

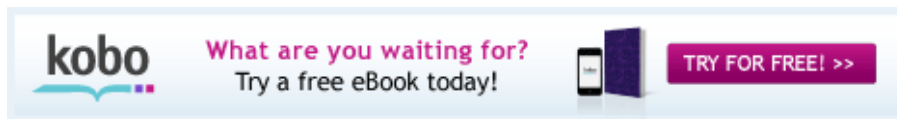
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[The Humane Reader - A sort of eReader for about 20 USD](#)

Posted by **Tony** on July 22, 2010 | Filed under [education](#)



A very different approach:

Humane Reader have come up with a device that would enable people in far flung underdeveloped places access to a large library of reference material for about 20 USD.

However, rather than create a "traditional" eReading device, which relies on the Internet to get books, and to read those books, they have gone in a completely different direction and decidedly thought out of the box in an attempt to solve the problems associated with eReaders in places such as the country areas of Bangladesh, or rural China and similar places. What they have come up with is a simple device on which to store your books (which come preinstalled on an SD memory card), which you then read on a TV screen.



Intelligently, what they have done is to look at both TV and Internet penetration in such areas, and noticed the well known fact that even in some of the most remote places in the world, people have TV sets, that to a greater or lesser degree function rather well. I can confirm this from personal experience, as I have seen a black and white TV being watched with pleasure by a group of nomads camping in their Yurts in the Pamir Mountains, kilometers from anywhere. Admittedly, the picture was not fantastic, but it worked.

To begin with they have reached agreement with Wikipedia to place the entire content of Wikipedia on a single SD card (!), in a number of languages, since obviously english is not the language that most of their target group will read or speak. So when you buy one of these devices, to begin with, you will have that amazing reference library at your disposal.

In fact, this device is not being aimed at individuals particularly, but at organisations such as NGO's, libraries, schools and such like, and those groups will see to the distribution and organisation of new content.

To give a clear idea of their aims, I will quote from their website, as they explain it very clearly:

Only approximately 20% of the developing world are internet users. The remaining 80% do not have access to online reference sources such as Wikipedia, online libraries of books and information to improve literacy, nor access to a computer to develop technological skills.

The Humane Reader device addresses this gap by providing the equivalent of a 5,000 book library in content at very low cost to households, libraries, and schools. No internet connection is required - the Humane Reader requires only a television set.

Books and text are stored on a simple SD memory Card - the type used by digital cameras - which are relatively low cost (~\$4 for 2GB in bulk) and can hold the equivalent of thousands of books. The Humane Reader allows a user to access the contents of the SD Card for display on a

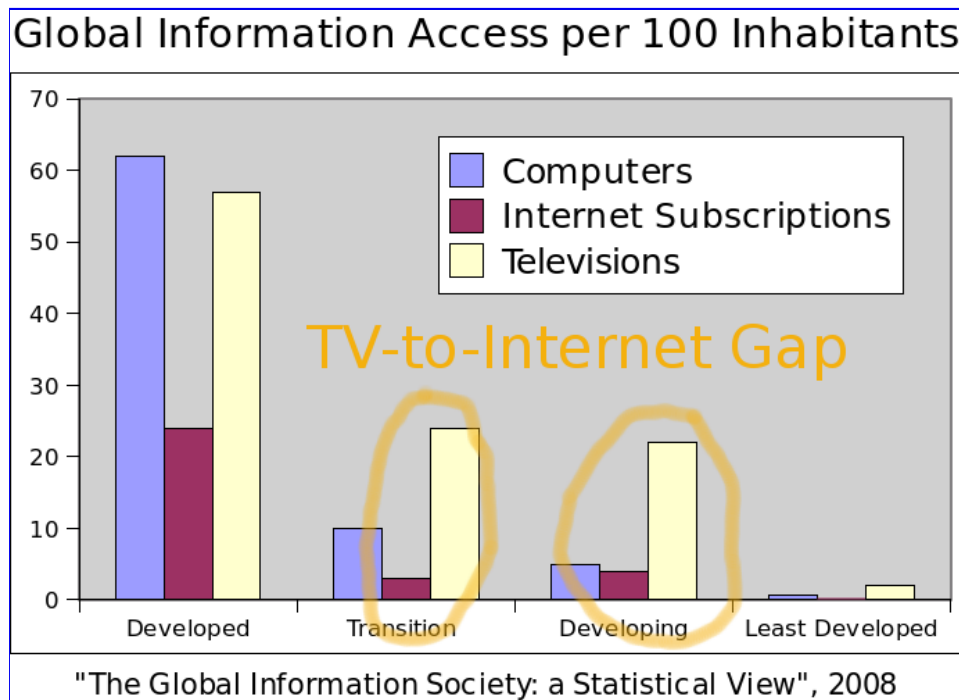
common TV set.

