

New e-reader Nook Color offers alternative

December 26 2010, By Mark W. Smith



The switch has finally been flipped, giving e-book lovers a compelling option to enjoy books, magazines and newspapers in full color on a dedicated e-reader.

The Nook Color (\$249) from Barnes & Noble is positioned to lure customers turned off by the limited functionality of less-expensive black-and-white E Ink e-readers and turned off by the \$500 plus price tag of the Apple iPad or Android tablet.

There's a slew of attractive features here, topped off by the first full-color screen from a top-shelf [e-reader](#).

It's a beauty, too.

The 7-inch screen packs in hundreds of thousands of pixels at 169 pixels per inch, making photos and magazines look super vibrant.

The overall design of the Nook Color is simple and comfortable, which is paramount for e-readers.

The Nook platform also embraces the standard ePub format for e-books, allowing users to load their own [e-books](#), including those from Google's new digital bookstore or ones rented from a local library, on their Nook device. Amazon continues on the closed route, only allowing books on the Kindle that have been purchased from its own e-book store.

Where the Nook Color really shines is in its implementation of full-color kids' books.

And while the section is limited for now, Barnes & Noble's Read to Me line of illustrated children's titles is a wonderful use of the colorful screen.

Each of these specially formatted books offers the option to read the book yourself or have it read aloud by a recorded track. Many small kids, increasingly at home with touch-screen devices, would undoubtedly love the chance to work their way through a vibrant book with a narrator.

The format for magazines is also attractive on the color screen, but each page is basically just a flattened image of the print edition, which doesn't allow for things like text highlighting or sharing passages online via Facebook or Twitter.

The Nook Color runs a version of Google's Android mobile operating system, which gives users a reasonably featured Web browser (Flash

support is lacking and is planned for next year).

The operating system has allowed for a small set of curated Android apps that are available on the Nook Color, including popular music streaming service Pandora.

The more tablet-like features of the Nook Color are hindered by a touch screen, though, that isn't as responsive as the Apple iPad or Samsung Galaxy Tab. It works just fine for reading and navigating around books, but you can sense the limitations quickly when trying to browse the Web as a whole.

The Nook Color, which is a bit heavier than you expect it to be, is also limited by the lack of 3G connectivity.

As more color e-readers come to market, we will wonder why we ever lusted over e-readers that boasted 16 shades of grey - as the previous Kindle did.

And even with the small set of frustrations on the Nook Color, it's clear we've hit an important turning point that will force other e-readers to push forward with color technology.

NOOK COLOR

- Price: \$249
- Size: 8.1-by-5-by-.48 inches
- Weight: 15.8 ounces
- Storage: 8 GB built-in, expandable up to 32 GB with microSD

- Battery: 8 hours of reading with WiFi turned off

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