

You've selected the U.S. Edition. Would you like to make this your default edition? Yes | No

Close

SET EDITION: U.S. | INTERNATIONAL | MÉXICO | ARABIC
TV: CNN | CNNi | CNN en Español | HLN

Sign up | Log in



SEARCH

Home TV & Video NewsPulse U.S. World Politics Justice Entertainment Tech Health Living Travel Opinion iReport Money Sports

E-books spur reading among Americans, survey shows

Recommend

2456 recommendations. [Sign Up](#) to see what your friends recommend.

By **Amy Gahrn**, Special to CNN
updated 5:34 AM EDT, Thu April 5, 2012 | Filed under: **Gaming and Gadgets**



COURTESY: AMAZON

Americans who own e-readers tend to read more often than those who read only printed works, a Pew survey found.

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

E-book users tend to read more often than people who read only print material, a survey finds

A third of people who read e-content say they now spend more time reading than before

Currently 28% of Americans age 18 and older own at least one tablet or e-reader

Editor's note: Amy Gahrn writes about mobile tech for CNN.com. She is a San Francisco Bay Area writer and media consultant whose blog, [Contentious.com](#), explores how people communicate in the online age.

(CNN) -- E-books aren't just becoming increasingly popular. They also appear to be promoting reading habits among American adults.

So says [new research from the Pew Internet and American Life Project](#), which states that about one-fifth of U.S. adults have read an e-book in the past year.

And if you expand that to include Americans over 16 who have used an e-reader device or app to read news articles or magazine-style features, the figure jumps to 43%.

E-book users tend to read more often than people who read only print material, Pew found. In particular, they read more books. A

ADVERTISEMENT

Most popular Tech stories right now

[The draw of 'Draw Something'](#)

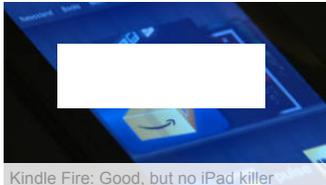
typical e-book user read 24 books in the past year, compared with the 15 books reported by typical non-e-book users.

Also, a third of people who read e-content say they now spend more time reading than they did before e-books. This is especially true for people who own tablets and e-book readers.



This might be good for the economy. According to Pew, e-book users are "also more likely than others to have bought their most recent book, rather than borrowed it, and they are more likely than others to say they prefer to purchase books in general."

E-readers and tablets (including Amazon's Kindle Fire e-reader, which is a modified Android tablet) were a popular holiday gift item last year. Currently 28% of Americans age 18 and older own at least one tablet or an e-book reader. And that's not even counting the people who read books on a smartphone or iPod Touch app.



Then again, Pew also noted that e-book users often start searching for books online -- which isn't great news for people who run brick-and-mortar bookstores.

For now, print reading material still rules the consumer market, however. Pew found that nearly three-fourths of U.S. adults read a printed book in 2011, and 11% listened to an audiobook. Print books are especially popular when people read to children.

Print books are also the most popular choice when people want to borrow or lend a book. That's not surprising -- recently [author Dave Taylor explained step-by-step how to borrow a Kindle book from a public library](#). It's not too difficult, but is still considerably more complicated than walking into the library and pulling a book off the shelf.

The survey also found that just slightly more people prefer e-books over print for reading in bed.

On the flip side, Pew noted that nearly 20% of U.S. adults said they had not read a single book in the past year. In general, people who don't own electronic reading devices are more likely not to read much at all.

In addition, nearly 20% of Americans 16 and older said they had "physical or health conditions that made reading difficult or challenging." Most of these people are older (25% of those over age 50), unemployed or low-income. But an interesting aspect of e-book and audiobook technology is its potential to improve the accessibility of written content.

Most e-reading devices allow the reader to adjust the font, font size, contrast, column width, and other factors to compensate for impaired vision. Plus, they often include text-to-speech technology that can read books or articles aloud -- maybe not with thrilling delivery, but still a useful option. This can also be helpful to people with limited literacy.

The cost of e-reading devices keeps dropping, and it's likely that in the next year or two companies like Amazon may be giving away basic e-readers for free (on the principle that you can make more money selling "blades" than "razors").

