

E-READERS: Books Gone Digital

The most basic item in a college bookstore is, of course, the book. Store shelves are stocked with textbooks, trade books and reference books for students to buy or rent at the beginning of each semester.

While books in print form continue to provide students with the necessary tools they need for their courses, pleasure reading or looking up a word, they have been supplemented by the emergence of books in electronic, or digital, format.

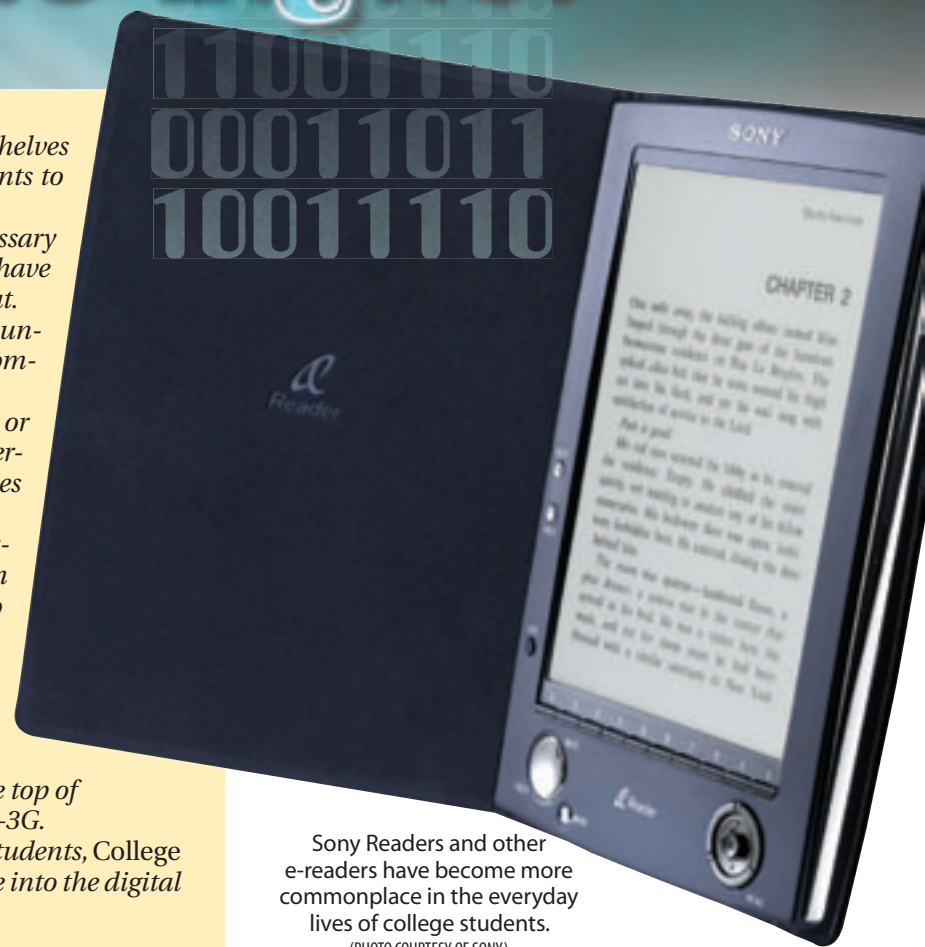
Electronic books, or simply e-books, allow students and faculty to carry hundreds, even thousands, of books on one device, the electronic reader, more commonly known as the e-reader.

Whether it's the Amazon Kindle, the Barnes & Noble Nook, the Apple iPad or the Sony Reader, each e-reader has its own unique features. Some allow Internet access. Others allow you to download movies. They come in different shapes and colors. But first and foremost, they serve as a storage device for e-books.

Some e-readers, such as the Sony Readers, are carried in college bookstores. Others, such as the Kindle, are starting to expand their availability in retail stores, with the possibility that one day, they will make their way onto college bookstore shelves.

