

The Federal Lawyer In Cyberia

MICHAEL J. TONSING

Flying With My Kindle™

I love my new Kindle.™ I left a little over a month ago for a three-week trip. As a guy who likes to read, even on airplanes, I knew I faced a challenge as I was preparing to fly to Frankfurt and then to Johannesburg—two hops of about 12 hours each. I knew the new weight restrictions on international flights were about to clash with my desire to pack my duffel bag heavily with good reading material. Enter Kindle, Amazon's™ entry into the new genre known as “eBook readers.” Problem solved—and then some.

Amazon's eBook reader is certainly not the first entry into this niche (Sony™ has been there for a while, for example), but Kindle certainly is the niftiest. It weighs less, just over 10 ounces, is smaller than a typical hardback book, has an *electronic-paper* matte display that is not backlit and thus provides a sharp, high-resolution screen that looks and reads just like real paper. The screen uses “e-Ink,” which makes the print look just like it does in books and newspapers; the ink particles are just displayed electronically.

Kindle reflects light like ordinary paper does, and because it uses no backlighting, the screen eliminates the glare associated with most electronic displays. Like an ordinary book, a Kindle can be read easily in bright sunlight; however, also like an ordinary book, it cannot be read in the dark. (I quickly acquired one of those small clip-on book lights and solved that problem.) Because it is not backlit, the screen never gets hot so you can comfortably read for as long as you like.

My Kindle holds over 200 titles. And, if I had wanted to work on the long flights, I could have. You can receive e-mail, including attached Microsoft Word™ documents and pictures (.jpg, .gif, .bmp, and .png files). (Right now, PDFs are in what Amazon calls an “experimental stage.” You can e-mail PDFs wirelessly to your Kindle; however, some files might not get formatted correctly. Apparently, a Kindle supports only two types of text files: .TXT files, or “plaintext” files, like those generated by Notepad and other common text editors; and .AZW files, the proprietary format used by content download from Amazon. Other file formats, including Microsoft Word, can be read by the Kindle, but only after going through a conversion process available from Amazon that involves e-mail-

ing your document to a special “@kindle.com” e-mail address. You'll pay 10 cents per file for conversion if you choose to send it directly to your Kindle; you'll pay nothing if Amazon chooses to have the converted file sent back to your original e-mail address, where it can then be transferred to the Kindle via a wired USB connection.

Unlike my laptop computer's need for “WiFi,” my Kindle uses the same high-speed data network (EVDO) as advanced cell phones use (think Sprint™)—so I never have to locate a hot spot. I can download virtually anywhere in the United States that can be connected on a Sprint cell phone. Do be warned, though: there is no coast-to-coast coverage. If you live outside the United States, or outside a decent-sized U.S. city, you won't have EVDO Sprint coverage. On the other hand, when you're outside of EVDO coverage, as when abroad, you can download via the Internet to your laptop, then painlessly transfer the content to the Kindle via a USB cable. Voila!

The battery lasts more than a week for normal use. But if you choose to download MP3 files and play your favorite music in the background as you read, that can shorten the life of the battery a bit. (Even though it has a headphone jack, my Kindle also has a surprisingly loud speaker, so I can listen to either music or audiobooks without the headphones—a feature that, frankly, surprised me.) In any event, the Kindle's battery fully recharges (a wall-plug recharger included) in just two hours.

Kindles are admittedly pricey up front—\$400. And there's no secondary market for Kindles yet. Amazon is the only game in town. On the other hand, there are no monthly wireless bills, service plans, or commitments. A huge number of books, including *New York Times* best sellers, are available for just under \$10 each. As of this writing, more than 110,000 Amazon books are available for one-minute downloads. Some smaller books are available for as little as a dollar or two. Once Amazon has established a credit card relationship with you and your Kindle, it takes only two clicks to download a book.

Amazon apparently is just happy to sell you inexpensive content painlessly after that initial \$400 commitment. In addition, you can subscribe to newspapers that are pushed into your Kindle, so you have the next edition before the home delivery guy can get it to you. Subscriptions are automatically delivered wirelessly, so if you leave your Kindle on overnight and at your bedside, the latest edition of your favorite



newspaper will be waiting for you on your nightstand each morning. And, the repertoire available is impressive; it includes all of the top U.S. and international newspapers—the *New York Times*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and many of the big ones in between. Plus, for good measure, the *Irish Times*, *Le Monde*, and several other major foreign newspapers are available. And because Kindle is wireless, these favorite publications follow you wherever you go; they are delivered to you whether you are at home or on the road in the United States. Each newspaper subscription starts with a free two-week trial. And as if that were not enough, the folks at Amazon throw in free access to the planet's most exhaustive and constantly up-to-date (though not always authoritative) encyclopedia—Wikipedia.org.

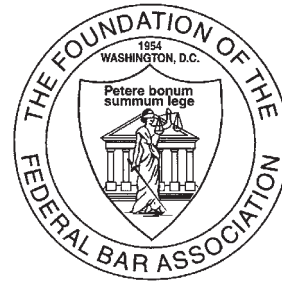
Want more? A “Kindlephile” can subscribe to the electronic version of 11 major American magazines (more are reportedly on the way) and can tie into more than 200 of the biggest and best blogs around. Subscribing to a blog via the Kindle service costs \$2 a month; newspaper subscriptions run about \$15 a month.

For those who read more than the latest trendy books, Amazon graciously provides an avenue to works in the public domain that are available free over the Internet. One of my favorite eBook repositories is the now famous Project Gutenberg, where Herman Melville's books and short stories—along with an incredible number of other titles—can be downloaded at no cost.

Happily, a Kindle allows its owner to create unlimited bookmarks, so that the user can highlight and copy text and also make notes and annotations.

What happens if your Kindle is lost or stolen? All is not lost. A copy of every book you have purchased from Amazon is backed up online in a place called “Your Media Library”—just in case you ever need to download the book again. This service, by the way, allows you to create a bookshelf of enormous length and to make room for new titles on your device; you know that Amazon is storing your entire personal library, which can always be downloaded again wirelessly. Amazon rightly calls this “a bookshelf in your attic”—even though you don't see them, your books are always nearby. If you read, especially if you read on planes, try a Kindle. **TFL**

Michael J. Tonsing practices law in San Francisco. He is a member of the FBA editorial board and has served on the Executive Committee of the Law Practice Management and Technology Section of the State Bar of California. He also mentors less-experienced litigators by serving as a “second chair” to their trials. See www.Your-Second-Chair.com. He can be reached at mtonsing@lawyer.com.



Memorials and Remembrances Gift Program

With a tax-deductible gift to the Foundation of the Federal Bar Association, members of the legal profession, the public, business organizations, charitable trusts, or other foundations may create a memorial to a deceased person. Gifts may also be made in honor of someone, an anniversary, birthday, or any other occasion. Your gift helps fund educational and charitable programs that promote public understanding of the law and enhance the cause of justice.

Given by
Herbert and Marsha Dunn

In Memory of
Diane Wolf

Foundation of the Federal Bar Association Memorial/Remembrance Gift Program

PLEASE DETACH AND MAIL THE COMPLETED FORM TO:

Foundation of the Federal Bar Association
1220 N. Fillmore Street, Suite 444, Arlington, VA 22201

In Memory of

Date of Death

In Honor of

Occasion

Please send acknowledgment to:

Name

Address

City, State, Zip

Donation made by:

Name

Address

City, State, Zip