

**E-BOOKS - ESSENTIALS OR EXTRAS?
THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND LIBRARY EXPERIENCE**

Ksenija Obradovic
Cataloguing Librarian
The University of Auckland Library
Private Bag 92019
Auckland New Zealand
Ph: +64 9 3737599 ext.85797, Fax +64 9 3737401
Email: k.obradovic@auckland.ac.nz

Abstract:

The e-publishing industry is developing rapidly, providing new opportunities for libraries, but creating new challenges as well. Questions on how best to integrate e-books into the learning environment are pressing. In 2003, the University of Auckland Library provided access to nearly 80,000 e-books through the library catalogue only. This paper will explore some of the theoretical and practical issues of implementing e-books in the University of Auckland Library, covering such issues as:

- Integration*
- Workflow*
- Differences in perception/acceptance of digital texts*
- Response from students and staff*
- User preferences and reasons for these*

INTRODUCTION

During the last decade the e-publishing industry has experienced significant changes especially in terms of market expectations and the conspicuous failure of predictions of the demise of the printed book. However, e-book sales are continuously one of the few growth areas in the whole publishing industry. Companies serving the e-book market realised that the biggest consumers of their products and services are libraries, where the reading public gathers, and they started focusing more there. E-book technology companies are finding more and more solutions for libraries; some solutions are just imitating the model of traditional libraries, while some are opening the new opportunities for libraries. For example, Adobe Content Server allows libraries to lend books to their patrons via Adobe PDF format on personal computers and handheld devices, while netLibrary enables the books that a library has purchased, as well as the public domain books that netLibrary carries, to be searched as one full-text database.

This paper will discuss the University of Auckland Library experiences in integrating e-books into the learning environment. It will also look at the differences in perception, preference, and acceptance of e-books among staff and students.

The term “e-book” is defined differently in today’s literature. In this article it is used to cover any monographic piece of text made available electronically, regardless of size and composition. No distinction will be made between digitized vs. born-digital; parallel published vs. born-digital; linear text vs. hypertext; straight text vs. value added text.

E-BOOKS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND LIBRARY

Access to the first e-book was provided in 1998, when the first link was created from the Library catalogue. The first collection of e-books was bought in the year 2000; since then, the Library has acquired thousands of e-books. In 2003 we provided access to nearly 80,000 e-books through the Library catalogue only, while at the same time the Cataloguing Department catalogued 45,000 monographic publications in all other formats, 40,000 of them being printed books. As of August 2004 there are over 90,000 links for e-books through the Library catalogue, and we expect to add even more this year - there will be around 125,500 bibliographic records delivered from the Eighteenth Century Collections Online database alone. This is more than the whole total for 2003. We also expect a number of records from other collections, e.g. Early English Books Online.

The following table shows the number of e-book holdings created per year on Voyager Library catalogue.

EBooks Holdings Added Per Year

<i>Year</i>	<i>Created Holdings</i>
2004	5158
2003	76799
2002	4404
2001	5258
2000	29
1999	3
1998	279
<i>Total e-Book Holdings:</i>	91930

Apart from the Voyager Library catalogue, the University of Auckland Library provides access to e-books through LEARN course pages, and directly through e-book databases.

Sources of e-books

The majority of e-books are purchased collections, e.g. netLibrary, ebrary, Women Writers Online, Medieval Sourcesonline, Past Masters, Oxford Reference Online, and Early English Books Online.

We also add links from Voyager to free full text electronic versions of printed monographs that we hold or plan to order. The Subject Librarian may decide to add to the collections the free electronic monographs that were originally published electronically if they are of high importance. They may decide to add a printout to the collection as well. Electronic information that is supplementary to the print version, such as companion sites, can also be added. Occasionally we include monographs in PDF format, which are stored locally. There are a few preconditions for including these: a sample copy has to be obtained first, and tested, before committing to purchase; we have to justify keeping it locally if it is not available on the web, or on CD etc.; and also we have to ensure that the publisher or vendor gives permission for it to be stored.

