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For immediate release

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Kobo eReaders @ the library

Kobo ereaders are now available for borrowing at Vancouver Island Regional Library.

The library has recently acquired 90 Kobos to allow customers at its 38 branches to experience the popular new technology. 'Kobo' is an anagram of the word 'book'.

The Kobo ereaders come preloaded with 100 books, and customers can get ebooks from the library's website that offers some 5,500 downloadable titles through a shared province-wide service, called Library To Go.

Fiona Anderson, director of library services at Vancouver Island Regional Library (VIRL), says that downloadable books are surging in popularity.

"Last year, VIRL's 163,000 customers downloaded more than 29,500 ebooks and audiobooks and, in the first six months of this year alone, we had over 28,000 such checkouts. In fact, VIRL customers are the third highest borrowers of ebooks in BC," she says.

Workshops in learning how to find, check out, and borrow ebooks are popular because it is not always easy to establish the download protocol the first time.

"The first time, it may take you an hour to set up the required download protocol but, once it's established, it takes no time to download materials," Anderson says.

While librarians share the ebook technology excitement, there are many issues still to be resolved with some publishers, who have decided that their titles may only be borrowed by one patron at a time.

"Unfortunately, some publishers don't allow their ebooks to be made available to libraries, and that limits our selection somewhat," she says. "In addition, some ereader brands don't allow downloading of library books, although some companies are starting to change their policy. For instance, Amazon does not allow its Kindle ereader to download library books in Canada, but they have recently relaxed their policy in the US, and we're hoping they will extend this to Canada in the near future."

Anderson says that customers come to the library with high expectations, and they have a hard time understanding why they can't always download any ebook instantly – why they have to wait for a title to become available.

"Those rules are imposed on us by publishers, not by our librarians," she says. "Libraries across North America are having discussions with publishers, and we're hopeful that one day they will relax the rules for ebooks in libraries."

The new Kobo ereaders can be borrowed from the library for a three-week period. Instructions on use are included with the ereaders, and help is available from library staff for first-time users of the new technology.

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