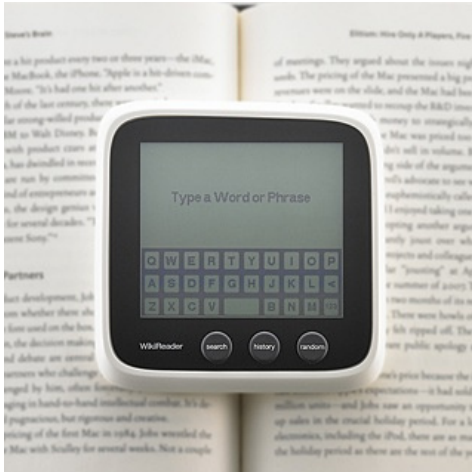




Wikipedia Goes All Douglas Adams With Portable E-Reader

BY KIT EATON Tue Oct 13, 2009 at 6:35 AM

Think of Wikipedia, and your mental image probably has you sitting at a PC tapping your queries in. But that's about to change because Wikipedia's Wikireader takes the encyclopedia mobile, in a sweetly *Hitchhiker's Guide* kind of way.



Meet the WikiReader, developed by Openmoko in official collaboration with Wikipedia and available at retail starting today for \$99. As the press release says, it's a "palm-sized electronic encyclopedia containing the more than three million English language articles of Wikipedia" that works entirely off-line. In a time when people are raving about e-readers, the Wikireader is a neat little piece of lateral-thinking, being part electronic-book, part e-reader...and having the advantage of instant power-on, and cheap price due to its simple components.

Drawing comparisons with *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* is kind of inevitable--remember Douglas Adam's description: "It's a sort of electronic book, it tells you everything you need to know about anything. That's its job." The Guide was also compiled by a suite of roving researchers, roughly equivalent to Wiki's crowdsourcing and central editing of its content.

The Wikireader doesn't bear the words "Don't Panic" on its back cover, sadly, but Openmoko did give the device a clever interface, in a way that surpasses *The Guide's* "hundred tiny flat press buttons and a screen about four inches square." Because though it does indeed have a tempered glass screen about that size, it only has three buttons--Search, History, and Random--and the rest of its controls are handled via a touchscreen interface. The first two buttons are obvious. The last almost turns the Wikireader into a toy for studious kids (complete with parental controls)--we've all enjoyed a random dip into Wiki's archive at some point, haven't we?

There's also a delightful irony in where the device is being sold: Through Amazon's online store. Considering Amazon's Kindle is touted as the most successful [portable electronic book](#), and one can access Wikipedia online via its built-in browser, this is an amusing move. And get this: while Amazon does, of course, give users access to the live edition of the encyclopedia, the Wikireader's content isn't static: You can update its built-in memory card by free downloadable code, or by a \$29 subscription service that'll send you a fresh card biannually. In truth, since the Wikireader's a single-use device, Amazon's probably deemed it's competitor status as mostly harmless.

[Via [Wikireader](#)]



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October 13, 2009 at 10:12am by [Shevonne Polastre](#)

I am really shocked that Amazon is selling the device. It does remind me of "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy"