

## **R.E.A.D.S. for Tennessee :**

### **Downloadable E-books and Audio**

**by**

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**Conference Abstract:** Come find out about the latest craze in libraries—downloadable audio and e-books. Learn how the Tennessee State Library and Archives, through its Regional Library System, selected and implemented this project and the exciting plans for its future.

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### **R.E.A.D.S.—Past, Present, and Future**

Marion Bryant, Bluegrass Regional Library director, began the session with a short history of the Regional e-Book and Audiobook Download System (R.E.A.D.S.) and how the entire project started. In early 2005, Laurel Best, director of Murfreesboro's Linebaugh Public Library, invited the library directors in Cleveland, Williamson County, and Brentwood, to discuss purchasing downloadable audio books. Ms. Bryant and Betty Jo Jarvis, Highland Rim Regional Library director, were invited to participate in several product demonstrations through their association with these libraries. Through these demonstrations, it was determined that Overdrive's pricing model and consortial structure was possibly a good fit for the regional library system. Ms. Bryant asked the four libraries to hold off on making a decision to purchase separately so she could share this information with the other regional directors. Her hope was that all regional library centers and the libraries they served could participate as a consortium.

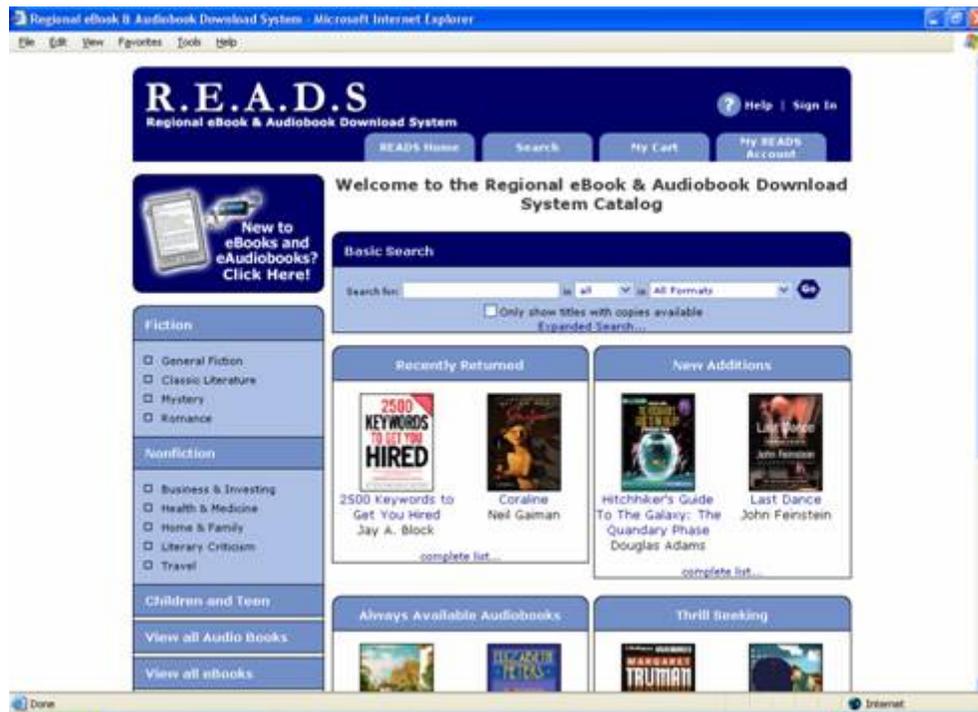
Ms. Bryant presented the idea to the regional library directors, state library staff, and Secretary of State Riley Darnell. Mr. Darnell was impressed with the program and saw potential for libraries across the state; he immediately agreed to pay the initial licensing fee for the product. At that point, the procurement process began in earnest, and a committee was formed to oversee its implementation. This committee consisted of six people. Bob Toth, Marion Bryant, and Nancy Renfro represented the regional libraries in west, middle and east Tennessee, respectively. Tricia Bengel represented the State Library and Archives, while Ruth Hemphill represented the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Representing public libraries was Laurel Best, director of the Linebaugh Public Library in Murfreesboro.

The committee discussed many details of the program: policies for how many books could be checked out at one time, what the website should look like, etc. One of the main discussions was method of payment. Each regional library is assessed a fee based on the number of public libraries in their region. This assessment purchases materials for the collection. The first year's budget was \$32,000, with an additional \$7000 credit from Overdrive. Half of the money was spent for an opening day collection. One of the major features was a collection called "always available". This collection of 50 downloadable audio titles has no limits on the number of checkouts. The committee felt it was critical that some materials be available at all times in case the demand was so great that all the other titles were checked out. The collection began with 261 e-books and 363 audio books. As of April 5<sup>th</sup>, the collection included 1330 titles.

