

# e-Books, e-Publishing and libraries in South Australia

On an overcast day in Library and Information Week, e-aficionados and the as-yet-unconverted gathered at the Adelaide Institute of TAFE to hear exactly what this 'e-Book thing' was all about. The event, organised by Acquisitions SA, Information Science SA, and LEARN Network TAFE, allowed discussion about the e-Book and its potential impact on the library industry. More than 100 people attended, including many interested students from South Australian library schools. Particular thanks should be paid to Adelaide Institute of TAFE for their hospitality and support for the day. Opinions remained varied, even after the event, but most attendees now have a better idea of what e-Books involve and their implications for libraries.

First on the agenda was Linda Carmichael (James Bennett), to discuss the steps that the bookseller is taking into the e-Book arena, and the issues that will affect the ready adoption of e-Book technology by booksellers and the libraries that they service. Glenda Rowsell (Blackwell) continued in a similar vein, discussing the pros and cons of e-Books, NetLibrary and the challenges that libraries will face if they were considering e-Books for their collections, for example budget implications, user acceptance, and format.

Len Woodley (Adelaide Library Services) amused the audience with his obvious attachment to his e-Book, as his entertaining presentation discussed the ways in which our culture is being shaped by our technology. The foibles of said technology were brought home to the audience by his misfortune in losing power to the stage. Bookshelf representative Grace Fitzpatrick spoke of innovations in the bookselling process which Bookshelf hopes to become involved in, and also discussed the lack of interest that academia has in e-Books, preferring instead added online features provided with the printed book.

The discussion turned technical as Chris Hosking (e-Info Solutions) presented details about exactly which portable e-Book readers are available in Australia and which sectors of industry would benefit particularly from the technology. Then came playtime, as we had the chance to use a selection of readers, and marvel at the things that they do.

After lunch, Sue Hutley (Toowoomba City Library) via a video conference link, gave us the perspective of a librarian who has actually become involved in lending e-Book readers, and talked about the frustrations and limitations that she has encountered while trying to get her project off the ground. Tim Colvey (EBSCO) talked about the advantages of NetLibrary, the inevitability of e-Books, and their integration into library collections.

The afternoon concluded with a panel featuring Katrina Keith (University of South Australia), Shane Cathcart (PLAIN), Ian Hildebrand (Charles Sturt Library Service) and Julie Dow (consultant) giving their views on the introduction of e-Books in South Australia and issues of access.

The day was filled with interesting information and opportunities to discuss the e-Book situation with the people who really know. The organisers appreciated the support of the speakers. Their input in terms of products and functionalities was extremely relevant. Many issues were raised — but given the wealth of confusing information on this topic, being told in a straightforward manner that nobody really knows from day-to-day what is happening in this area, was really rather reassuring!

Eleanor Thomas

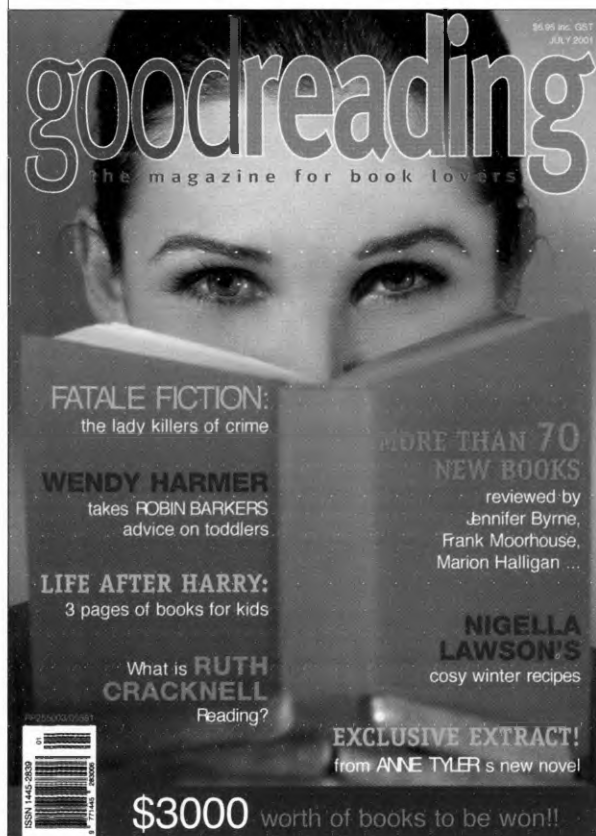
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