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## Moving from Book to e-book

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**Proposed Title: Moving from Book to E-Book**

**Abstract:**

The article discusses the significant impact electronic books have had on collection management activities in academic libraries. With the advent of electronic books, book collections have become more and more mixed; it is time to take a step back and take a look at books in both formats to examine the trends that have emerged related to use and the benefits of each format. Using the experience at UNLV Libraries, the authors describe how UNLV developed a mixed format book collection by incorporating e-books in specific subjects based on curriculum and research needs into its print book collection. The article also discusses how e-books have impacted specific activities within libraries, such as selection and acquisitions, including a look at the role of vendors in the e-book arena. Finally, the authors compare and contrast how to evaluate print books and electronic books and which methods are used for collection assessment. Can traditional methods of assessment for print books be used for electronic books? If not, why, and which methods should be used to effectively evaluate electronic books. The article concludes with an overview of the future of e-books.

**Keywords:** Electronic books, collection development, acquisitions

**Introduction**

In the last five years, electronic books have slowly become commonplace in academic libraries. Due to an increase in their popularity, electronic books are now offered in databases, subject collections and on a title-by-title basis by most publishers and several aggregators. At the University of Nevada, Las Vegas Libraries (UNLV) an initiative was undertaken to purchase electronic books in specific disciplines where program growth was evident. This article discusses UNLV's experience as the library developed its electronic books collection and how electronic books are now used at the library. In addition, the authors consider the impact of electronic books on libraries in the areas of collection management, selection and acquisitions workflow, collection assessment, and working with vendors.

## **Literature Review**

Analyzing the literature, several articles serve as case studies for academic and public libraries and usage of electronic book collections. One example of such an article is a case study by Hernon, Hopper, Leach, Saunders and Zhang (2006). The authors examined search behavior and use patterns of undergraduates in economics, literature and medicine with regard to electronic books. The study showed that undergraduates limited their research to library databases and unless electronic books were included in these databases or recommended by a professor, they were not used very often. The study illustrated the fact that libraries must be cognizant of how students gather and use information. A second study by Bailey (2006) measured electronic book usage at Auburn

University in Montgomery, Alabama. It found that electronic book usage increased during 2002-2004, while use of the library's print collection decreased. The study also found that electronic books in the subject areas of business, computers, literature, social sciences and medicine were the most used. Other case studies include Dillon (2001), Chu (2003), Ismail and Zainab (2005), Hughes and Buchanon (2001), Gunter (2005), and Langston (2003). For public libraries, there have been case studies including those by McKnight and Dearnley (2003 & 2004) and Dearnley, Morris, McKnight, Berube, Palmer and John (2004).

An article by Dooley (2007) describes University of California-Merced's experience of purchasing electronic books. The author discusses the establishment of the library in 2005 and how the library emphasized electronic materials for its collections, except for books due to significant barriers that existed for electronic books at the time. Dooley goes on to describe how the library did begin to purchase different e-book collections over the next few years including those supplied by ebrary, NetLibrary, EBL and MyiLibrary. The article emphasizes how the library is now looking into e-book-only collections for specific disciplines since previous barriers to establishing e-book collections have been overcome.

Other articles written about e-books discuss issues related to cataloging and licensing. An article written by Martin (2007) talks about the challenges associated with cataloging e-books, focusing primarily on how e-book content is integrated into library online catalogs. Martin discusses the MARC records provided by e-book vendors and

how the quality of the records varies from vendor to vendor. The article also presents issues related to cataloging principles and workflow as e-books are processed by cataloging units. In an article by Rice (2006), the author broaches the concept of licensing e-books and the wide array of licensing agreements. Rice states there are three basic models for e-book licensing, with one additional model that stands apart from the rest. The three basic models include a print model, the database model and the free or open-access model. The notable exception is a non-linear lending model based on a certain number of “loan instances” per year.

