



APRIL 2, 2009

- [HOME](#)
- [POLITICS](#)
- [MEDIA](#)
- [BUSINESS](#)
- [ENTERTAINMENT](#)
- [LIVING](#)
- [STYLE](#)
- [GREEN](#)
- [WORLD](#)
- [CHICAGO](#)
- [COMEDY 23/6](#)
- [VIDEO](#)
- [BLOGGER INDEX](#)
- [ARCHIVE](#)
- [Twitter: Follow Us](#)
- [Get Email Alerts](#)
- [★ Make HuffPost Your HomePage](#)



Michael Giltz

Freelance writer and raconteur

Posted March 30, 2009 | 03:39 PM (EST)

- BIO
- Get Email Alerts
- Become a Fan
- Blogger's Index

Kindle 2.0: The Final Review



Read More: [Amazon](#), [Books](#), [E-Reader](#), [Electronic Books](#), [Kindle](#), [Public Domain](#), [Sony](#), [Entertainment News](#)

Buzz up! **Be the First to Submit This Story to Digg**

Get Breaking News Alerts

never spam

Share Print Comments

Most of the reviews of the Kindle 2.0 had to be thrown together by people who spent a few hours playing with them on deadline. I decided to spend some two weeks with my very first electronic book device to really get a feel for it and see what it was like.

Clearly, electronic books are going to be around in one form or another and the news has been coming fast and furious since Kindle 2.0 came

out. There's an app for the iPhone, publisher [Thomas Nelson](#) is offering a free ebook and audio book for everyone who buys a hardcover from them on select new titles (this is the wave of the future in my mind), [Google](#) is offering 500,000 public domain titles in easy to use formats for the [Sony E-Reader](#), Fujitsu is selling a color electronic book in Japan for \$1000 and on and on and on.

So here's my take on the [Kindle 2.0](#). I'm an aggressive book reader and collector and will surely die surrounded by hardcovers and paperbacks. I read probably 100+ books a year, as well as newspapers and magazines and blogs and the such. I can't imagine not holding a "real" book in my hand. However, I travel a lot and sometimes find my luggage weighed down with books I might want to read (and books I buy overseas). I also commute a lot on trains and buses. Recently I was lugging around *Dreadnought* by Robert K. Massie, a 900 page monster about the naval arms race before World War I and it did occur to me that having it in eBook form while reading it around town might not be the worst thing in the world. (However, that particular book isn't available on Kindle or [Sony's E-Reader](#). The sequel, however, is.) So I'm both intrigued and wary of electronic books. Personally, I won't be happy until every new book I buy comes with a free eBook. But I can see the appeal and wanted to find out for myself.

IS IT LIKE READING A BOOK? -- Yep, it is. I found the Kindle 2.0 very easy to read, with no discernible difference in eye strain or the like whether reading a Kindle or a print edition. Personally, I found the leather cover essential for reading. (And \$30 for something that really should come for free with the \$360.00 Kindle 2.0 is annoying.) Even when I "folded" the cover back (something I would never do on a print edition), I needed that cover to hold and feel comfortable while reading. The heft of the Kindle was nice, solid but not too heavy. This is not a

Popular Stories on HuffPost

- Stephen Colbert Rips Apart Glenn Beck: Building His Career On 9/11 (VIDEO)**
Stephen Colbert ripped apart Fox News host (and New York...
- Sarah Palin Disinvited, Newt Gingrich In For Major GOP Dinner**
WASHINGTON -- Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin is out, and former House Speaker Newt...
- "Real Housewives" Countess Dumped By Her Count**
Luann de Lesseps, the countess from "The Real Housewives of New York," is single...
- Alex McCord Laid off? Update Your Resume and Take Time to Admire the Gold Sparkly Drag Queen**
I thought I'd gotten out. A little over...
- Bob Cesca Insane Republicans Reveal An Insane Budget Plan**
It only makes sense that a party currently being wagged by fringe crazy

side by side comparison, but the brief time I spent playing with the Sony E-Reader (which has a backlight and a touch screen) was no comparison, even though they use the same technology. The thick screen necessary for touch technology made the E-Reader far less reader friendly. And the iPhone? Please. Reading a book on the iPhone is highly impractical. I use it to read the occasional Shakespearean sonnet or some other poetry, but that's as far as it can go.

