



## eBooks issue – May 2013

- [eBooks](#)
- [eReaders](#)
- [eBook libraries](#)
- [Create your own](#)
- [eBooks in Māori](#)

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 From the  
editor


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This newsletter investigates some options for access to eBooks. Many of us who love to read like the look and feel of physical books and complain that onscreen reading is harder. It is also true that younger, so called 'digital natives' read onscreen more than older readers but I still see teens with books (especially when they are reading for leisure).

For some people however, physical books are inaccessible. Books can be too heavy for some hold, page turning can be difficult and standard font sizes are inaccessible. For others reading is difficult because they lack literacy skills or have a specific reading difficulty such as dyslexia.

eBooks provide options that can make books more accessible.

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## Farewell to Mel Holland

I would like to take this opportunity to farewell Mel Holland who is leaving us. Mel has supported many of you to provide assistive technology services and her knowledge and enthusiasm will be missed.

Her position is advertised here until Thursday 31 May 2013: [position details](#)

## eBooks



Mel Holland  
Technology Advisor  
Assistive Technology

An eBook (also called a digital book, e-book, ebook or electronic books) is a book which is specially designed to be read on a computer or device screen. eBooks can be read on dedicated eBook readers, tablets using e-reader applications, personal computers and smart phones.

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## Benefits of eBooks

- Virtual library is open 24/7 and accessible from any location
- Some eBooks can be read aloud (though this depends on the eBook format and the software and hardware on the device)
- Pages can be turned with a single touch or swipe and there is no risk of tearing pages
- Students with low vision can increase font size, have text read aloud and change formatting options
- Students who are blind can have text output in Braille (using additional assistive technology)
- Other literacy support options are often available (word definitions, highlighting, bookmarking, etc.)
- Sync between devices allows the user to read on different devices (e.g. laptop, phone, iPad all synced with the page you are up to and book marks etc).

## Read aloud

It has become evident with this research that many books available at no cost on the internet are not read aloud. Many are in image format which is normally not able to be read aloud.

Students with vision difficulties usually have specialised software that reads not only the text but also allows on-screen navigation. In this newsletter we consider only text to speech for literacy support rather than screen reading for vision impairments.

Lack of text to speech can sometimes be overcome by using options available on the device or by using additional software that reads text aloud.

Mac computers have an inbuilt text to speech capability (see systems preferences – speech). The iPad can speak text using the ‘speak selection’ option and some web browsers have inbuilt text to speech (such as Chrome speak on Google chrome).

Balabolka is a free text-to-speech program which can be used for Windows computers. Balabolka can read files from a wide variety of formats including AZW and AZW3 (Amazon eBook formats), ePub (commonly used for eBooks), HTML (web text) and .pdf (Adobe) but only those that are unlocked copyright free versions. Any computer voices which are already installed on your system will be available. The onscreen text can also be saved as .WAV, .MP3, MP4 or other file types. This makes the text ‘rewindable’ as the student can listen as many times as required.

Often a .pdf file will allow for ‘read aloud’. To access this mode, open the Adobe Reader software, click on View → Read Mode (control H). Then click on View again → Read Out Loud → Activate Read Outloud (shift, control v). You can select what to read (read the page or to the end of the document etc.).

## Accessing eBooks

There are two very distinct parts to reading books on a device:

- the reader device or software/app that provides the reading environment
- sourcing the books to read

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## What is an eReader?

If you have a netbook, laptop or PC you already have the equivalent of an eReader. Knowing how to set the equipment up, where you can download digital books from, and how to make the most of digital books can be a challenge. This will be the focus of the rest of this newsletter. eBook readers or eReaders are portable electronic devices designed primarily for reading digital books.

Dedicated eBook readers (eg. Kindle, Kobo, etc.) have some advantages in that they are relatively inexpensive to buy, extremely lightweight, have long-battery life, can store many books, and the e-ink screens look very similar to traditionally printed books.

The key limitation of eReaders is that reading books is mostly all the device can do. Other devices such as iPads and laptops have multiple functions and can act as eBook readers as well (though they are also more expensive to buy).

Tablets are light weight and portable, and have reasonably long lasting battery life so are more comparable with dedicated eReaders than traditional laptop computers. They generally have a larger screen size compared to dedicated eReaders which can be a distinct advantage when font size needs to be increased. They are also backlit making it easier to read in low light.

There are many different ebook readers available for download. We have selected only a few to compare in the following table .

It would be best to carefully consider student requirements to select the most appropriate reader.

Table 1 – eBook Readers

	<b>Amazon (kindle)</b>	<b>Adobe digital edition</b>	<b>iBooks app</b>
Website	<a href="http://www.amazon.com">http://www.amazon.com</a>	<a href="http://www.adobe.com">http://www.adobe.com</a>	iBooks
Type	Download reader on any device or use dedicated reader	Online & download	Download app
Platform	All	Windows and Mac	iPad only
Format	Kindle format	ePub and PDF/a	ePub
Personal Library	Yes – stored locally and online	Yes – stored locally	Yes – stored locally and online
Change font	Yes (book dependent)	No	Yes
Change font size	Yes	Yes	Yes
Other	<p>Can add Whispersync for Voice – use this for downloading both physical book as well as audio book formats so that you can listen, or read, and keep in sync.</p> <p>The latest Kindle operating system update now accessible includes Voiceover screen reader</p>	<p>Designed for use with assistive technology – especially screen readers (JAWS and NVDE and Voice Over).</p> <p>Has text to speech inbuilt but not screen reading.</p> <p>Some books available in the sample library. Source books and upload to the bookshelf by using Control + Shift+ O.</p>	<p>Designed specifically for iOS. Books can be read-aloud (turn speak selection on) and VoiceOver screen readerscreen reading</p> <p>Books can be added from multiple sources (not just iBookstore).</p> <p>Books in PDF format can also be opened in iBooks (stored as a separate collection).</p> <p>Dictionary definitions, literacy support and speech. .pdf's and ePub's can be read aloud.</p>

## eBook libraries

A personal library is an individually chosen group of eBooks which can be saved, and linked to either an account or a device. This enables a reader to have eBooks available at all times, for instance on their iPad, on their laptop and potentially in the cloud, allowing readers to switch reading devices as conditions dictate.

