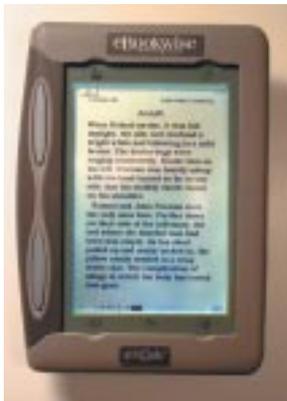


tools of the trade

Reading, Presenting, Scrolling, and Dubbing

The eBookwise 1150 is an electronic book reader that's about the size of a large paperback (5 × 7.5 × 1.5 in.). The screen is a brightly back-lit 5 1/2-in. diagonal LCD touch



eBookwise 1150 Reader

screen with half-VGA resolution. The back of the reader is sculpted to fit right- or left-handed readers (you can reverse the screen and buttons to switch hands), and the unit weighs 18 ounces. The onboard 8MB memory will hold more than a dozen books, and you can

add a SmartMedia memory card for up to 128MB additional space—several hundred books will fit on a card that size. The battery life provides up to 15 hours before recharging, depending on how you have adjusted the brightness and contrast of the screen. You download books through a USB connection to your computer, or you can plug into a standard (analog) phone line and use the built-in modem to connect to the bookstore. (See Tech Forum on the next page for a description of managing your bookshelf.) The 1150 eBook reads Rocketbook formatted books (.rb) as well as plain text (.txt), rich text (.rtf), MS Word (.doc), and HTML (.htm or .html) files. You can bookmark pages, write notes, highlight text, adjust text size, and search for words. The 1150 remembers what page you were on when you shut down or go to another book. There's

more information about the reader and the eBookwise/fictionwise bookstores at www.ebookwise.com.

The RemotePoint® Presenter from Interlink Electronics is a wireless control for PowerPoint slide presentations, Internet site navigation, and cursor control for Web-meeting software or boardroom spreadsheets. The polished metal case has icon-studded keys, integrated joystick, and 32 MB of onboard memory for presentation storage. An integrated ClickTrigger® provides 360-degree mouse controls for navigation. The RemotePoint Presenter can be used up to 100 feet away with RF wireless transmissions. The 32MB memory is integrated into its RF receiver and can be used to save your presentation. You insert the USB receiver and save or run your presentation directly from the onboard memory. The Presenter is a USB



RemotePoint Presenter

input device designed for Windows XP, 2000, 98, and ME systems. You don't need software drivers—just plug in the USB receiver, and install the batteries.

www.rppresenter.com

Logitech's MX™1000 Laser Cordless Mouse is one of the most accurate tracking devices available. It has 20 times more sensitivity to surface detail than conventional optical devices. The cordless mouse recharges on its base station while not in use, and there's an illuminated four-level battery indicator that shows battery strength. The device is



Logitech Laser Cordless Mouse

The e-Book—An Update ◆ Michael Castelluccio, Editor

■ The first e-book I remember using was something called the Glassbook Reader. It was software from Adobe, and it displayed text in a one- or two-page image that looked just like the page(s) of a print book. The problem was the “book” sat on your desk inside a monitor or on your laptop. One suggestion to create a virtual book experience was to rotate the image on the screen and hold the laptop as you would a large open book—keyboard on the left-facing page, text on the right-facing page (screen). Not too comfortable—sort of a six- or seven-pound hardbound plastic book digging into your lap. But that was more than five years ago.

The Right Device

Once e-books escaped the desktop computer, the race—or rather, the trek—was on. The promise of a revolution in content delivery soon settled in as something more like an evolution. Progress and growth have been slow, but there has been a gathering momentum.

There’s an audience for e-books, but the first devices ranged from expensive to way too expensive (\$250 to \$800), and that didn’t help. Today the record is mixed. You can download e-book reader programs for virtually any computer, PDA, and many cell phones, and many of these

readers are free. You can also purchase a dedicated device like the eBookwise reincarnation of the Rocket Book (see review in Tools) for not much over \$100. Or you can still spend \$700+ for the Cybook, which has a built-in browser and a larger 8 X 10 format. The most interesting new device is the Sony Librie, which uses an advanced e-ink technology that creates an almost paper-like reflective fidelity. The Librie hasn’t arrived in the West yet, and it does have issues with Sony’s plan for locking down copyrighted content on the device. There’s also a Toshiba e-book reader that uses the same digital paper, but it’s not yet available here either. And then there’s the elegant hiebook reader from Korea (see photo, next page), which seems to be on the same path as the disappearing snow leopard.

