

Dropbox on iOS is disappointing

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Dropbox popularized the idea of cloud storage. They were the first widely used product which normal people like my mother could understand. On OSX Dropbox is integrated very well with the OS. In fact, you can see Dropbox as a folder and basically forget that the files which you save locally will be transmitted on the server in the background.

On a daily basis I use Google Drive, but when I got an iPad, I thought it'd be good to keep Dropbox as my iPad backing store, so that I don't get distracted with my normal stuff. I intended to keep PDFs, books and other documents in Dropbox so that I could use my iPad for productive work.

First surprise: iOS version of Dropbox isn't well suited for this. To my knowledge there's no way to synchronize the whole directory for offline access. Basically when I wanted to make my directory called "PDFs" available offline, I had no way to do so. My solution to the problem was to go through my documents and tag them for offline reading individually. File by file. Guess how happy I was during doing that?

Second surprise is when I realized that the offline mode is only sensible for people who want to read documents in Dropbox itself. Dropbox comes with a built-in PDF which is fairly limited, and since I can't make it work in pages mode (scroll to swap a page), I wanted to read my PDFs in Acrobat Reader. This isn't supported, since Acrobat. Reader states the file is unavailable. There's no way to send the file to Acrobat Reader from within Dropbox. When I share the document with AR, the network connectivity is prohibited.

So that's a double bummer. Seems like I need to figure out a way to just sync files from Dropbox on the shared file system within iOS and later pointer Acrobat Reader to this location. Am I expecting too much?