

Electronic Books  
by Arlene Rains Graber

I have a confession. I know I've said otherwise, but with the newest craze in technology, and the virtues thereof, it's possible I will soon join the millions who carry one single electronic device downloaded with a plethora of books, magazines, and newspapers. As an actual book enthusiast, I don't intend to give up haunting books stores and purchasing books from recycled trees with colorful covers that fit snugly into my hands. Nor will I give up my book club and the local library. However, I explored the merits of those electronic reader devices and decided there is definitely a place for them.

The Sony Reader and Amazon Kindle are two that deserve some consideration. The Sony is about three ounces lighter, than the ten ounce Kindle, but both fit easily into your purse or briefcase. This comes in handy when you're traveling since you eliminate the weight of a stack of books to read with one small device.

Fonts can easily be enlarged on both as needed, and screens feature sharp contrast that allows you to read in sunlight. According to reviews by *Consumer Reports*, the Kindle has a crisper contrast. The same review noted that the Kindle advantage is that it is wireless while Sony hasn't mastered that feature. In addition, the Kindle has the availability of twice the book offerings due to its Amazon alliance. Still, the Sony had a storage advantage over the Kindle since it supports both internal and external memory where the Kindle does not.

If you get tired of reading, the Kindle allows you to switch it to speaker, and it reads the text to you without a lift of a finger. This feature is appealing to most everyone. The Kindle also features a built in PDF converter so it's possible to download documents

and speeches easily. They both have a battery life of two weeks, but only four days for the Kindle if wireless is turned on.

So, why would I not want to give up my book obsession and go electronic? Well, here's the thing. Given how fast technology changes, the life of electronic devices is but a few years, and you have to wonder if several decades from now if these items will even be around. Take for instance my old Betamax from the 70's. It soon became obsolete first with VHS, then DVD, and now Blu-Ray threatens to take over.

Remember those eight-track tapes, the 78-rpm records and the manual Royal typewriter? They were all phased out by advances in technology. So, I'm thinking, if I write an e-book, chances are it won't be read decades down the road, but a book written on paper and bound with a handsome cover will remain in tact for my great grandchildren and they won't need to do a thing but read it. Take for instance, the Book of Kells at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland written in the seventh century, which has outlasted technology. Then there are all those coveted first editions book lovers like to collect.

Who says we can't have the best of both worlds. If finances allow, build a library of favorite books at home, and purchase an electronic reader for those times when you don't want to lug a book bag. Books might be called "yesterday" by some, but for all—they are "tomorrow".