We tend not to add links to the sites with Tables of Contents, publishers' web sites, and other sites which only have an overview of the book, and any e-versions which are available free for a limited period only. Nevertheless, if they are already in the bibliographic record, we do not delete them. Links are not added to any freely available

documents that are not html or PDF, i.e. Word, Excel, etc. However these can be converted to PDFs.

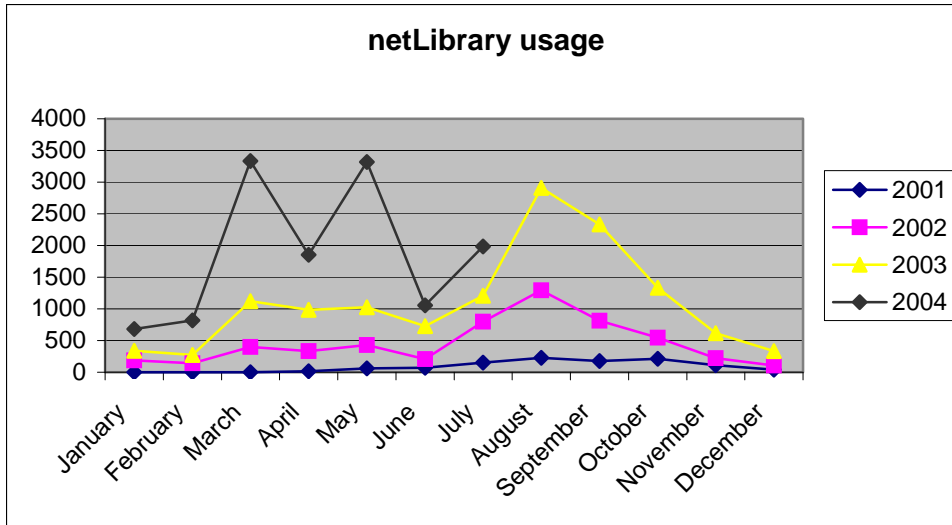
There are three ways of obtaining the bibliographical records - we buy records from vendors, add 856 MARC field to the existing hard copy record, or create a record for the e-book. The majority of the bibliographic records have been supplied by vendors. Some of them send big files that we batch load; in that case we ask vendors to customise the 856 MARC field, and to put the name of the collection in a public note. Sometimes we have to go to the vendor's web page and download the records manually; in that case we add the information about the collection ourselves.

The large number of records makes it impractical for us to carry out bibliographical control. This one of the central problems that integrating e-books brings. Another difficulty is that the vendors usually do not tell us if they stop providing access to the e-book. Moreover, the receipt of e-books and bibliographical records does not necessarily coincide. It happens that we buy the book and download the record before the book is actually available. Sometimes the vendor changes the link without informing us. All these we find out accidentally, usually when Library patrons complain to us that they can not access the e-book. In addition to that, sometimes there is a considerable wait for the vendor to send us bibliographical records for books that are already available.