[Super-mayor Cory Booker gets memed](#)

[Apple says update will fix Mac virus](#)

[Virus found in fake 'Angry Birds' for Android](#)

[Draw Something's fast rise and sale](#)

[Explore the news with NewsPulse »](#)



ADVERTISEMENT

Sponsored links

Prudential Can Help

Together, let's tackle our biggest financial challenges. Learn more. Prudential.com/bringyourchallenges

Overstock iPads 2: \$43.20

Today Only: Get 32GB iPads for \$43. 1 Per Customer. Limited Quantities. www.NoMoreRack.com/iPad

E-Book Distribution

Bookrix Makes It Easy To Publish and Sell Your Ebook. Join Today! www.bookrix.com/sell.html

As the price of e-readers approaches zero, it opens up more opportunities for people who have been left on the wrong side of the digital divide to access the same wealth of information, entertainment and education as people with normal vision and average-or-better income.

Since the invention of writing, the written word has always disrupted the balance of power in societies. While e-books might have started out as a high-tech novelty for early adopters, they may ultimately prove to be a great equalizer across boundaries of ability, resources and education.

The opinions expressed in this post are solely those of Amy Gahran.

Recommend

2456 recommendations. [Sign Up](#) to see what your friends recommend.

We recommend

- [A new reason to stay off the Web at work](#)
- [Palin goes rogue on 'Today' show](#)
- ['Harry Potter' series finally available as e-books](#)
- [Two Coast Guard members shot dead on Alaskan island](#)
- [Three dead in Ohio restaurant shooting](#)
- [How newspapers can survive](#)

From around the web

- [The Craziest Things People Did This Year To Save Money](#) Bankrate.com
- [These 4 Things Happen Right Before a Heart Attack](#) Newsmax.com
- [Overcome Depression: How to Avoid Hitting Bottom](#) Lifescript.com
- [11-Year-Old Girl Who Gave Birth Is Not Normal The Stir](#) By CafeMom
- [How Much Should You Really Weigh?](#) MyDailyMoment
- [40 Weird Facts About The United States That Are Almost Too Crazy To Believe](#) YOLOHUB

[what's this]

Sponsored links

Prudential Can Help
 Together, let's tackle our biggest financial challenges. Learn more.
[Prudential.com/bringyourchallenges](#)

Overstock iPads 2: \$43.20
 Today Only: Get 32GB iPads for \$43.1 Per Customer. Limited Quantities.
[www.NoMoreRack.com/iPad](#)

Download Audiobooks
 Start your 30-Day Free Trial today. Listen on your iPod or Mp3 Player!
[audible.com](#)

Real-time updating is **enabled**.

Comments for this page are closed.

Showing 25 of 206 comments

Sort by newest first



squidbait

Since all publishers don't sell all books: Come up with a single device that can read ANY format, or come up with a single non-proprietary format that will work on ANY device and I'll think about it. Until then...not worth it.

4 days ago 3 Likes

Like



Sixnard

I have a Kindle, and I like it, especially while traveling. But I find myself drifting back to ordinary books a

lot, because I like to lend and borrow them. Kindle, understandably, doesn't make this easy.

Sadly, my dream of building a technical library I could tote from job to job is not working out well at all. Kindle versions of many such books (especially, somewhat oddly, software references) aren't available, or the formatting is garbled so badly they are next to useless. I suppose this will get sorted out in time, but right now it's frustrating that the material I would most benefit from isn't available or doesn't work on the Kindle.

1 week ago 3 Likes

Like



8r1f0nt

Although I welcome the rise in e-books, I am cautious about the potential of integrating subliminal messages.

1 week ago

Like



Sixnard

Well, given that there's never been an actual instance of a subliminal message actually working, I wouldn't worry about it.

1 week ago in reply to 8r1f0nt 9 Likes

Like



Charles10034

which states that about one-fifth of U.S. adults have read an e-book in the past year.....Pretty good since about half of adults do not read any books at all.

1 week ago 8 Likes

Like



Zero36

I love reading REAL books.