### **Building an E-book Collection for the UNLV Libraries**

UNLV has changed quite a bit from the one-building campus in the desert when it was established in 1957. Since that first class of 300 students, the student population has grown to over 28,000 in the university’s first fifty years. Growth at UNLV has meant more than new students, however. Each year more new faculty, new academic programs and buildings—including a state-of-the-art library—are added. Since the 1990s, particularly, scores of new academic programs across all disciplines have been implemented at UNLV at the graduate level; from a doctoral degree in the fine arts to the opening of a new campus housing a dental school, a cancer institute and a biotechnology center. The UNLV Libraries have responded by adopting new approaches to budget allocation and collection development, focusing on providing access to information resources in multiple formats. Under a mandate to transition from print-based collections to those that are primarily electronic, the Libraries moved from a collection of less than

twenty electronic resources in 1998, comprised mainly of index and abstract databases, to over 200 full-text databases, e-journal collections and other e-resources by the end of fiscal year 2004/2005. By July 2005, UNLV library users had access to 16,000 journals. Less than 10% of these were in print format, with most of the growth in the e-journal collection occurring over a period of two years. The growth rate of UNLV's e-book collection during this period, however, was not as dramatic.

#### *2000-2001: Getting our feet wet*

UNLV's e-book collection began in earnest with the acquisition of a shared NetLibrary collection purchased through a regional consortium in 2001. The collection consisted of approximately 2,000 titles covering a broad range of subject areas. Other e-books acquired by the library around the same time included online reference works such as the World Book Online, a few CRC Handbooks and in 2002, Oxford Reference Online. By the fall of 2002, although use data for e-books was not collected or analyzed consistently there was little, if any, evidence that e-books were being used or even in demand by UNLV students and faculty. Consequently, despite a push to build online book collections within the library, there was, understandably, reluctance on the part of subject librarians to divert a portion of their monograph allocations toward the purchase of e-books. Other obstacles to integrating e-books into the library's collection included issues for the user related to the e-book reader, such as a single-use, check-out model, and for the librarians, a separate workflow to review and select individual e-book titles. For a campus serving a large population of undergraduate students and students who attended

classes on a part-time basis or in the evening, it seemed incongruous that books available online 24/7 were not being used or popular. A closer examination of the shared collection, however, showed that most of the titles in the collection were published in the late 1990s or even earlier. More recent and new books were only available in print form at the library.

*2003-2004: Build that critical mass & they will come*

Given the lack-luster experience with e-books initially and increasing pressures on staff and budget resources due to growth at UNLV, experimenting with e-books was not high on the priority lists of most at the library. During fiscal year 2003/2004, however, the Collection Development (CD) department proposed to conduct a pilot project to give e-books another chance at UNLV. The project centered on the idea that if the library built a critical mass of e-books—newer titles in specific subject areas—and increased its marketing and user education efforts, it would see an increase in use and demand for e-books. CD would spend its funds so as not to impact the subject allocations of liaisons and after one year, usage of e-books would be evaluated.

Starting in the fall of 2003, the library took advantage of NetLibrary shared collections being offered at the time to build its e-book collection quickly. The library focused on medical, information technology (IT) and business administration titles. A shared collection including a broad range of subjects was also acquired. Also, as publishers made e-books available, either in collections or title-by-title, the library

acquired more e-books throughout the year. Examples include but are not limited to scientific-medical-technical (STM) titles by published by Marcel Dekker, the History E-Books Database (upon the recommendation of a UNLV faculty author), Elsevier book series online and assorted online reference works by major publishers. By the end of fiscal year 2003/2004 approximately 3,500 e-books, mainly supplied by NetLibrary, had been added to UNLV collections. MARC records provided by vendors were loaded into the library's OPAC and while there were few focused marketing efforts related specifically to e-books, subject web pages listed newly cataloged titles on a monthly basis, including new e-books.

After one year, a review of vendor-supplied usage data showed over 400 'check-outs' for NetLibrary titles. The overall number of accesses for NetLibrary titles was approximately 2,200; an impressive number given library users still had not verbalized a preference for e-books. As expected, the highest number of accesses was for titles related to computers, nearly 31% of total accesses for the 12-month period. More surprising, however, was the 27% of total accesses for titles in literature, the arts and social sciences given efforts by the library to acquire e-books in science and business-related academic areas demonstrating program growth at UNLV. Only about 14% of e-book accesses related to business and medicine titles. Without the benefit of user surveys or other concrete information, it was concluded that the relatively high use of e-books in literature and the social sciences was due to term paper assignments in introductory level courses for UNLV's large undergraduate student population.