Despite the continuing search for the ideal reader, e-book sales continue to climb. According to the trade organization Open eBook Forum, in the first three quarters of 2004 there was a 14% increase in sales and a 20% increase in revenues (\$9.4 million) compared to the same period in 2003. The cost of e-books has come down, and there’s a wider diversity of titles, including best sellers. In fact, the top-selling e-books for 2004 have Dan Brown in the top three places with *continued on next page*

sculpted to fit your hand (it’s fashioned for right-handed users), and it has a scrolling system that features a tilting wheel for side-to-side scrolling, a rocker for speed control up and down, and a zoom activated by a click of the wheel. A thumb button controls universal page forward and back, and there’s a switch to move between open windows. The MX 1000 is for PC or Mac. For a demo, go to Logitech’s website at www.logitech.com.

JVC has released a new DVD recorder line that includes hard drive and VHS combo models. There are four models including a multi-format recorder and three combination units—a DVD/hard disc recorder, a DVD/VHS recorder, and a three-in-one combo offering VHS, hard disc, and DVD recording in a single unit. The DR-MV1S pictured here has one-touch, dual-direction dubbing between the DVD and VHS sections for

archiving and editing. It has two tuners that allow DVD and VHS recording to be performed separately, and even simultaneously, from different TV channels. The DVD recording formats include DVD-RAM/RW (VR and Video format)/R, and playback formats include

DVD Video, DVD-RAM/RW/R, CD Audio, VCD, CD-R/RW, MP3, JPEG Digital Still Playback (CD-R/RW), VHS, and SQPB. All the units in the line offer dubbing between their built-in decks. Information on all four recorders is at www.jvc.com.



JVC DVD/hard drive/VHS combo

continued from p. 55

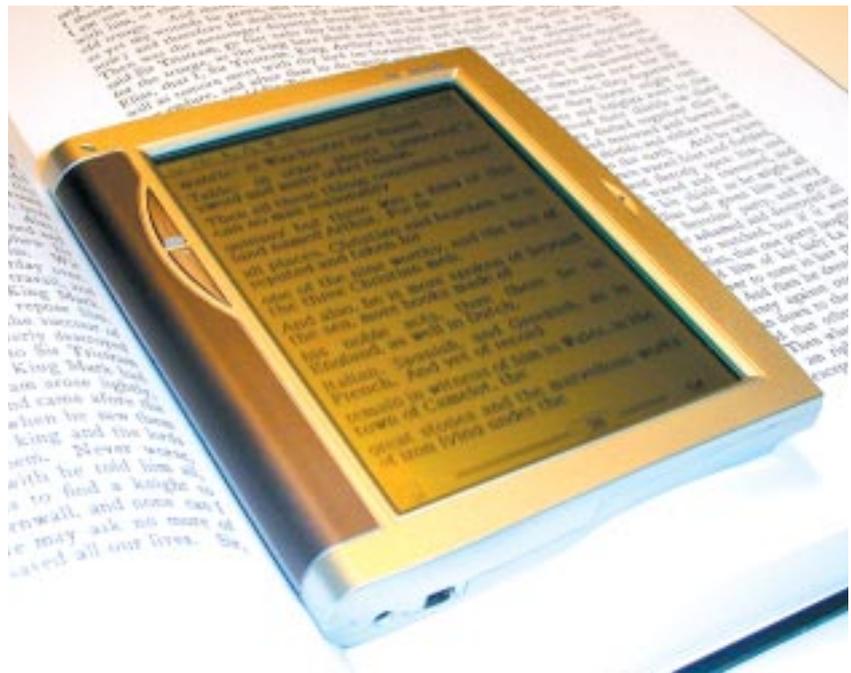
The Da Vinci Code, Angels and Demons, and Deception Point.

But why would anyone want to trade paper for plastic? Here the reasons remain unchanged from when e-books were first introduced. You can literally carry around hundreds of books, periodicals, and reports on a single pocketable device. You can bookmark pages, highlight, scribble notes, and even do word searches on many of the readers—even the free ones. Some embedded e-book dictionaries let you look up definitions just by highlighting the word on a page you're reading. On the more sophisticated e-readers, you can do things like change the color of ink and the paper and set up an automatic scroll so you're not even turning pages. And there are other intangibles, too, such as being able to download a new book that has caught your eye in a matter of minutes with no delivery charge.

Systems and Readers

The electronic publishers have poured a load of sand in their own gearboxes.

Just as with some other digital platforms, e-books come in a variety of incompatible formats—some play on some devices, others don't. Consequently, there are a number of different readers, and you have to watch when you shop in an e-bookstore that you're downloading the right format version for your reader. There's MobiPocket, eReader, MS Reader, Rocket books, iSilo, Plucker, and others as well as .htm, PDF, text, and .doc file formats. A good place to start, if you'd like to try one of the more popular formats, is at www.mobipocket.com. There's a Mobipocket reader for Palm, Pocket PC, and Symbian phones. There's a



Sir Thomas Malory's *King Arthur* on paper and plastic

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With Google and a number of universities and public libraries beginning massive drives to scan and produce electronic versions of their catalogs, the future for e-books looks bright. Now if someone would only decide to market a reasonably priced device using that new digital paper, with the variety of offerings continuing to expand, the evolution might crank back up to the more respectable speed of a revolution. ■