

Offline Book Scouting

I call this type of book scouting service offline because while you have to have an Internet connection initially to get it setup, you don't need one when you're actually looking up prices. This type of service allows you to download a copy of most or all of Amazon's pricing information for their millions of books onto a device such as a cell phone or PDA. This can be done via a memory card that is inserted into the computer; the pricing information is then downloaded onto it, and can then be transferred into the PDA or cell phone. The whole premise is to get a copy of Amazon's pricing information onto a device that you can take with you in the field to go scouting for books.



Neatoscan Offline Book Scouting Service

Hardware required - The upfront cost of offline book scouting can be very pricey. At a minimum, you will need a device to download the pricing information to. This is typically a PDA running the Windows Mobile operating system. Brands such as Dell Axims, Palm Treos, or HP iPAQs are popular choices. Once you have the handheld device, you then have to purchase the storage card to insert into the device to get the pricing data onto it. This is the very minimum but some booksellers choose to purchase a barcode scanner to complement this. A scanner gives you the ability to scan the barcode on the newer books without having to manually input the ISBN number. There are a number of different barcode scanners, such as ones that are inserted into the device itself or wireless scanners that utilize a technology called Bluetooth to connect wirelessly to the device. A minimum expense you'd expect to pay for the device itself is \$200, and if you decide to get a top of the line device plus a nice Bluetooth scanner, you can pay upwards of \$1000.

Advantages - The biggest advantage to using the offline method is being able to look up a book's current price from anywhere. There is no dependency on the Internet. This allows the bookseller to go anywhere and either manually input ISBNs or scan barcodes on the book. It's also a lot quicker to look up the price because the information is stored on the device itself instead of having to go to the Internet to find the price.

Disadvantages - The only big disadvantage to using this is the price discrepancy between what your device tells you and what's actually on Amazon's site at the time. Since you download a copy of Amazon's pricing information, it is not the true, real-time information directly from Amazon. Prices on books change every second on Amazon and anything more than a few minutes old could be considered out of date. You also depend on the book scouting service that you connect to for up to date pricing information. You may download the information right before you go to a book sale but if the service only gets the information from Amazon once a week, the information may be a week old. However, even if the service can continually keep the information up to date (I'm not familiar with any service that can do this currently), it would still be a little outdated when you go the sale.