

OSALL

Organisation of SA Law Libraries

"OSALL aims to link and support everyone interested in Law Librarianship in South Africa"



NEWSLETTER

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Editorial

The final newsletter of the year includes an article by Maggie Verster on the application of twitter for law librarians as well as two articles on e-readers. The Editor had never seriously considered purchasing an e-book reader, however with free 3G browsing the Kindle I received as a birthday gift has proved to be very addictive! Kosie Eloff and Mary Bruce's articles on e-books enlighten us on everything from file formats to cost and will help you make an informed decision should you wish to purchase an e-reader. Special thanks to Kosie Eloff who generously agreed to take the time and share his expertise on the ever-evolving e-book with this newsletter's readers.

You may also wish to read "Living life by the law book" which appeared in the Cape Times and gives some much needed positive publicity for our profession. There is also news of Gail Dendy, fellow law librarian and published poet. Last but not least Nico Ferreira shares the latest in legal publications with us.

Please remember that OSALL is your organisation and the newsletter belongs to you so don't forget to send me interesting articles and news.

The OSALL Committee wishes its readers a joyous holiday season and a happy and healthy 2012.

Enjoy!

News

WHY SHOULD LAW LIBRARIANS BE TWEETING?

by Maggie Verster
Educational Technologist
ICT4Champions



Law librarians have always been the gateways of information aggregation and dissemination within law firms and faculties. It is their job to source the latest law briefs, publications and tidbits that make it possible to adequately assist their legal eagles to

be on the cutting edge of their respective fields.

I therefore find it quite disconcerting when asked to justify why it is necessary for a law librarian to use social media tools like twitter. Twitter is where cutting edge information is being shared at the moment. From breaking news like the earthquakes in Japan to eyewitness reports, to advocacy that can bring governments to a halt, twitter is where it is happening and in most cases even before it hits the headlines. With almost a million users in South Africa alone, it has become a mainstream tool. You will notice more and more that organisations and brands are sharing their twitter web addresses instead of their website addresses for "on the fly" information and news. Cutting law librarians off from this valuable source of information by blocking them from using it at work, is like asking them to navigate their libraries blindfolded. They will just not see the whole picture!

Personal Learning networks (PLN's)

To illustrate the possibilities presented by a tool like twitter, let's start by defining what twitter is and how it can become a powerful tool in a law librarian's arsenal of information sourcing. Twitter is a microblogging tool where you share short status updates of not more than 140 characters on a global level with anybody who wants to hear it. This forms streams of information as well as professional development resources from which librarians can filter valuable information for his/her firm. It is simple to use and open, which means that you have an incredibly significant audience that you can engage with and they with you. This in turn can lead to creating strong personal learning networks (PLN's) that connect people together into effective communities of practice where they can learn together as well as effortlessly share cutting edge information and resources. By denying them access to tools like twitter, they will miss out on being information pioneers and explorers. By not encouraging your law librarians to be "in the stream" in a responsible way, law firms will lose out on the opportunity to guide and support them in using the tool to perform their jobs more effectively.

Twitter has a feature where you can follow likeminded individuals who are known to share valuable resources and information. These individuals become filters of information that work even more effectively than googling (searching for) information on the internet. A librarian who fits this description is a valuable asset to any firm as he/she not only represents the firm as an innovative law institution, but can also harvest the most appropriate content that is not yet indexed in search engines. Added to this, a well-trained librarian twit can do more constructive marketing for a firm than an entire marketing campaign!

The power of a twitter PLN lies entirely in who forms part of your network. To truly benefit from such a tool, a law librarian will have to source other law librarians and law libraries to follow. It will also be a good idea to follow law publishers in order to keep up with the latest publications and law briefs. Following legal practitioners, government organisations as well as union organisations, provides a comprehensive overview for any good law librarian to gauge the general landscape as it unfolds **in real time**. Twitter will automatically suggest who to follow based on your existing PLN and their connections as well as your interests. The PLN becomes the dashboard of relevant information and valuable learning relationships can be formed in 140 characters or less!

Currently there are not very many local law librarians and law firms on the internet, but the landscape is changing as the legal fraternity is fast catching on to the possibilities and opportunities of having a real-time information stream. The ones that have established themselves as reputable twits clearly have a head start in proving themselves as innovative leaders in legal knowledge sharing and marketing. I have been building a list of law-twits (<http://goo.gl/spRIS>) and am hoping to add to the list as more law librarians, firms, organisations

and societies join the fray. Feel free to peruse the depth of information shared by these visionaries and start building your own law PLN.

