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## My First eBook

Angi Herald Faiks

*MINITEX, University of Minnesota*

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# My First eBook

by **Angi Herold Faiks** (Electronic Resources Librarian, MINITEX, University of Minnesota, 15 Andersen Library, 222 21st Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55455-0439; Direct Line: 612-624-2925; Office: 612-624-4002; Toll Free: 800-462-5348; Fax: 612-624-4508) <http://www.minitex.umn> <http://www.minitex.umn.edu/>

I did it. I read my first eBook cover-to-cover. No, I was not forced. Well, not really.

It all started on a camping trip to the tranquil **Lake Superior** shores of **Canada**. This was one of those trips that along the way we discovered that we forgot our pots and pans, our can opener, Canadian money, oh, and my book. One of the best parts of camping for me is getting cozy in the tent and reading a book that I have not had a chance to crack open for way too long. I burrowed into my sleeping bag, clicked on the lamp, reached into my backpack, and found the books-on-tape that I had brought for the car and an old, half-read *New Yorker*. The new hardcover novel I was ready to curl up with for the weekend was at home 400 miles away. I couldn't believe it. After throwing a small fit, making my husband read aloud one random paragraph from his relished book, I gave up any hope for a good read, turned off the light and went to bed.

Then, morning came. Off my husband went to birdwatch, leaving me to face my backpack. I reached in and grabbed my *New Yorker*. I had about 3 unread articles left. You know, the ones in the back you only read every few issues since by the time you get to them a new issue has arrived and you are on to that already. The ones like an article on **Donald Rumsfeld**, an article I had not yet finished. I gave it my best shot, but just could not do it. The Secretary of Defense was not who I wanted to spend my cozy Saturday morning with.

Then I remembered that I had recently downloaded my first eBook to my personal digital assistant (PDA) otherwise known as a personal handheld device, or handheld. \*see sidebar. I

try to stay abreast of new technologies for my job and for fun. I have most recently been concentrating on eBooks and their technologies. A few weeks before my trip, I downloaded **Anne Lamott's *Traveling Mercies*** from the eBook producer **Palm Digital Media** (<http://www.palmdigitalmedia.com>) for \$8.62 and had been showing it to colleagues and playing around with some of its features.

Since one of my roles as an electronic resources librarian is to promote eBooks, I wanted to be comfortable with the concept. But honestly, I did not plan to read it in its entirety. This was about work, not pleasure.

Now, with the nearest **Borders** as far away as my beloved new novel, I had two choices: either I give it a shot, or I spend the afternoon staring out of the tent, past my toes, at the lake 20 feet beyond our campsite. I decided to fire up my device and see what happened.

A few hours later I was on page 752 out of 926. (Those are eBook pages. The paper version is 275 pages.) I could not put the book down. No, there was no awkward overhead or learning curve with the device. No, I did not constantly notice that this was an eBook and not paper and ink. Did I like it? I most certainly did.

The next logical question is no doubt...WHY? Was it because it was my only option? Nope. If my husband walked in and

said he found my missing book stuck under the front seat of the car, I would have gone on reading my eBook. If the paper version of the eBook I was reading suddenly washed up on shore, I would have stayed with the eBook. I will certainly continue to buy and read paper books (pBooks), but will also add eBooks to my reading options. I have to admit, I loved it.

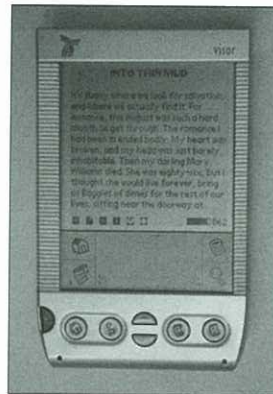
First, like any good book, one sign of success is transcending the physical item—the pages, the ink, and the words to find yourself in a world beyond. This happened to me right away. In some ways making this transition was even easier with the eBook. While I love holding and leafing through books, reading an eBook was in many ways more enjoyable than a paper version. First, my PDA has a leather cover. I don't think I have ever read a leather-bound book. It felt great in my hands and was so easy to hold.

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## Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) & eBooks:

PDAs can be defined as small portable computer devices, often referred to as pocket-sized. These devices typically include electronic calendars, address books, to-do lists, games, calculators, clocks, etc. eBooks can be read on these devices after downloading eBook reader software in addition to compatible eBook content. While there are many versions of eBook reader devices and methods of reading different kinds of eBooks, this article focuses on PDAs specifically. The **Palm Reader** referred to in this article can be downloaded to devices such as **Palm**, **Visor Handspring**, **Sony** and **PocketPC**.

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## My First eBook from page 40

helps readers easily keep track of the many thoughts that come to mind when reading, but are often lost for any number of reasons.


