



Connection Reflection

Happy Holidays

Each holiday season, the SET Connections organization tries to bring you some reasonably priced, interesting technology tools. We have attempted to do so again this year; however, the scenery has changed. What was hot a year ago isn't even close to being exciting this holiday season! Gone are the days of being thrilled to gift a flash drive or a set of speakers. This year, it seems websites, e-readers and video solutions hit the mark. So, this issues tries to present a few interesting items perfect for your holiday gift giving.



Technology Is An Excellent Tutor

**By: Dr. Henry Thiele
President**

Over the past year I have been diving more into applications that can help kids with learning, especially repeating skills. A few years ago I heard Yong Zhao (<http://zhaolearning.com/>) speak where he referenced the idea of letting computers do what they do best - repeatable skills. As a person who does not perform repeating tasks very effectively Zhao's statement really hit home. As I have gone on in education in the classroom, as an administrator, and as a parent, I have tried to hand things over to technology that technology does best. In past



Dr. Henry Thiele

articles I have talked about some of these areas such as task management.

When we turn simple tasks over to computers it frees us up to take on more complex issues like solving problems, interacting with people, or trying to figure out what to cook for dinner.

One of my favorite tools in this crusade has been the website IXL (<http://www.ixl.com/>) and it is my recommendation for an educational gift to hand off to a K-8 student this year. I use it at home as "RTI" for areas in math where my kids get stuck. IXL incorporates

dynamic targeted math problems that are leveled and math skill based. A student can hop right into a problem area and "scrub up, rinse and repeat" until they start to understand the area. As a parent I can keep tabs on their progress and their work or through detailed reports that are emailed to me. At \$79/year for a single student (or give it to your favorite teacher for all of their students at \$199) it has earned back the investment many times over.

I have also been finding lots of great free and paid iPad and iPod apps to help out on skills through <http://www.iear.org/>. I can usually convince the kids to "play" a

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Special Dates of Interest

November 30
SET Connections
Winter Workshop
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April 16
SET Connections
Spring
Conference

Both will be held at
Maine South High
School, Park Ridge, IL

E-Book Readers—How Do You Decide?



Judy Okazaki

By: Judy Okazaki
Executive Director

Three years ago we evaluated e-Readers. By then the Amazon Kindle had been out for a year.

The Sony e-Reader had been around a while longer, the Barnes and Noble Nook did not yet exist, and there were several devices available from other manufacturers. E-readers were still kind of a novelty with potential; but three years later, as is the case in the world of technology, things have changed.

Not For Me . . .

First, to address those of you who are thinking "Not for me! I want a traditional book that I can hold in my hand." Please, note you don't have to give up your physical books. You can have both, with lots of benefits. An e-Reader is great for reading outside in the sunlight and for handling multiple magazines, news periodicals, .pdfs and books that you want or need to read. If you are going out of town how light in weight and easy it is to take several books all in the e-Reader; and you don't have to make a decision as to how many or which books or magazines to pack. Whatever you feel like reading you will have with you. If you are reading material that requires note taking or if there are characters or passages that you want to search out from previously read parts of a book, eBooks can accommodate you. If you are reading material where you find yourself accessing the dictionary frequently, a dictionary built into the e-Reader can be useful. E-readers also have text to speech capabilities.

Which is Best ?

The number one e-reader, hands down

today, is the Amazon Kindle Touch with ads for \$99 and without ads for \$139. Features include the ability to change font size and style, display page numbers, access a dictionary, look up information in Wikipedia, capability to bookmark and annotate, and to organize a personal library. If you want those along with color, the opportunity to listen to music, watch movies, surf the web and access some apps, then the \$200 Kindle Fire (release date November 15, 2011) is the answer. The biggest difference between the two is the screen display. The Fire does not have the E Ink which makes it easy to read outside and for longer periods of time because it uses the type of display technology that readers use.



Previously, Amazon in its Kindle offerings had great software with lots of features. However, there were three limitations in comparison with the other leading e-Readers. You could not borrow library books because the standard format used for library e-Books is epub and Amazon did not support that format. Second, you could not share books. Third, turned pages did not display as fast on the Kindles. These problems have been rectified. Library books are now available on the Kindle in a format acceptable to the device. (If you purchase books from stores other than Amazon there are free converter programs such as Kindle Maker and Calibre.) The e-Books can be loaned for a



fourteen-day period. The recipient does not have to own a Kindle device, but does need to use the free Kindle software available to download on any device. Pages now display quickly.

But these two devices might not be right for everyone. Let's look at what the other devices have to offer that might make them a better choice for you.

If money is an issue, Amazon also provides the least expensive device with great software—a \$79 Kindle is available with advertising; and for only \$109, you can get the device without advertising. You still get great software and a crystal clear screen. It does not, however, include the "X-Ray" feature which allows you to search for all passages within a book that mention a given idea, character, place or topic that you might want to reference. If you want to be able to download books anywhere anytime then the Kindle Touch with free G3 is the answer (\$149 with ads and \$189 without.)

The Kobo eVox e-Reader is a color pad device similar to the Kindle Fire and also sells for \$199 (released October 28, 2011.) It provides access to the full selections of Google Android apps.