Hashtags

I am often asked how you source relevant information around a certain topic or trend when there is so much irrelevant “background noise” (irrelevant chatter) associated with the use of twitter. This is where hashtags come in handy. A hashtag is a keyword that can be placed anywhere in a tweet (the status update) in order to unite users around a specific topic or purpose without having to follow specific users. It allows you to keep track of a specific topic, trend, conference, resource or discussion. The hashtag should be unique enough not be confused with other keywords and in order to avoid multiple streams on different topics contaminating a focused twitter discussion. For instance, a way to keep track of all OSALL resources, news and information would be to create and follow the hashtag **#osallsa**. The use of a hashtag is by no means officially regulated and it organically becomes popular due to frequent use by the community as a whole, creating a trend. It is also used to pull anybody interested in the specific topic (being a topic/trend/conference/meeting) into the conversation in a non-threatening way. Depending on who you would like to reach or network with, you can choose a more general hashtag e.g. **#lawinsa**. One suggestion (from [@infointuitive](#)) for a hashtag to unite law librarians in South Africa is to use **#lawlibsa**. If you search for the term in twitter’s search window you will get a list of tweets from everybody that wanted to connect their tweet to this group (law librarians).

Information and resource sharing

As twitter only has 140 characters available to use in a message, how can librarians effectively share information? One of the best features of twitter is the byte size information tidbits that are effortlessly passed along without having to construct intricate e-mails and attaching large files. Instead of individually sharing resources or information, all you have to do is to insert a web address (for instance a new published book or relevant blog/article post) into your tweet with a brief description. If the resource is loaded onto your web site, copying and sharing the web address is just a matter of cutting and pasting. This in effect means that twitter becomes a portal to other information and pages. If you want to quickly share a file, you can upload it to a local file-sharing facility called www.fileshare.co.za where you will be given an URL (Uniform Resource Locator or web address) to paste into your tweet. Those who choose to follow you or are monitoring a hashtag, simply have to click on the link in the tweet to open the resource. Simple, efficient and effective!

The real power of twitter

When all is said and done it is not about the tool but what you want to achieve. Can Twitter be an effective communication tool? Yes, fast and furious. Can it share resources and information without fuss? Yes, effortlessly. Can it unite people around a topic or cause? Yes and what is more it can have global impact. Can it be used for marketing your firm and library? Yes, if you use it responsibly. Can it provide you with instant assistance via your network? Yes, provided you have taken the time to build a real network of value. So in the end it is about learning and sharing relationships and not about the tool. That is where the real power lies.

So why not just stick to the tried and trusted e-mail tool? The instantaneous open nature of twitter allows it to provide on demand assistance without the “pomp and ceremony” of having to construct time consuming letters. While sharing information and wisdom on the fly, you in effect allow onlookers to learn over your shoulder. The real power of twitter is the people connections that form strong learning and sharing networks.

The way forward

There are already innovators and creative thinkers out there within the realm of the legal profession. They are the leaders and they are the people/firms/publishers to follow. Get yourself in the stream. Unite interests around a common twitter hashtag (e.g.#lawlibsa) and start the conversation.

I just want to thank [@infointuitive](#) for linking me up with [@MaryBruceZA](#) and their collective wisdom shared with me. Thank you [@maribrightmore](#) for asking me to write this article. I have created a list of law related peeps here: <http://www.diigo.com/list/maggiev/Law>. Feel free to twitter about it.

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 Blogs: www.school2.co.za
www.maggie.co.za
<http://saschoollibraries.wordpress.com>
<http://maths-ed.blogspot.com>
<http://saschoollibrary.wordpress.com>
 Wiki’s: <http://saschools.wetpaint.com>
 Flickr: www.flickr.com/maggiev
 Presentations: www.slideshare.net/maggiev
 SN: www.ict4champions.co.za

E-PUBLICATIONS CAN SOLVE OUR WOES: WHY I'M AN E-BOOK EVANGELIST

by **Kosie Eloff**
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A decade ago you [listened to music](#) and [watched video](#) much differently - the same transformation is happening to books. E-books represent 15 - 20% of major US trade publisher sales [\[1\]](#) - a fraction of the global e-book market - and the South African market is growing. Readers buy e-books from Kalahari.net [\[2\]](#), subscribe to You via iPads [\[3\]](#), send documents from Blackberry to Blackberry. Soon, we will buy books directly from copy shops [\[4\]](#) and lend e-books from libraries [\[5\]](#).

I firstly discuss the **practical** aspects, then finish with my **motivation** for advocating e-books.

Practical: where to get an e-book

[Goodreads.com](#)

Search your favourite author, book or title – look for an option entitled : "[get a copy](#)". If the publisher offers the option, you can to buy the e-book from many stores - or get it for free.

