

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – July 23, 2010

CONTACT: Jim Scheppke
Oregon State Librarian
Phone: (503) 378-4367
E-mail: jim.b.scheppke@state.or.us



STATE LIBRARIANS' REPORT SUGGESTS WAYS TO ADVANCE EBOOK SERVICES

(Lexington, KY) - Librarians needn't worry about the availability of low-cost eReaders and other devices that will allow public library users to take advantage of downloadable eBooks from their local libraries. That is one of the findings of an internal report released by the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA).

The COSLA eReader Task Force has spent the past six months working with consultants to learn from knowledgeable librarians and industry experts about the direction of the eReader and eBook marketplace, and more generally, what public libraries need to do to continue to grow and improve their downloadable eBook services.

When COSLA formed the Task Force last year, state librarians were concerned about the high cost of eReaders like the Kindle, and the fact that the Kindle and other devices might not be compatible with the downloadable eBook services libraries were developing. The report released by COSLA concludes that the availability of low-cost, library-friendly devices will not be a problem. The market is evolving rapidly, and prices are falling close to \$100, and will probably drop below that price point in the near future. This means devices will be affordable for many library users and some libraries may even be able to afford to purchase devices to demonstrate and to lend to library users.

Having concluded that state librarians needn't worry about eReader devices, the report goes on to suggest many ideas that state libraries and others should consider in efforts to grow and improve eBook services in public libraries. More needs to be done to improve library purchasing power through consortia purchasing and similar strategies. New technologies like the Internet Archive's BookServer ought to be explored as a way for library users to more easily discover the services that are available. The certification of eReaders for library use should be pursued with participation by public librarians. Research is needed to demonstrate to skeptical publishers that library ebook services are not a threat to their bottom line, but in fact will help their bottom line. Public libraries should be champions of self-publishing and should feature self-published books in their eBook offerings. Libraries need to foster greater awareness and conversation about copyright and fair use issues that might threaten their eBook services. And as traditional printed book lending shifts more and more to downloadable eBooks, libraries should take advantage of the opportunity to repurpose their space and experiment with new services.

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The COSLA eReader Task Force was led by Oregon State Librarian Jim Scheppke. Other members were California State Librarian Stacey Aldrich, Kansas State Librarian Jo Budler, and Massachusetts State Librarian, Rob Maier. They worked with Eva Miller of Pinpoint Logic, a Portland-based research and design consulting firm, and Tom Peters of TAP Information Services, and Kansas-based library consulting firm.

Copies of the report are available for download on the COSLA website: www.COSLA.org or directly through http://www.cosla.org/documents/COSLA2270_Report_Final1.pdf.

COSLA is an independent organization of the chief officers of state and territorial agencies designated as the state library administrative agency and responsible for statewide library development. COSLA's mission is to identify issues of common concern and national interest, to further state library agency relationships with the federal government and national organizations, and to initiate, maintain and support cooperative action for the improvement of library services. COSLA offers to its membership mutual support and the opportunity through group action to influence federal policy and national organizations. COSLA promotes its leadership role in the library community and with other organizations of state officials in order to affect policy of importance to library and information delivery. COSLA is a dynamic diverse organization, which encourages open discussion of issues.

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