

Chapter 29

E–Books: Reader, Librarian, and Publisher Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

The e-book is a digital medium for communication of information. The chapter recognizes various types of e-books available and discusses various issues such as the technology required, standardization, licensing, and pricing, etc. It also discusses the need of legal deposit of e-books and the problems facing this issue and the Legal Deposit Database (LDD) to solve it. Advantages and disadvantages of e-books and the barriers affecting the use are also discussed. An analysis of the survey is presented, which shows the views of readers, librarians, and publishers about e-books. The analysis reveals that libraries should purchase e-books because of online availability, 24x7 easy access, and simultaneous use, etc. The chapter concludes with the problems of e-books in India such as multiple languages used in the country. It visualizes the glorious future with the adoption of technology by users and minimizing DRM restrictions and the use of the open access model.

INTRODUCTION

A book is a medium for communicating information. The medium, as we commonly understand nowadays is paper, but can include all other mediums, like clay, stone, birch, bark, palm leaf, metal sheets, etc. The information includes facts, teaching material, discursive writing, poetry, or

fiction, etc. An e-book is an equivalent with a change of medium. It is a digital medium. The paper is replaced by light screen be it TFT or LCD or its future. The ink is replaced by digital inscription. E-book is an example of new developments evolved from conception to a reality with more to come. In 1945, Vannevar Bush conceptualized a device “Memex,” that could store and display

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personal documents, records and books. In the beginning it was only possible to display lines one by one, which later could display four lines at a time, so it was of little use during those days (Subba Rao, 2004). The word ‘electronic book’ is believed to have been coined by Andries Van Dam in 1980. He developed the Hypertext Editing System (HEP) for reading text on a computer screen. Alan Kay presented “Dynabook” similar to a laptop. The earlier E-books were reference books like thesaurus and dictionary. The first widely available e-book was Random House’s Electronic Thesaurus in 1981. During the 1990s, the first generation e-book reader devices came into existence. Also during this time print publications were scanned or keyed, proofread, and then converted to HTML for developing e-books, which was a laborious and expensive task. The electronic book player played both audio CDs and books on CD-ROM. The small screen and lack of an appropriate content distribution channel made the success of these limited. Later, Franklin launched the E-bookman with a larger screen and enabled titles to be downloaded from the Internet. The second-generation devices during 1998 could store multiple titles in a small space, and retain the advantages of the print medium, a high-resolution screen and turning of pages using buttons (Khosrow-Pour, 2006). In 1999 Netlibrary was launched with more than 2000 E-books commercially available to libraries. In the year 2004, E-Book Library (EBL) and MyiLibrary were established. In December of 2004 Google began print library project called ‘Google Books Library Project’ to make available the digitized collections of New York Public Library and the universities of Michigan, Harvard, Oxford, and Stanford through Google Books. During this period, publishers themselves also began e-book initiatives (Subba Rao, 2004).

LITERATURE SURVEY

There are many work on e-books, Polanka (2011) found out that despite a 40-year history, e-books are still relatively young and have room to grow and improve. Strempe (2011) found out that e-books are demonstrating explosive growth in the professional scholarly market as print sales subside. In fact, it is estimated that professional and scholarly books account for 75% of the E-Book market. Surveys conducted by Library Journal (2011) found that 94% of academic libraries and 72% of public libraries had offered e-books to their patrons during the last year. Survey conducted by the Association of American Publishers, e-book net sales totaled nearly \$70 million in January 2011, an increase of 115% over the previous year. It is estimated that “e-book sales have increased annually and significantly since 2002” (Biba, 2011). E-books are the future of printed books as printed books were future of manuscripts. Librarians have embraced e-books for their ease of archiving, capacity to allow simultaneous multi-user access, and ability to expand library collections without encroaching on valuable library space (Wheeler, 2011).

DEFINITIONS

E-book can be defined as a text in digital form, a book converted into digital form, digital reading material, a book in a computer file format, an electronic file of words and images to be displayed on computer screen, or read on a computer over a network, or viewed on a desktop/note-books/ dedicated portable device, or read on all types of computers, or formatted for display on e-book readers (Jenkins, 2008). Electronic book is an electronic text regardless of size or composition, made available electronically or optically, for any device, hand-held or desk-bound that includes a

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