The growth of e-book collections at South African academic libraries
A case study of the Western Cape

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Overview

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Introduction

• Libraries still very much associated with books (Dewan, 2012; Medeiros, 2011).

• E-journal now widely integrated into academic libraries. Commonly accepted as successor to print journal (Anderson, 2009; Medeiros, 2012; Joint, 2010).

• What value e-books?
Introduction

• JISC National E-books Observatory project:

E-books “have entered into the mainstream of academic life and people are increasingly expecting to source e-book materials from the university library” (Rowlands et al., 2009).
Study objectives

• Investigate current and potential use of e-books at South African university libraries from a user’s perspective.

  – Attitudes to e-resources
  – Use being made of e-books
  – Expectations of e-books in libraries
Participants, sampling & responses

- Western Cape universities
- Students and academic staff
- All faculties, levels of study, age groups
- Invitation via email; online questionnaire
- Participants remained anonymous
- No compulsory questions
- Data triangulated with librarians’ responses
- $n = 1,355$

A school of choice in Africa for Library and Information Studies
Survey results
General e-resource use

Material read electronically

- Academic journals: 76%
- Newspapers, magazines: 67%
- Academic books: 64%
- Leisure titles: 58%
- Reference books: 58%
- Textbooks, manuals: 58%

* A large percentage of all ages, except for over-65s, claim to read e-books.

- Users are interested in using e-books.
- There is a need for academic e-books.
Reading preferences

- Preferences are dependent on certain factors.
- Print collections are still important.
Use of e-books

• E-books are not being used by the majority of the population.

Have read e-books from university library

- I don’t know: 4%
- No: 57%
- Yes: 39%
Reasons for not using e-books

1. I didn’t know my university library stocks e-books and so I have never looked for them.
2. I don’t know where to find e-books.
3. When searching for information in the library, e-books have never come up in the search results.
4. I simply prefer to read a print book.
5. I don’t like the scrolling and navigating involved in reading an e-book.
Satisfaction with e-book collections

- Librarians don’t expect user satisfied with collections.
- Even “satisfactory” collections, are not unequivocally so.
E-book discovery

- Google: 75%
- University library catalogue or discovery tool: 70%
- Via databases: 57%
- Links from course reading lists: 44%
- Links from the university library website: 36%
- Links from the university VLE: 34%
- Links sent from friends: 27%
- Online bookshops: 24%
- Book reviews: 16%
E-book features: access & use

• Most important to users:
  – Anywhere, anytime access
  – Search functionality

• Users want convenience, and e-books features that enhance accessibility and speed.
• Users are not always aware of the added-value features that e-book packages offer.
E-book features: borrowing

• Most important to users:
  – borrow any e-book, not only those already owned by the library

• Also important:
  – borrow textbooks, short loan and interlibrary loan books as e-books
Device ownership and use

• 90% want to download e-books to computer or memory device
  92% have regular, unlimited access to a laptop

• 51% want to borrow e-book readers
  18% own an e-reader

• 43% want to download e-books to a cellphone
  78% own a cellphone with internet access
To conclude: some comments from users

- More aware of e-books now
- Had not known that features such as note-taking, highlighting, bookmarking and customising could be part of an e-book offering
- Had been under the impression that e-books were limited to fiction
- Had been “against the use of e-books over the use of a printed book” but now see the benefits of e-books for academic use
- Feel they should adapt to this “new” technology
- Will approach librarians to ask about e-books in library
References


Thank you!

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