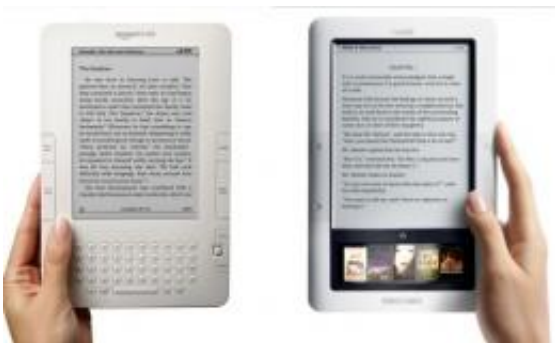


E-reader faceoff: Kindle or Nook? Here's a comparison

August 27 2010, By Mark W. Smith



There's a titanic battle brewing in the e-reader market. The Amazon Kindle and Barnes & Noble Nook are leaving competitors in the dust this summer and are locked in a war that has dropped prices by more than half in just a year.

These electronic devices let you read [books](#), magazines or newspapers on an e-ink display. They can store thousands of items.

Both Amazon and B&N now boast e-readers that have dipped below \$150 -- a key price point for consumers prone to impulse buys.

Just recently, Plastic Logic shelved plans for the long-delayed Que e-reader, joining a growing list of competitors who have folded amid the

intense competition.

With the release of the all-new Kindle 3 at the end of the month, readers have some tough decisions to make, but there has never been a better time to buy.

Amazon said it sold 180 e-books in July for every 100 hardcover books -- a sign that the e-reader train isn't slowing down soon.

HARDWARE: DISPLAYS DIFFER

The big difference here is the Nook's small color touch screen at the bottom of the device. The Kindle features a physical keyboard and a handy five-way rocker button for navigation. The Nook's color touch screen is nice, but the navigation can feel disjointed as you touch one screen to move the cursor on another. And the bright color display can be distracting while you read.

The two e-readers had long used the same 6-inch e-ink display, but Amazon promises the Kindle 3 will have 50 percent better contrast than previous models.

CONNECTEDNESS: GO WITH 3G

Both the Kindle 3 and [Nook](#) come in versions with WiFi only and with 3G. The WiFi-only models need a wireless hot spot to connect to the Web, while the 3G models can go online anywhere, just like a smartphone. So with WiFi only, you won't always be able to download books or newspapers on the go.

If you're a frequent traveler, or don't have consistent access to WiFi, you'll want to go with a slightly more expensive 3G model. It's worth it,

though, as there is never a charge to access the 3G wireless service once you have either device.

SELECTION: DO SOME SEARCHING

Amazon boasts a library of more than 630,000 books, while B&N says it has more than a million. Beware of those figures, though, as many of the B&N books are older, public domain books available for free on both platforms. Amazon does not include those books in its tally.

Some authors have been coaxed to sign exclusivity agreements with one store or the other (only Amazon has the most recent Salman Rushdie novel, for example). So it's smart to go online and do a spot check of your favorite authors before committing to an [e-reader](#).

ONLY ON NOOK: IN-STORE PERKS

Here's a big advantage for Nook: While using one inside an actual B&N store, readers can browse and read entire books for free.

Another perk on Nook is the ability to lend most books to a friend. Readers can send a book to a friend's Nook for up to 14 days.

ONLY ON KINDLE: READING ALOUD

The Kindle includes the option to have a book read to you. That's an important consideration for those with poor eyesight -- or if you just like being read to.

MOBILE APPS: BOOKS EVERYWHERE

Because the real goal for retailers here is to sell you e-books, not e-

readers, Amazon and B&N have gone to great lengths to make sure you can read purchased e-books on any device you'd like.

Both platforms have free dedicated apps for the PC, Mac, Android-based smartphones and the Apple iPad, iPhone and iPod touch. Books read on each device will automatically hold your place on all the others.

AVAILABILITY: KINDLE SOLD OUT

Pre-orders for the Kindle 3 have been so brisk that Amazon has had to push the ship date for some orders from Aug. 27 to early September, though first shipments of pre-orders were on their way early. New orders will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis online.

The Nook is available now, both online at bn.com and at B&N stores.

PRICE: A MOVING TARGET

When Barnes & Noble announced a \$60 price drop to \$199 for the 3G Nook this summer, Amazon announced a new price for the Kindle -- \$189 -- just hours later.

When the [Kindle](#) 3 is released next month, it will be the new price champ at \$139 for the WiFi-only model, but don't expect it to hold that title long. Especially as we approach the holiday shopping season, there's no telling how low these e-readers will go.

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