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A Successful Model for eBooks

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Selecting and Acquiring eBooks: from page 28

- **Currency:** How important is currency to each discipline? If currency is important, would an annual subscription to a database of constantly updated content be most appropriate? If currency is not important, would a collection of selected titles with long-term or perpetual access be better?
- **Long-Term Access and Archiving:** If an eBook is being purchased in place of a print copy, what are the ongoing costs for long-term or "perpetual" access? Do the vendors providing this type of access also provide archiving? If so, what type, and how much does it cost?

Some more specific questions to consider in the selection of eBooks include:

- **Searchability:** Is the search page well-organized, making the search options clear? Does the search engine increase users' potential for success by suggesting alternative spellings, performing case sensitive searches, etc.? Are search tips included on the search screen? Can users browse subject areas to find relevant content?
- **Ease of Use:** Is the interface intuitive, allowing users to easily navigate to relevant content? Once a user is in an eBook, is it easy to navigate back to the results list? Is it clear how to print, copy and use tools such as full-text searching? Is the "help" section useful and easy to use?
- **Functionality:** Does the eBook interface offer tools that transcend the print book? Most eBooks feature full-text searching,

but are other features such as highlighting, linked tables of contents and indexes, and embedded dictionaries included?

- **MARC Records:** Catalog integration can dramatically increase discovery of a library's eBooks. Are MARC records available from the vendor? Are they high-quality? Are they free?
- **Usage Statistics:** Most vendors now provide usage statistics to library customers. What level of detail do these statistics provide, and are they compliant with current standards such as ICOLC? Are the usage statistics easy to access? Can they be delivered to customers by email at regular intervals?
- **Access limits:** Does the vendor place limits on printing and copying and pasting? Are these limits acceptable?
- **Content:** Is the vendor limited in its ability to provide newly-published titles in eBook format? Are the eBooks missing content, including illustrations, due to rights restrictions?

Conclusion

As the very definition of an eBook continues to evolve, libraries have a myriad of purchase models, access models and content collections to choose from. With so many different types of products available, the processes of selecting an eBook vendor and selecting and acquiring content can vary widely. However, librarians can evaluate these resources using a common set of criteria. As the eBook marketplace continues to evolve, librarians will have to continue to refine selection and acquisitions processes and take advantage of new tools that can help streamline these processes.

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A Success Model for eBooks

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Abstract: This case study on **OECD's eBooks library, SourceOECD**, explains how the concept was developed and evolved, provides some statistics, and describes some of the problems and pitfalls faced and improvements planned. Launched in 2000, **SourceOECD** was an early (perhaps the first) attempt by a publisher to offer all its books on an annual, all-you-can-eat subscription model. Four years later, the model has shown itself to be robust and sustainable. More than 550 institutions worldwide now choose to subscribe, and a number of additional publishers have launched services modeled on **SourceOECD**.

Introduction

The **Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)** is an international organization that publishes 150-200 books each

year on economics and public policy in English and in French. These books include analytical reports, conference proceedings, reference books, and a large number of annual statistical reports and policy reviews/outlooks covering such subject areas as economics, agriculture, de-

velopment, education, employment, energy, financial affairs, industry, public management, science and technology, social affairs, and transportation. Many contain authoritative cross-country statistics and policy information not available in comparable form elsewhere.

As with many specialist book publishers, sales of **OECD's** printed books had been steadily falling during the 1990s. More seriously, the number of core institutions opting to take standing order plans to **OECD** books was falling. With pressure on book acquisitions budgets unrelenting, partly because of the "Big Deal" model for e-journals, any recovery in the core library market seemed remote. So, in a spirit of "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em," **OECD** started to look at eBooks and the

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Internet, and for a new model for its book business more suited to the needs of potential readers and their librarians or information managers.

Phase One: Producing eBooks

Until 1998, OECD had been maintaining an archive of all publications on microfiche. By this time, microfiche was a dying technology, and the organization desired to discontinue supporting it. An alternative had to be found, and the decision was made to create an archive copy in PDF. Having integrated the creation of PDF files into our production process, PDF files for each book were available and offered the possibility of being able to use them for other purposes.

The first new application of the PDFs was to our online bookshop. The eBooks were made available for purchase at 80% of the print price and were offered free of charge to clients purchasing the print editions. This way, we were able to meet the needs of those who required instant access to our content and yet who still wanted the printed edition. By 2000, a pattern began to emerge, roughly 20% of all online bookshop sales were eBook only, with an additional large number of customers taking advantage of the opportunity of instantly downloading the eBook while waiting for the arrival of their printed copy.

Finding a Solution for Those Without Purchasing Power

Clearly, the online bookshop had been a success, but it was never going to be the "killer solution" we needed to arrest the erosion in our sales, since individually, the majority of our readers do not themselves have purchasing power. Most of our potential readers rely on their institution (university or company library) to provide with access to and pay for the information they need. These institutional buyers generally prefer to centralize their buying, often through book suppliers.