### *2004-2005: E-books integrated into the collections*

Fiscal year 2004/2005 marked a turning point for the UNLV Libraries with regard to e-book collection development. Usage data was certainly a contributing factor—it was difficult to say that e-books weren't being used at UNLV when the data indicated otherwise. It was harder still to say so when most users seemed to have come across the library's e-books on their own, through the online catalog via a subject search or while navigating the library's e-resources web listings. As new faculty joined UNLV during the year, liaisons began to hear of requests for the library to look at e-book aggregators faculty had access to at their previous institution. By fall of 2005, UNLV libraries had added 24,000 e-books via ebrary's Academic Complete Collection.

### *2007: Where are we now?*

At UNLV, the library routinely acquires both print and electronic books. One of the more recent collection development efforts related to electronic books focused on the reference collection. The library noticed a significant drop in the use of its print reference materials in the library over the previous two years. In addition, the library, concerned with space issues, began looking at the print reference collection as a logical collection to save space and money. For these reasons, UNLV Libraries has aggressively been purchasing online reference collections that include the content of print materials showing high use. The library is also reviewing online reference collections that will be useful for new and existing programs.

Another area that where there has been an increased effort to purchase electronic books is in the health sciences. The Nevada System of Higher Education has made health sciences a priority and UNLV has seen its health sciences program grow exponentially since 2003. In the last three years, UNLV has opened a new campus that houses several health sciences departments. This off-site campus has no brick-and-mortar library facility available to those who are located there and due to the fact that previously purchased health sciences e-books have experienced high use, UNLV Libraries has recently purchased e-book collections in the biomedical sciences.

## **The Impact of Electronic Books on Libraries**

### *Electronic Books and Library Users*

One of the most significant ways in which e-books have impacted libraries relates, not surprisingly, to the library patron. Despite access to thousands of recently published e-books, many library users at UNLV still seem to prefer print books over electronic. This appears to be due mainly to two factors. First, library users are still getting used to the notion that books are actually now available online. This is, of course, less of an issue with younger users because so many have used e-books in high school or while surfing the Internet and are generally more aware of their existence. User satisfaction or lack thereof, with the software required to read books online may also affect a student or faculty member's decision to choose print over online books. An

example of this is how some e-book readers require the user to download a plug-in, while others do not. The tools available in the e-book software will also impact the user, especially if the tools create obstacles to browsing through or searching for an e-book.

How e-books available from the library are accessed can be a major issue for library users as well. It is vital that libraries receive (or create) cataloging records as they would for a print book so the e-book title can be included in the library's online catalog. Of course, receiving vendor-supplied MARC records has its own problems. Consistency or standardization of MARC records among vendors is necessary for the library to maintain database integrity—the quality of records in the online catalog. The availability of MARC records immediately upon purchase and receipt of data is critical to acquisitions and cataloging workflows as well. In one instance at UNLV the vendor did not provide MARC records until six months after access had been granted to a large e-book collection the library had purchased. This sort of delay, without any penalty to the vendor who had received payment in full from the library, does not inspire confidence in those libraries that are looking to build e-book collections.

The marketing of e-books by libraries has been a significant issue ever since e-books appeared on the horizon. As with other electronic resources, library marketing efforts are vital to promoting e-books. Some libraries have done an outstanding job of this, while others have not. Not only is it important to have e-books in the library's online catalog, but if a library has invested in purchasing large e-book collections for the benefit of its users, these collections need to be highlighted and easily accessible in

different areas of the library's website. Additionally, subject librarians must make students and faculty aware of e-books that are available in specific disciplines, showing users not only how easy electronic books are to access and use, but, for faculty, librarians must also how e-books can be integrated into the teaching curriculum. This can be done easily through library instruction sessions when presenting other electronic and print resources available at the library.

