Other departments have bought Kindles for their own use. Even those patrons who, after borrowing the Kindle, decide that it's not for them, that they miss the traditional book, admit to reading multiple books on the device.

## **What's Next?**

Given the warm reception to the Kindle on campus, we're looking to expand our program. The announcement and release of the KindleDX with its larger screen and native PDF support since the start of our program has rekindled (hah) the idea of using these devices to support our Reserves collection. Currently, we have a few large filing cabinets that get filled with printed copies of articles. What if instead of putting a few dead trees on reserve, we could use the DX instead? So many of our professors use Blackboard to provide articles to students, so it shouldn't be too hard to round up a few to put on the device. And for those articles that are not available in digital form? We have an Ariel system lurking in the ILL department, ready to use. Maybe we'll get another six Kindle 2s to help supplement in-demand titles. Why buy extra copies of *Team of Rivals* that will go unused after demand for the book dwindles when we could buy one digital copy and put it on six Kindles, knowing that in the future we can re-purpose them for whatever new book is in demand?

*(December 2009 Update:* The two DXes we purchased have been tasked to handle articles, PDFs, and the like. While there are textbooks available for the Kindle, no texts currently match books required for a Suffolk class, so testing in that manner is somewhat limited.

Additionally, Barnes and Nobles has released its own eReader, **Nook**, which has some nice features (lending materials, second color touch screen, etc) but some major drawbacks (one ebook loan per title, lesser battery life, etc) that limit its usability. We'll probably take a look at the Nook 2 when it comes out.)

## **Final Thoughts**

E-books are an emerging format that are still struggling to find a place in the world of publishing. We hope that by rewarding those publishers who take the plunge by buying their e-books we can encourage others to make more content available. I don't think e-books or the Kindle will replace conventional books at all. From my own experience, I use my Kindle quite frequently but still buy physical books, still use the library.

The Kindle and its ilk are not a threat to libraries. They are an opportunity. For roughly \$3,000 a library can set themselves up with a half dozen devices and a year worth of reading material for a variety of uses. E-books can be resized to assist those who have trouble reading small print. E-readers can be used to supplement current collections, filling temporary demand on materials like new books or required readings. The device itself draws in patrons who might not normally take advantage of the library. E-readers are not for everyone, true, but they're also not just for gadget lovers.

I encourage librarians to take a look at the Kindle, or any e-reader, and think about if there is a role for it in their own libraries.

*Drew Meger is the Circulation Manager of the Mildred F. Sawyer Library at Suffolk University. All opinions contained herein are his own.*