Prices for e-readers vary, depending on which one students purchase. Kindles range from \$139 to the \$189 Kindle 3G. The Nook Wi-Fi retails for \$149, while the Nook 3G+Wi-Fi sells for \$199. Sony Readers range in price from \$179.99 for the Reader Pocket Edition, \$229.99 for the Reader Touch Edition and \$249.99 for the Reader Daily Edition. Apple iPads remain at the top of the e-reader price list at \$499 for 16GB Wi-Fi up to \$829 for the 64GB Wi-Fi+3G.

As e-readers become more commonplace in the everyday lives of college students, College Store Executive spoke with a few of the major players in the category to delve into the digital world of books.



Sony Readers and other e-readers have become more commonplace in the everyday lives of college students.
(PHOTO COURTESY OF SONY)

CafeScribe — Facebook for E-Books

The CafeScribe platform, powered by Follett Higher Education Group (FHEG), not only allows students to download digital textbooks onto their PCs or Macs, it also serves as a social networking tool.

Gary Shapiro, FHEG senior vice president for intellectual property, explained that about three years ago, FHEG explored what it could do in the area of electronic textbooks.

A Web 2.0 social networking company called Fourteen40, Inc. developed the CafeScribe platform as a "Facebook for e-books," as Shapiro called it. "It was built around a collaboration process."

Through an e-book reader application MyScribe, students can import, read and annotate PDFs. MyScribe features include a shared-notes network, a comprehensive search function, highlighting and annotation.

"In the content itself, you can collaborate, share notes, publish your notes into someone else's book, rate notes to say they're good or they're bad. It's a very collaborative tool within the content itself."

Faculty members who adopt CafeScribe as the delivery method for their content can actually take a publisher's content and place notes within the content to alert students to pay attention to certain things in the book, or indicate content that will be discussed in the next class.

Follett introduced CafeScribe as a pilot program in one class at each of four schools approximately three years ago. After a period of follow-up and observation on what students did with CafeScribe, Follett purchased Fourteen40 in March 2008.

DOWNLOADS

There are three ways to download e-books through CafeScribe. Students can log on to www.foollett.com to get their book list. If one of the courses that a student is taking is using a book that has a digital version, there will be a button that will direct the student to CafeScribe to purchase the e-book.

The second method is to go to www.cafe-scribe.com itself and browse all of the content available by ISBN or author/title and purchase the digital books.

Third, students can go into the bookstore and obtain e-book cards, which have a barcode on them. The student takes the barcode to the register, the register scans the barcode, which sends out a message to a remote server, and brings down a unique passcode and URL imprinted on the receipt.

"If you were buying an e-book in the store, the information that allows you to go online and get it comes on the receipt," Shapiro explained.

BOOK LISTS

More than 15,000 titles are available through CafeScribe, and each college store has to adopt the list of digital titles to make the books available for students to download. Currently, an estimated 800 FHEG-managed stores carry digital textbooks.

Follett has contracts with more than 50 publishers to feature their content on CafeScribe, including Pearson plc, Cengage Learning, McGraw-Hill, John Wiley & Sons and Macmillan. "Several of those publishers have given us their full catalog of everything they have digitally," Shapiro said.

ADVANTAGES

Shapiro noted that CafeScribe's primary benefit to students is that e-books purchased through the platform cost less than print textbooks. "That price will vary depending on the publisher and the content. On average, the cost savings ranges from 40-60 percent."

The advantage for bookstores is that they can offer more choice to students. "A student used to get new or used books off the shelf," he said. "Today it's new or used, rented and digital. Now we're giving students the choice in any format they want."

"From a store's perspective, because students have that choice, hopefully they're go-

ing to keep the customers in the store, and the customers won't go outside and purchase from other websites."

LOOKING AHEAD

Shapiro noted that store feedback on CafeScribe has been very positive. "Stores love it; they love to have an option to do it." Sales were four times greater during this year's rush than last year's.

Follett is currently working on a mobile application for CafeScribe, so that students could read books on their cell phones.

In addition, Follett recently announced a partnership with Blackboard Inc. that gives students the ability to purchase and use digital textbooks directly in Blackboard Learn — a platform for delivering learning content, engaging learners and measuring their performance — with a free integration that provides access to CafeScribe through the Blackboard system.

