

## E-book sales enter brisk chapter

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Staff writer

Japan's electronic book market gained about ¥10 billion in sales last year to reach ¥57.4 billion and is expected to exceed ¥130 billion in five years, a research company said Thursday.

According to Impress R&D, a Tokyo-based information technology research firm, sales in fiscal 2009 overwhelmingly came from e-books for cell phones — ¥51 billion — while ¥6 billion was spent on content for computers.

Comic books, or "manga," for cell phones have been leading the growth, but new types of e-book readers, including smart phones and Apple's iPad tablet computer, are expected to see dramatic growth over the next few years, said Masahiro Kitagawa, an expert on the e-book industry and an executive of Impress Holdings Inc., which owns Impress R&D.

"E-book sales for cell phones are expected to stay the same or decrease a bit. New platforms will join the market and will probably lead the growth," Kitagawa said during a seminar at the Tokyo International Book Fair, which runs through Sunday at Tokyo Big Sight.

With the boost from new platforms, sales of e-books should top ¥130 billion by fiscal 2014, Kitagawa said, adding that the pace of growth will depend on how quickly the Japanese publishing industry adjusts to provide strong content.

He said the environment is starting to pick up this year.

With the iPad's debut providing a boost, this year is considered by many to be the beginning of the e-book era, and people in the Japanese publishing industry and related fields are trying to make the most of it at



The old-fashioned way: People gather at Google Inc.'s booth to learn about Google Books at the 17th Tokyo International Book Fair at Tokyo Big Sight on Thursday.  
YOSHIAKI MIURA PHOTO

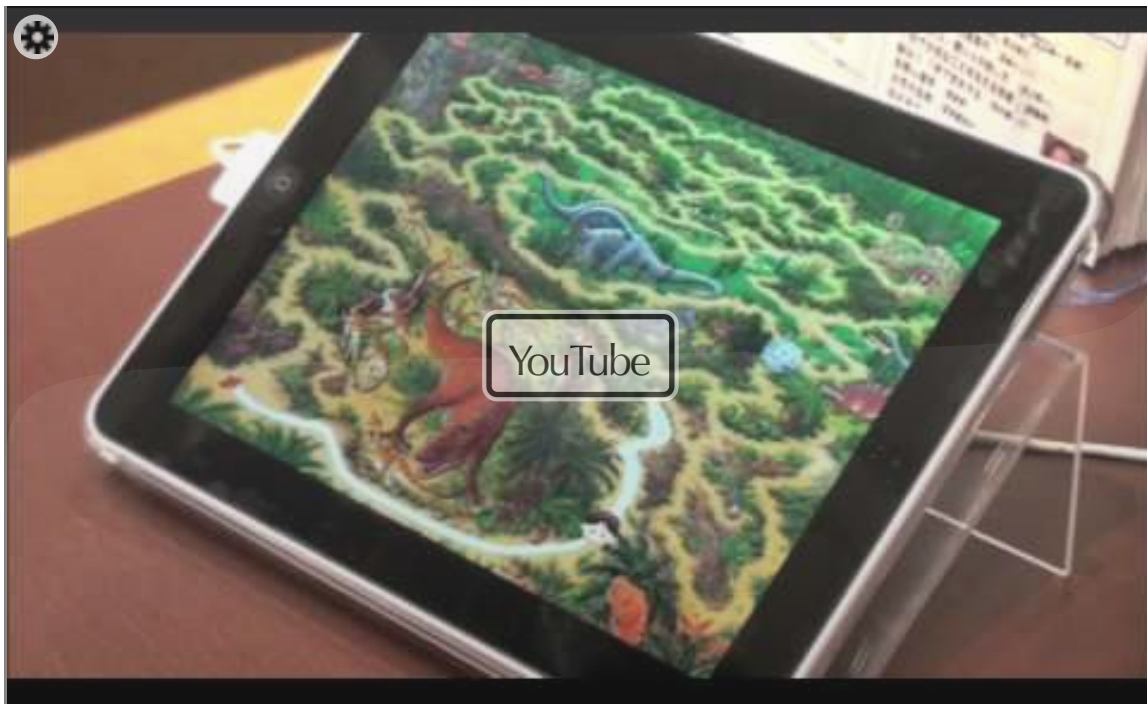
the fair, which has drawn about 1,000 companies from 30 countries.

Many companies, regardless of size, are displaying e-book related products and gadgets, including viewing software and e-book rental services.

Internet giant Google Inc.'s booth in particular was drawing a lot of attention Thursday as the company pitched its Google Books and Google Editions services.

Partnering with more than 20,000 publishers and authors, Google Books enables users to search through the full text of books and then take users to online bookstores where those books are available for purchase.

Google Editions is a service where users pay a fee to read books stored in Google's servers. It will start in the U.S. this year, while the launch in Japan is not yet decided.



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