IS THE KINDLE 2.0 A BIG JUMP ON THE 1.0? -- Oh yes. Strangely, a lot of the reviews described the 2.0 as just tweaking the design of the 1.0. I disagree strongly. The Kindle 1.0, to me, was always very junky and cheap feeling. The buttons for advancing pages were poorly designed, with the biggest complaint being that anyone just trying to hold the device invariably flipped the pages by accident. That problem is completely removed with the 2.0 which is much sleeker and nicer than the original. The page buttons are press-able on the inside only, almost to a fault. It's actually a tad difficult to change pages, which is definitely an improvement on too easy. Perhaps a small raised button on the inside would make it more tactile and user-friendly? The keyboard looks much nicer and the look overall is much, much better. This feels like a real device, not a toy. I'd be happy to keep it around and show it off. However, I can't keep a comment by David Pogue of the New York Times out of my head: he said it looked like **it was designed by the people who did the Commodore 64**. Ouch. Not quite fair for the new Kindle but really: would it kill them to make it available in black and other colors? White is about the least friendly color for a device you're going to be handling all the time.

IS WIRELESS CONNECTIVITY A BIG DEAL? -- Before I used it, the Whispernet function of the Kindle 2.0 seemed a little silly. What's the big deal about plugging in a Kindle to your computer when you want a new book? I do it with my iPod, right? But I had to admit, this feature was surprisingly nice. There's something almost sinfully easy about lying in bed late at night with your Kindle, thinking about a book you want to read and a few seconds later you've found it, purchased it, and begun reading. The free first chapter offer (available for seemingly any book at the Kindle store) is also tempting. To me, it's still not a big negative in other devices to have to hook up to a computer to purchase and download a book. But the breeze of constant connectivity is a bigger positive than I imagined.

HOW ABOUT GETTING YOUR OWN DOCUMENTS ONTO THE KINDLE? -- Sight unseen, I was very adamantly opposed to the way the Kindle works this. If you have a Word or PDF document you want to carry around on your Kindle, you have to email it to the Kindle people who then download it onto your personal device. Privacy be damned, of course. This annoyed the heck out of me in theory. In practice? Not so much. It worked easily and almost as quickly as buying a new book on the Kindle. Several articles and blogs I'd written came to the Kindle in Word formats and were easily read.

CAN YOU BUY ALL THE BESTSELLERS? -- Yes, you can. This is true of Kindle 2.0 and the Sony E-Reader. Today, I went through the Top 15 New York Times bestsellers in fiction and nonfiction. Both devices had every title available, with one exception: the Sony E-Reader did not have the nonfiction title *Inside The Revolution* available, while Kindle did. And neither device had the new John Grisham, who must be a technophobe. What you can't do with the Kindle (or the Sony E-Reader) is just name books you want to read and find them. Current releases are available and the obvious classic titles (*The Three Musketeers*, *Wuthering Heights* and the like). But many, many catalog titles are not. Kindle may have 250,000 titles available but publishers put out that many books every two years, so there are a LOT of gaps to fill. I looked for the massive two volume Winston Churchill biography *The Last Lion* but it wasn't available. However, Churchill's own acclaimed history of World War II is. I looked for *Dreadnought*, that doorstop of a book and it's not available (and neither is most anything else by this best-selling historian EXCEPT the sequel to *Dreadnought*, which is available.)

HOW EXPENSIVE ARE THE EBOOKS? -- Kindle has got most everything at \$10 or less, with exceptions of course. (They're all detailed at Amazon, as well as the Kindle online store, which does NOT include the readers comments from Amazon.) Sony E-Reader's store has titles more commonly at \$11, which is \$2 more than Kindle. There's a lot of variability in pricing, though, with Kindle generally cheaper. You can buy Joe Torre and Tom Verducci's *The Yankee Years* for \$17.61 on sale in hardcover at Amazon or you can get it at the Sony eBook store for \$18.87 (bizarrely, it's MORE expensive than the hardcover) or you can get it on Kindle for \$10. Prices are set by

people like...

Bonnie Fuller Michelle Obama's Lost Her Mind! 3 Reasons She's Suddenly A Fashion Disaster

Touching the Queen wasn't the only...

April Fools 2009! The Best Pranks Of This Year (VIDEO)

-- Car and Driver is reporting that President Obama has ordered all...

Michelle Obama Hugs Queen Elizabeth, Stirs Controversy (PHOTOS, POLL, VIDEO)

Scroll down for photo, video and poll UPDATE:

Obamas Arrive In London, First Leg Of Europe Trip (VIDEO, SLIDESHOW)

UPDATE: LONDON - President Barack Obama has arrived in...

