

eBooks and eReaders

What are they?

EBooks are digital reproductions of books and other publications that can be distributed through the internet to users. The principal international suppliers are Amazon and Barnes and Noble. Public libraries now offer an eBook lending service.

Format

Sadly not all eBooks are created equal as they come in a variety of formats, not all of which can be read by all readers. EPUB is the industry standard format which most readers, except the Kindle, use. The Kindle uses its own format which is not available to the other readers. However, Kindle has applications (apps) that enable most eReaders to access and read Kindle books. The common formats are:

- Amazon Kindle: (AZW, TPZ), TXT, MOBI, PRC and PDF, HTML and DOC
- Apple iPad: EPUB, PDF, HTML, DOC (plus iPad apps)
- Sony Reader: EPUB, PDF, TXT, RTF, DOC
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A light hearted discussion is contained in <http://tinyurl.com/yayetok>.

What devices can be used for eBooks?

There are a number of ways that an eBook can be accessed:

dedicated readers which store and read books and nothing else, they are light and comparatively cheap;

tablets e.g. iPad, which are mini computers in which eBook capability is only one of many functions. They are reasonably light but much more expensive;

your computer, if appropriate software is loaded, but there is a loss of portability and even laptops and net books are a bit heavy for convenient reading;

smart phones but the display area is small. They are however good for audio books.

Screen size

Varies from 6 inches (150 mm) to 9.7 inches (250 mm) for the readers and around 3 inches (75 mm) for smart phones although they are getting bigger all the time.

eReaders <http://ebook-reader-review.toptenreviews.com> provides a comparison of all current eReaders although not all are available in NZ. For a New Zealand review try <http://alatest.co.nz/c/ereader-reviews/374/>.

Kindle seems to be the most popular (probably due to extensive advertising). See it at

<http://tinyurl.com/bgbu2px> (Dick Smith’s site). PC users can download a Kindle programme at

<http://tinyurl.com/yja443f>.

Kobo available from Noel Leeming, <http://tinyurl.com/mxhdzv3>, and Harvey Norman. For PC users see

<http://kobobooks.com/desktops> for appropriate software.

Nook Made by Barnes & Noble see <http://tinyurl.com/cceq9fg>. It is not readily available in NZ as it only sells to

persons with a USA address.

Sony available from Sony see <http://www.sony.co.nz/product/prs-t1> and for PC

<http://www.sony.co.nz/support/download/469198>.

What To Consider In An eReader

Content Type: Format is the main thing to consider, the more formats it supports the better.

Storage/Memory: some eReaders can hold thousands of books; do you need this?

Weight: dedicated eReaders are much lighter than tablets.

Display Preferences: Touch screens, e-ink (better in daylight), LCD display and size are things to consider.

Connectivity: The options for downloading books are 3G using the cellular network; Wi-Fi; or through your computer.

Battery Life: Not important if you will always have mains electricity handy but for long distance air travel 10 hours + is desirable. eReaders have a much longer battery duration than tablets.

Have a look at as many eReaders as you can before buying, check the specifications, do not go for more features than you really need as all this does is increase the price. Make sure you are comfortable with it. Check prices at <http://pricespy.co.nz>.

E-ink versus Liquid Crystal (LCD)

Probably the most important difference between dedicated eReaders and tablets is the look of the display. Most eReaders use an e-Ink display which is intended to look like the page of a book. It reads well in sunlight but requires an external light source at night. It requires less battery power. But it does not display colour. Tablet LCD displays on the other hand, use the same technology as a monitor screen, have higher resolution, are brighter, and can be read equally well at night. Both displays have their advocates and there appears to be no substance to the claims that they create eye strain. It is, therefore, really important to have a look at both before making a choice.

Downloading eBooks

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Barnes and Noble is very big in North America but does not ship to New Zealand.

eBooks can be usually be obtained at a considerable discount from the printed version but with new editions the difference is often not great.

A wide range of newspapers and magazines is also available; you can even take out a subscription and have them delivered regularly.

Google has entered the book market in a big way, and is reputed to be competing with Amazon. It sells hard copy books, as well as eBooks.

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give a better idea of its capabilities, see. <http://calibre-ebook.com/demo#tour>.

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Libraries

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Magazine subscriptions are also available and many are available on line through the Wellington Library Gateway, see <http://wcl.govt.nz/mygateway/>. This also gives access to access to a vast number of databases.

Further reading

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_e-book_readers This covers the differences between LCD displays and the various types of e-Ink.