

Barnes & Noble unveils new e-reader: the 'nook' (w/ Video)

October 20 2009

(AP) -- Barnes & Noble Inc. unveiled a new electronic-book reader Tuesday that will compete with Amazon.com's Kindle in a still-small arena where some see bookselling's future.

A wireless reader with 2 gigabytes of memory, the capacity to store and play MP3 files and a feature that allows users to loan out their e-books, the "nook" is available for "pre-order" on Barnes & Noble's Web site for \$259 - the same as the recently reduced Kindle. Less than 5 inches wide and 8 inches tall and weighing 11.2 ounces, the company says the nook is the size and weight of a paperback book and will start shipping in November.

Author Malcolm Gladwell read from his best-seller "The Tipping Point" during a launch event Tuesday for the device in New York. The first 10,000 people to order a nook will get a free electronic copy of the book.

Video: Promotional video from Barnes & Noble Inc.

Users will get free wireless access in Barnes & Noble stores, where the device will be displayed. It has a slot for adding up to 16 gigabytes more memory, a 3.5-inch color touch screen below the page display and can store users' personal photos.

E-book readers can serve as customer retention tools as much as anything because they display only versions of books provided by the

company that sells the device.

The largest U.S. book store chain is only the latest company to enter the e-reader market, which Kindle has dominated since its 2007 launch. Sony has sold e-readers since 2006 and plans to launch a new version with a touch screen and wireless downloading capability via AT&T in December. Smaller companies IREX Technologies Inc. and Plastic Logic Ltd. also plan to offer e-readers soon.

So far, e-readership is small.

"Only 8 percent of the U.S. adult population bought one e-book in 2008," and most read them on PCs, said Michael Norris, senior analyst at research firm Simba Information. "So it's a device that is extremely important to everyone except 92 percent of American adults."

Still, the niche is growing fast in an industry that is slumping. Forrester Research predicts 3 million e-readers will sell in the U.S. in 2009, and twice as many in 2010.

Sales have been falling for years at Barnes & Noble and other brick-and-mortar booksellers - mainly chief rival Borders Inc., which sells Sony e-readers in some stores - as shoppers turn to online and discount booksellers. The recession also led consumers to slash their spending on discretionary items like books and music.

Barnes & Noble hopes the e-reader and the company's new e-bookstore, launched in July, will boost sales. The e-bookstore, which sells versions of books to read on smart phones and other mobile devices and most personal computers, offers 700,000 books, including the more than half-million offered free by Google Inc. It plans to offer up to 1 million within a year, as well as magazines and newspapers.

Amazon.com meanwhile offers about 350,000 books for the Kindle, and Sony offers about 600,000, including Google's free titles.

When Barnes & Noble launched its e-bookstore, it was to be the exclusive provider of books for a reader from Plastic Logic to be released in 2010. It was not clear Tuesday afternoon whether Plastic Logic makes the e-book soon to be announced.

Barnes & Noble has the advantage that it can feature its e-reader in its stores, said Norris.

"If you buy something from Amazon, you can't touch it first," he said. "Barnes & Noble presumably will have big showcases for these in all of its superstores.... Barnes & Noble, knowing full well that Amazon isn't as big in e-books as it wants people to think, is hoping that the fact they can get consumers to hold a reasonably priced e-book device in their hand ... will target their device to the right people."

On the Net: <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/nook/features/techspecs/>

©2009 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Citation: Barnes & Noble unveils new e-reader: the 'nook' (w/ Video) (2009, October 20) retrieved 11 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-10-barnes-noble-unveils-e-reader-nook.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.