I am not a gadget person, nor do I consider myself a techie. I use technology as a tool and don't usually learn more than I have to. eBook reading on my handheld did not take me out of my comfort zone, and that surprised me. This is certainly a case of, "If I can enjoy this, anyone can." It is important to note that when I am talking about eBook reading, I am specifically talking about reading on a personal handheld device. I do believe that the success of eBooks is dependent upon titles being downloadable to widely-used handheld devices like **Palm** and **Visor**. The portable aspect of electronic text is appealing to me since it most closely reproduces a pBook experience, yet offers many additional useful features to the reading process. While dedicated eBook readers may offer a similar experience to that of handheld devices, most people cannot usually afford to have both. Since the trend is to have your one personal device be everything (your phone, GPS system, digital camera, etc.), I predict that most people will want their eBook reader to be compatible with this platform as well.

In my work, I find a good deal of resistance to eBooks. I can appreciate and understand this trepidation since the thought of computers invading the space of such a time-honored pastime can be a jarring one. Especially for librarians, I suppose, there is a natu-

ral attachment to the traditional book media. But, if I can get excited about this new medium, others can and will.

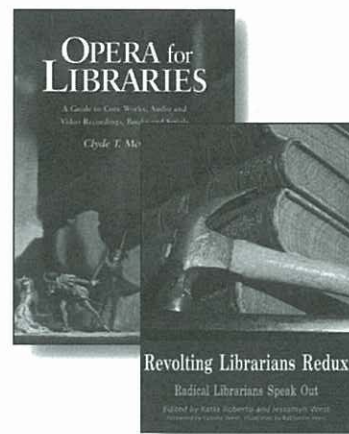
While older generations may need to adjust a bit, I believe that the younger generations will have no problem with the eBook concept. I am constantly amazed by how many toys include aspects of handheld technologies such as miniature keyboards, touch-sensitive screens, and thumb buttons. I have no doubt that picking up devices to read eBooks will be as natural for them as typing on a word processor is for my generation or turning on a tv is for my parents.

If I were to give one bit of advice to those intrigued enough to give eBook reading on handhelds a try, it would be to pick a work that you know you will love. In other words, choose something that you are assured to enjoy in paper format. You don't want to have an unpleasant experience and think that it was perhaps because it was an eBook. No format or device is going to make a book better, but a lackluster read or a tedious story as your first handheld reading experience could lead you to incorrect conclusions about where to place the blame.

I attribute my success to the title I picked. It was a book that I had been wanting to read for a long time by an author I adore. I could not get enough. So, hunkered down in my sleeping bag, I was swept away, moving effortlessly from page to page. The only distraction was the bothersome noise coming from my husband. "Honey, isn't all of that annoying page turning getting on your nerves?" I asked him. "No," he replied. But, I could detect the envy in his tone. 

## Articles

- E-books go to college: a survey of students in two college courses grades eBook devices and their function in higher education. Author: **Bell, Lori**; McCoy, Virginia.; **Peters, Tom**. Source: *Library Journal* v. 127 no. 8 (May 1 2002) p. 44-6.
- Don't be afraid of E-books. Author: **Burk, Roberta**. Source: *Library Journal* v. 125 no7 (Apr. 15 2000) p. 42-5.
- E-book trends in public libraries. Author: **Connaway, Lynn Silipigni**. Source: *Public Libraries E-libraries* (Sept./Oct. 2001) p. 27-9.
- *Library Hi Tech*, 30 November 2001, vol. 19, no. 4 (Entire issue).
- Stakeholders and standards in the e-book ecology: or, it's the economics, stupid! — **Coyle, K**.
- E-book devices and the marketplace: in search of customers — **Burk, R**.
- Electronic books: challenges for academic libraries — **Lonsdale, R.; Armstrong, C**.
- A Web-based electronic book (e-book) library: the netLibrary model — **Connaway, L.S**.
- E-books: the University of Texas experience, part 2 — **Dillon, D**.
- Growing competition for libraries — **Gibbons, S**.
- Use of electronic monographs in the humanities and social sciences — **Hughes, C.A.; Buchanan, N.L**.
- Electronic ink technologies: showing the way to a brighter future — **Terry, A.A**.
- Beyond print: reading digitally — **Brown, G.J**.
- The economics of a cooperative EAD project — **Redding, C**.
- Serving XML: practical techniques for the dissemination of structured electronic information — **Gilmour, R**.
- What is "SCUP" and so what? — **Boone, M.D**.
- Survey research design — **Janes, J**.
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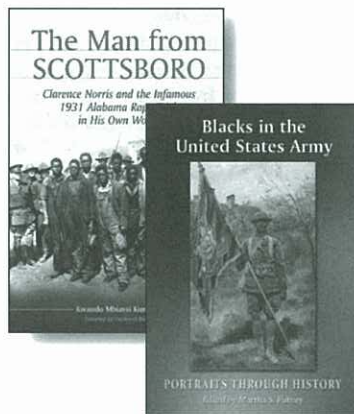
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Clyde T. McCants. 204pp., 2003, \$45 softcover (7 × 10), appendix, index, ISBN 0-7864-1442-1.

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*Edited by Katia Roberto and Jessamyn West.* [192]pp., 2003, \$35 softcover (7 × 10), illustrations, notes, index, ISBN 0-7864-1608-4.



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