

Ebook Library (EBL) and James Bennett Textbook Discussion Panel
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Sue Dowling, Murdoch University Library
From ebooks to etextbooks

Overview

Introduction: where Murdoch is at with ebooks

What we want, and don't want, in ebooks

Etextbooks: the stakeholders

Do the students want them?

Possible advantages of etextbooks

Who pays for them?

How do we get there?

Ebooks @ Murdoch Uni Library – where are we?

Murdoch Library currently provides access to over 23,000 ebooks through the OPAC. These include about 5000 NetLibrary titles, and about 6,500 EBL titles, of which about 2300 are owned and nearly 4,200 are non-owned titles. The remainder include titles on publishers' platforms (both packages and 'pick and choose' collections), and some that come with the aggregated databases such as ProQuest and Academic OneFile. We also provide links to free sites such as Project Gutenberg and these add several more thousand titles to those that our users can access through our website.

We haven't moved into providing electronic textbooks, but we are starting to investigate the options available. A few academics and the Murdoch Bookshop are, and have been, experimenting with providing electronic copies on CD of readings, lab manuals etc in selected courses, so far with limited success.

What we want in ebooks

The list is getting longer and longer!

Availability:

- Around the same time as the print equivalent, or even before. It is really annoying when we buy the print copy and then a couple of months find that the ebook version has just become available;
- Able to select and buy from library suppliers such as Coutts and YBP using our normal procedures, as well as direct from publishers;
- Available via aggregators such as EBL, NetLibrary, or MyiLibrary, not just via the publisher site
- Able for purchase/subscription title by title as well as in packages (both subject and publisher packages);
- Able to purchase/subscribe by the chapter/segment.

Discoverability

- Availability of good quality metadata for inclusion in library catalogues and other databases, including DOIs to chapter level
- Searchable (and findable) via discovery services such as Summon and Primo Central
- Accessible via open URL link resolvers such as SFX and 360 Link.

Usability

- Ability to search within a book
- Usable on a range of devices, rather than just one or a few
- Personal features such as bookmarking, annotating;

- Cross-linking with related resources
- Built-in dictionaries, encyclopaedias and thesauri
- Easily transferable to an e reader if this is allowed
- Reflowable text
- Reasonable print and copy allowances
- Unlimited users without paying the earth! In academic libraries there are pronounced peaks and troughs in usage and it's not feasible to pay for the expected maximum number of concurrent users. EBL's nonlinear lending model caters for this.
- Accessible to users with disabilities, eg read aloud capability
- Able to supply copies of chapters/segments to other libraries via our usual document delivery procedures
- Able to include full text in institutional repositories

Standards

- "Currently few standards exist for e-books, but it seems as though everyone from end users to publishers and librarians is asking for them." (Polanka, p135).
- This sounds great, but Polanka goes on to say that in practice this is not easy, due to the number of ebook devices now available, the number of formats, differing needs of libraries, and the different markets (academic and trade) for ebooks
- Licences and other legal agreements are time consuming and difficult to negotiate, especially if an institution's legal department needs to see and approve the agreement. SERU (Shared Electronic Resource Understanding) is a step in the right direction, and may be the simplest way of dealing with small purchases
- Usage statistics that conform to a standard (COUNTER is probably the best known of these) allow libraries to compare usage across platforms, publishers and vendors.

Long term availability and access

- Option of perpetual access, and security of knowing that preservation is guaranteed (as much as it can be) for example by agreements with services such as Portico, CLOCKSS, and LOCKSS.

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The intangibles

- Good customer service
- Willingness on the part of all stakeholders to maintain an ongoing dialogue about ebooks in a constructive manner

What we don't want

- Need for plugins or additional software to use ebooks. This does not work in a library environment with hundreds of computers that have standard operating environments and that are usually tightly controlled to prevent hacking and other antisocial activities
- DRM! Yes, I know why it's there, but trying to explain how to get started with Adobe Digital Editions is challenging, and it doesn't work in a library environment! And DRM can be cracked or bypassed by someone with the knowledge to do it. Is DRM an invitation to those who like a challenge to find a way around it? As our Emerging Technologies Specialist said, make it inconvenient to pirate but not inconvenient to use.
- A single user checkout model like the print model where only one user can have a book at a time. Users just don't like this – to them, if it's online they expect to be able to get it when and where they

want it. A model such as EBL's nonlinear lending allows for unlimited users, and caters for the peaks and troughs of demands.