"We're making tremendous investment in making sure that we're able to offer options to students and faculty as those options becomes more and more prevalent," he noted. "We're watching the evolution of the product carefully to make sure our platform will support the evolution."



CafeScribe allows students to download digital textbooks onto their PCs or Macs. (PHOTO COURTESY OF FOLLETT HIGHER EDUCATION GROUP)

NOOKstudy

Barnes & Noble, Inc. has developed an integrated software solution for college students called NOOKstudy, a feature-rich, free software application that enables students to manage all their digital content — e-textbooks, class materials and notes — on either a PC or a Mac.

Introduced in August, NOOKstudy was developed over the past year with input from college students.

"It was really built by students for students," said Tracey Weber, executive vice president, Textbooks and Digital Education, Barnes & Noble.com.

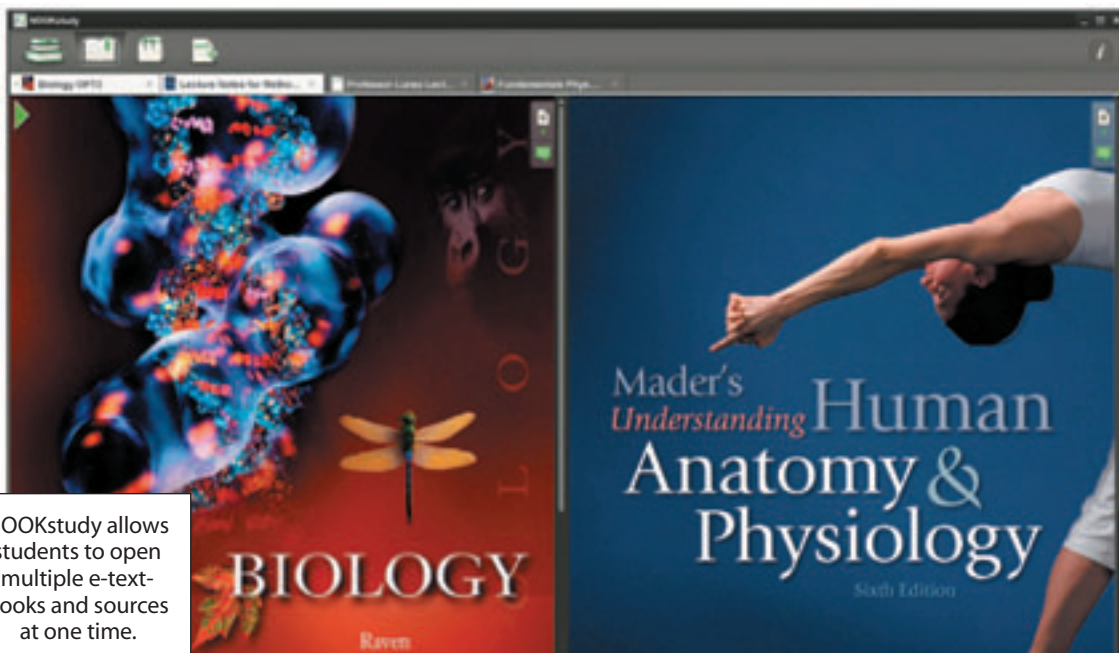
NOOKstudy delivers an enhanced digital reading experience and is one of the first digital textbook applications that enhance the academic experience through unique and customizable study features developed with extensive feedback from college students, professors and administrators.

It lets students view multiple books and sources at one time and offers access to complementary content, such as toolsets and reference materials, as well as the ability to highlight and take notes that are searchable and customizable.

NOOKstudy also provides students access to all of their materials — e-textbooks, lecture notes, syllabi, slides, images, trade books and other course-related documents — all in one place, so their digital library goes wherever they go.

"NOOKstudy is a big win for college students: it will not only lighten their backpacks, but also help them save money and study more efficiently," Weber noted.

NOOKstudy is compatible with the company's entire catalog of e-books and digital content, including relevant study aids, test prep guides, periodicals and hundreds of thousands of trade and professional titles. It also enables students to save money, as e-textbooks offer up to 50 percent savings off new textbooks.



NOOKstudy allows students to open multiple e-textbooks and sources at one time.