After a decade of resisting, I finally bought a Kindle



Amazon launched the Kindle just after I graduated college in 2007, a device which Walt Mossberg called a milestone for the company. I remember seeing the first devices pop up at the time, but it wasn't something I was interested in since I was firmly wedded to the paper book. A decade after Amazon debuted its revolutionary device, I finally broke down during last year's Prime Day sale and purchased a refurbished Kindle Paperwhite.

I have a bit of a love-hate relationship with Amazon. My first purchases were facilitated by my high school librarian, who helped me keep up with the latest *Star Wars* novels. Amazon.com later proved to be useful for my textbooks in college. But I was also wary of the site: during and after college, I was a bookseller at my local Walden Books when its parent company, Borders, went under after being unable to compete with its larger online rival. I later worked at a local independent bookstore, part of an industry that continues to face challenges in a world where customers can simply push a button

and receive a book instantly.

So, buying a Kindle was a bit of a conflict for me. On one hand, it's proven time and time again that it's an incredibly useful device when it comes to spending more time reading, something that I've been working on doing. But on the other hand, it's part of a movement that seems poised to utterly remake an industry and art form that I love.

In recent years, my already-distracted attention has been pulled in every direction. There's Netflix and an endless list of films and television shows that I really want to check out. There's the steady stream of updates from Facebook and Twitter, on top of the continual grind of the 24/7 news cycle of which I'm a part. In recent years, my reading time has dwindled as a result, picking up books when I have spare moments.

What convinced me that these sporadic reading times were counterproductive was when I was on vacation last summer with my family. While at a theme park, I ended up minding our bags while my wife, son, and mother-in-law went off to wait in a long line for a ride. To my dismay, I found that I didn't stick the book that I'd been reading in my pack. To pass time, I ended up putting my phone into airplane mode and began reading Linda Nagata's military science fiction novel *The Last Good Man*. I sped through the book, and realized the benefits of having a device that limited distractions, while offering a small library of reading material.

In the months since, I've found that the Kindle opens up more *dedicated* reading time. While before I'd only use the Kindle app on my phone to read snippets while I was bored (and usually without cellular service), I'm now using it to actually take time and sit and read. I can't flip over to check e-mail or lose myself in Twitter. I can capture that 15 to 30 minutes at night or in the morning to read without turning on a light.

The results are promising. I strive to read about a book a week, and I've been setting aside time in the morning to sit down and read, before I plug into the world for the rest of the day. I haven't abandoned my paper books — I've got more of them in my house than ever — but what the Kindle does is give me options. Some review copies aren't available as physical books, and it's far easier to sit down and eat lunch with a screen, rather than a book that I have to prop open. When I took a train down to New York City last year, I packed it along, reading up on a couple of books while saving some weight in my pack.

My house will always be full of books, but I'm more willing to accept the fact that reading is no longer an activity limited to a single medium. Words exist as ink, images on a screen, or as an audiobook, ready to fill the time when they're most needed, whether that's while I'm at line in the grocery store or post office, or while I'm driving around.

Some of those deep-seated reservations about the device linger. I still regularly frequent my local indie bookstores and simply wander up and down the tall shelves, looking for something to catch my eye. But this Kindle helps me get me moving through my reading list during times when I might have been doing something else: I'm essentially swapping reading one set of content on a device for another. What the Kindle hasn't — and likely won't — do is act as a replacement for appreciating the fact that a book is more than just the story it contains. (Also, bookseller friends, please don't excommunicate me.)

https://www.theverge.com/2018/3/3/16119322/kindle-paperwhite-books-reading-essay