Nancy Renfro, Watauga Regional Library director, then led the group through a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the R.E.A.D.S. website. The first few slides showed different public library websites and their treatment of R.E.A.D.S. She stressed the importance of having information about R.E.A.D.S. on the front page of a library's website so that patrons can easily find what they're looking for. She highlighted the [Watauga Regional Library](#) website, the [Linebaugh Public Library](#) site, [Brentwood Public Library](#), and the [C.E. Weldon Public Library](#) in Martin.

From there, she showed a screen shot of the main page of the R.E.A.D.S. system at <http://reads.lib.overdrive.com>.

**Figure 1.** R.E.A.D.S system Web site, main page.



She mentioned that the site was designed by the committee, and can be changed as necessary. She highlighted the help menu, entitled “New to eBooks and eAudiobooks”. She told the group that they should familiarize themselves with the help menu, and also send patrons to that menu. Libraries should not have to hand out a lot of information. The site was designed to be all-inclusive.

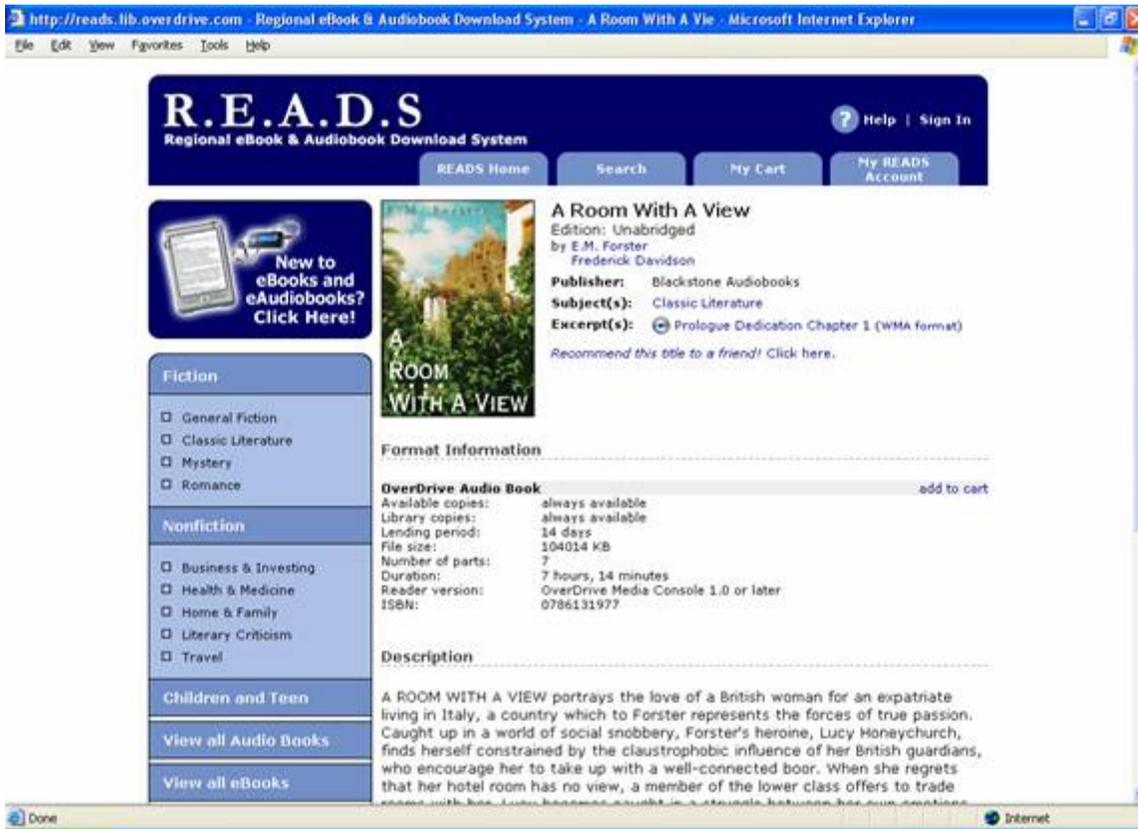
She then pointed out several of the boxes in the middle of the screen. Those were designed to highlight specific collections, and can be changed as needed. For example, “Thrill seeking” can be changed to “Travel”. The three other collections will probably stay, since one is the collection of “Always Available Audiobooks,” and the other two highlight books that were recently returned to the collection and books that were just purchased.

