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eReaders

Kobo takes a page from the Kindle

Indigo announces it will sell its budget eReader in Canada starting in May

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It is a truth universally acknowledged that a book lover in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a gadget.

At least, that's what publishers and makers of e-reader devices are betting on. Wednesday, another device joined the fray: **Indigo Books & Music Inc.** announced that it will sell its Kobo eReader in Canada starting in May, at a price that undercuts some competing devices.

The e-reader will cost about \$150, and is a bid by Indigo to compete with the popular Kindle, sold online by Amazon.com Inc. for \$259 (U.S.). The Sony Reader, by comparison, is offered at a discount on its Canadian site for roughly \$200 to \$300 (Canadian), depending on the model, but typically runs up to \$350.

The Kobo e-reader looks remarkably similar to the Kindle, with its white plastic shell and inky grayscale screen, but it has a large, blue four-way navigator button in place of its counterpart's little white nubbin. And its quilted back is supposed to simulate "the touch and comfort of traditional books."

If Indigo wants Kobo to be affordable enough to attract a wider segment of consumers who might not be willing to shell out more than \$200 for a book that can break, it may yet have some slashing to do. A report last year by [Forrester Research](#) suggested e-readers will need to be priced closer to \$50-\$99 (U.S.) before they will be widely adopted.

The report said that the e-reader segment is challenged by devices such as Apple's iPhone and a variety of netbook computers, which compete for customers' discretionary budgets at similar prices.

The timing of the launch also comes on the heels of the mega-hyped Apple iPad tablet computer, which functions as an e-reader, among other things. The iPad is set to be available in Canada starting at the end of April.

Kobo Inc. was launched in December after Indigo spun off its Shortcovers digital book business. The Canadian book retailer controls roughly 60 per cent of the company, and partners with Borders Group Inc. and other partners in Australia and [Hong Kong](#). Borders will sell the Kobo eReader in the U.S. starting this summer.

The company also unveiled its new software yesterday, which works with devices other than its own e-reader, including laptops, smart phones and tablets such as the iPad. That software can be linked up with a Kobo account for buying digital books.

"We believe consumers want choice, and the freedom to read on any device. Building great eReading applications and partnering with leading device manufacturers is a recipe for success in this quickly growing

market," Kobo chief executive officer Michael Serbinis said in a statement.

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