



Nothing a Little Ingenuity Can't Handle

Over the past few months I've led quite a few workshops about e-readers, e-reading, and apps. To be honest, it's been slightly disheartening to find out how much people *don't* know about these topics.

It's hard to imagine that so many librarians (those that work with teens and others) don't seem able to keep up with what's going on in e-reading, something essential to serving 21st century customers.

I know there are barriers to keeping up, especially access, time, and money—to name the three most common ones. I'd like to suggest that with just a little bit of ingenuity, it's possible to overcome all of them. Here's how.

MAKE FRIENDS WITH SMARTPHONE AND TABLET OWNERS

One of the responses I hear the most when I ask people if they have ever read an e-book or looked at a book-related app is, "No, I don't have a smartphone, iPad, or tablet." My answer to that is, "Don't let that stop you. You know someone who does." I mean, c'mon, if you start thinking about the colleagues, friends, teens, and families who come into the library, you'll certainly be able to think of one person, if not more, who has a device. Don't be afraid to ask that person to let you try it out. Most people I know love showing off their gadgets to a friend, colleague, or even . . . their teen librarian.

And ask questions. Everyone likes to be an expert. If you are looking at a smartphone or tablet, ask the person who owns the device to show you how apps are added. Ask if you can download and try an app yourself. A great thing to do is to download and try the app for your library's e-book collection—assuming your library circulates e-books. If you do that, then not only do you get to try out the app, the device owner will also have a chance to see the app and then have it on their device after you are done testing. That will give them easy access to and knowledge of library e-books.

Money's no object, since the library e-book app is free. But some apps do have a price tag. Search through the app store for the particular smartphone or tablet you are using—iTunes or Android Marketplace—in order to find other reading apps. But ask the owner of the device if she wouldn't mind buying an app with her device account and letting you reimburse her, since some of the apps might have a cost, usually between \$.99 and \$5. A couple of book apps that you might want to buy include:

The Waste Land: This app received a lot of press when it first launched because of its interactive nature and added value content: videos, audio, and so on. The app is only available for the iPad, priced more than usual at \$13.99.

DC Comics and Marvel Comics both have apps that are free, but some of the comics that users can read via the apps are not free. Prices of the comics range from \$0 to \$4.99, but it's well worth the price, as seeing what it's like to read a comic on an iPad or other tablet is one of the best ways to appreciate this new-fangled reading experience. The **D.C. Comics** app is available for both Android and iPad devices. The **Marvel** app is available for iPad, and **Graphic.ly** provides an app for reading Marvel comics on Android.

3:15 was reviewed by Wendy Stephens in a YALSA Blog post. She wrote, "The stories are creepy but never gory or gruesome, and they seem to tap into the terrors plaguing the tween psyche." The app combines audio, text, and video for a truly creepy short-story experience. The app is free for both iPhone and Android phones; episodes cost \$.99 each.

DON'T SNUB THE E-READER OWNERS

It's also a good idea to try out at least one of the e-readers to get a sense of how they compare to tablets and smartphones. Ask a different technophile on your list if they can show you how their e-reader works and if they'd be willing to loan it overnight so you can read a short book or a few chapters. Many of the books that you might want to read on one of these devices cost something, but you can find free books at the **Amazon Kindle** store and the **Barnes and Noble Nook** store. See how the download works. While reading, try out the features which make the experience different, maybe even better than reading in traditional book form. For example:

Check out any note-taking features in the e-reader; how you take notes and how you can search through notes once you've saved them.

What's the bookmarking feature like? How easy is it to bookmark and then go back to the page that was bookmarked?

Find out how you search through a book in order to see where certain words and phrases appear within the text.

See if you can highlight and save passages, and if it's easy to go back to a saved passage.

Those are just a few of the features that you'll want to look for when using an e-reader. Ask the person whose device it is if they have favorite features or features they would like to see added. Don't forget that you can use e-reading apps on other devices such as smartphones and tablets. Give those a try also.

Even if you don't live near a Best Buy or Apple store, Wal-Mart and Target, and many other stores, sell the devices. While you might not be able to add apps and books to the in-store devices, you should be able to at least try them out and get a sense of what it's like to read on them while in a store.