Barnes and Noble offers its Color Nook for \$249 and grey scale e-Reader Nook for \$139. If you prefer Barnes and Noble book selection then one of these devices might be worth the extra cost to you. *(Barnes and Noble's book store contains two million books compared to the Amazon store with one million books available and Google's e-Book collection which now boasts 3 million).*



Just a note about the Sony e-reader, it sells for \$150. For the higher price you don't get all the features available on the Kindle or the Nook.

The iPad can also serve as a reader; but, as with other tablet devices the screens do not use the E-Ink display technology

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Flip Alternative

By: Jim Gubbins
Board of Directors

When it was announced that production of the Flip video camera would soon cease, I immediately started looking for cost effective alternatives. One of the most promising is the ION Twin Video Camera. This lightweight handheld video camera allows you to capture up to 4 hours of high-quality 640 x 480 MP4 video onto a SD card with a single battery charge. It has a threaded slot at the base for attaching to any stabilizing equipment you choose. The feature that makes this device unique is the ability to switch between front and rear cameras with the click of a button while continuously recording! This aspect makes it great for narrating events or



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Worthwhile E-Reader Links

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which makes reading stress free for the eyes. Also, the iPad reader software is not very sophisticated. However, if you already have an iPad or are planning on purchasing one you can choose from an assortment of "apps" for readers to download including the Kindle app/software.

More About eReaders . . . Links Worth Checking Out

- Which Kindle is right for me? http://www.amazon.com/gp/help/customer/display.html/ref=hp_navbox_kspot_kinfo?nodeId=200763130
- Overdrive - the premier digital distributor of eBooks <http://search.overdrive.com/>
- Choosing an eBook Reader - http://wiki.mobilerread.com/wiki/Choosing_An_Ebook_Reader
- cNet -Which eBook Reader should you buy? http://reviews.cnet.com/8301-33198_7-20009738-286/kindle-vs-nook-vs-ipad-which-e-book-reader-should-you-buy/?tag=txt;title
- Comparing eReaders - Chart <http://www.the-ebook-reader.com/ebook-reader-comparison.html>
- Comparing eReaders - Chart <http://paidcontent.org/table/comparing-e-readers-september-2011>
- All about eBooks - <http://www.the-ebook-reader.com>
20 Sites with links to access free eBooks sites - <http://www.hongkiat.com/blog/20-best-websites-to-download-free-e-books/>

Tweet Your Way to Professional Development

By: James Gubbins,
Board of Directors

Have you taken the plunge and started using Twitter to enhance your Professional Development? Do find yourself even more perplexed by some of the unique language and special syntax? Hopefully, this mini-glossary will clear any confusion.



James Gubbins
Board of Directors

@ Symbol

The @ symbol when attached to a username is used to reply or provide attribution to a user:

@JMGubbins I agree

Direct Message (D or DM)

D or DM represents a Direct Message and when placed before a username makes it possible to send a private message that only the sender and receiver see:

DM JMGubbins I agree

ReTweet

RT is used to ReTweet a message you like and share it with your followers:

RT @JMGubbins I agree

Hashtag (#)

The # symbol is probably the most powerful tool in Twitter. It can be included in a message to organize and collaborate Twitter discussions:

@JMGubbins I agree #edchat

Hashtag conversations are occurring everyday concerning all levels of education and technology. A glance at Jerry "@cybraryman1" Blumengarten's website: <http://www.cybraryman.com/chats.html> will help you find when the conversations you are most interested in will take place.

Now that you know what a hashtag means, be sure to get some experience using #spedchat during the Special Education chats occurring every Tuesday evening at 7 CDT!

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@SETConnections
on Twitter!*

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Connecting
Special Education and
Technology

Join Us

Log on to our website at
www.SETConnections.org
OR

Email us at
info@SETConnections.org
for information

SET Connections Winter Workshop

Wednesday, November 30, 2011
5 to 7 p.m.

Maine South High School

Registration Fee: \$20
(Includes a light dinner, 2 CPDUs and
membership to SET Connections)

Program

Putting Free Google Apps to Work for Special Education
Dr. Henry Thiele

Create Valuable Videos—Get Started with
iMovie and Your iDevices
Cheryl Rodgers

A Guide to eBook Readers
Judy Okazaki

Register by noon on November 30, 2011, to guarantee your
space and dinner reservation ([Click Here](#))

More information available
on the SET Connections website
(www.SETConnections.org)

Try an E-Tutor

(Continued from page 1)

game or two on apps that are directly related to skills they are working on at school. I know there are a lot of people that think that technology is only a distraction to kids, but an iPod loaded with some excellent apps serves as a great tutor that never tires out. Keep an eye out for a refurbished iOS device through Apple's online store (<http://store.apple.com/us/browse/home/specialdeals/ipod>) where you can get a



device that is like new for a great price.

Nothing beats a 1:1 tutor, and there are times in the classroom or at home where a piece of technology, used appropriately, can fill that role. When one student is engaged in skill and practice through the e-tutor, your attention can be directed to a more complex student issue (or dinner). Put the technology to work for you so you can work where your people skills are needed!

ION Video Cam

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conducting interviews. Personally, I will be using mine next year to maintain a weekly vlog! While it lacks the flip out USB component for connecting to a computer, attaching the ION camera to MAC or PC through a USB cable or by popping the SD card into a reader makes offloading files a breeze. And, for less than \$50 at some retailers it is a must add gadget to include among your collection this holiday season. You can read more about it on the ION website at <http://www.ionaudio.com/products/details/twin-video>