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Selecting Your First E-Book Reader

There are a lot of reviews of e-book readers available on the internet today. You will also find them in newspapers and magazines from time to time. It's a reflection of the fact that e-book readers have really taken off - driven to a large extent by Amazon's release of the Kindle 2.0 in February of 2009. Today there are plenty of e-book readers to choose from and a lot of people are looking for help in order to make a buying decision.

Many reviews, understandably perhaps, concentrate very strongly on the hardware - the size of the Kindle screen is this, the Sony Daily Edition screen size is that, this reader incorporates touch screen controls, that reader has a wireless connection etc. Which is fine, but if you're looking for your first e-book reader then the chances are that you will be making a mental comparison between e-books and conventional books rather than between different types of e-book reader.

First of all, and just to put your mind at ease, a recent survey of e-book reader owners in the USA found that 80% of them actually preferred using an e-book reader to reading on a traditional paper book. Based on feedback like that it doesn't appear as if those who have made the jump from paper to electronic books are missing the feel of a real book. It seems that manhandling large, bound editions is an unattractive prospect for those with experience of e-book readers.

The display is one of the key things that you should consider when selecting your e-book reader. Assuming that the main purpose of your e-book reader is to read books, as opposed to surfing the web or watching video, you will certainly want to go for a reader which has an e-ink technology display. These really are very much like reading normal text printed on normal paper - much more so than reading on a backlit computer screen. They also require very much less power and this means you can go for a long time between charges. When you turn the page, the screen will flicker and go black very briefly. This is not a big problem. In the beginning you will notice it because it is something new but, after just a couple of reading sessions, you will be completely unaware of it.

A further important factor to take into account is the layout of the controls and the overall usability of the device. The Amazon Kindle controls for example, are very well laid out and simple to use. It's very easy to use the Kindle with only one hand, ideal if you're on a crowded bus or train. The Sony reader features touch screen controls, but this is at the expense of a slightly lower quality display due to the fact that current touch screen technology is not completely transparent and also requires the use of a screen which is a little more reflective.

Finally, do not make the mistake of thinking that e-book prices are the same for different readers. A recent survey carried out by the New York Times showed that there were some very significant differences in the price of e-books for different readers. In some cases the difference was so large that someone who reads a book a week could save \$300 a year - enough to pay for the e-book reader in other words. Book pricing is very volatile - so be sure to check on the price of e-books for the reader that you are considering buying.

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