MSNBC's 10 PM Search "On Indefinite Hold," Will Continue Olbermann Repeats

NEW YORK — MSNBC will continue airing Keith Olbermann's...

Obama Meets Queen Elizabeth II At Buckingham Palace (SLIDESHOW) (VIDEO)

LONDON - President Barack Obama arrived at Buckingham...

Angie Harmon: Republicans "Don't Point Fingers" And "Have Class"

Angie Harmon gave a lengthy interview to Foxnews.com, and...

Walgreens Offering Free Healthcare For Jobless, Uninsured

NEW YORK — Drugstore operator Walgreen will offer free clinic visits...

Michelle Obama Oprah Interview: "My Happiness Is Tied To How I Feel About Myself"

This month's O Magazine features Michelle...

Terrifying Horse And Rider Fall During English Race (SLIDESHOW)

A harrowing horse fall at the John Smith's Fox Hunters' Chase...

publishers and not the device sellers, of course. I have to say, the cheaper Kindle editions -- as compared to hardcovers -- were appealing. Publishers really do have to follow the Thomas Nelson lead and make ebook and audio book versions available for free when you buy a hardcover OR a paperback. The Doris Kearns Goodwin title *Team Of Rivals* is \$21 in paperback -- I know it's a thick book, but my God, isn't that expensive? The Sony e-version is \$14 and the Kindle is \$10 but I'd much prefer to buy the paperback (or hardcover) and get a download for free. Why not? Once you've set up the edition as a digital download, making it available is super cheap. Forcing people to choose which version they want (which is like making people choose whether they want to be able to play the CD they purchase ONLY in their car or ONLY at home or ONLY on their computer) is just crazy and will push them into embracing pirate versions.

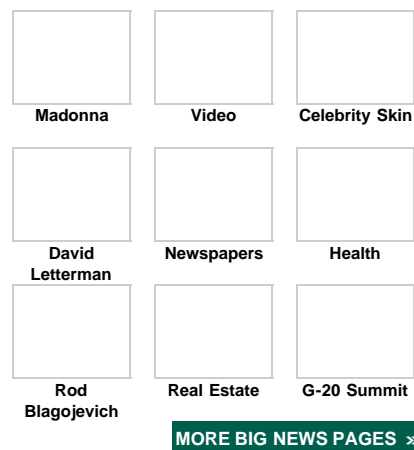
WHAT ABOUT THAT COMPUTERIZED READING VOICE OPTION? -- Publishers are idiots to demand Kindle give them the option of turning off this feature on select titles. A computerized voice reads the text for you in a mechanical, but not bad manner. It's not a genuine audiobook, in which someone really performs the text or at least lets you hear the author speak. It's just a computerized transcription, just like people already have available on their computers. I thought it would be dumb, but there are moments maybe when shaving or cooking breakfast you might want to keep hearing something you're looking at, especially if it's an owner's manual or some text from work, as opposed to *Great Expectations*. And editions for the blind take FOREVER to come out and aren't available for many titles, so removing this option is obnoxious for those who might make use of it. Speaking of impaired vision, the ability to increase the size of the text is terrific for older people.

WHAT ABOUT CLASSIC TITLES? ARE THEY FREE OR CHEAP? -- I was a little surprised to find free editions of some classic titles (Sherlock Holmes, etc.) on the Kindle store. And of course Google has raised the bar with its deal with Sony. I can't think of any reason why they wouldn't work out the same details and make the same titles available to Kindle down the road, though no one is talking. But there are also many publishers making public domain titles available in extremely cheap sets. I bought the complete Charles Dickens for \$5; Mark Twain for \$4, Balzac for \$5, a handful of Trollope for \$4 and so on. With \$30 to play with, I filled my Kindle with literally hundreds of classic and new titles. Shakespeare is a different beast: I've yet to find a free or cheap edition that presented the plays nicely. (Getting the line-breaks right ain't easy, apparently.) You can also find lots of websites with free downloads of public domain titles in Kindle or E-Reader friendly versions. But I'm a clumsy tech guy and tried a couple of them and couldn't find any that came up properly on the Kindle. I'm certain this will get easier and -- again -- Google (with their call for free content on any platform and any device) will surely make their 500,000 and counting public domain titles available in Kindle friendly versions as well that will work.


