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Turning Pages: Reflections on eBook Acquisitions & Access Challenges

Lorraine Busby

University of Western Ontario, lbusby@uwo.ca

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and video rental stores have repeatedly won. Second, since revising the first sale doctrine will not prohibit licenses that forbid loaning, and given that contract law is mostly governed by state law rather than federal, lobbying Congress to ban restrictive licensing is unlikely to be successful; instead libraries must demand license concessions before purchasing or subscribing to content; if we favor companies that favor our wishes, hopefully the market will push hold-out companies to yield. Third, libraries need to encourage the development of open access eBook publishing. If we are successful, we will make significant steps toward ensuring the right of the public to information without regard to one's income level or location in regards to electronic materials, as we largely have for print.

During these years of adjustment to eBooks, collection developers should tailor their selection of eBooks based on patron topic and format demand; public services should teach patrons how to use eBooks; catalogers should devise a clearer way to catalog eBooks using consistent standards; staff should update MARC local holding records to enable automated deflection; and libraries should lobby for the legal right and technological ability to truly loan eBooks. Until these changes are fully implemented, ILL borrowing staff members should continue to carefully select records to be requested; ILL lending staff members should continue to patiently cancel requests for eBooks; and everyone should educate patrons about interlibrary loan, eBooks, copyright, licensing, and scholarly communications in general. 🌱

Endnotes

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3. Most notably: **Jens Vigen** and **Kari Paulson**, "E-books and interlibrary loan: An Academic Centric Model for Lending?" [Online]; available at <http://www.nla.gov.au/ilds/abstracts/VigenJ.pdf>, accessed 3 Jan 2007; **Penny Garrod**, "E-books: Are They the Interlibrary Lending Model of the Future?," *Interlending & Document Supply* 32 (4) (2004), 227-232.
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5. **Margi Mann**, "Guide to WorldCat Resource Sharing ILL Request Routing and ILL Request Deflection: What It Is & How it Affects You," [Online]; available at http://www.wla.org/igs/wale/presentations06/tech_services/DeflectionGuidebook.pdf.

against the grain people profile

Associate University Librarian
Information Resources Western Libraries
University of Western Ontario
London Ontario N6A 3K7
Phone: 519 661-2111 x84850 Fax: 519 661-3503
<lbusby@uwo.ca>

Lorraine Busby

BORN & LIVED: Born in Welland, Ontario. Lived most of life in Stoney Creek or London, Ontario. Now live on 3 acres in Ilderton, Ontario.

EARLY LIFE: Worked in **Stoney Creek Public Library** as a page ... and always wanted to be a librarian.

FAMILY: 1 husband, 1 son, 1 dog, 1 cat, 3 goats, 10 chickens.

EDUCATION: BA (Hons) in English and History. MLS.

FIRST JOB: Library page as above. Then a bank teller.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: Worked at **Western** since 1984 in the (now defunct) Engineering Library, the **Allyn and Betty Taylor Library**, **The D.B. Weldon Library**, the Music Library and a very brief connection with the Law Library. Currently as AUL, Information Resources, my office is located with the fun people in Library Technical Services.

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO: Spin mohair which has been sheared from the family's angora goats.

FAVORITE BOOKS: *Dune* by **Frank Herbert**.

PET PEEVES/WHAT MAKES ME MAD: Expecting change without taking risks.

PHILOSOPHY: Let's try it; the worse that will happen is that we will be told no.

MOST MEANINGFUL CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: Working in the Music Library without a music background.

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: Staying healthy and happy. 🌱

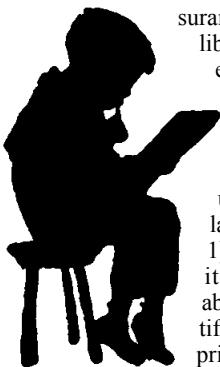


Turning Pages: Reflections on eBook Acquisitions & Access Challenges

by **Lorraine Busby** (Associate University Librarian, Information Resources, University of Western Ontario) <lbusby@uwo.ca>