### *Electronic Books and Collection Development*

Electronic books have had several implications in the area of collection development in academic libraries during the past few years. Initially purchasing collections offered by publishers and aggregators, libraries are moving to selecting individual titles. As this happens, first and most importantly, the library needs to establish collection development policies for mixed format collections—how will selectors determine the preferred format for a book if it's available in multiple formats? Is it even possible to set a policy; will the library always prefer the first option be the print edition (or the electronic), for example? Will the preferred format vary from subject to subject? Or, particularly during the period of transition, does the library prefer to have a book in both formats? Selectors also need to consider whether traditional selection criteria for print books also apply to electronic books or are there additional factors to consider, such as the e-book reader, licensing terms for the content, and the ease of providing access to e-books via website and/or the online catalog?

Another issue that selectors face is how to avoid duplication. When buying electronic books, either individually or through collections, it is vital that the library not purchase an e-book twice, which may happen quite easily. Not only is there considerable overlap between the e-book aggregators—the same titles available in more than one e-book supplier's collections, but as book vendors offer e-book titles individually, the library may already have purchased a title through a collection offered by an aggregator or the publisher. In either case, de-duplication must be possible and easy to accomplish when purchasing individual titles through vendors such as YBP, Coutts or Blackwell's. If a library sets up an e-book ordering service with vendors, the book vendor and/or e-book supplier should be able to load lists e-book titles currently held by the library into the vendor title database/ordering system so selectors do not inadvertently order e-books the library has had access to for through another source.

Budget allocation for e-books is one of the more complex issues facing collection development librarians. Depending on the demand for e-books at an institution and the collection development policy, if one has been established for e-books, the library needs to determine how much of the budget should be set aside for print books and for e-books. Beyond the amount to budget, the method by which these allocations are made also needs to be decided. Should the library divert existing funds, for example, allocated for print books toward the purchase of e-books? Or, should the library create a new fund line for e-books? Each library needs to develop a budgeting method based on its environment, its users and the pace with which it wants to incorporate e-books into the library's

collections. At UNLV, the library has decided to observe expenditures over the coming fiscal year to determine where and how money is being spent on e-books by liaisons.

All of the above decisions need to be made as academic libraries face dwindling materials budgets. So, where should cuts in funding occur? Traditionally, the book budget was sacrificed in the face of increasing cost for subscription-based resources. In this new environment, does the library treat e-book funds as it did print book budgets? For example, in certain disciplines, if faculty and students prefer journals and the library decides the budget for 'books' is reduced to save journals, will this cut impact the budget for e-books as well, or just print books?

### *Electronic Book Workflows*

E-books have had a significant impact on a number of workflows in libraries, but selection, acquisitions and cataloging may have been affected the most. As discussed earlier, subject liaisons and collection development librarians now have another format option to choose from as they perform their collection development duties. But, once selected, are e-books treated in acquisitions like print books? At UNLV when the library purchased collections from e-book aggregators from 2003 through 2005, Collection Development and the library's Electronic Serials librarian handled most of the tasks that needed to be completed. Now that librarians there are selecting most e-books via GOBI, the online order system of the library's book vendor, the workflow of selectors and acquisitions staff is similar to that of purchasing a print book. For technical services,

while cataloging is an activity that is already performed for print books and other library materials, considerations with e-books include but are not limited to the source of the MARC record, the quality of MARC record, and the additional workload in already strained departments.

### *Electronic Books and Collection Assessment*

To evaluate books collections, the methods used for print books and e-books are similar. For both formats, some measure of use is preferred. At UNLV, data on usage for print books is provided by the circulation department. Use data is gathered for external usage (checkout) and internal usage (re-shelving books). For e-books, use data is provided by the vendor and is gathered quarterly by collection development staff. From this data, monthly use is calculated.

There are a number of options available to academic libraries for evaluating e-book use but most are impacted by data made available by vendors. UNLV Libraries have been collecting use statistics for electronic resources, including e-books, since 2003. The good news for the library has been that each e-book supplier has been able to send it use statistics for individual books. The bad news is the lack of consistency in the data among e-book vendors. For example, NetLibrary usage reports provide LC classification numbers for their titles while ebrary does not. So, in order to examine e-book use for ebrary titles, UNLV has had to use the ebrary record number and match it with the bibliographic record in the library's online catalog to obtain the LC number. On a more

positive note, it helps the library that its e-book aggregators supply usage reports for each of the subject e-book collections offered. Data such as this, if it is readily available, makes it relatively easy for libraries to assess in which disciplines e-books are used more often, which, in turn will help librarians make purchase decisions in the future.