netLibrary and ebrary collections

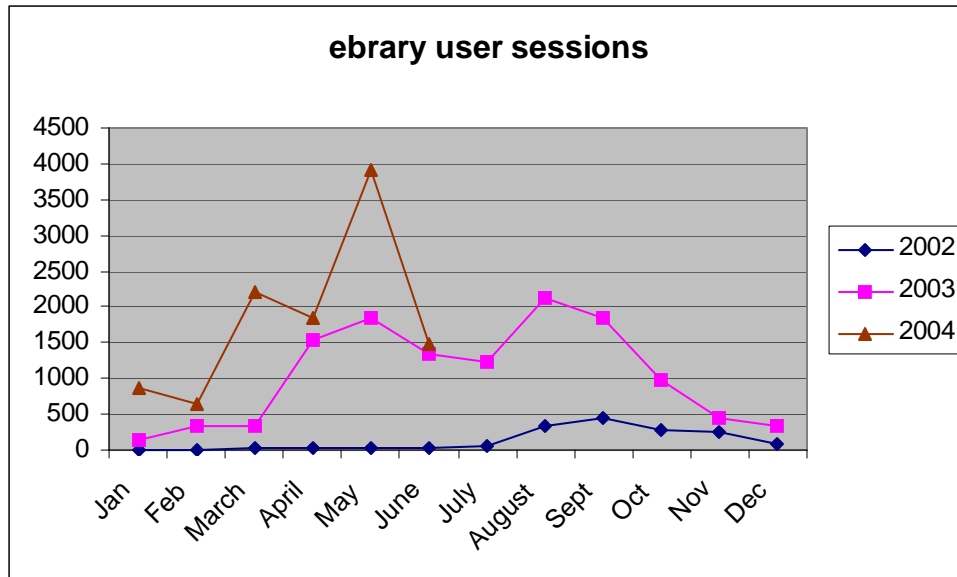
The library has purchased a number of e-book databases, two being netLibrary and ebrary. As of August 2004 there were a total of 6,794 netLibrary titles and 11,915 ebrary titles available through the Library catalogue. For these collections we have two different models. The ebrary titles are provided as a part of the whole collection. For netLibrary, Subject Librarians select titles for which we buy permanent access. This means that both content and growth of this e-book database depends on Subject Librarians. At the selection stage they make a choice as to what they are going to incorporate into their collections - the print or e-version of a title (or both). This process does not always go smoothly, as print notification often appears much earlier than e-book notification. Occasionally the print version has already been ordered for the Library and therefore the e-book is not ordered. Alternatively, print titles have been ordered when we have the title as an e-book because the e-book records have been slow reaching the Library catalogue. Hopefully, improved administration tools from e-book vendors and more effective library procedures will lessen these problems.

The use of both netLibrary and ebrary titles has been gradually increasing over the last year. The vendors for both of these collections produce statistics on usage, as measured by number of user sessions, which are shown in the graphs and tables below.



NetLibrary usage by topic for July 2004

Business & Economics	938
Computers	697
Social Sciences	77
Education	33
Medicine	31
Language & linguistics	30
Literature	28
Arts	25
Political Science	22



ebrary usage by topic for July 2004

	User Sessions	Pages viewed
Computers	428	7840
Business & Economics	376	4938
History	114	1272
Science	109	787
Medical	96	1144
Social Science	79	900
Language arts	62	716
Literary criticism	49	282

E-book databases tend not to have titles that are required texts, as the publishers keep these in print format, and e-book titles have been purchased as supplemental and general reading. Nonetheless, netLibrary and ebrary statistical data show that e-books are integrated well at the University of Auckland Library, and that they are becoming more and more popular among the users.

STAFF AND STUDENT FEEDBACK

To assess the level of knowledge that users have about e-books, the type of use, and perceptions of e-books, a questionnaire was given to Library staff and students. Two groups of students were targeted: students that expressed interest in the Library e-book

course, and students based on the North Shore campus. The assumption was that students who enrolled in the e-book course were already aware of and interested in using the e-books collections, and that North Shore based students, being off the city site, might have more need to use e-books.

It is important to say that this was not a survey. The targeted groups were not big themselves, and the return rate was relatively low (Library staff returned 16 questionnaires, Course students 33, and North Shore students 30). The gathered data then are indicative rather than conclusive of a trend. However, the returned questionnaires are printed out for archiving, and kept for eventual future analysis.

The e-book course

The e-book course was organised as one of the steps in promoting e-books, and to help Library staff and users to gain better understanding of what the e-book is. All three groups were asked if they attended the course. In addition to that, they were asked if they felt that they had a good understanding of e-books.

More than half of the staff that responded had attended the e-book course. Almost all of them said that they had a good understanding of e-books.

About half of the students that expressed interest in the e-book course had not attended it. The majority of those who did not attend the course said they had a good understanding of e-books. All students who attended the course said they knew how to access and use e-books. Nevertheless, four students who attended the course said their understanding of e-books was not good.

Two thirds of e-book course respondents were based in the City campus. Half of them have attended the course, half have not. One third are North Shore based students, all of whom attended the course. Only one was from Grafton campus and one from Tamaki campus.