2006 was the year of the eBook. After years of hesitating, major academic publishers were ready to launch their monographs in a digital form. Clearly, publishers were reluctant to invest heavily without reassurances that the academic library community would embrace eBooks. While there was widespread acknowledgment that electronic journals are here to stay, it is understood that this is largely for two reasons: 1) a journal article lends itself to being searchable by keyword to identify relevance, and 2) it is printable, to allow portability and convenience of reading when and where the reader wants. Uncertainty about both user and purchaser reaction to digital books, on the other hand, made publishers cautious yet willing to experiment. Printing eBooks is an oxymoron and simply not an option in the way that printing of articles meets users' needs. Nonetheless, by 2006 the technology and general approval of all things digital had achieved widespread acceptability in academic circles with the resultant competitive pressure for publishers to move forward with their electronic books. A critical mass of electronic titles, new and retrospective, from a wide variety of academic publishers, hit the market. The pricing models, options for acquisition, and pre-purchasing contract clauses varied significantly from publisher to publisher. It is

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these differences, and our responses to them, which are the subjects of this paper. Library acquisition practices typically have flowed from the options available for purchase through to the policies, procedures and practices adopted by library staff to bring resources into the library in a cost-effective fashion. The lack of consistency and the variety of options at the point of purchase should give librarians reason to pause and consider workflow repercussions and how much staff effort is needed to manage a digital format.

When electronic journals first were introduced there was little consideration of these issues. Libraries typically made the expedient decision to set up a Web page (outside the **OPAC**) listing electronic resources and perhaps to catalog various aggregator packages to which users were directed for keyword searching. Over time, some libraries elected to catalog individual journal titles and incorporate them into their **OPAC**. Users were encouraged to continue finding the journals from separate Web pages rather than from the catalog. Those libraries that placed a priority on individual journal title access added electronic titles to their catalogs as separate ISSN identification numbers for the electronic version became readily available. Catalogers embraced mechanisms for unique identification of electronic resources to facilitate accuracy and relevancy in identifying the bibliographic entity being described. Consequently, the predominant cataloging issue became a decision to use single records for all formats, or separate records based on unique bibliographic format and unique identification of the resource. Today there are a variety of approaches to the issue of single or multiple records. Background discussion about cataloging rules for Resource Description and Access (RDA) swirls around the issue. According to a recent update, the future is looking both bleak and discouraging to anyone anticipating increased bibliographic control and increased user access through RDA.¹ Perhaps lack of professional agreement on how that control is to occur has influenced the market uptake of Electronic Resource Management systems to operate within our ILS and **OPACs**. Such tools provide an expensive solution to manage an expensive resource — and our users see little, if any, direct value in them.

Before the processing dust settled on electronic journals, so to speak, libraries were inundated with offers for acquiring a critical mass of eBooks. Initial library responses paralleled those of the introduction of electronic serials — creation of Web page listings or individually cataloged for addition to the **OPAC**.² When only a limited number of eBooks were available, libraries could do whatever they wanted regarding bibliographic management without worry or repercussions. Now that large quantities of digital books are available, all the identification issues connected with journals haunt the eBook format in tandem with additional considerations. None of the

supposed clarity of acquisition and processing in the print book world is available. Libraries are trying to figure out what an eBook truly is in order to determine how to process it in a cost-effective fashion. Perhaps there is hope in the **TIME (Test Bed for Interoperable Metadata for E-books) Project** described at the **UKSG** seminar on eBooks in November 2005.³ For most of us, though, waiting for metadata standards to fully meet all requirements of the library world is wishful thinking. Timesavings in downloading bibliographic records for eBooks are not yet readily available. From my perspective, **Joanne Yeomans of CERN** is correct when she questions why we are not radically reinventing purchasing models.⁴ In a similar vein, why are we not radically reinventing processing models?

Evidence so far suggests that links to eBooks through the library catalog are providing insufficient access.⁵ Treating eBooks like print equivalents, with perhaps added descriptors to acknowledge electronic features, fails to recognize the systemic limitations of our **OPACs** in providing access to electronic content. According to the **Dinkelman and Stacy-Bates** survey, “97% of those [libraries] surveyed offered some publicly accessible means for searching for electronic resources outside of the catalog.”⁶ This is a clear symptom that something is wrong with the **OPAC** search interface. Still to be resolved is whether eBooks will be processed and handled as serials, for after all, the electronic format may have annual renewal fees, making it more akin to a journal than a book. Yet, librarians are reluctant to recognize the serial nature of eBooks from a budget management perspective as electronic serials already consume the largest portion of the acquisition budget in an academic institution. It is problematic to increase this allocation by committing to book purchases with annual renewals. One-time purchases for eBook titles become much more palatable, even if the annual access fee to the platform is buried under serial expenses.

