



TECHNICAL TREASURE FOR SYDNEY READERS

Sometimes the treasured items in a library aren't the books. At Hills Shire Library Service in Sydney, eReaders became so popular the library decided to make them available for loan.

The Hills Shire Library Service strives to provide customers with access to innovative technologies. Our mission statement presents a strong vision for the library service of "active, safe and culturally rich people enjoying community life". In keeping with this vision, the rise of eBooks as a popular format was one that simply couldn't be ignored. As eBook awareness in the community grew, customer feedback identified a need to introduce an online eBook and audiobook library across library services in the Sydney Hills.

At first it was unclear how customers would react to eReaders in the library. To gauge interest, five eReaders were displayed at each library along with information about the Digital Download Library. The demand to borrow the eReaders soon grew to such an extent it became apparent that they should be made available for loan. A further ten eReaders were made available for loan as part of kits which included an eReader, simple instructions and information about the Digital Download Library. All 15 went out on loan in the first week and many reserves were placed by eager customers.

Since the introduction of the eReaders demand has been astounding with little promotion needed. To allow for a high turnover rate, there is no option to renew after the seven day loan period.

To further promote the Digital Download Library and assist customers, three digital downloads information sessions were held, proving to be very popular with customers. Feedback from each session was positive with all attendees appreciative of the opportunity to access new formats. One customer was so enthused after a session that she emailed the library to say she had been inspired to purchase her own eReader. Customers have requested more sessions as they appreciate the opportunity to ask one-on-one questions about downloading books. More sessions are being planned to be presented on a regular basis.

Surveys are included in every kit. So far feedback has been mixed. As most customers are using the technology for the first time, some said they needed more practice and had struggled to get the hang of it but appreciated the opportunity to try it out. Most respondents downloaded a book from the Digital Download Library and some have said they were encouraged to buy their own eReader.

As our service is an early adopter there were few models of eReaders available for us to trial but we recommend other libraries is to trial as many models and brands as possible before purchasing eReaders for collections. It will be interesting to see if demand levels remain the same or drop as customers purchase their own models.

Overall, having a proactive approach to eReaders and eBooks as a valid lending format has enabled our customers to access material to which they might not



Erica and Emma Craig with one of the eReaders that are now so popular

previously have had access. In addition, the library is seen to be an innovative and integral part of the community and, by taking this initiative, our staff have had the chance to embrace the format and promote the opportunities it provides.

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