

eBooks at Shorelink

Margaret Gaunt, Willoughby Public Library

Live rock music heralded the arrival of e-books at the Shorelink Library Network on the evening of Wednesday 25 May 2005 at Willoughby City Library. A party during Australian Library and Information Week seemed the best way to celebrate the introduction of an exciting new collection of electronic versions of published books to Lane Cove, Manly, Mosman, North Sydney and Willoughby library customers.

A Library Development Grant in 2001 enabled the e-book technology project to develop from providing e-Book readers to having instant access to books, whether the reader is at the library, at home — in fact anywhere, anytime, day or night via the internet! Netlibrary.com provides the facility to read online: the cost of offline software was beyond the budget. Another supplier will soon offer both online and offline facilities for one price, so we anticipate that title downloading will become available. Hand-held devices can be used to read e-books as long as they support Adobe Reader — iPods do not and cannot be used at this stage.

The eBook project is an outstanding example of collaboration between five libraries within the Shorelink Library Network. In itself, this spirit of co-operation in our group has been a positive, happy learning experience leading to closer working relationship. Together the suppliers were assessed, the books selected. Cataloguing, availability, publicity, and

access issues were discussed and agreed upon. The on-going cost of this project is shared by the Shorelink Libraries Network on a subscription basis, depending on the content, features and so forth, which varies from supplier to supplier. Together we will ensure the collection, like every collection, continues to meet the needs of our customers.

Netlibrary.com supplies a large range of non-fiction titles ranging from travel guides, business, philosophy, and over 3000 public-domain literary classics, including Shakespeare, Charles Dickens and more. Negotiations are continuing with suppliers who will provide a wider range of Australian content.

eBook access is free for members of the Shorelink Library Network (after contacting their Shorelink library and creating an online account). Access is on a timed basis and the titles can be issued for a specific period of time as desired, such as 4 days. Access to eBooks requires Acrobat Reader 7 or later version. No fees are involved and eBooks are available with our other on-line databases and services. eBook usage may reflect the belief held by some that the focus of eBooks should be on the provision of factual information and as a useful reference tool. To ascertain usage patterns, on-line feedback from eBook users is encouraged, together with the collection of data of usage of resources. By December 2005, 884 people had registered to use eBooks



and the 268 subscription titles had been accessed 2311 times: a positive start to use of a new resource.

On-going promotion raises public awareness of this new collection. A number of ideas have been put into practice, including advertising the availability of eBooks in our local newspapers, library information brochures and information on our websites. A special publication, using our slogan 'Open your world. Open an eBook', and our 'pull-up' banner are attractive and eye-catching. eBooks are promoted to new members when they join. 'Introduction to eBooks' tutorials have begun. Most branch libraries are planning seminars for HSC students who use the eBooks.

We love our books. Our attachment to them is strong! However, the time is right now to give eBooks a place in our library collections, allowing a new and exciting product a chance to demonstrate its worth. Shorelink Library Network has accepted the challenge. ■

Visual impact in Darwin

Barbara Hickey, project officer, Darwin City Libraries Council

How can you promote community awareness of your library in a relatively inexpensive way, reaching the whole (well almost) population of the city? Television advertising? Yes, good, but it is very expensive and not everyone watches TV. Newspaper ads? Yes, but tomorrow that paper will be wrapped around your potato peelings.

For years Darwin City Council Libraries used a plain white van to courier mail and books around our four branches. We used it to transport props and materials to Shows and Expos, taxi visitors, move furniture, trips to the dump — it has even been called upon to deliver library items to our Housebound Service members. In fact, the nondescript van travelled the length and breadth of Darwin for 4–5 hours every day of the

week without any visual impact whatsoever. What a waste!

During a recent brainstorming session it suddenly became obvious that with a single outlay of around \$1200 our message could be out there for all Darwin to see. When you are sitting behind a large vehicle at the lights it is almost impossible not to read whatever is displayed on the back. If you pass it in traffic, or even walking down the street, a sign-written vehicle catches the eye. Even if you don't take in the small print, the Libraries logo has been subliminally etched into your brain.

We opted for removable acrylic signs as the corporate van is due to be traded in early next year. As you can see from the photos there is no mistaking where our libraries are located, and where you can find us on the web. And, of course, a personalised number plate LIBRARY. ■