For electronic books, what works on the individual title level is assumed to work on the aggregated package level. Regardless of how vendors price, market, and package their resources, library staff needs to separate the purchasing mechanism from processing and activating the package, and there must be efficiencies at both stages. How the vendor sells their products should not determine how the customer rolls out the products. Uncoupling these two activities reminds us that the vendors’ business model is separate from our internal practices and procedures.

Unfortunately, the focus in many libraries is primarily on making new products fit the existing catalog. When discussing the possible introduction of a new eBook package, staff is quick to ask: “Are MARC records available?”

Vendors dutifully are asked our mantra, and most manage to avoid publicly groaning. Speak to them privately, though, and they will acknowledge that it is almost impossible to meet their customers’ cataloging expectations. In essence, the vendor is asked to produce what cannot be accomplished within the profession — records with varying ranges of acceptable cataloging standards. Despite expecting the near impossible from our vendors, librarians then add insult to injury by expecting records to be free. Typical costs of \$1 a MARC record may appear acceptable when added to the purchase price of an individual print volume. What becomes problematic and suspect, particularly within a consortium, is to purchase an electronic collection of 50,000 titles to be faced with an add-on charge of \$50,000 for MARC records which *each* purchaser of the collection presumably wants and needs. Those institutions with the financial wherewithal to afford the cost rationalize the purchase of these records on the basis of both staff efficiencies and accelerated access for users.

Do our users care? Assuredly, they have no idea what a MARC record is and nor should they have to know. Certainly, they do not line up at our libraries with complaints about inaccurate coding in MARC tag xxx and its

“Despite the slow introduction to electronic books, the current proliferation of purchasing options is waiting to be embraced while progress in managing these resources has stagnated.”

negative affects on others if not corrected immediately. When electronic journals became ubiquitous, users had no problem searching Web pages to find the content they wanted. Those libraries that cataloged individual titles in packages needed to intercede with training to convince users that they could and should check the catalog to find the desired electronic journal. Some voices in the profession correctly continue to acknowledge that digital content need not be constrained by the print world environment. The systemic problems that we continue to encounter emerge from our unwillingness to give up the control and order that was possible in print. For the most part, we are battling our profession and ourselves. As contradictory as it may sound, to achieve progress, librarians must surrender what has become internalized as our exclusive turf — access and control of selected resources. The implications are enormous; we will lose the boundaries of our collections, our buildings, our responsibilities, and our expertise but we will gain a world of information to deliver to the people we serve.

Users do continue to request electronic books and, even though there is not a clear understanding of their needs and how they will make use of digital content, libraries

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have a responsibility to make accessible what is purchased. Without further, dedicated research on electronic access from the users' perspective, best practices will be slow to emerge. Experience so far suggests that users likely are quite willing to search content on Websites (either library or vendors' Websites), rather than sifting through an OPAC for digital resources. Yet that approach works well only if all eBooks are accessible through one vendor platform or are locally loaded on an institutional server. Once available through a common interface or platform the potential for federated searching of digital books becomes a real alternative to access through the OPAC. At this point there are significant limitations to federated searching but technological innovations are sure to overcome these problems in the foreseeable future. The alternative, namely to encourage users to search the OPAC and link out to specific titles of interest, clearly is not adequate either. When purchasing content in packages one or both options are possible. Purchasing on a title-by-title basis necessitates integration into the catalog. In the short term, both expedient approaches will have to be considered adequate. In the long term, the role and function of our catalog need to be agreed upon. Clarity on this issue is missing and doesn't appear to be on the horizon in the near future. Controversies over the design of next generation catalogs are equally divisive to some in the profession who worry that control and access is being sacrificed to expedience. Meanwhile our users Google and never think of searching a library catalog.