IS IT THE IPOD OF ELECTRONIC BOOKS? -- No, for one simple reason: you can't put all your books on it for free. The iPod was backward compatible; any CDs you owned could be ripped and placed on it immediately. Oh if only that were true of the Kindle. If only you could, say, scan your UPC code and show you own a title and get an electronic version of every book you own on the Kindle for free. I'd buy one immediately. But you can't. And when you buy a new book, in most cases you have to decide in advance whether you want a hardcover or wait one year for a paperback or a more expensive audio version or a cheaper ebook version. This must change, in my mind, for these electronic books to become widespread.

WHO SHOULD BUY THE KINDLE? -- If you travel a lot and like the classics or have lots of disposable income and don't mind buying the cheap ebook versions of new titles you may already own or want in a print edition, the Kindle is very tempting. It reads terrifically well, it's lightweight and portable and easy to use and you can fill it up with classics very, very cheaply. If you're like me and worry about running out of reading material, the Kindle is ideal. You can bring two books and the Kindle and be set for the weekend or a month, frankly, without any anxiety. If you're old and have poor eyesight, the ability to have de facto large print editions of classics and new bestsellers is great. However, if you have eclectic tastes and expect to find any title you're looking for available on the Kindle, you'll get frustrated. Browsing the Kindle store to find titles to read is fun. But looking for a particular book that came out 10 or 20 years ago is frustrating since half the time it's not available. I found it telling when I was looking for some acclaimed authors who have won awards and hit the bestseller lists but are still "midlist" as opposed to perennial bestsellers like John Updike. Padgett Powell? None. Peter Taylor? None. Mark Helprin? One. Edmund White? Four, but mostly minor works and none of his acknowledged classics. Steven Millhauser? His three most recent only. By the way, John Updike is no better, really. I found only eight books, a mishmash of mostly recent releases and none of the Rabbit books. And so it goes. This situation will improve with time (and with the number of people who actually buy these electronic books).

HUFFPOST'S BIG NEWS PAGES



Books by this author

This Blogger's Books from  amazon.com.

A cabin of one's own: New England's MacDowell Colony celebrates 100 years of artistic utopia. And the gay and lesbian artists who prospered there celebrate ... (The national gay & lesbian newsmagazine)
by Michael Giltz

Affairs to remember: Farley Granger bedded Ava Gardner, Shelley Winters, and Leonard Bernstein. In his autobiography, Include Me Out, Hitchcock's muse ... (The national gay & lesbian newsmagazine)
by Michael Giltz


But for the moment it's a lot easier to find books NOT available than it is ones that are. Again, however, all the classics are there for free or in extremely cheap editions and new releases seem to be available as a matter of course.

To sum up, I loved playing with the Kindle and would love one for free and would love to get free ebooks and audio books every time I buy a print edition (or get the option of just the ebook or audio book at a severe discount). It reads very easily without any eyestrain whatsoever; I felt like I was reading a book whereas reading on an iPhone or a computer is just a gimmick. The Kindle is indeed a genuine alternative to a print edition and not just a toy. But for the moment, I won't buy it. Here are some suggested changes.

1. \$200 with a leather cover and a bigger screen would be more enticing. The screen should contain all the info on a standard mass market paperback page. That's the standard they must set for themselves. Otherwise you're flipping pages every 30 seconds.
2. Free web surfing makes sense too. Paying to read newspapers you can access free online is ridiculous.
3. They need more colors available for the exterior of the model; a color screen is far less important to me.
4. They need to get rid of the keyboard or at least offer an edition that comes without the keyboard. Personally, I never write in books or take notes so the keyboard is pointless except when shopping or searching the text and in those contexts an onscreen keyboard is fine.
5. Navigation is a little clumsy at times. When you're in the store, the Kindle takes you to the top of the page and you have to scroll down through new releases and bestsellers and recommendations and so on to get to the section where you can type in an author. Trying to toggle up to jump from the top to the bottom doesn't work. Other minor roadblocks like that popped up.
6. The "page forward" and "back" buttons are almost TOO hard to press. You get used to it but they should tweak that more.
7. Kindle needs to woo Google and get a deal done quickly; those 500,000 public domain titles are awfully tempting.
8. Similarly, the Kindle should come loaded with say 100+ classics like Dickens and Twain and Shakespeare and Austen.
9. The Kindle store should have a section for free downloads, just like they do for mystery and science fiction and so on.
10. And do this FAST. I'm not ready to buy an electronic book but I will be very surprised if I don't have one in the next five years.

If you have any questions about the Kindle, ask away and I'll try to answer them. Do you own an eBook of any sort? Have you played with one? Let me know what you think.

