

Fun with Technology

A while back, Amazon.com put out a popular new e-book reader and called it the Kindle. Since then, lots of companies have come out with their own versions. All the versions have displays that look like paper, not like a computer screen. With each new version, reading an e-reader is getting more and more like reading a book (or newspapers, or magazines, or whatever you choose to read). I hear soon they'll even be able to display color.

For someone who likes to read—here, I mean me, but since you're reading this it probably means you as well—the idea of books that don't take up physical space is pretty exciting.

However, for me, e-books are also unnerving. Since the column you're reading is called "Library Lines," you probably know what's unnerving me. E-book readers mean new things for libraries, and some people are saying soon we won't need libraries.

For now, libraries are safe. As nice as e-book readers are, there are still pretty of problems with them. Besides, the things are still expensive, and now isn't a good time to buy expensive things. Also, after a person's bought the reader, there are the e-books to buy as well. For now, most of us will let the "early adopters" (people with lots of money and a yearning for the latest gadgets) buy this new technology while it's still costly and full of bugs, just like they did with television, computers, mp3 players, and lots of other devices many of us use all the time.

Still, I'm unnerved. I'm sure at some point in my library career I'll have to deal with this fancy new tech becoming commonplace. Technologically, the world has changed immensely in the past ten years—it's even changed a lot since I graduated from library school, only a couple of years ago. E-books are a problem to face sooner, rather than later.

It's not a serious problem, though. As much as the world's changed in the last ten years, it's changed a lot more since Benjamin Franklin started a lending library back in the eighteenth century, or Dewey came up with his decimal system in the nineteenth century. Libraries have faced lots of new technology and not only survived, but adapted to them.

Along with books, the Bartholomew County Public Library has CDs, DVDs, downloadable audio books, and twenty-four computers for the public to use. New technology means more information, and libraries exist to provide information for free, even when that information isn't printed on paper. In the future, a lot will change, but as long as people want to know things, we'll be there.

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