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Main content

Article Preview :

IN MY PREVIOUS article (featured in the Fall 2013 issue of eContent Quarterly), I expounded upon the file formats (including Adobe PDF, EPUB, Kindle Books, Apple iBooks, and several others) found in today's market for e-reading. In this article, I will detail the most popular devices that display those file formats, so readers can enjoy the bounty of digital content available. For today's mobile, tech-savvy lifestyle, devices for e-reading fall into three main categories: smartphones, tablets, and dedicated e-readers. While it can be argued that laptops could constitute a fourth category, I would argue that laptops, while useful, are the mobile device of yesteryear. I stick by this statement even with the advent of netbooks. Netbooks are far more portable and even laptops, like the MacBook Air, are amazingly light, but that whole lifting the lid and external keyboard thing is "so last decade."

In a presentation posted on the pewinternet.org website titled "Public Libraries in the Digital Age," Kathryn Zickuhr and Mary Madden report that 29 percent of U.S. adults own either a tablet or an e-reader device for e-reading. They further assert in this report (given on April 25, 2012) that Kindle holds 62 percent of the market of eighteen-plus aged e-reader owners in America. The growing popularity, sophistication, and dissemination of these devices are remarkable as they are making it easier to read wherever and whenever. Who doesn't want to have a world with more reading; e-readers and e-reading are making that happen.

Smartphones

The market is saturated with modern, high-tech smartphones--there is a plethora of options available with respect to brand, operating system (OS), features, and so on. As smartphones have become "smarter" and more feature-rich, their ability to provide a useful and convenient reading platform has increased. Apps, and the integration thereof, are overwhelmingly responsible for this as they are providing simple software solutions to many useful tasks like e-book reading. "App" is short for "application" and simply refers to the software that often is downloaded as opposed to loaded from a disc. Apps are much smaller, compact, and less feature-rich when compared to regular software packages like Adobe Photoshop, Microsoft Office, or Apple's Final Cut Pro, for example.

When purchasing a smartphone, it really becomes a choice of what brand, operating system, and features you desire. Regardless of what smartphone you select, many apps do a fine job of displaying e-book content that you can procure. The most basic and fundamental reading app that is very serviceable and free is the Adobe Reader. Thanks to that app alone, students that use my library are able to download e-books, journal articles, newspapers, and other documents in the PDF file format and read them on their smartphones without having to set foot in the library. The second most useful and ubiquitous e-reading app is Amazon's Kindle app, followed closely by Barnes & Noble's Nook app and Apple's iBooks app (Apple devices only). All are free and allow users to read any of the top four file...

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