

E-Books

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This document is part of a collection of presentations with a focus on Electronic Publishing. For full details of this and the rest of the collection see the cover sheet at: <http://humbox.ac.uk/3078/>

In today's chapter...

- E-Books and their history
- Their advantages and problems
- How they fit into the market
- Reading online and on paper

E-books

- What is an ebook?

Technology needed

- Web access
- Conventional computer
- PDA or Phone
- Specialist readers
 - From rocket e-books to Sony e-book reader or Kindle

History and development

- Up to 2000.
 - Heavy investment by aggregators e.g. netLibrary
 - Individual book sellers like Barnes and Noble
 - Lots of hype
- Dot.com boom to crash
 - E-books suffered, uptake quite slow
- Consolidation
 - parallels with other dot.coms – netLibrary saved from Bankruptcy by OCLC
- Relaunch
 - specific sectors, complement to paper books

E-books 2.0

- Re-evaluation of ebooks
- Linked to improved reader hardware – Kindle, Sony and now Android e-book reader
 - New devices promised from Microsoft and Mac
- Google Book Search and other mass digitisation projects
- What effect does this have on readers and users of technology?
- And on publishing models?

Advantages of e-books for individuals

- Anywhere, anytime access (24/7)
 - Wifi access to online book store (Amazon/Kindle)
- full text searching – within an eBook – across a whole collection of eBooks
- Customisable interface
- Portable
- Storage capacity
 - Especially convenient for travel

Advantages for libraries

- No lost or missing books or torn or defaced copies
- No physical book storage required
- No late returns and as many copies as there are readers
 - researchers and students no longer compete for copies
- Users expect online resources e.g. journals
- Good for distance learning

Problems

- Reading on screen still difficult
- Interoperability- huge number of different technical standards
 - Can only use certain formats on certain readers
- Dedicated devices still quite costly
- Cataloguing - often hard to find in library catalogues
- Digital Rights Management
 - What are users/libraries allowed to do?
 - Much less flexible than print
- Long term access to books when reader is obsolete

Cost and pricing

- In theory e-books should be cheaper than print
 - No printing, warehousing or transport cost
- But...
 - Publishers concerned e-books will hurt sales of print copies
 - usually cost at least the price of a print copy *per user* in libraries.
 - Significant extra burden per student for libraries
- Individual e-book pricing very similar to printed books
 - Early releases have ‘hard back’ prices
 - Out of copyright texts cheaper
 - But for print you don't have to buy the reading device

Economic models

- Not achieved huge market share
 - Certain niches eg engineering
 - Student texts, may replace course packs and short loan
- Devices driving market, but need more content to be available for real success
- Add on to print
 - Oxford scholarship online
 - O'Reilly computer manuals
- Linked to devices or online shops, eg Amazon Kindle

Google booksearch

- Digitising ‘a million books’ in partnerships with libraries
- Enables online searching of ‘real’ books
 - Partnership with publishers
 - Marketing tool for physical books
 - Don’t envisage it replacing real books
- Sales of advertising
- Tie-up with hardware manufacturers
- Still huge problems about copyright and monopolistic behaviour

Future development

- E-paper and e-ink
 - Sound a good idea, but slow to be produced
- New and better reading devices
- Expectation of young adults is that material must be digital
- Academic libraries already in conflict with publishers as a result
 - Will universities cut out academic publishers for textbooks?