More than half of the students based on North Shore campus have not attended the course. However, the majority of them consider their understanding of e-books to be adequate.

Preferred method of accessing the e-books

As said before, the Library provides access to e-books through the Voyager Library catalogue, through LEARN course pages, and through e-book databases. One of the questions considered the preferred method of access by users.

The majority of staff use Voyager to access e-books, while the majority of North Shore based students prefer LEARN course pages. The e-book course group was divided. The North Shore based respondents preferred LEARN course pages, while the others showed preference for the Voyager Library catalogue.

Print vs. electronic

One of the questions was “If the book is available in both print and e-version, what would you prefer – to physically get the book from the library or to access the e-book version electronically?” All three groups answered that they would prefer print to electronic version. However, ratios of preference vary. Two thirds of staff and e-book course students prefer print version, and among North Shore students, print version is preferred by a small margin.

The respondents are also asked to explain their preference. The common reason for preferring the printed book is that it is easier to read. Some other reasons that were given: “More familiar”; “No time limit”; “Can mark important lines”; “Can read on the bus; Too long to download big bits of books; E-books too slow; Easier to look through; Getting out of the house.

The reasons given for preferring electronic version: “Availability; A few people can access it at the same time; I don’t have to carry the books around.

Some of the respondents that favoured electronic access said that they would have to print out the text, because reading the hard copy is easier and because electronic page turning is tedious. Some said that they were exploring palm pilot options for e-book reading.

In all three groups some participants indicated that they did not have a preference, and the choice would depend on the situation.

The general impression is that users often browse the book to see if it is useful, and then get the printed copy for more substantial reading.

Assuming that many of the students would print out the e-book, one of the questions concerned their awareness of copyright restrictions limiting the number of pages that could be downloaded or copied. About one third answered that were not aware of any such restrictions.

Importance of e-book features

Different e-book features are rated differently.

Access anytime, anywhere is regarded as very important by majority of course students, and by almost all staff. Access to key reference materials and definitions as one reads the e-book is valued more by library staff than by course and North Shore students. All three groups assume that elements such as animation or video are of little importance. However, students find these features more useful than library staff. Ability to print content is regarded as very important by majority of students and staff. All three groups are polarised in their preference for electronic version resembling printed. Some really

like it, some do not care at all. Almost all library staff rate access to searchable content as very important. Some students agree, but not all.

Frequency of use

Staff use e-books more often than the other two groups. Both North Shore based students and Course students said that they use e-books usually once a month or even less than that. Only a few of the respondents said that they use e-books more than once a week. However, asked if they would like more e-books in their subject areas, the majority of all three groups answered yes.

The focus groups were also asked if they used the user functions in netLibrary and ebrary. The majority of staff indicated that they have, while about half of students have not.

Some of the other comments:

The questionnaire provided the opportunity for other comment. A few respondents pointed out that e-books are incredibly useful for titles that are in high-usage. In addition to this, several comments were about the need for Short Loan collections to be replaced by e-books. Although e-books offer only peripheral reading in digital format, they give students a good start if the recommended text is not available. Several Subject Librarians mentioned that they liked the fact that they are able to search across the whole collection, not just one book.

FINAL NOTES

Both printed and electronic books have their place in academic libraries. In many instances print is the desirable format - users often browse the e-book to see if it is useful, and then get the printed copy for a more substantial reading.

E-books expand the level of library service. The search capabilities they offer are extremely important for the work of the library reference staff. The integration of full-text searching with other search capabilities allows librarians to search collections more comprehensively and mine considerably more information than ever before.

E-books have become an important part of the learning environment at the University of Auckland library. They have been regarded as much more than merely printed books in electronic format. Popularity of e-books is growing among both students and staff, and advantages of e-books are appreciated by many users.

The future use of e-books at the University of Auckland Library relies on Subject Librarians incorporating them into their collections and streamlining the selection

process, as well as on publishers providing more recommended texts in e-format and further exploring the possibilities that electronic text could offer to libraries.

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