1 week ago 10 Likes

Like



Ryan1972

Books are a collection of words, not cardboard paper and glue. I read at least twice as much as I did before I had an e-reader because of the convenience. I'm not going to carry 25 books, 3 newspapers and 5 magazines with me. But an e-reader is easy. I never lose my place, I can buy a book in 5 seconds, anywhere, anytime. The luddites can keep their paper books and silly romantic notions about recycled pulp and wrinkled paperbacks. Books are words, not paper. Get over it.

1 week ago in reply to Zero36 29 Likes

Like



Kevweb

That number is low. Why would anyone not just read books on their iPad or Kindle? Why is it so tough for old people to understand technology makes your life easier and better?

1 week ago 1 Like

Like



FreeDumbie

Nothing promotes reading in video game/Reality TV America..what a joke!! LMAO...

1 week ago

Like



jackd418

I love to read,I read this useless story didn't I?

1 week ago

Like

**lcook5**

i read about the same number of books as before, but it is now much easier. before i always had a stack of books that needed disposal. this solved the problem. this is one of the few newfangled devices that really make sense to me.

1 week ago 3 Likes

Like

**Charles10034**

Here, you can trade them in on other books so disposal is profitable.

1 week ago in reply to lcook5

Like

**Paul Jacobs**

Growing up I was an avid reader starting in elementary school where I ate through the school library consuming the complete works of Nancy Drew and the Hardy Boys, making it through the Lord of The Rings trilogy in sixth grade, and conquering the sci-fi fantasy genre in high school frequenting used book stores, walden books, and b. dalton at the mall. Come college I had no time for reading and then as I was finishing my college years the internet happened and I didn't pick up another book for nearly 20 years.

When I bought iPads for my wife and I everything changed. I discovered that the local library had an e-media site and as long as I had a library card I could download ePub and audio books for free! Now I am back to high school levels consuming 2-3 books a week between reading ePub books in bed and listening to audiobooks while on the freeway to and from work. Heck, my wife even puts the iPad inside a ziplock freezer bag and reads in the bathtub!

And, as things go, even what I do is good for the book industry as most books I like to read are part of a series of books and somehow (*cough* by design) the library never seems to have every book in the series so I invariably end up having to buy a Kindle edition of that one book that I am missing from the series.

1 week ago 9 Likes

Like

**Wastrel Way**, Retired lawyer and UNIX administrator.

This is egregious nonsense. Certainly if you buy an e-reader you are going to stock it with books, and use it. In fact, if you buy an e-reader, you probably read more books in the first place. "This may be good for the economy..." What?

1 week ago 3 Likes

Like

**Aloisae**

While that factor did strike me as well, there is also the increase in amount of reading reported by a third of the e-reader purchasers before and after the purchase. While it is possible the amount of easily accessible free material might impact this which lessens the impact on the economy, I'm sure that some of it really is increased sales.

For example, my father has read over 300 digital books since he received an iPad for Christmas in 2010... this after reading less than half a dozen books the previous year because reading had become so difficult due to failing eyesight. Of course, part of this was free out-of-copyright material but even so the increase in books actually purchased by him was substantial.

1 week ago in reply to Wastrel Way 1 Like

Like

**Wastrel Way**, Retired lawyer and UNIX administrator.

Yup. I've thought it over. They took a group of people who read more than other people (e-reader buyers) and did a scientific study, and proved that they read more than other people. This is so bursting with excellence that I can hardly contain myself.

1 week ago in reply to Wastrel Way 2 Likes

Like

**Mary Paddock**

I am an avid reader--have been since third grade. I inhale books, often reading over 300 pages in just

over forty-eight hours. I don't have enough bookshelves so they sometimes wind up stacked on the floor, on bedside tables, etc. The library is great, but our local branch doesn't always have what I want.

My husband, bless him, gave me a Kindle for Christmas last year (2010). Best investment ever and nobody trips over books. Amazon is loaded with free downloadable books--classics and with indie authors. It also has a lending library.

It's handy for textbooks too. I returned to school last fall and easily a 1/3 of my textbooks are downloadable. Very handy.