Until recently, book suppliers had no ability to handle eBooks, so there was no effective delivery channel, even if the institutions wanted to obtain our books. Of course, there were emerging initiatives such as **netLibrary**, **Questia**, and **Ebrary**. However, in trying to reach those without purchasing power, their business models did not seem to offer any significant advantage compared to print. Their business models still required librarians to pick and choose every title individually, and usually only allowed one-user-at-a-time access. Users could only browse the titles the librarian had bought, rather than a publisher's entire catalog, so there was no advantage to publishers in terms of having titles "discovered." In short, they took all the inefficiencies of the printed book model and copied them on the Web!

The other big problem with these emerging eBook systems was their use of proprietary technologies and their lack of common standards and models. Which horse should we back? Would any actually succeed in the long run? We also did not like the cost of sale associated

against the grain people profile

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Toby Green

BORN & LIVED: Born in West Dorset (UK) and now live in Paris, France.

EARLY LIFE: Brought up in rural surroundings. Spent boisterous childhood with three brothers on ponies and horses.

FAMILY: Married with three (boisterous) boys aged 5, 3 and 3 (yes, twins!).

EDUCATION: BSc(Hons) Microbiology & Virology, **Warwick University**, UK.

FIRST JOB: Petrol pump attendant.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: 1984 - date: promoting, selling or marketing specialist publications with Academic Press, Elsevier Applied Science, Pergamon Press, Elsevier Science and, now, OECD. Currently Head of Dissemination and Marketing, OECD Publications. Since 2001: ALPSP Council Member.

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO: Organise Disc Golf Tournaments and spend time with my family.

MOST MEANINGFUL CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: 1994: Launched ContentsDirect, Pergamon's email ToC alerting service — it is now serving all Elsevier journals. 2000:

Launched SourceOECD, OECD's e-library of books, periodicals and statistical databases.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: I think there could be a re-emergence of University Presses

thanks to the Open Access movement and some reduction in the share of the journals market controlled by for-profit publishers. Online services will be increasingly sophisticated and able to draw different content types together. Libraries will be buying online access to more books on a subscription basis. Conversely, I think printed books will do better thanks to print-on-demand technologies.

with these models, which would have pushed up prices to our clients.

Unconvinced by those potential solutions, we looked at the e-journals model. Here was an online publishing solution that was maturing very quickly indeed. There was an established and standardized infrastructure from publisher to reader, via all the usual intermediaries, including librarians. Most of all, this was where the majority of all reading was going on, thanks to a very open discovery system.

The e-journal market is characterized by some very large, aggregated, online portals gathering together journals from many different publishers. Access to these portals is often free, and, provided a subscription is in place, click-through access to the full text is easy. We figured that if we could load our eBooks into a system like this, we would benefit by having more of our books "discovered" as a part of user searches. We also liked the idea that these systems are multi-user. If you could have 20 people at the same institution reading the same journal article at the same

time, why not for books as well?

The e-journals model also meant that we could continue to work with our existing distributors with minimal disruption to our end-client relationships, and thus retain control of the business model and of contact with our end-clients. The cost of sale was also a known quantity and affordable. Furthermore, we realized that we could position our books alongside our journals and statistics and work towards an integrated information system or e-library.

eBooks, Phase II: An Online Library

So the question became how to shoehorn our books into a journals system. The solution was to gather our books into 20 subject-area clusters, and to load each cluster as a journal into **Ingenta's** journal platform. Each book behaved as an "issue" and each chapter as an "article." To begin with, we did not have the ability to break books into chapters, so each "issue" in effect had a single "article" — the whole eBook.

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We then gave each subject area cluster an ISSN and offered them to librarians on annual subscription, using exactly the same business model as used by journals. We offered a print+online service as well as an online only service.

We added our journals, loose-leaf services, and statistical databases as well and thereby created a comprehensive and integrated offering of our complete range of publications via *Ingenta.com* and some other aggregated gateways. Following early feedback, we also built our own branded portal, **SourceOECD**, in November 2000. In November 2002 we added our French language books in a parallel French language portal. In 2004 we launched <http://new.SourceOECD.org>, which added full-text searching, faster access via mirror sites around the world, and persistent links to individual titles.

All books from January 1998 are available through **SourceOECD**, and a few key items from before 1998 have now been added. In addition, we have started to add PDFs of selected documents, some of which are book length but never published in book form. So now, at the end of 2004, there are more than 2000 books and documents available on the site.

