

eBooks Update September 2012

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The [last eBook Update](#) described how eBooks work. It also included details about Overdrive's* initial church library contract, a contract offered to a group of churches in Dallas, TX. This was the first time we could see what the eBooks service would actually cost. Our suspicions were confirmed; it was going to be expensive! In fact, after several months of trying, the Dallas group could not meet the start-up requirements. eBook services for church libraries "crashed" before it even "took off."

To the credit of Overdrive and the Dallas churches involved, neither gave up. Negotiations continued. In God's perfect timing, TWO church consortia have now been formed and eBooks are now available to their library users. This Update will focus on what proved to be the **major hurdles** to finally making the eBook commitment.

More than one church library: For the eBooks service to be affordable, most churches will have to be a part of group of churches (a consortium) and share the cost. Encourage as many libraries as possible to join with you in learning, planning and preparing. These libraries will eventually become the members of your consortium. You will work closely with them buying and creating the shared collection of eBooks plus a myriad of other choices.

As you talk to other churches, consider that Overdrive has been insistent on confining consortia to limited geographic areas. Large population centers appear to be a factor. Even after much discussion and begging, they would not permit Fort Worth and Dallas, TX, in the same consortium. Sadly, as the two groups were being established, we discovered that many church libraries were interested, but few would finally commit to participating. It was not for lack of commitment or intense interest. What then made it possible for some and not for others?

The Budget: Some of the libraries had anticipated their need for budget increases and had begun the process a year or more ago. Several had already courted donors who were ready to give to the new ministry. Churches that had not anticipated the service's availability had a more difficult time with meeting the cost requirements in what proved to be a narrow time window. Start resolving this challenge now. Some libraries focused primarily on raising their budgets. That is a "hard sell" when you are asking for 50%, a 100%, a 200% increase. But it is not impossible.

The church's willingness: Prayerfully create a plan to bring your church leadership "on board." Emphasize that the eBooks service is a NEW ministry. (This emphasis was detailed in [eBooks: A Good Value? Part 1](#)). Some librarians were surprised when they discovered that some on the church staff were already active eBook readers. Prayerfully consider how your library staff can demonstrate its commitment to the project. One library agreed to raise half the cost within the library if the church would agree to budget the other half. (For other ideas, see [eBooks: Affordable?](#))

Our two consortia are now in their infancy, but we can grow. As other church libraries overcome their unique challenges, they can be added. Hurdles, yes; impossible no...in God's perfect timing.

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* **What is Overdrive?** The process of checking out copy-protected eBooks (virtually all current titles) is highly technical and will require an eBook service company to do the heavy lifting. Overdrive (overdrive.com) is the company that services most of the nation's public and school libraries. While there are competitors (Ingram, 3M, Ebsco, Recorded Books, etc.) we have chosen to work with Overdrive for the following reasons: 1) Overdrive has the best selection of eBook publishers and titles that are used in church libraries; 2) Overdrive is the only service that supports the Amazon Kindle[®]; and 3) Overdrive has a no-cost patron authentication feature that works with the software commonly used by church libraries. Other services will require an expensive, highly technical add-on.