

E-books are now the fastest growing service of the Chautauqua-Cattaraugus Library System, according to Director Catherine Way.

"Our local experience mirrors a national e-book surge," Ms. Way said.

In February, American publishers ranked e-books as their #1 format, and Amazon.com recently announced its customers now buy more e-books than print books.

Using library cards from the System's 24 automated libraries, area residents have downloaded more than 9,000 e-books since the System began offering them in December 2010.

The top downloads to date are "To Have and to Kill," "The 19th Wife," "And Then There Were None," "The Girl who Kicks the Hornet's Nest," "Harvesting the Heart" and "The Pillars of the Earth."

Borrowers have access to a System collection of 426 titles purchased by Hazeltine Public Library in Busti, Smith Memorial Library at Chautauqua, Darwin R. Barker Library in Fredonia, Prendergast Library in Jamestown, Olean Public Library and Mayville Public Library.

This collection includes biographies, history, self-help and inspirational titles plus many New York Times bestsellers and the 2011 titles chosen for the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle. New titles, including some for children and teens, continue to be added every month.

Recent purchases include "Sixkill" by Robert B. Parker, "The Mighty Queens of Freeville" by Amy Dickinson, "The Final Storm" by Jeff Shaara, "In the Garden of Beasts" by Erik Larson, "The Essence of Happiness" by the Dalai Lama, and "If You Ask Me" by Betty White.

Patrons also have access to 15,000 free public domain titles through Project Gutenberg, a volunteer effort to digitize older books no longer subject to copyright restrictions. These include classics in the fields of literature, history, science, biography, religion, philosophy and drama.

The library system partners with OverDrive, Inc., a leading provider of download media catalogs, to provide its online collection. E-books are compatible with the Barnes and Noble Nook, iPod Touch, Sony Reader, and many other devices. Kindle book-borrowing is expected to be available later this year.

To download e-books, cardholders of the System's automated libraries log on to <http://ccls.lib.overdrive.com/> or go to the Web site of an automated library, such as www.prendergastlibrary.org, and click on the OverDrive logo. OverDrive has recently redesigned its Help section with added graphics and step-by-step instruction in an effort

to streamline the process of installing free software, selecting titles, checking them out, and downloading them to a desktop computer, mobile device or e-book reader.

People may also call Prendergast Library's Public Computer Center at 484-7135, Ext. 247, to ask questions or arrange for one-on-one assistance from staff members. The PCC has four devices available for demonstrations – iPod Touch, Kindle, NookColor and Sony Touch, and programs about them are available for local organizations.

According to Ms. Way, the success of e-books follows close on the heels of the demand for downloadable audio books, which showed a 400 percent increase in circulation the first two years after they were introduced in 2007, and continue to grow in popularity.