



Using e-Books and e-Readers for Adult Learning: With a Focus on Adult Literacy

Gay, Sandie; and Richardson, Tina
International Specialized Book Services, 2013

Book Review

Tags: adult learning | e-books | e-readers | technology and teaching

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The role of e-books in higher education continues to evolve. E-book sales rise steadily, as publishers and libraries explore the use of e-books in academia. Students and faculty, however, are often reluctant to embrace e-books for academic purposes. College and seminary educators seeking to discern the value of e-books and their role in higher education need guidance and insight. Unfortunately, *Using e-Books and e-Readers for Adult Learning* does not contribute significantly to that discussion.

Written by an e-learning specialist and an educational program manager at Staffordshire University, the book articulates its purpose clearly: “to provide a guide on what different e-reading devices and e-books can offer the learner for the advancement of their learning, and to outline some of the issues and challenges that come with using them in the adult classroom” (1). These issues, however, are overshadowed by a considerable amount of how-to material that detracts from the more substantive discussion.

The first three chapters address various aspects of e-book technology (for example, e-readers, digital rights management, and accessibility issues). Such introduction to the broad e-book landscape could prove useful, but these pages are dominated by tables, screen-shots, and technical minutiae (like screen orientation and battery life). Where the authors provide tips for classroom integration, these are subordinate to technical details. Anyone already familiar with e-books is likely to skim past this elementary material and overlook the tips. The next two chapters consider research on e-books in teaching, summarizing published studies and the authors’ own action research. This material is interesting, but would benefit from more synthesis and analysis of findings across the studies. The final chapters and conclusion discuss

implementing e-book programs, offer tips for classroom use, and look toward the future of e-books in teaching and learning. (While directed toward adult literacy and diverse learning needs, some of these insights might transfer well to teaching theology and religion.) These chapters address the work's stated goals and broach interesting theoretical considerations, but unfortunately this is the slimmest section of the book. The volume concludes with a glossary, web-resources, and an appendix detailing software and hardware aspects of different e-readers. Sadly, as is often the case when discussing technology, the material is already obsolete.

Gay and Richardson are clearly knowledgeable regarding the value of e-books for adult literacy, but *Using e-Books and e-Readers for Adult Learning* is dominated by elementary technical matters. The book would benefit from attention to the substantive issues, by offering a thorough synthesis of research, spending more time discussing how e-books can serve different learners, and relegating technical how-to information to appendices. This does not mean the work should be awash in educational theory, but more attention to "so what?" questions would have been welcome. To some degree, the title suggests what the content does not deliver. This work serves as a detailed introduction to e-books for adult literacy teachers and programs, but its elementary character dilutes its value and restricts its potential for other settings.

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