

More than Books

Just last week, the Pew Internet & American Life Project released its new study, “The Rise of e-Reading.” Researchers surveyed 2,986 Americans ages 16 and older between November and December, 2011. As a librarian – and a reader – I was interested in the key findings that appeared in the report summary as reported by the Illinois Library Association:

Twenty-one percent of Americans have read an e-book. The increasing availability of e-content is prompting some to read more than in the past and to prefer buying books to borrowing them.

In a head-to-head competition, people prefer e-books to printed books when they want speedy access and portability, but print wins out when people are reading to children and sharing books with others.

The majority of book readers prefer to buy rather than borrow. A majority of print readers (54%) and readers of e-books (61%) prefer to purchase their own copies of these books. Meanwhile, most audiobook listeners prefer to borrow their audiobooks; just one in three audiobook listeners (32%) prefer to purchase audiobooks they want to listen to, while 61% prefer to borrow them.

Overall, people read for a variety of reasons. Americans cite a range of motives for their reading and it is often the case that people point to multiple reasons for reading. As a rule, technology users, and especially tablet owners and those who own e-book readers, are more likely than non-owners to read for every purpose.

- 80% of Americans age 16 and older say they read at least occasionally for pleasure. Some 36% read for pleasure every day or almost every day.
- 78% say they read at least occasionally to keep up with current events. People read most frequently for this reason: 50% say they do it daily or almost every day.
- 74% say they read at least occasionally in order to do research on specific topics that interest them. Some 24% read for this reason daily or almost every day.
- 56% say they read at least occasionally for work or school. Some 36% read for work or school daily or almost every day.

Takeaways?

First of all, I am impressed by the ready acceptance of and the dramatic increase in ownership of e-readers. It really was, hands down, the 2011 Christmas gift of choice.

Although I am delighted by the percentage of listeners (61%) who prefer to borrow audiobooks rather than purchase them, this is not the case – yet – with e-book readers. When asked about the latest book read in any format, 48% of e-book readers bought the title while 24% borrowed it from someone else, and, coming in third, 14% borrowed the title from a library. Another 13% got it “from another source.”

This is telling me, loud and clear, that libraries, Freeport included, of course, have to do a better job of promoting ourselves as “More than Books” to e-reader aficionados. Books may be a library’s brand, but they’re not our whole brand.

Check out our e-book selection by going to the library website at www.freeportpubliclibrary.org and clicking on the light green icon, “Download audiobooks and eBooks” on the left side of the screen. If you’d like some help getting started borrowing e-content for your electronic device, be it Kindle, Nook, or another e-reader, pick up an instruction booklet at the second-floor information desk, or ask for individual assistance there.

If you are not among the 21% who are already proud owners of an e-reader, you can try out the experience by borrowing either a Nook or a Kindle from the library. Ours come pre-loaded with a sampling of popular titles so you can see what it is like to read a book on an electronic device.

In summary

So, what does the Pew study mean? You may want to read and digest it yourself at <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/2236/ebook-reading-print-books-tablets-ereaders>.

Library Director Carole Dickerson may be reached by phone at 815-233-3000, ext. 216 or by email at cdickerson@freeportpubliclibrary.org.