[Books.google.com](#)

Google books searches inside *existing* books. I found 856,000 publications referring to Nelson Mandela and can read many of them directly from my browser.

[Books.google.com/ebooks](#)

Google *ebooks* takes this a step further, giving you access to the e-book - if available.

Main e-book formats

Any text document is theoretically an e-book. The main file formats for what most understand as e-books are:

1) Portable Document Format [\[6\]](#)

PDF thrives in a [fixed-layout](#) environment. It's easy to generate and to share. However, mobile devices [cannot reflow](#) the content of a PDF, making it difficult to read.

2) Electronic Publication [\[7\]](#)

Epub is based on HTML - the language of the web. No-one owns this format. It's becoming the standard way to deliver e-publications and is reflowable - perfect for mobile displays.

3) Kindle [\[8\]](#)

Kindle is also based on HTML, but Amazon owns the format. Amazon is the global market leader in sales of its Kindle *devices*, so I expect you've heard of "Kindle books" already.

E-readers / media tablets / smart phones (EMTS)

The difference between these devices is their displays - both in terms of dimensions and operation.

E-ink versus LCD

E-readers use a display called e-ink [\[9\]](#). Unlike other displays (e.g. LCD), e-ink looks *better* in sunlight. E-ink also uses less power; a device can last for two months without recharge. LCD displays consume a lot of power, so media tablets such as the iPad have a limited battery life (around 8-10 hours).

Comparison

If you want to try out one of these 'reading devices', but aren't sure which to try, consider:

E-readers	Media tablets / smart phones
Cheaper (R1200+)	Expensive (R3000+)
Long battery life (in weeks)	Short battery life (in hours)
Read better in sunlight	Read worse in sunlight

[Both offer internet access](#), though, which is important.

Think in terms of the platform, not in terms of specific devices. You don't *need* an EMTS to read e-books. Amazon realized this and released their Kindle software on multiple platforms (Mac, PC, iPhone, Blackberry, Android...) [\[10\]](#).

Motivation: why I'm excited about e-reading

A publishing student asked me why we learn about e-books in South Africa, where people can't afford e-readers, never mind books. I didn't have a straight answer for her back in 2006, when digital media consumption hadn't yet reached the book sector - but as anyone in the publishing profession can attest, things have changed [\[1\]](#).

South Africa is a connected society, and increasingly so.

Now my answer is: a majority of us *can* afford mobile devices [11]. Our reading is moving towards the mobile internet [12]. To emphasize my point about SA and mobile media consumption, consider Blackberry. There are more Blackberries in use in SA than any other phone - yet, globally, Research In Motion (RIM) has a 13.4% share. [13]. RIM is the only company to offer *free mobile internet access* via its Blackberry devices - access to e-books.

Investing in the digital marketplace, we can save money

Media tablets are currently only for the privileged. E-readers prices are dropping steeply (R3200 to R1200 in three years [14]). Also, Amazon offers free 3G browsing on its Kindle e-reader. Initiatives such as Worldreader and Paperight (a-must-read for publishers) [4] are underway to place books in every African's hands - and e-books play a significant role in this.

This is why I'm excited about e-books in South Africa - as you should be.

Other presentations

[Digital publishing: ebooks and mobile devices](#)

[Making sense of ebooks](#)

LIVING LIFE BY THE LAW BOOK

The Career Times (Cape Times, 21 Nov. 2011) recently interviewed law librarian Daphne Burger of Lexinfo Library Consultancy. The article provided some much needed positive exposure for our profession.

Read the full article at:

http://www.lexinfo.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=40

GAIL DENDY

Congratulations are due to law librarian, Gail Dendy, who is an accomplished poet. Gail is the author of seven poetry collections, the latest being *Closer Than That*, published by Dye Hard Press. She was first published by Harold Pinter in 1993, with her subsequent collections appearing in SA, the UK and the US. Her poetry and, more recently, short stories, are regularly published in journals and anthologies.

Read more about Gail's poetry at:

<http://dyehardinterviews.blogspot.com/2011/08/gail-dendy-dancing-in-verse.html>

FUN AT THE 2011 OSALL YEAR END FUNCTION

OSALL Committee Chairman Fanus Olivier embraced the Rugby World Cup theme!



Dotting the "i" and Crossing the "t"

WEIGHING THE OPTIONS : AND BEING FOUND WANTING, VERY WANTING

by Mary Bruce
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For those of us who are yet to acquire an e-reader, the choice of products seems to get ever wider and the costs ever lower but, as with so many decisions, there is no obvious single winner. Two of the people whose technological decisions I most respect have fallen right up against the same fence, just some distance apart. The first is an early adopter of note and soon owned the first Kindle I had seen in this country. He still swears by it. The second has given the matter some consideration but is not to be rushed; he is currently awaiting the arrival of the Kindle Fire in South Africa, a choice influenced largely by the extended applications he will have access

to from a multi-functional tablet rather than a dedicated e-reader. And then there's a colleague who is so happy with her Mobi access that she's not even considering acquiring an e-reader.