More in Entertainment...



Bill O'Reilly Book On Obama Due In...	Angie Harmon: Republicans "Don't Point Fingers" And...	Bridget Moynahan's Friend Slams Gisele	Andy Hallett, "Angel" Actor, Dies At 33
---------------------------------------	--	--	---

digg™ HuffPost Stories Surging Right Now

Lee Stranahan: Watch: 5 Benefits To Legal Weed (& The 1 Big Thing Stopping It)

"BRUNO" TRAILER! Calamity, African Babies, Chase Scenes And More (NSFW VIDEO)

Alaska Republicans Want Redo Election For Stevens

Obama Chia Pet Held Up Behind Santelli On CNBC (VIDEO)

Sponsored Links

"My Teeth Are so White"

Read the trick, discovered by a mom, to turn yellow teeth white.

CathysTeeth.com

My Wrinkles Are Gone!

Learn how a mom combined 2 products to easily get rid of her wrinkles

KathysWrinkles.com

JetBlue Cuts Fares, \$39+

Fly Across the U.S. this Spring

www.travelzoo.com

[Buy a link here](#)

Comments

5

Pending Comments

0

[FAQ: Comments & Moderation](#)

[FAQ: HuffPost Accounts](#)

Post a Comment

Want to reply to a comment? Hint: Click "Reply" at the bottom of the comment; after being approved your comment will appear directly underneath the comment you replied to

Newest

View Comments: First

Expand All

azteacher [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of azteacher](#) [permalink](#)

As a Kindle 2.0 lover, I really enjoyed this article. The only disagreement I found is that free web surfing is already available on the Kindle 2.0. It's not a very advanced internet system, but you can do all of the basics! I heart my Kindle!

Reply Favorite Flag as abusive *Posted 01:09 PM on 03/31/2009*

Michael Giltz [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of Michael Giltz](#) [permalink](#)

I found the web access area. But it's so clumsy and stripped down, I feel like it barely counts. How many titles do you have on your Kindle? And do you just buy ebooks or have you bought something in print and a Kindle version because you want a copy to keep but like the ease of the e-version?

Reply Favorite Flag as abusive *Posted 11:47 AM on 04/01/2009*

Michael Giltz [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of Michael Giltz](#) [permalink](#)

Thx for reading. How do you access the internet? I'm looking at the menu and home pages and don't see it. And why would anyone pay for a subscription to the New York Times if they could go online and read it for free?

Reply Favorite Flag as abusive *Posted 11:44 AM on 04/01/2009*

onceler [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of onceler](#) [permalink](#)

But now that the iPhone has a Kindle app, isn't the Kindle already obsolete?

And for the love of Yaweh, can they cut about \$150 off the price?

Seriously, they have been selling similar devices for children's learning purposes for years that have a little less capacity but are under \$80 or so.

For \$360, just keep saving, get a laptop, and 'read' off of that.

Reply Favorite Flag as abusive *Posted 10:40 AM on 03/31/2009*

jl4141 [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of jl4141](#) [permalink](#)

Did you even read the article before posting this? Giltz addressed the shortcomings of the iPhone and the high price, among other concerns. And reading off a laptop? Yeah, that'll fit nicely into your jacket pocket.

BTW, it's "Yahwey," not "Yawey." You could look it up.

[Reply](#) [Favorite](#) [Flag as abusive](#) Posted 12:07 PM on 03/31/2009

You must be **logged in** to reply to this comment. [Log in](#) or

Ads by Google

Kindle 2: Amazon's \$359

New Wireless Reading Device The Future Of Book Reading.

www.Amazon.com/Kindle



Google™ Custom Search

[HOME](#) [POLITICS](#) [MEDIA](#) [BUSINESS](#) [ENTERTAINMENT](#) [LIVING](#) [GREEN](#) [STYLE](#) [WORLD](#) [CHICAGO](#) [COMEDY](#) [FUNDRACE](#) [ARCHIVE](#)

[Advertise](#) | [Login](#) | [Make HuffPost your Home Page](#) | [RSS](#) | [Jobs](#) | [FAQ: Comments & Moderation](#) | [FAQ: Huffpost Accounts](#) | [Contact Us](#)

[Copyright © 2009 HuffingtonPost.com, Inc.](#) | [Archive](#) | [User Agreement](#) | [Privacy](#) | [Comment Policy](#) | [About Us](#) | [Powered by Movable Type](#)