

eBook and eReader Study

As anyone with an eReader (such as a Nook, iPad or Kindle) can attest, books are coming in exciting, new electronic formats -- and the Poudre River Public Library District is positioning itself to meet the new demand.

In early June of 2011, a joint Poudre River Public, Front Range Community College, and Colorado State University libraries committee released a report on the state of eBooks and eReaders. The purpose of the study was to gain a better understanding of this rapidly-developing topic, and to make recommendations aimed at serving the customers of each library.

Key Findings

This report is a snapshot in time. The eBook and eReader market is in rapid and constant change, and even the experts say they have trouble keeping up.

Academic and public libraries face different challenges with eBooks and eReaders in terms of available content. Academic libraries have access to a wide variety of digital materials while public libraries are much more limited in what they can purchase or lease to meet popular reading demand. Currently there are two major vendors that provide public libraries with content that is "licensed to loan" to patrons (Overdrive and NetLibrary on EbscoHost), and they do not represent all commercial publishing houses.

Academic and Public Libraries face similar challenges in terms of devices and Digital Rights Management (DRM). DRM helps ensure that creators of content are paid for their work, but can make access to eBooks and other materials very cumbersome for users of libraries.

Key recommendations

Within the context of a volatile publishing market, the Poudre River Public Libraries and Colorado State University Libraries have made a commitment to invest staff effort and funds in four areas:

Education: There is a demand for education in this the area of eBooks and eReaders for all levels of libraries, including customers, staff, administration, and trustees. The committee recommended that the libraries create programming to address educational needs.

Technology: The committee recommended that the libraries make targeted investments in physical eReaders, circulate those devices to customers in a manner similar to other library materials, and evaluate the results for future investments in eReader technology.

Advocacy: With the current state of licensing for libraries in flux, the committee recommended that the libraries actively advocate for library-friendly access to electronic materials in any manner possible – from grass roots, one-on-one communications to organized efforts.

Continued partnership and study: The partnership was productive and successful, and each institution (and the customers they serve) will stay informed and discover further collaboration opportunities, including potential cost savings.