When narrowing down which product best suits your needs, there is a mega-list of factors to consider:

- Do you only want to read books, or do your interests extend to newspapers, blogs, magazines, and so on? Do you want to be able to surf too? Do you want access to sound files and videos?
- Are you going to want to read in sunlight and/or at night or in other environments? How will the display cope? Does it have a backlight?
- Do you feel less eye strain using one option compared to another?
- Do you prefer a qwerty keyboard to touchscreen navigation?
- Does the menu layout suit your style or complicate matters?
- Check the battery life
- Compare portability : dimensions including thickness, weight
- Is connectivity through 3G or Wi-Fi or both?
- Where relevant, compare consistency over upgrades. Once you've made a commitment it's going to be harder to switch to a different system down the line
- You are going to have to choose between Kindle (Amazon)'s relatively limited choice of file formats, or the wider options offered with other e-readers
- What content/choice of titles will be available through your chosen product? What are the cost and other implications? Ask questions, lots of them
- Essentially, make sure the product and services are supported in South Africa
- Price

The article Comparing the Kindle 2, Nook, and Sony Reader³ provides cogent guidelines. It points out that all three options include bookmarking, highlighting text and a dictionary; however, only two enable one to borrow or share books and there is a vast difference in storage capacity. If consistency in page numbering between the

'real world' and what you see on screen worries you, one option is going to drive you insane. A particular reader can actually read to you. A different one claims to be the only e-reader that allows you to browse books prior to purchase.

The aforementioned Kindle Fire was released in the US on 14 November, costs \$199 USD and measures 190x120x11.4mm. It is a tablet rather than e-reader and has a colour touch display. The battery will allow up to eight hours of reading. Rather interestingly, it has an email application that allows various webmail accounts to be merged into one inbox. The Wikipedia entry⁴ includes a host of interesting specs.

Lots to think about as this year winds down to its natural conclusion. Many of us have experienced recent unseasonal weather which is not the brightest of ways to welcome the holiday season. It doesn't seem too big a figment of the imagination to see us starting the festive close-down with our noses pressed against windows asking "Can you see the rain, dear"?

But, rain or shine, we can console ourselves with the thought that we are valued for more than our battery life, portability and whether our displays sometimes feel more lead than LED.

Best wishes for 2012, dear e-Reader.

With thanks to Wayne, Kerwin and Collette for comments on their experiences

Opinions expressed in this column are my own and not necessarily those of my employer.

Please send suggestions and contributions for future columns to mary@lawsoc.co.za and/or d.riley@bowman.co.za

¹ Buying guide : how to choose an e-book reader / Priya Ganapati. 22 May 2009 <http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=%22priya+ganapati%22+%22buying+guide%22+%22how+to+choose+a+n+e-book+reader%22&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCIQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.wired.com%2Fgadgetlab%2F2009%2F05%2Fbuying-guide-e-book-reader%2F&ei=uBDXTuahOJPn8QO8qMjfDQ&usq=AFQjCNG1FZI-5AxLpT-jAMU76XL7hMQU8g>

² Find the perfect e-reader / Melissa J Perenson. 29 November 2011

http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=%22melissa+iperenson%22+%22find+the+perfect+e-reader%22&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CD0QqQlwAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.pcworld.com%2Farticle%2F245183%2Ffind_the_perfect_ereader.html&ei=ERHXTsvuCI m38QPvk5zJDQ&usg=AFQjCNGwDGqoQpnAGLYdokR1reaAL_4UPg

³ Comparing the Kindle 2, Nook, and Sony Reader – for dummies

<http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=%22comparing+the+kindle+2%2C+nook%2C+and+sony+reader%22+%22for+dummies%22&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CEkQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.dummies.com%2Fhow-to%2Fcontent%2Fcomparing-the-kindle-2-nook-and-sony-reader.html&ei=dRHXTsWFM8zY8QPi8YDaDQ&usg=AFQjCNEYulZUEE9FBCWqiiKHoDcE2zS-ag>

⁴ Kindle Fire

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kindle_Fire

⁵ E-Readers: reviews of the Kindle, Nook and other e-readers

<http://www.pcworld.com/products/tablets/ereaders.html>

⁶ e-Reader review: what to look for in an e-Reader comparison

<http://ereadercomparisonchart.org/ereader-reviews/>

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