Sub-standard approaches are sub-standard only if users cannot find what they want and need. Technology should provide the capability to scoop relevant metadata from which to create catalog records with sufficient bibliographic detail to accurately identify and access the item. Combine this with digital Table of Contents (TOC) and the user has something to work with. Traditionally we have paid for TOC services as a catalog enrichment service, but why would we do so when the data is already part of the digital item in hand? Using technology to retrieve this data and import into a record allows effective resource management, and is a process well suited to technological automation. From there the user can treat an eBook as comparable to a journal with separate chapters/articles. Surely libraries can manage this process without outsourcing and without human intervention. Control in this fashion requires contracting for eBooks to be locally hosted. Otherwise it requires librarians to contract with our eBook vendors, not for MARC records, but for relevant metadata to create sufficient access points to the electronic book entity being described. In time, if the standardization efforts and consensus evolve, the possibility of upgrading and conforming can be considered. A united voice is needed to make this happen. Perhaps our consortia can lead this initiative as part of contracting for eBook packages. But frankly, if our users

are satisfied perhaps it is not an issue worth pursuing. The goal should be accessibility for the user. They search, they capture, and they print as needed.

In reviewing a recent Weblog by **Lorcan Dempsey**,⁷ he highlighted relevant points:

- Libraries are reducing investment in routine activities to focus on where they can most create value for the user. This leads to a focus on both ends of the value chain: use of resources and creation of resources.
- Cost and complexity need to be driven out of library activity. This drives an interest in standardization and consolidation.

From **Dempsey's** Weblog page it is possible to link to the *DEFF Strategy Discussion Paper*, which referenced the **OCLC Pattern Recognition Scan** from 2003. While neither source specifically deals with the issue of access to eBooks, the overall conclusions are relevant: shift the focus to the user and shift service from "what you see is what you get" to "what you need is what you get." Librarians continue to learn what our users both want and need but the bottom line is that students see eBooks as must-haves. Libraries already are competing with free eBooks from **Google** and other search engines on the Internet; it behooves us to take a lesson from these digital leaders by adopting the obvious approaches available and modifying these approach as users respond to them.

How can electronic book access be expedited compared to earlier efforts with journal Web pages? My biggest fear is that librarians will treat these resources as monographic series — a futile attempt to equate the serial-like nature of electronic content with the marketing and packaging of the content as a "book." While there may have been legitimate reasons to manage these entities in the convoluted

world of series, let's not digitally replicate the confusion.

Despite the slow introduction to electronic books, the current proliferation of purchasing options is waiting to be embraced while progress in managing these resources has stagnated. Since staff comprises the largest component of operating budgets, good business practices suggest that designing workflow processes, which allocate minimal staff and time in handling resources, is to be desired provided that there is no negative impact on identification and access for users. It is up to library staff to ensure eBook access to users is successful to the extent that it matches users' wants and needs. Expedient access options within, and outside of, the catalog must be widely shared and adopted with faith that the longer-term access issues can, and will, be resolved. So, let's work together to set reasonable standards, focus on effective access, reduce the preoccupation with control, and better serve our users. 🌱

Endnotes

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2. **Dinkelman, Andrea and Stacy-Bates, Kristine.** (2007) Accessing E-books through Academic Library Web Sites. *College & Research Libraries* 68 (1) 45-58.
3. **Sharp, Steve.** (2006). E-book: the new serial? *Serials* 19 (1), 8-9. Retrieved from <http://uksg.metapress.com>.
4. **Sharp, Steve.** Ibid., p 9.
5. **Dinkelman, Andrea et al.** Ibid., p 47.
6. **Dinkelman, Andrea et al.** Ibid., p 52.
7. **Lorcan Dempsey's** Weblog on libraries, services and networks. February 5, 2007. Retrieved February 12, 2007 from <http://orweblog.oclc.org/archives/001261.html>.

Rumors from page 22

at **UNC-Chapel Hill** about archiving print and e-content. We are hoping to have **Michael** write a regular column for *ATG* and perhaps speak during the **2007 Charleston Conference**. Can you believe it's been 37 years since **Bruce** and **Michael** were in Oxford as colleagues?

More visitors. **Pam Censer** <pam.censer@gmail.com> and her husband, **Doug**, were recently in **Charleston** enjoying the cool weather that we aren't used to. **Pam** is visiting **Melinda Scharstein** and her mother, **Terry**, and we hope to get a minute together to brainstorm about **Pam's** and **Susan Campbell's** mentoring roles at the **2007 Charleston Conference**. Should be fun, right?

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Future Dates for Charleston Conferences

Preconferences and Vendor Showcase

Main Conference

2007 Conference	7 November	8-10 November
2008 Conference	5 November	6-8 November
2009 Conference	4 November	5-7 November
2010 Conference	3 November	4-6 November