

eBooks: in our library?

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Do we need eBooks* in our church libraries?

As the sales of eBook readers and tablet computers skyrocket, the sales of eBooks exceed the sales of "print" books. The reading world is changing. Are our church libraries expected to keep up? Maybe it's just a fad. Consider the following:

- Many of your church members already own eBook readers.
- The cost of the technology has dropped radically. The "hot" Christmas items for 2011 are expected to be eBook readers and tablet computers (with eBook reader apps and so much more.) Smartphones (such as iPhones and Androids) also have very good reader apps.
- Many public and school libraries now have eBook check-out.
- Schools are buying tablet computers for their students. Electronic textbooks are becoming available.
- Some publishers are by-passing print books in favor eBooks. This trend is expected to increase.

In addition to the expectations of our church families, let's consider the concerns of our church families as a whole. Many of our churches are struggling with space issues. Recently, one of our largest church libraries had to move to a former racquetball court. More than half of the collection was boxed up and stored for the future. Perhaps adding an eBook ministry to the church library will be a solution to a multitude of problems challenging our church families these days.

What about all the new churches starting through our denominations today and in the future? All of these church starts as well as our smaller existing churches have limited space or shared space with schools, etc. In the past, these churches could not consider having a library because of these barriers. What if these churches had a laptop or a tablet in the lobby near the worship center? The church librarian would be there to assist people in finding eBooks that interest them. The church web site would make the church library available to church members at all times.

So, don't you imagine that our church members are expecting to have eBooks available in their church library soon? I'm pretty sure the answer is YES, and we librarians need to be ready. To get ready, go to the following articles on the [Church Librarians Network](#) for more information—"Are eBooks a Good Value? Part 1 and Part 2" and "How Can we Afford eBook Services?"

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* The term *eBooks* includes not only electronic text but audio books.