1 week ago 6 Likes

Like



SkandiaRecluse

Lower the price of something and more people buy it, odd how that works isn't it?

1 week ago 3 Likes

Like



TwitHappens

Actually we like the comic and pictures on them e-books. Other folks thin it stands for Ebonics books...

1 week ago 2 Likes

Like



DesignFlaw

Nearly 20% of american adults have not read a book in the last year? Really? I would be shocked if the actual percent is below 50. 75% is more realistic.

1 week ago 4 Likes

Like



GizzyN

Agreed. Because we're often reading in restaurants - and people notice this - we've heard many times over the years... "I don't even remember the last time I picked up a book...I think I was in college."

What? Are you kidding?!?!

I've never understood how people can just stop reading once it is no longer required by their schooling.

For all the cracks many of us make about Harry Potter or Twilight, my thought is - at least they encouraged a new generation to crack a book just for pleasure. Hopefully that will become a life-long habit for more of that generation.

1 week ago in reply to DesignFlaw 15 Likes

Like



joeyallday

I wonder when schools will finally switch over to ebooks as a primary learning tool.

1 week ago 1 Like

Like



Diana Schaffer

Some of the larger, and more financially able, school systems already have. Also, many colleges now do e-books for text books. At mine, the majority of core classes now have their books in ebook format, downloadable to either an e-reader or to your computer. It has saved my back, that's for sure

1 week ago in reply to joeyallday

Like



Cat Nippy

I used to say I would never replace books with an e-reader. Then my husband got me one, and I found I LOVE it! It's not only lighter weight and easier to carry around than a book, the feature that lets you adjust the type style and size is wonderful! I read a lot, and the older I get, the tireder my eyes get. Now when I

am reading late at night, I can just punch up the type size and give my eyes a break.

1 week ago 9 Likes

Like



GizzyN

You mentioned two things here that were also part of what won me over - and reminded me of another.

My eyes have gone through big changes this year, and being able to adjust the font size of whatever I'm reading, with just a few swipes of my finger - HUGE benefit to me. As I mentioned in my previous post, I live in a small rural town with a very small library... my options with regards to large print books are exceptionally limited.

The other part is "size." When it comes to my favorite authors, I often want to read their books the day they are released. In the past, this mean sometimes lugging around obscenely large hard-bound books. I read EVERYWHERE. My family and I read during meals - at home or at restaurants, and talk about what we're reading. We sometimes have awesome debates about character motivation, author intent, etc. In many cases, all of us are anxiously awaiting a new book from an author - there's no fighting over who gets the book first. We can all read it, at the same time.

And size also relates to price - I can often end up paying less for my single Kindle edition, which my entire family can read on the same day - than I would be paying for a large hard-bound book (not to mention not having to spend gas/time picking it up or paying for shipping).

And one more benefit - audible books. We have an Audible account, which currently has 33 books in it (we just got the account in November). We listen to those in the car, or while exercising, or while doing housework, etc.

None of which I can get from a bound book.

My family is reading. My family is constantly being exposed to quality writing and fantastic storytelling. My family is able to share our love of these stories with each other, expanding our knowledge - and my kids' vocabulary - at the same time.

How is any of this a bad thing?

1 week ago in reply to Cat Nippy 12 Likes

Like

Subscribe by email RSS

Load more comments

70° HI 77° LO 67° Okay, OK Weather forecast

SEARCH POWERED BY Google

Home | Video | NewsPulse | U.S. | World | Politics | Justice | Entertainment | Tech | Health | Living | Travel | Opinion | iReport | Money | Sports Tools & widgets | RSS | Podcasts | Blogs | CNN mobile | My profile | E-mail alerts | CNN shop | Site map

© 2012 Cable News Network. Turner Broadcasting System, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Terms of service | Privacy guidelines | Ad choices | Advertise with us | About us | Contact us | Work for us | Help

CNN en ESPAÑOL | CNN Chile | CNN Expansion | العربية | 한국어 | 日本語 | Türkçe CNN TV | HLN | Transcripts |