For more book sources try:

1. The Royal NZ Foundation of the Blind (RNZFB) have an e-book list which anyone is welcome to join:
  - email to: [ebooks-a11y-request@freelists.org](mailto:ebooks-a11y-request@freelists.org) with 'subscribe' in the subject field
  - subscribe online <http://www.freelists.org/list/ebooks-a11y>
2. List of 200 sites that offer free eBooks for children:
  - <http://www.techsupportalert.com>
3. List of sites that offer free children's books (including younger students/early readers):
  - <http://www.e-book.com.au>

Table 2 – eBook libraries

Note – although there are too many places to download books to mention here, we have focused on free books, or sites with a good number of free books as a starting point.

	Local Library	Ebook junkie	Childrens Library	Many Books	Amazon	iBooks <sup>1</sup>	ePubbud
	Contact locally	<a href="http://ebookjunkie.com/childrens-books">http://ebookjunkie.com/childrens-books</a>	<a href="http://www.childrenslibrary.org/icdl">www.childrenslibrary.org/icdl</a>	<a href="http://manybooks.net/categories/CHI">http://manybooks.net/categories/CHI</a>	<a href="http://www.amazon.com">http://www.amazon.com</a>	iBooks - store	<a href="http://www.epubbud.com">www.epubbud.com</a>
Online or Download	Contact your local library	Online, but can be downloaded (Install Adobe Reader)	Online	Download only	Download	Download Can open any .epub or .pdf.	Both - ePub readers for download
Format	Overdrive	PDF	TIFF image format only	Select – all available	Own format	ePub or PDF	ePub
PC, Mac or Tablet	Various	All	All	All	All	iOS devices	All browsers
Cost	Free	Free (some paid books are available)	Free	Free	Free books available (+enormous range of paid books)	Free books available (+enormous range of paid books)	Free books (+enormous range of paid books)
Range of books	Large and growing	Good	Reasonable Good multi-cultural selection.	Public domain Limited for early readers.	Excellent	Good	Good Mostly children and youth books.
Personal library	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes – downloaded	Yes – downloaded	No
Font size	Yes	Ctl + and -	Ctl + and -	No	Yes	Yes	Ctl + and -
Font colour	White, sepia & night options	Black only	Black only	Black only	Black only	White, sepia & night options	Black only
Font style	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
Bookmarks	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Markup/Notes	No	Can add comments	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

<sup>1</sup> If downloading eBooks to an iPad the operating system often enables many more text options.

## Create your own books

Creating accurate, authentic books for students or by students should not be forgotten as these books can be completely personalised. There are limited books available in Te Reo or the Pacific languages so the option to make your own is very valuable.

PowerPoint books, using Microsoft PowerPoint, are personalised books with (or without) narration which can be easily and quickly created. These books were covered in [CAT Popular Article – PowerPoint Books and Tips](#),

There are many book creation apps on the iPad. Two that we often used are BookCreator and Story Creator.

BookCreator App can be used to create personalised books with text, images, multimedia, and/or video. Once made, these books can be saved to the iBooks bookshelf, saved as PDF (useful to share on other devices/non iPads, or emailed).

Story Creator is a free iPad App to create books with text, images and narration. These stories can also highlight text when read aloud.

## Switch Access

Many eBooks can be accessed with switches. Any program that uses the enter key or mouse click to turn pages can be accessed by switches (including PowerPoint and Tar Heel Readers (<http://tarheelreader.org/>)).

iBooks can be accessed using switches. For more information see <http://www.janefarrall.com/blog>.

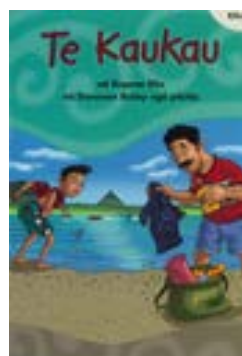
As always, we have tried to represent all products fairly. If you have any [further queries or information](#) about products or ideas in this newsletter we would appreciate your feedback.

To unsubscribe to the newsletter [email us](#) with UNSUBSCRIBE in the subject line.

**Lynne Silcock & Mel Holland**

## Māori eBooks

Free online books



<http://eng.mataurangamaori.tki.org.nz>

Links to online versions of multimedia resources and eBooks found in the boxed sets of Te Huinga Raukura. Each series of eBooks has audio for students to follow. You can also download teacher support materials and student activities as PDFs. The books and levels are relevant to the Ngā Kete Kōrero series.

## Milly Molly Māori (free) iPad App



These 30 free books with narration and text in te reo Māori.

These books relate the adventures of two girls from different ethnic backgrounds with their multi-cultural friends. The books have been written to promote the acceptance of diversity, values and the learning of life skills. Swipe the text to have the page read aloud. Touch a word to hear individual words spoke aloud and spelt out. Use the narration function to read and record the story so that the student is the narrator.