Ms. Renfro then showed the group how to see the complete list of titles available. Links to "Place on hold" or "Add to cart" appear next to each title. If items are available for checkout, patrons can immediately place them in their cart, where they will stay for 60 minutes while they continue to browse. If a title is already checked out, a patron can put it on hold, by entering his/her email address. Once a title is returned, the patron who has

requested the hold will receive an email notice that the book is now available for checkout.

She also indicated that some publishers allow their books to be burned to CD, and some do not. Patrons will see that information clearly on the screen. She then showed how to select a book from the "always available" collection, as shown below (see fig. 2).

**Figure 2.** R.E.A.D.S item record



She noted that the screen shows the number of copies available at any point, the lending period, and the length of the download (ex. 7 hours, 14 minutes). From this screen, a patron can also add the item to his/her cart. Note that up to this point, no login is necessary. A patron can search, put materials on hold, and add items to a cart before having to give the system any identifying information. However, once the patron clicks on "Proceed to checkout", the system will prompt for library card information. The screen below will then appear, allowing the patron to choose a region (see fig. 3). This map looks very similar to the [map used for TEL](#).

**Figure 3.** A patron chooses a region before signing into his/her account.



After the patron chooses a region, the next screen provides choices of libraries in that region. Although the regional office is not listed, all the public libraries, including their respective branches, are included. For example, the Sullivan County Library System has five locations, and a patron can choose a favorite branch, such as the Colonial Heights branch. After a branch is selected from the drop-down menu, the patron will then put in his/her library barcode.

Once this information is entered, the patron will be returned to the checkout screen and asked to confirm the checkout of the book. If the book is a downloadable audio, s/he can then download the Overdrive Media Console, a free reading device, which only has to be downloaded once. After the software is downloaded, the patron will be able to choose how much of the audio book will be download at this particular time; anytime during the two week checkout period other parts can be downloaded until the entire book is completed. Downloadable audio books are automatically checked back in to the READS system after two weeks. No patron action is required.

The process for e-books is slightly different. Adobe Acrobat Reader software is required to read e-books. If a patron does not already have Adobe Reader loaded on his/her computer, it can be downloaded during the checkout process. The one caveat with e-books is that they can only be downloaded once in the two week period, so patrons should make sure that the device they download the e-book onto is the device they wish to actually read it on. E-books can be checked in by the patron before the two week period is up. To do so, the patron would open Adobe Reader, go to File on the menu bar, scroll down to Digital Editions, then select My Digital Editions. A display screen of the book cover will appear. Right click on the book cover, and then select Return to Lender. Then click on OK. If everything works as it should, the book cover will disappear.

Ms. Renfro mentioned that the e-book collection has many popular titles that are difficult for libraries to keep on their shelves, such as testing books (ACT, SAT, etc.), as well as resume and cover letter books. Patrons can print off portions of the material for their own use instead of marking up the library's copy or tearing out pages.

Members of the R.E.A.D.S. committee and the regional directors have access to statistics to track the usage of the system. The usage has been amazing. Some of the statistics include the number of holds, the number of checkouts (systemwide or by individual location), and checkouts by title, patron, or subject. The top ten holds for March 2006 were: *24 Hours*, *Abduction*, *Bad Place*, *5th Horseman*, *Palindrome*, *Angels Flight*, *Hideaway*, *Full Bloom*, *Freakonomics*, and *Memphis Ribs*.

“Why downloadable audio and ebooks?” The answers are simple:

- They are available anytime and from anywhere.
- It is not possible for them to be lost, stolen, or damaged.
- The money and collections are shared statewide.
- Weeding is easily done.
- The books require no processing.
- The materials are never overdue.
- There are no physical space limitations, since they exist electronically.
- The libraries are able to receive quick usage statistics.
- One of the main selling points is accessibility for people with mobility and visual impairments.

- For the patrons, it gives them anonymity to read materials they may feel uncomfortable bringing to the front desk of the library.
- But most of all, it's easy and fun.

Tricia Bengel, TSLA Special Projects Coordinator, then spoke about the future of R.E.A.D.S. She mentioned that Overdrive is rolling out a new product called Download Station, which will allow downloads from library computers by bypassing the hard drive and downloading directly to a portable device. We are still in pricing negotiations for this product. She then mentioned that music and video downloads are already available through Overdrive, but that we are waiting to purchase these until we have a handle on books.

The trio announced that publicity materials are available on the Tennessee State Library and Archives homepage at <http://tennessee.gov/tsla/lps/electronic.htm>.