

Barnes & Noble's Nook tablet starts shipping Wed

November 16 2011, By MAE ANDERSON , AP Retail Writer

Barnes & Noble Inc.'s Nook Tablet electronic device will begin arriving in stores and homes on Wednesday, one day ahead of schedule.

The move comes just after Amazon.com Inc. began shipping its similar Kindle Fire device on Monday, also a day ahead of schedule. Both hope their souped-up tablet-like e-readers will be popular gifts this holiday season.

Apple Inc.'s iPad has so far dominated the tablet market. That device starts at \$499. Nook Tablet is selling for \$249 and Amazon's Kindle Fire sells for \$199.

Since introducing its first Nook in 2009, Barnes & Noble has spent heavily on its e-book readers and e-bookstore.

Unlike Amazon, Barnes & Noble doesn't offer its own streaming services, but the Nook includes preloaded software from Hulu and Netflix Inc. to let users watch movies and TV shows through those subscription services.

The Nook Tablet weighs less than a pound, has a battery that enables nine hours of video watching and comes with 16 gigabytes of memory and an SD slot to add more. It runs on Google Inc.'s Android system for mobile devices.

The company also offers free customer service at the more than 700

Barnes & Noble stores, something CEO William Lynch points out that Amazon as an online retailer cannot do.

The Nook Tablet is being sold online, in Barnes & Noble stores and by a variety of other retailers, including Target, Best Buy, Staples and Fry's.

As people change the way they read, Barnes & Noble faces tough competition from discounters and online retailers in the market for traditional books. Barnes & Noble, which is based in New York, has struggled to turn a profit. Its much smaller rival, Borders Group Inc., sought bankruptcy protection and then liquidated its assets this year.

In its most recent quarter, Barnes & Noble reported a narrower loss than a year earlier as its revenue edged up 2 percent to \$1.42 billion.

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Citation: Barnes & Noble's Nook tablet starts shipping Wed (2011, November 16) retrieved 9 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-11-barnes-noble-nook-tablet-shipping.html>

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