The Result

We have found that librarians really like the simplicity of the subscription model for books and the fact that they can offer multi-user desktop access, even to remote users. They can offer the full range of **OECD** books online for much less than the cost of buying each printed book individually. They like the predictability of the annual subscription pricing which makes budgets easier to manage. They also realize that they can make journal-like (or greater) savings in administrative and other costs: no more checking in of individual books and processing of all those book invoices.

The results have been very encouraging. At the end of the first year (2001), we had 70 institutions subscribing to all 20 thematic clusters, most also taking print. More significantly, we noticed that the number of institutions taking a majority of our books actually grew for the first time in years — we were winning back our old core customers.

By the end of 2002 the figure had risen to 266, of which 22% chose online-only access. By the end of 2004 this figure had risen to 550, with an increasing proportion opting for online-only service. In addition, a growing number of institutions were subscribing to particular subject themes. Our 200,000th eBook was downloaded in 2004 and we anticipate delivering our 300,000th in 2005.

As confidence in eBooks has risen (along with budgetary pressures) we are starting to see some libraries switch from online+print service to online only service.

The gradual build-up can be explained by several factors:

1. In 2000, the eBook market was immature and only now are readers

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BORN & LIVED: Born and grew up in rural central Pennsylvania, north of Harrisburg.

FAMILY: Pennsylvania German.

EDUCATION: BA in International Studies from **American University** and graduate of the Publications Specialist program of **George Washington University**.

FIRST JOB: With **McGraw-Hill** in a bookstore they opened in the the **Smithsonian Institution**.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: Sales Rep and VP for Marketing of **Acropolis Books**, Washington DC; Marketing Officer, Deputy Head of Center, and Head of Center of the **OECD** Washington Center, Washington, DC; and currently Corporate Marketing Manager, **OECD Publishing**, Paris, France.

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO: Read, see movies.

FAVORITE BOOKS: Too many to mention. Currently reading new biography of **Faulkner**.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: I see the library market moving increasingly toward electronic dissemination, and electronic products offering increasing value added with internal linking, enhanced search capabilities, etc.

starting to expect to find books online as opposed to journals.

2. Slow download speeds/limited bandwidth availability in 2000 made books slow to download; today institutions have increased their bandwidth and books are faster to download. Also, **OECD** has introduced chapter-by-chapter download options.
3. Librarians are now beginning to link from their OPACs to eBooks, which in **SourceOECD** have persistent links.
4. Discovery systems such as **Ebsco Online**, **Ingenta**, and **SwetsWise** are not well adapted to books metadata, although this is changing with **IngentaConnect**.
5. Full text searching was not available until 2004, but introduction of full-text searching has enhanced **SourceOECD** use.
6. The gradual introduction of chapter-by-chapter searching has increased the granularity of metadata and has increased the chances of users finding **OECD** materials in their searches.

The growth in the number of institutions taking a majority of our books and the strong interest from a range of new markets and library consortia show that we have probably found a sustainable business model for specialist book publishing in an online era. In 2002, 24% of our book revenues were generated by **SourceOECD** subscriptions and by the end of 2004, the percentage will be nearly 50%.

The Future

As any publisher of books and journals will confirm, the margins associated with subscription publishing are much more flexible than for books. So, with our book publishing looking more and more like a subscription business, we are finding it easier to accommodate new titles that would have struggled to be published in a traditional way. For example, we can now publish short reports and other content types online only alongside our books; previously, these would have been lost in the sea of grey literature. Print on demand, to be introduced in 2005, will increase our flexibility still further.

One weakness in the system has been getting user data. **Ingenta** adopted the **COUNTER** standard very early, but it is a standard developed to track journal usage, not book or database usage. **COUNTER** is working on a system for books, but until standards are in place, the usage data for eBooks is not likely to be comparable. **Ingenta** is working on improvements for **SourceOECD's** usage data.

Another weakness in the **SourceOECD** system has been the search mechanism. In 2004, this was enhanced with the introduction of full-text searching in **SourceOECD**, and searching has also been enhanced as more and more books are being broken up into chapters, each of which has its own metadata. We are working with **Ingenta** on further enhancements to the search mechanism, including elimination of duplicate results.

In addition, we are working on ways to make discovery and access easier through **Google**, **EconLit**, and **REPEC**. Having persistent links

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makes is much easier to provide access via discovery services.

We have just started to use DOIs (Digital Object Identifiers) on selected statistical books to enhance usability of our PDF files of those books. Starting in 2005, selected publications will embed DOIs which we are calling "Statlinks" next to statistical tables. These Statlinks will link to live **Excel** spreadsheet files containing the numbers found in the table. In time, we expect to load these spreadsheets into **SourceOECD** so they can be found separately from the eBooks. We are also hoping to provide links, via **CrossRef**, in bibliographical references found in our books. Our eBooks are gradually becoming platforms from which other content can be found.

