Losing track when reading e-books

By Maia Szalavitz, Time

I received a Kindle for my birthday, and enjoying "light reading," in addition to the dense science I read for work, I immediately loaded it with mysteries by my favorite authors. But I soon found that I had difficulty recalling the names of characters from chapter to chapter. At first, I attributed the lapses to a scary reality of getting older — but then I discovered that I didn't have this problem when I read paperbacks.

When I discussed my quirky recall with friends and colleagues, I found out I wasn't the only one who suffered from "e-book moments." Online, I discovered that Google's Larry Page himself had concerns about research showing that on-screen reading is measurably slower than reading on paper.

This seems like a particularly troubling trend for academia, where digital books are slowly overtaking the heavy tomes I used to lug around. On many levels, e-books seem like better alternatives to textbooks — they can be easily updated and many formats allow readers to interact with the material more, with quizzes, video, audio and other multimedia to reinforce lessons. But some studies suggest that there may be significant advantages in printed books if your goal is to remember what you read long-term.