Etextbooks: the stakeholders

- Authors - understandably want a return for their effort and don't want their works pirated
- Publishers - are their digital arms competing with their print arms, are there conflicts between their different markets?
- University bookshops want to retain their place in the market – how can they do this?
- Academics must want to prescribe etextbooks for their students, and must want to use them to best advantage – how much of an attitude shift will this require?
- Students – do they want them? Studies of student use of etexts have come up with varying results. How much of a shift will it be for them to move from print to online? Is this an opening for yet more information literacy classes run by the library?
- Libraries – if we buy or subscribe to an etext and make it available to our users, of course the users won't buy it! So how do the publishers maintain their revenue? The libraries can't afford to make up the shortfall
- Any others?

Do students want etexts?

Some studies have found that many students don't want etexts. Why?

- Maybe they aren't ready for them? Not everyone is a digital native, though this will change over time.
- It can represent a shift in how students interact with their texts.
- Is it because the print copies were merely replaced with electronic equivalents? [Murdoch bookshop manager – this was tried with a couple of units – all readings, lab manuals etc were supplied to students on CD, with the option to request print copies instead. Many students didn't like this because, for example, they could only use the CDs on PCs, laptops etc so less convenient].
- Is it because different students have different learning styles?
- Is it because the students can't resell their textbooks?

What are some of the advantages, identified in the literature?

These include:

- Incorporating other types of media, eg video clips, links to websites, more sophisticated pictures and graphics, tutorials, and so on
 - Links to social media sites - so students can communicate with other users, a potentially useful study aid
 - Reduced costs?
 - More portable (if on handheld devices). Many textbooks are heavy!
 - Environmentally friendly as it reduces paper consumption
- Does acceptance depend on creating a sufficiently different, and better, experience for students?

Paying for etexts

There are reported studies on implementing etexts, mostly from the United States.

- One of these described how the titles were sold by the campus bookstore – the student would go to the bookstore and buy an electronic card. This card was then used to download a copy of the book from a website run by an etext supplier. Note that in this study the book couldn't be resold or returned, and could only be used on the computer on which it was downloaded.

- Another study discussed charging students a course fee which in turn gave them access to the required content for the time that they wanted it.

However, libraries cannot possibly bear the full cost. Our budgets are not growing – and in many cases they are shrinking.

Yet publishers want to maintain (and hopefully grow) their revenue, and authors will justifiably want to continue to receive a return for their efforts

Is open access the answer?

There are some examples out there already, such as Flat World Knowledge, Connexions, Wikibooks, Global Text Project, and Textbook Media.

Flat World Knowledge offers textbooks that are free online, open-licensed, and customisable by educators. Income is generated by sales of ‘affordable’ print copies and other add-ons such as study aids.

Connexions is a platform for users to both create content using the Connexions platform and also store that content on Connexions. The content is available ‘chunked’ into modules. Academics can combine modules as they wish. Income comes from grants and/or donations.

Wikibooks provides a platform on which students can create their own textbooks. Income is generated by donations.

Global Text Project is funded by donations.

Textbook Media is funded by advertising.

Will these examples, or other offerings similarly structured, work?

How do we get there? Who should take the lead?

Is the implementation of etexts a ‘whole of institution’ effort, with academics, university management, libraries and end users working together and with other stakeholders to ensure such an implementation is sustainable and delivers benefits to students? This is the theme that underlies many reported studies so far. For example, a study at Indiana University asked students what role the university should play in the e-textbook market. Responses showed that the students overwhelmingly believed that the university should play a key leadership role.

Ultimately, we all need to work together, collaboratively, to make this work, and work well. This workshop is a great opportunity to do just that.

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Ebooks at Murdoch

- Over 23,000 ebooks available from the Library OPAC
- More available as links to collections from our databases pages
- Selected academics and bookshop have tried supplying course readings, lab manuals etc on CD (instead of print)



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What we want in ebooks

- Availability
- Discoverability
- Usability
- Standards
- Long term availability and access
- The intangibles
- ☺



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What we don't want

- Plugins or additional software
- DRM!
- Single user checkout model (as for print)
- ☹️



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Ebooks: the stakeholders

- Authors
- Publishers
- University bookstores
- Academics
- Students
- Libraries and their parent institutions
- Anyone else?



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Do students want etextbooks?

- Results to date suggest it's not an overwhelming preference
- What could make etextbooks attractive to students?

Who pays?

- Not just a library responsibility!
- Is open source part of the answer?



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So how do we get there?

- Needs 'whole of institution' support, plus involvement of the stakeholders
- Let's work together

Thank you