The division between books, periodicals, and statistical databases is blurring. We are finding that users don't really care what kind of publication information comes from: the important thing is being able to find it. Services like **Ingenta** are responding by making their systems more friendly to non-journal content. This, in turn, could very well influence how we present content in future versions of **SourceOECD**.

A number of other publishers have noticed the attractions of our model as well. The **World Bank** launched their e-library in 2003 and the **World Tourism Organisation** and **Oxford University Press** launched theirs in 2004, all using the **Ingenta** platform.

Conclusion

At the end of 1997, **OECD's** book publishing operation was losing clients at an unsustainable rate, and this decline raised questions about the future of the **OECD's** book publishing pro-

gram. By turning to the eBook, **OECD** has succeeded in creating a business platform from which it can move forward with confidence. The solution has proved to be the creation of an e-library sold on an annual subscription using the e-journals model. This model has succeeded in arresting the decline in the number of clients taking **OECD** standing order plans, has won back lost clients, and is actually bringing in new clients.

With online services, **OECD** now has the flexibility and potential to reach out and sell its books program to new market segments such as small and medium-sized institutions and institutions in developing countries. We now have the ability to publish a wider range of book types to an increasing readership.

Finally, the wonders of electronic distribution mean we now know much more about what is being read and what is not being read, and are better able to make publishing decisions for the future.

eBooks in the Health Sciences: Trends and Challenges

by **Ramune Kubilius** (Collection Development / Special Projects Librarian,
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This article describes a current health sciences electronic book scene that may resemble experiences in other types of libraries. The phrase "electronic book" is used in a general sense to describe book content available in a computer readable format... It should be noted that this survey "from the trenches" has an admittedly academic library emphasis.

Several years' experience has shown that things may not have changed much. Already in a 2002 survey of predominantly academic health sciences librarians, 99% of survey respondents indicated that their libraries provided access to electronic books.¹ In 2004, more types of libraries, those at hospitals and smaller health institutions, probably offer some eBook access. Libraries usually begin their venture by looking for reliable "classic" textbooks online, defined by local needs and core lists. More consortia licenses of electronic gateways include health sciences books, benefiting more users in diverse types of libraries. Local decisions determine whether to seek, catalog, and link reputable online free health sciences books, from government and digital library project sources. The number of publishers and providers licensing eBook content expanded since 2002, but the "players" of 2002 are also still on the scene. (The Appendix provides a list of some electronic health sciences book collections and providers.)

Once a list of desired titles is developed, it must be determined if they are available online (preferably via a Web gateway), and through which provider(s). Checklists of criteria guide selection. Decisions are based on price, licensing parameters and restrictions, permitted user

base, concurrent use, title-by-title vs. suite availability. Sometimes, desirable titles in a suite cannot be unbundled from less desirable titles. Sometimes they can, but a persistent librarian has to know to request (or demand) it! The search interface is examined for usability, linking, and printing. Publisher platforms, just as with electronic journals, offer more "bells and whistles," beyond providing basic print book content.

WHAT IS AVAILABLE? WHAT ARE PRIORITIES?

Curriculum support: Cutting edge research is announced in health sciences journal literature, but broad overview reviews needed by health sciences students of various levels are found in textbook literature. Licensing and accreditation bodies for health professional education and residency programs have information literacy requirements that may include reading lists of books or book chapters. Instructors devise required and recommended book lists for students. For user convenience, as well as the capability of linking books and chapters in online reserve / reading list sites and course management systems, libraries usually seek online availability of reading list books.

Clinical and reference: Some electronic titles may be considered by librarians to be part of a desirable "quick reference" collection and would include health sciences dictionaries, laboratory value, and drug information resources. For healthcare practitioners, synopsis handbooks or "lab coat pocket book" series may be licensed. Libraries may license or contribute funds to-

wards collaborative licensing of suites for general references, such as encyclopedias, English and foreign language dictionaries.

Basic sciences: Health sciences libraries are called upon to provide electronic access to more basic sciences books and content, including laboratory protocols and methodology. Basic sciences textbooks are curricular reading in graduate schools and fundamental courses of health sciences programs. Books are useful to laboratory researchers² and assistants. Some laboratory protocol series that "straddled the fence" in their print formats, as books, classed journal series, or loose leaf services, now resemble electronic journals or online databases. Much still depends on how indexing services, publishers, providers, and individual libraries treat them.

Examination review: Some educators are skeptical about the efficacy of commercial health professional board and certification examination review resources.³ Electronically available review resources present their own challenges. Examination questions may be "hidden" in appendices to online textbooks. Some review series are available in health sciences or even non-health sciences electronic book provider gateways. Some print series have evolved into examination review databases. Some databases have been designed "from scratch." This genre seems to be moving away from the "choppy" book-like format, as online modules are designed and licensed to target specific examination audiences.

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