

## **To Kindle or not to Kindle .....**

As IWOC members you are well aware that writing comes before reading. So it is no surprise that writing methods would lead reading methods. So let's take a quick look at the evolution of writing and reading methods.

As far as we can tell writing or drawing started on the walls of caves (the paper of the day) with blackened sticks or something like that. It then progressed to rock tablets and stone chisels to papyrus, parchment or animal hides with some type of ink applying instrument such as a quill or stick. Quills and later ink pens and pencils dominated writing for a while. Then typewriters were invented and rapidly evolved from crude manual machines to the pinnacle of electric typewriters, the IBM Selectric. And finally the PC totally revolutionized writing, allowing revisions and electronic "cutting and pasting" with an ease scarcely imaginable a few short years before the PC arrived.

In parallel with the evolution of writing methods, printing methods also evolved from laborious one-at-a-time book creations, à la the Book of Kells, to the mass production methods made possible by Gutenberg's printing press.

For the most part, these advances in writing methods were welcomed by writers because the increased productivity made writing more profitable. There may be a few holdouts but most writers today use PCs in their craft.

Reading methods followed closely behind the writing and printing methods. And, again for the most part, the advances were welcomed by readers because they made books affordable for all and very portable in the form of paperbacks. Now we are at something of a crossroads with the arrival of devices such as the Kindle, The Sony Reader and the iPad, to name the most well known brands. While writers welcome the electronic methods because they make their lives easier and more profitable, readers view things a little differently.

A book, whether hard covered or paperback, represents something friendly in a very technological world. People like the feel of the book, the smell of a new book (new book smell like new car smell). It doesn't need batteries. It's more pleasant to read than the print on a computer screen. If you get sand in it, it's OK. So there is a reluctance to switch to the Kindle or its ilk. The logic is much the same as a young child's logic for not eating carrots. "I don't like them." He says. "But you've never eaten them." Says his Mom. "I know but I don't like them."

I thought like this child before I got a birthday present of a Kindle (the original). Now I love it. I won't leave home without it on a trip. So, let's look at how a Kindle compares to a conventional book.

To buy a book you must go to a store or buy it on line on Amazon or other online bookstore. So there is a time delay between your urge to buy a new book and when you can actually start reading it. With a Kindle you can visit the KindleStore online or actually use the Kindle itself to scan through the KindleStore stock and within a minute or two you are reading your new book. And at about half the price of a store bought or Amazon hard copy book.

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If you have tried to use your laptop at the beach you know that it's almost impossible to read the screen. With the Kindle's electronic paper screen you can read it in direct sunlight just as you would a print book. Now, if you want to read the Kindle under the covers at night you will need a flashlight. With an iPad you can read in the dark if that's your thing but not very well in direct sunlight at the beach or on your back porch.

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There is an excellent book on the Kindle by Stephen Windwalker entitled, "The Complete User's Guide to the Amazing Amazon Kindle." This book gives detailed instructions on how to read e-mail, access the web and read blogs as well as a boatload of information about using the Kindle to read – about \$5.00 at the KindleStore.

You may have been expecting a comparison of my basic Kindle with the other leading readers such as the iPad and the Sony Reader or even the Kindle DX but since I have not used these devices that would not be fair.

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Tom McCauley

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