

Libraries, patrons, & e-books & The rise of e-reading

The Pew Research Center's [Internet & American Life Project](#) has produced a series of reports presenting **new research on library services, trends in reading habits and patron needs in the digital age**. This three-year research program is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and informed by an advisory group, focus groups and surveys of library users, non-users, and librarians.

This brief, prepared by the Gates Foundation, offers information and potential messaging based on this research for you to customize and use in your community. Please feel free to use the information in this report as you see fit.

Report 1: [The rise of e-reading](#) (April 2012)

1. How Americans find and access information is quickly changing as ~~information needs~~ as more and more people are seeking information online through computers and other mobile devices

- Libraries have done tremendous work to innovate and offer technology-related services however, it's imperative that libraries stay in step with—or ahead of—the evolving digital needs of communities.
- E-book reading happens across an array of devices, including smartphones
- Libraries will need to institutionalize technology services including access to the Internet, e-content, e-books, and training on how to use these tools.

Supporting Facts

- 43% of Americans age 16 and older have used an e-book reader, tablet computer, regular computer, or cell phone to read long-form e-content, such as an e-book, magazine, journal, or news article. (page 5)
- Nearly one-fifth (21%) of Americans read an e-book in the past year (page 5). E-book ownership jumped from 10% in December 2011 to 29% in January 2012. (page 6)
- In the past year, e-books were read by Americans on the following devices:
 - Cell phones (29%)
 - Tablets (23%)
 - Computer (42%)
 - E-reader like a Nook or Kindle (41%) (page 5)

2. Readers of e-content spend more time reading and are strong supporters of libraries

- Most e-book borrowers say libraries are very important to them and their families and they are heavy readers in all formats, including books they bought and books lent to them.
- 41% of tablet owners and 35% of e-reading device owners said they are reading more since the advent of e-content. (page 4)
- 42% of readers of e-books said they are reading more now that long-form reading material is available in digital format. (page 4)

Report 2: *Libraries, patrons, and e-books (June 2012)*

1. Shifts in how people find information online are reflected in the ways patrons use libraries today

- Library patrons are increasingly looking to their local library to offer more than traditional services and books. They consider the library as an important source of e-content and the tools to access it.
- Libraries are a gateway to new technologies for many low-income and minority people who do not otherwise have access to these tools.

Supporting Facts

- Only 2% of library users borrowed e-books from their library in the last year, however nearly half (46%) of library users who do not borrow e-books are interested in borrowing an e-reading device so they could do so. (page 6)
- Nearly a third of patrons (32%) that do not currently borrow e-books would like to take a library class on how to borrow and operate an e-reading device. (page 6)
- Half of black and Hispanic respondents expressed interest in learning how to use and borrow e-devices compared to just 25% of white respondents. (page 68)

2. Most Americans are not aware they can borrow e-books from libraries

- There is a tremendous opportunity for libraries to engage with their patrons and start a dialogue about what services, current and new, patrons would like to see.

Supporting Facts

- Over three quarters of the nation's public libraries lend e-books, however 62% of library users do not know whether or not their library already loans e-books. (page 5)
- Some 12% of Americans ages 16 and older who read e-books say they have borrowed an e-book from a library in the past year. (page 5)
- 48% of all owners of e-book reading devices (such as original Kindles and NOOKs) say they do not know if their library lends e-books. (page 64)
- 58% of all library card holders say they do not know if their library provides e-book lending services. (page 5)

3. Enthusiasm for e-lending at libraries is growing however hurdles remain

- Americans that borrow e-books from their library have identified challenges that prevent them from doing so more frequently:
 - Lack of book selection
 - Long waiting periods for books
 - Compatibility issues with their e-reading device
- Americans that do not borrow e-books from their library say they would do so if:
 - Reading devices came pre-loaded with books they wanted to read
 - Libraries offered classes on how download books to e-reading devices and mobile handheld devices
- African-Americans, Hispanics, and those who live in lower-income households are more likely than others to say they would be interested in borrowing pre-loaded e-reading devices and take classes about how to use the devices and download books. These are also communities librarians are eager to reach.

Supporting Facts

- 56% of e-book borrowers from libraries say they have tried to borrow a particular book and found that the library did not carry it. (page 6)
- 52% of e-book borrowers say that they encountered waiting lists to borrow a book. (page 6)
- 18% of e-book borrowers say that they found that an e-book they were interested in was not compatible with the e-reading device they were using. (page 6)
- 46% of those who do not currently borrow e-books from libraries say they would be “very” or “somewhat” likely to borrow an e-reading device that came loaded with a book they wanted to read. (page 6)
- 32% of those who do not currently borrow e-books say they would be “very” or “somewhat” likely to take a course at a library in how to use an e-reader or tablet computer. (page 6)
- 50% of African Americans and 52% of Hispanics would be interested in taking a class at the library on how to download a book to an e-reading device compared to 25% of whites.
- 63% of African Americans and 61% of Hispanics would be likely to borrow an e-book device if it came pre-loaded with the book they wanted to read. This is compared to 40% of whites.