

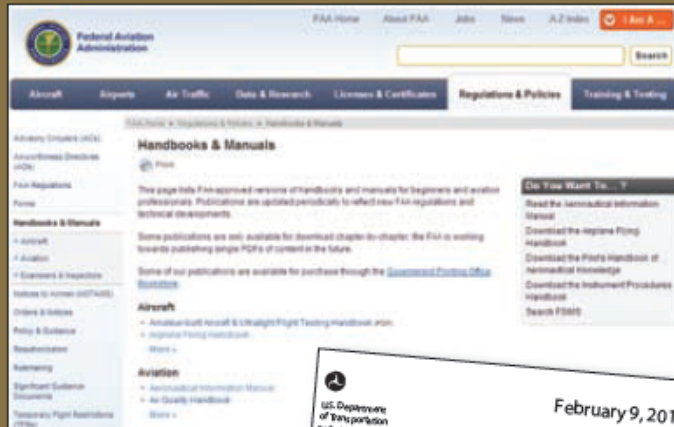
PAPER OR PLASTIC?

Up front, let's acknowledge that books themselves do not confer any special characteristics on the quality of the training we receive and the ways in which we maintain currency. Electronic materials—especially interactive products—offer many benefits, chief among them the ease with which they can be updated and distributed. Many of the items you should have in an aviation library are uniquely suited for an electronic format. And, say what you will about the FAA, its Web site offers a wealth of important, accurate information and references free for the download.

Regulations and guidance are the best candidates for electronic distribution and retention. In fact, we really shouldn't retain much of this stuff at all—whether on paper or in electronic format—because it keeps changing. (Sometimes: Earlier this year, the FAA finally got around to removing from the AIM its long-standing material on Loran, which ceased operation on February 8, 2010.) The best way to keep track of the FARS, for example, is to access them online. That way, you'll always be looking at the current regs, even as historical ones are only a click away. That said, many of the best resources for studying and understanding aviation theory are on a printed, not electronic page.

The only problem I have with the electronic versions of many publications is my preference for thumbing through physical pages as opposed to swiping, scrolling or clicking my way along. If I want to (re-)read Ernie Gann's *Fate Is The Hunter*, I won't dig through my iPad for it; I'll grab it off a shelf.

Too, there's not much future in trying to acquire and maintain an all-electronic library—if only because there's



little to show visitors. But full, downloadable copies of the AIM, the P/CG and ATC are available as PDFs for delivery to your iPad or EFB of choice. Even if you don't keep them handy, knowing where and how they're available—and not some mysterious texts only instructors refer to in hushed tones—enables you to spend your time elsewhere.