The above chart shows the number of computers, television sets, and internet subscriptions (dialup or broadband connections) per 100 inhabitants in the Developed world (USA, Canada, Europe, Japan, Australia, etc), and the Developing World (India, China, most others).

As can be seen in the chart, - see below - televisions are far more common in the Developing countries than computers or internet connections. There are indeed more than half a billion more television sets than internet connections in the developing world, providing a broad market.

The Humane Reader has been developed from the ground up with cost in mind. The basic unit can be produced for less than \$20 in mass quantities. Thus for less than the cost of a single textbook the Reader can provide the equivalent of a five thousand book library.

Wikipedia is the first content provided for use with the Humane Reader. A single memory card can hold most if not all of Wikipedia text in a variety of languages. The device provides search capabilities, and can be connected to an optional keyboard for more fluid text input.



Obviously I am intrigued by this idea, as I am deeply convinced that eReaders (in whatever form) are an absolutely wonderful tool to spread education and literacy in the so called Third World, and every initiative that helps this come about is to be applauded and encouraged. Also, I love the lateral thinking that this one

shows..... Look at the problem, analyze what technical facilities exist in your target areas, and then try and find a solution that would work..... And using TV sets, while not actually ideal to read with, is a step in the right direction, since they are extremely wide spread in the Third World.

As you will know if you have been a loyal and enthusiastic reader of my blog over the last months, this is a use of eReader technology that I return to frequently in my posts, since education is one of the best answers to poverty in the developing world, and for people to have access to books is a very important part of this development, especially for kids.....

I have seen for myself in quite a few poverty ridden places how important the TV (frequently watched as a communal activity) is to people as a means of discovering what is happening in the outside world as well as simple entertainment, so this rather odd idea should work in my view. Poor country development is something that needs to be attacked from a number of directions at the same time to be solved, and initiatives such as this one, with its appreciation of a basic reality, is a splendid idea, which I hope will get the support it deserves.

Link: <http://humaneinfo.com/reader.html>

Share with us:

I would love to hear your views on this device and on the whole topic of eReading in the developing (and all too often, non-developing, world)

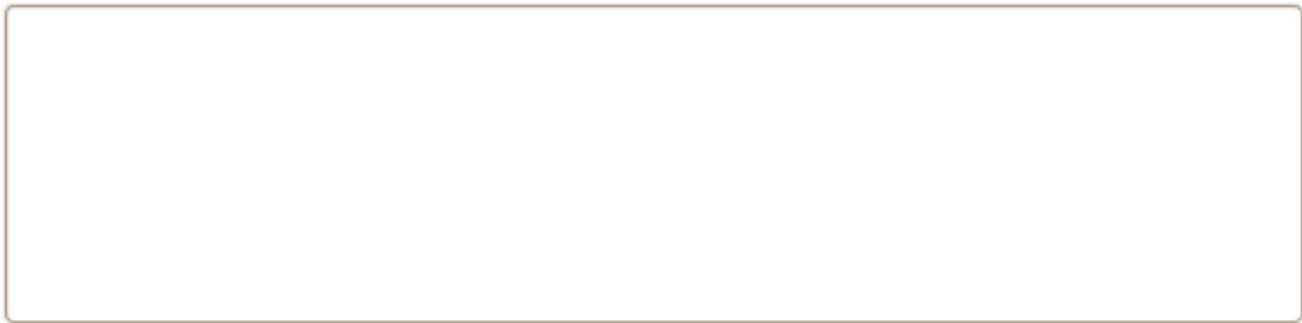


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