Sony e-book reader gets 500,000 books from Google

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The Google headquarters sign is seen in a Mountain View, Calif. file photo from July 21, 2005. Google Inc. is making half a million books, unprotected by copyright, available for free on Sony Corp.'s electronic book-reading device, the companies were set to announce Thursday March 19, 2009. (AP Photo/Paul Sakuma, File)

(AP) -- Google Inc. is making half a million books, unprotected by copyright, available for free on Sony Corp.'s electronic book-reading device, the companies were set to announce Thursday.

It's the first time Google has made its vast trove of scanned public-domain books available to an e-book device, and vaults the Sony Reader

past Amazon.com Inc.'s [Kindle](#) as the device with the largest available library, at about 600,000 books.

The scanned books were all published before 1923, and include works like Charles Dickens' "A Tale of Two Cities" as well as nonfiction classics like Herodotus' "The Histories."

The books are already available as free downloads in the [Portable Document Format](#) (PDF), which works well on computer screens but not on e-book readers. Google will provide the books to the Sony Reader in the EPUB ([electronic publication](#)) format, which lets the lines flow differently to fit a smaller screen.

Google spokeswoman Jennie Johnson said the company wants to make the books available as widely as possible.

"Really our vision is: any book, anywhere, any time and on any device," she said. "We want to partner with anybody who shares our vision of making them more accessible."

The publishing industry has more or less united on EPUB for e-book distribution, but Amazon uses its own format for the Kindle. However, unencrypted EPUB files can be converted to a format readable by the Kindle using PC software.

Unlike the Sony Reader, the $359 Kindle has a wireless connection directly to its e-book store, which boasts more than 245,000 titles. To get books onto the Reader, the user first downloads them from Sony's Web site using a computer, then connects the Reader to the computer.

There are two models of the Reader, priced at $300 and $350.

On the Net:

http://www.sony.com/reader

http://books.google.com

http://www.amazon.com/kindle

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