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1-1-2008

Resources: E-Book Readers

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Recommended Citation
Brenner, D. & Kelley, T.R. (2008) Resources: E-Book Readers, Technology and Children, 13(2), 14-15.

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RESOURCES

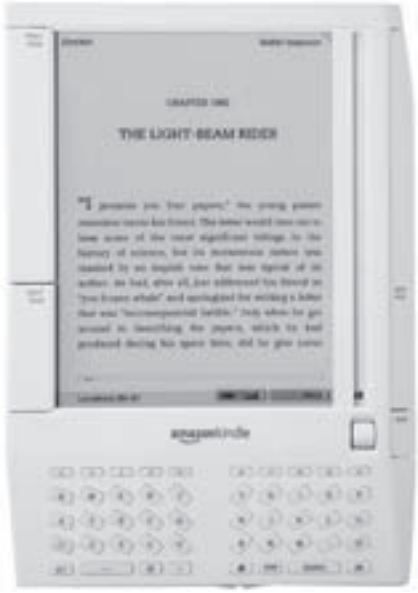
e-book readers

by Daniel Brenner and Todd R. Kelley

introduction

As educators prepare their students for the technological world, they will expose eager minds to an array of high-tech devices. Many times, however, it can be a struggle to find the right technology to help foster technological literacy and meet core curriculum content requirements. One solution to this problem might just be to use a gizmo! The gizmo featured in this column is an electronic book reader.

The word "gizmo" may stir thoughts of an engineer or a scientist in a basement creating a complicated contraption with springs, wires, dials, and flashing lights. One might employ the word in situations when one cannot find a name for some particular obscure device. Generated during World War II, the term gizmo was coined by servicemen (Online Etymology Dictionary, n.d.). After returning to civilian life, the men brought the word back with them, introducing it into American mainstream society. Today, we use the word gizmo to mean: "an often small mechanical or electronic device with a practical use but often thought of as a novelty" (Merriam-Webster, 2008).



historical connections

Around the year 1450, the invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg changed society forever. The printing press made books less costly and more readily available to the people who desired them (Johnson, 2000). It can be argued that the printing press was the start of an "information revolution." Libraries, for example, were able to store more books, and individuals could purchase books at a reasonable price (Kreis, 2000).

Just as the printing press opened up literature to the masses, devices such as e-book readers will make printed materials more accessible. If an individual were to look around any room, he or she would likely see at least one book. What if all of these books were gone? What if printing presses were made obsolete by an electronic gizmo? Just as scribes were replaced by printing presses, books may one day be replaced with e-book readers.

electronic book reader

The Amazon Kindle is one of several e-book readers available for purchase. An e-book reader is a device through which people can electronically purchase, download, store, and read printed material such as books, magazines, newspapers, blogs, and other useful literature. The Kindle weighs about 10 ounces and can hold approximately 200 books within its internal memory (additional memory can be added with an SD card). The battery in the device will last for several days—many users report approximately four days of use between charges.

The e-book reader uses the same technology as high-speed Internet cell phone connections. The Kindle can retrieve well over 100,000 text resources with wireless capabilities. In just a few minutes, a reader will be able to download the entirety of a full-length novel or book. Although initially quite expensive, this little gizmo might just be a good friend to the cost-conscious bookworm. The initial cost of the Kindle will be just under $400. After the initial purchase, the user will find that books often cost less than ten dollars; *The World is Flat* (Friedman, 2005) will cost the reader $10, compared to the list price of the hardcover for $30. A one-month subscription to *Time Magazine*, a weekly publication, will cost just under a dollar and fifty cents. Newspapers such as *The New York Times* will cost approximately $14 every month, close to 20 percent less than buying the paper version. The paper will be electronically delivered every morning to the device. Free wireless access to Wikipedia is also provided.

connection to the classroom

E-book readers are still an emerging technology, and although the devices have a lot to offer, their impact may not be realized for some time to come.

Most school textbooks for example, are not currently available for download. Additionally, the e-book reader, which has a black-and-white screen designed to simulate paper, may not do justice to graphic illustrations found within school texts. Public response provides feedback that individuals are excited about the possibility of replacing backbreaking stacks of textbooks with lighter, digital books.

The e-book reader can prove to be a very useful resource to educators. Fortunately, there are many grants available that would allow schools to break through the cost barrier to purchase such devices. (See the sources in the next column for funding opportunities.) The possibility of purchasing library or classroom sets may be a viable option in many schools.

Even the best of libraries or classrooms will not have every book, but with an e-book reader, almost any book can be made available almost instantly. Paperless, compact, and lightweight, this little gizmo might just add some technological flare to reading time!

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funding resources/grants

Target Early Childhood Reading Grants

Target Early Childhood Reading Grants provide funding to organizations wishing to generate an interest in reading through programs in communities, libraries, and schools.
http://sites.target.com/site/en/corporate/page.jsp?contentId=PRD03-003408

HP Technology for Teaching Grant Initiative:

The HP Technology for Teaching Grant Initiative searches for K-16 schools wishing to purchase mobile technology.
www.hp.com/hpinfo/grants/us/programs/tech_teaching/

EDS Technology Grant Program

The EDS Technology Grant Program provides funding to teachers and organizations wishing to pay for technologies that will benefit students.
www.eds.com/about/community/grants/

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product information

(From Amazon's Website)
Display: 6" diagonal E-Ink® electronic paper display, 600 x 800 pixel resolution at 167 ppi, 4-level gray scale
Size (in inches): 7.5" x 5.3" x 0.7"
Weight: 10.3 ounces
Storage: 256MB internal (approximately 180MB available for user content

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