Libraries in Palm Beach County promote summer reading

By Jaclyn Rosansky, Sun Sentinel

9:58 PM EDT, June 20, 2011

The library's summer reading program isn't what it was 10 or 20 years ago.

Today, children have more reading options than ever — e-books, picture books, audio books, comic books, newspapers and magazines — along with the classics their parents remember.

About 8,000 youngsters are registered for this summer's reading program at Palm Beach County Library branches, said Cilla Jacobson, library youth services coordinator, and they have plenty of high-tech choices. The system has 1,806 e-books, with 480 e-book titles for young adults and children, and 4,199 audio books.

The library does not provide e-readers, Jacobson said, but using them is encouraged.

Young readers who pledge to read 10 hours through July 29, and teens 13-16 who pledge to read 16 hours, successfully complete the program and win prizes along the way.

Making reading interactive is important in today's tech-savvy world. Children can download e-books at home from the library's website, giving them more options, Jacobson said.

"There has to be a foundation built for the summer reading programs," said Florida Atlantic University core reading instructor Leslie Calhoun. "Based on research, we know it's very important for kids to read over the summer."

Kids who do not read over the summer experience an average learning loss of three months, Calhoun said.

For the past two weeks, libraries across Palm Beach County had their kickoff events for the nationwide summer reading program, "One World, Many Stories."

Even though children can complete the reading program from home, the library still is a place for gathering as a community, Jacobson said. Throughout the summer, games, crafts, music and magic shows will supplement all the reading.

At the Greenacres branch on Thursday, children and their parents watched magician James Changefield.

"My kids love the magic shows," said Stacy Fichtman, the mother of two. "I wish they had more stuff like this."
Dawn Belgrave said she finds the library helpful.

"I think reading is important," she said. Belgrave said her 3-year-old son, Tyler, enjoys reading.

"Since he was a baby he's been coming to the library," she said.

Tyler's smile widened when his mom asked him what he liked to read. "The Lion King" and "Don't Climb Out of the Window Tonight" are his favorites.

"Kids are technology-based now," said Calhoun, "They want to go on Twitter and blog and use social networks to talk about what they read, too," she said.