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## Some notes on e-books

by [Charlene Barina](#) - Sunday, 26 March 2006, 06:02 AM

As a student, I wanted to share a bit about my perspective on e-books as well as some upcoming technology that may help expand e-book usage. (These comments refer particularly to the Q&A at the end of the keynote)

I am currently caught in a vicious cycle of textbooks, even as a grad student. Publishers seem to push out new "editions" of textbooks as often as possible. This results in students having to buy the latest edition, coincidentally only available new, as opposed to older used editions. With undergrad and sciences textbooks, these prices are often very different - as much as \$70 difference in a single book.

How does this relate to e-books? I live off my laptop now, and I really, \*really\* wish more textbooks were available electronically, particularly in pdf format. Someone mentioned that you can't highlight an electronic book, which isn't the case for me. Adobe acrobat does just that. If it's an image scan, it will try to do OCR on the page beforehand so that you can highlight even those types of pdfs. And you can set the highlight settings such that you can print out only the highlighted items - very useful when you're writing a research paper and just want the nuggets of importance on a single page.

If you want more control over writing on your page, you can use software such as [PDF Annotator](#). I don't use it much, but I know others who swear by it. I also use a Tablet PC (there were a couple at the session), which means I can sort of fold up my laptop and hold the screen at any viewing angle. If I had to read e-books or pdf's on a screen that I couldn't hold in my lap or move around or highlight, I definitely wouldn't want to use it, either.

For people who are interested in purely reading a book, there are a few products coming out that are grayscale and specially designed to produce text that's supposed to be as sharp as actual print. This one is coincidentally called the [iLiad](#) and the other one is by Sony called, unoriginally, [Reader](#).

How's all that for fungible? 😊

There are a fairly active subgroup of students and other people who are trying their hardest to get e-books, especially e-textbooks, off the ground. They have discussions about the best way to scan in books, book scanners, cutting off bindings and all sorts of other things here at [this forum](#).

Finally, here's a homemade [fully automatic book scanner made from lego parts](#) and using a pencil eraser to turn the pages.

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