READ AND TALK

I know librarians working with teens read all the time. You read articles in professional journals and in online sources. You read books for teens. I also know that teen librarians are very good at talking with each other about what they are doing, and seeking out ideas for how to do something new, or differently, or better in their work. The key thing is to expand that reading and talking to the topic of e-reading, and to expand that reading and talking beyond the traditional sources. For example:

Add to your regular professional reading life resources that specifically focus on technology, and that include discussions of e-reading technologies. These should not just be library-related resources, because often you can learn more about what customers are interested and participating in from sources outside of our own field. Check out **Mashable**, **ReadWriteWeb**, **NextWeb** and **Good.is** for keeping up on technology topics that include those related to e-reading.

Use social media to ask and find answers to questions related to e-reading. By following a few librarians, educators, and technology experts on **Twitter** or **Facebook** or **Google+**, you can learn a lot about what's going on in the digital reading world. Consider following @MindShiftKQED, @gigaom, and @pewinternet on **Twitter**. Some of these may take you outside of your typical reading zone; but it's important to be able to put the work you are doing in context, and by reading broadly in these other resources, you'll be able to do that pretty successfully.

Make sure the professional journal reading you're doing includes YALSA's "App of the Week" blog column and the **School Library Journal** app review blog, "Touch and Go."

You don't want to take someone else's word for what e-reading is all about; nonetheless, talk to people—virtually and face-to-face—other librarians, parents, and teens, about e-reading, and use what they tell you, along with your first-hand experience, in order to gain a fuller understanding of the e-reading landscape.

BUT WHAT ABOUT THAT OTHER BARRIER?

You may be saying to yourself, "She said she was going to tell us how to get past all three common barriers: access, time, and money, but she didn't." Access and money were covered. What's left? The time barrier.

When it comes to time, you need to start consciously integrating the subject of e-reading into what you already spend time on. For example, when reading a professional journal, don't skip over the article on e-reading because you don't think it's relevant. Instead, skip over the article on a program that is just like something you already do. Sure, you can always improve on the things you do know about, but it's critical to spend your precious time on what you don't know, in order to advance, not to mention survive, as an information professional in the 21st century.

In the same vein, instead of always picking up that professional journal you always read in order to keep up, occasionally replace it with something that isn't typical. Read a post on **Mashable** about a new reading app, or read through the **MindShiftKQED Twitter** posts to see what's recently been added about e-reading and devices. With a little bit of discipline, it's likely that before you know it, some new resources will become an automatic part of your professional reading.

You don't have time *not* to learn about e-reading and devices. Don't wait for that workshop where someone is going to tell you everything you need to know about e-reading. The workshop is one step, but get started now so when you get to that workshop, you'll be able to ask good questions and add to the conversation and your (needed) understanding. ■

RESOURCES MENTIONED

- DC Comics App for iPhone, iPad, iPod Touch.** <http://www.dccomics.com/sites/digital/app/>
- DC Comics App for Android.** <https://market.android.com/details?id=com.dccomics.comics>
- GigaOm Twitter.** <http://twitter.com/gigaom/>
- Good.is.** <http://good.is>
- Graphic.ly.** <https://market.android.com/details?id=com.graphicly>
- KQED MindShift Twitter.** <http://twitter.com/MindShiftKQED>
- Marvel Comics Apps.** http://marvel.com/news/story/11835/download_the_official_marvel_comics_ipad_app
- Mashable.** <http://mashable.com>
- NextWeb.** <http://thenextweb.com>
- Pew Internet and American Life Twitter.** <http://twitter.com/pewinternet>
- ReadWriteWeb.** <http://readwriteweb.com>
- School Library Journal Touch and Go Blog.** <http://blog.schoollibraryjournal.com/touchandgo/>
- 3:15 App for iPhone, iPad, and iPod.** <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/3-15/id423037136?mt=8>
- 3:15 App for Android.** <http://www.appbrain.com/app/3%3A15/com.threefifteen>
- The Waste Land App.** <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/the-waste-land/id427434046?mt=8>
- YALSA Blog App of the Week.** <http://yalsa.ala.org/blog/category/apps/>

Use social media to ask and find answers to questions related to e-reading. By following a few librarians, educators, and technology experts on **Twitter** or **Facebook** or **Google+**, you can learn a lot about what's going on in the digital reading world.

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