

# Taiwan pushes e-books but lacks Chinese content

January 28 2010, By DEBBY WU , Associated Press Writer

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In this photo taken Wednesday, Jan. 27, 2010, a booth attendant displays Chinese language content on Taiwan-made BenQ electronic book at the Taipei International Book Fair in Taipei, Taiwan. Taiwan may lead the world in the development of readers for the fast-growing electronic book market, but when it comes to satisfying the e-appetites of its highly literate population, it runs into the problem of a gaping lack of appealing Chinese-language content. (AP Photo/Wally Santana)

(AP) -- Taiwan leads the world in development of readers for the fast-growing electronic book market, but when it comes to satisfying the e-appetites of the island's highly literate population, it seems distinctly pre-digital.

The problem: A gaping lack of appealing Chinese-language content.

At this week's 18th annual Taipei Book Exhibition, cutting-edge gadgets offered by Taiwanese tech companies were loaded with little beyond translations of classical Western literature and well-known Chinese standards like The Romance of the Three Kingdoms. Compelling material to entice contemporary-minded readers was conspicuously absent.

And while buyers of devices like the nReader K60 - made by Taiwanese PC maker BenQ - are given the opportunity to purchase additional material from affiliated Web sites, the selection is limited and best sellers are almost nowhere to be found.

The problem arises partly because publishers are uncertain what impact e-books may have on their revenues, said Albert Hsu, a manager in the e-Publishing Service Platform Department of Taiwan [computer maker](#) Acer Inc.

"One major problem is that publishers are worried that if they sell books in their electronic format, it could hurt the sale of paper copies," Hsu said.

Hsu added that publishers are also concerned the content could be more easily shared - and sales suffer - if books are published in electronic format.

One company trying to buck the dull content trend is Yuan-Liou Publishing Co., a Taipei-based firm cooperating with e-book reader developer Koobe Inc. to produce an [e-reader](#) that will feature the works of a renowned writer of Chinese martial art novels.

Yuan-Liou assistant marketing supervisor Ophelia Chen said her company's reader will come with all 36 [books](#) by Hong Kong-based Louis Cha - better known as Jin Yong - in their electronic format.

Chen said the 6-inch screen device will go on sale in the first half of this year, and cost between New Taiwan dollars 13,000 and NT\$15,000 (\$413-\$468). She said Yuan-Liou will also have thousands of e-books ready for purchase on its Web site when the reader becomes available.

The [electronic-book](#) industry is becoming big business on this island of 23 million people.

Last month the government announced a 2 billion New Taiwan dollar (\$65 million) initiative to help makers cash in on the rapidly growing world market.

[Taiwan](#) is already a leading player in the digital book market, being the exclusive supplier of e-paper displays for Amazon's Kindle and Sony's e-Reader through collaboration with foreign firms that hold cutting-edge electronic ink technologies.

Prime View International Co. currently supplies 90 percent of the e-paper displays to the world market, with the rest coming mainly from Taiwanese maker AU Optronics Corp., according to Austin, Texas-based research firm Display Search.

Display Search says worldwide e-book sales in 2009 likely surpassed 4 million, and are expected to double this year.

Taiwan's Industrial Development Bureau report said at least 10 other Taiwanese firms are making related chip sets or assembling the digital readers.

With near 100 percent literacy, Taiwanese are big readers.

Leading chain bookstore Eslite says people generally like to purchase novels and nonfiction works like contemporary political essays. A

Chinese translation of Stephenie Meyer's four-part vampire series  
Twilight ranked No.2 on their best-seller chart for 2009.

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Citation: Taiwan pushes e-books but lacks Chinese content (2010, January 28) retrieved 24 April  
2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-01-taiwan-e-books-lacks-chinese-content.html>

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