



E-textbooks: issues for university libraries

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Presentation overview

- Environmental scan of developments in the US, the UK and Australia
- Advantages of e-textbooks
- Disadvantages of e-textbooks
- Three possible future scenarios
- The way forward

Coming, ready or not

- Large increase in e-textbook content in the US (CourseSmart the key player)
- JISC Ebook Observatory Project testing the water in the UK
- Progress slower in Australia (online supplementary resources are common)
- Open source

Advantages

- Accessibility, mobility, functionality, convenience
- Currency
- Richer content (video, graphs, diagrams, interactive material, etc. – moving beyond the “book”)
- Built-in assessment (online quizzes, etc.)
- Integration with other e-learning materials
- Potential for reducing costs
- Potential for greater social equity

The downside – unsatisfactory business models

- Publishers concerned about effect on print sales
- Licensing, not ownership
- DRM features restrictive (including printing)
- Access limited to the study period
- Networked access not available
- HESA guidelines prohibit incidental fees (access to textbooks must be available free)
- Libraries cannot afford to bear the whole cost of e-textbooks

Scenario 1: More of the same

- Purchase by individual students
- Arrangements between publishers and academics
- Access provided to specific student cohorts
- HESA guidelines limit online provision
- Print textbook will remain predominant

Scenario 2: Site licences

- Negotiation between universities and publishers for site licences
- Key role for university libraries
- Licences for whole university community or for students in specific units
- Who pays?
- University bookshops limited to print sales

Scenario 3: Open access

- Push for OER (Open Educational Resources) slowly gaining momentum
- Student groups resisting rising textbook costs
- Various models:
 - Repositories of free e-textbooks (e.g. Connexions)
 - Free e-textbooks with chargeable add-ons (e.g. Flat World Knowledge)
 - Individual authors (e.g. McAfee)
- Open educational licences used (e.g. Creative Commons)
- Can it be made sustainable?

What next?

- Discussion among stakeholders:
 - University librarians
 - Publishers
 - LMS administrators
 - University bookshop managers
 - Students
- National initiatives needed
- Libraries need to form partnerships
- University administrators must be in the loop
- Effective business models can be found

Selected references

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Selected links

- CourseSmart: <http://www.coursesmart.com>
- Wikibooks: <http://wikibooks.org>
- Open Educational Resources: <http://www.oercommons.org>
- Make Textbooks Affordable:
<http://www.maketextbooksaffordable.org>
- Connexions: <http://cnx.org>
- Flat World Knowledge: <http://www.flatworldknowledge.com>