

eBooks: A Good Value? Part 1

Glenn McEowen

What is the potential *ministry* value of having eBook* services?

While there are practical financial factors to consider, let's look first at the *ministry value*.

What does an eBook ministry look like?

- First and foremost, like our print books, our church libraries will uniquely provide an eBook collection that can be TRUSTED! The theology is sound, the world view matches our church's and entertainment materials have moral choices that are appropriate. In other words our "selection policy" prevails. Our members can read eBooks without concerns. (Try that at your public library!)
- The ministry is private. The eBook ministry has the potential to serve the intimate concerns of our members. A member does not have to face the librarian when checking out titles on addiction, relationship issues and other topics that would be embarrassing. This privacy may be the greatest ministry tool our libraries can offer.
- The ministry is not bound by four walls and church attendance.
 - ✓ Members who travel on business or vacation
 - ✓ Members who are commuters
 - ✓ Members away from home: college students, military, missionaries
 - ✓ Members who cannot visit the library during normal hours, shift and weekend workers
 - ✓ Hospital patients and nursing home residents
- The technology will be of great help to some groups not well served by "print" books.
 - ✓ Font size settings: aging, sight-impaired
 - ✓ Read-aloud features: beginning readers (children), non-English readers or ESL, blind and sight-impaired, aural learners
 - ✓ Physically limited: those who the lighter weight, easier ability to turn pages
- The COOL factor
 - ✓ Appeal to youth and young adults who are not typically involved in the church library. (I think our church's first eBook promotion will be in the YOUTH department...after all, they already have eBook readers on their phones, 'touches, and 'pads.)

Imagine meeting the reading needs of entirely new groups of readers who have never visited the church library. We librarians need to think of eBook services as much more than a simple expansion the library ministry. It is a new ministry serving new people. It deserves new funding as any new ministry should.

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

This article is part of a series on ebooks on the [Church Librarians Network](#).