Finally, in addition to use, assessment of the book collections, print and electronic, may include, as the UNLV Libraries have done, analyzing the year of publication of to determine the period of research and/or how old the books are that patrons are using.

### *Electronic Books, Libraries, and Vendors*

Library vendors who have traditionally supplied academic libraries with print books seem to have also struggled with the emergence of e-books as a format during the past few years. Recent developments, however, demonstrate some progress and for libraries, the impact has been both positive and negative. Regardless of the vendor, ordering e-books through book vendors seems to have become easier as all major vendors have developed mechanisms and/or relationships with aggregators or publishers to sell electronic books. For example, UNLV currently purchases books through YBP, Library Services, Inc. using the vendor's online title database and ordering system GOBI. With both print books and e-books in the system, librarians can visit one place to review, select, and order titles in either format. When UNLV set up its e-book account with the vendor loaded UNLV's previously purchased e-book titles from NetLibrary and ebrary so



that GOBI informs the librarian not only if a print edition of a title has been purchased by the library already, but now also if the library has already purchased the e-book, thus avoiding duplication (and wasting precious book funds). Also, in order to streamline the selection process for e-books, the library requested YBP to create an approval profile for e-books based on UNLV's print approval plan profile. By doing so, librarians receive electronic notification of new e-books in profiled areas for librarians to review and order. With both print and e-book expenditures in one system, when it is time to evaluate approval and firm order activity, UNLV will be in a good position to assess the impact of e-books not only on the monographic budget as a whole but also on collection activities as they vary from subject by subject.

On the negative side, publishers and vendors have not made it easy for librarians, who are already suffering from "choice overload." While it's true that in the print world, a library could always order a book direct from the publisher or from its book vendor, pity the poor librarian who now has to decide where to get that e-book a faculty member has requested. A single e-book title may be available not only by the publisher and an e-book aggregator but also may be available from the library's vendor, if the vendor offers e-books. If the title is offered by an e-book aggregator and the library doesn't have access to that aggregator's titles, the library can't fulfill the faculty member's request. The e-book may also be available from the library's subscription agent or it may be included in a full-text database, or in an e-book collection, but one that is only from the publisher. But, titles in a collection may or may not be available individually.

Since price may not vary from source to source and librarians have several vendors and the publisher trying to sell the same e-book, what becomes the basis for the decision? Is it the e-book reader or satisfaction with the vendor's service, the ease of ordering, or some other factor? Who makes these decisions? Traditionally, acquisitions staff were charged with determining the best source for a book. Will this decision now be made by selectors or Collection Development? Finally, while it may be desirable from a workflow perspective to select and order e-books via the library's primary book vendor system, if a vendor has only contracted with one e-book aggregator, or with a few publishers' offerings, the library may be forced to go back to the dark days of direct ordering from publishers.

## **Conclusion**

This article provides a general overview of issues many libraries face when integrating electronic books into a print-based collection. Using one academic library's experience over a period of five years, the authors describe the impact on virtually every unit in the library as it built an e-book collection; from budget allocation and technical services workflows to introducing e-books to library users and dealing with publishers, aggregators and vendors. As more and more libraries engage in this process, the authors feel a number of issues need to be addressed by publishers and vendors to facilitate e-book collection development and acquisitions. These include but are not limited to:

- Licensing agreements—standardize and simplify agreements (if licenses are needed at all!)

- Collections— do not force libraries to purchase every book by a publisher or none at all; do not offer some titles in collections and exclude others—title-by-title acquisitions must always be an option, whether through the publisher, vendor or aggregator
- E-book readers—develop readers that are painless for the user and library to utilize
- E-book content—content should be platform-neutral so that a library should not have to purchase multiple platforms (and library users should not have to learn to navigate each one)

What will the next five years bring? There are definitely more questions than answers at this point. What further impact will e-books have on library collections and workflows? Will users demand more electronic book content from libraries? Will the impact of e-books on library collections and expenditures be similar to that of electronic journals, that is, will e-books begin to replace print books? Probably not, however, this emphasizes the need for librarians, working together with publishers and vendors, to develop efficient and effective methods to develop and manage collections that include books in both print and electronic formats for decades to come.

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