

Amazon Kindle goes international

CALIFORNIA, USA: Amazon.com on Tuesday, 6 October 2009, announced it is releasing an international version of the Kindle and trimming prices of the coveted electronic book readers.



Kindle models designed to synch with telecom networks in countries around the world (including South Africa) are priced at US\$279 and the prices of basic Kindles tailored only for use in the United States were cut \$40 to \$259.

"For the first time ever, Kindle is available for sale outside the US," Amazon founder Jeff Bezos said as he provided a glimpse of the international model in Cupertino, California.

"Now, Kindle will work in a hundred countries. With Kindle you can be in France and get an English-language book within seconds."

International versions of the e-readers can be ordered online through Amazon but shipping won't start until 19 October.

"Our vision for Kindle is every book ever printed, in print or out of print, in every language available," Bezos said.

For now, downloads are only available in English, although the giant online retailer has teams working on digitising books in other languages.

Kindle has become the top selling item at Amazon since its US launch two years ago. It is also the most "gifted and wished for" product on Amazon's virtual shelves, according to Bezos.

For every 100 ink-and-paper books Amazon sells, 48 digital editions are bought for reading on Kindles.

Bezos told of a continuing flood of email messages from Kindle converts, book lovers who went from shunning to embracing digital works.

"What people realise is they can enter the author's world and have the device disappear the way a book does," Bezos said adding that Kindle's advantages include one-handed reading, its light weight, and built-in dictionaries.

"There really is a renaissance in reading in that regard. There is no turning back."

Amazon plans next year to release an international version of a sleek new Kindle DX model that hit the US market about five months ago.

Kindle DX e-readers are still available only in the United States and will remain priced at \$489 each.

Cost reductions resulting from high-volume manufacturing, not the increasingly competitive electronic book reader market has led to the price cuts, according to Bezos.

US telecom colossus AT&T handles wireless connections for Kindles in the United States and is overseeing deals with telecom firms in various countries to wirelessly link Amazon e-readers to the Internet.

Kindles use high-speed mobile telephone networks to download books, magazines, newspapers, or personal documents.

"Kindle has revolutionised the way we purchase and read books, by making it mobile, easy, and intuitive," said AT&T chief executive Randall Stephenson.

Seattle-based Amazon's list of more than 85 newspapers and magazines available on Kindle include Italy's La Stampa; Spain's El Pais; France's Le Monde, and Britain's Daily Telegraph.

Rival companies are boosting their e-reader business as well.

Sony unveiled plans in August to do away with proprietary software on its electronic Sony Reader and convert to an industry standard in a move that "allows Sony to make its e-book store compatible with multiple devices."

Sony's move is seen as a direct challenge to Amazon, whose electronic books can only be read on the Kindle or on an Apple iPhone using Kindle software.

Sony Corp. announced early this year that Internet giant Google is making more than 500 000 copyright-free books available for its electronic reader.

Source: AFP

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