



---

Volume 50 | Issue 1

Article 3

---

2007

## Integrating E-Books into the Collection: Some Practical Considerations

John Doncevic

*Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry*

Kathryn Floyd

*Geneva College*

*The Christian Librarian* is the official publication of the Association of Christian Librarians (ACL). To learn more about ACL and its products and services please visit <http://www.acl.org/>

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/tcl>

 Part of the [Collection Development and Management Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Doncevic, John and Floyd, Kathryn (2007) "Integrating E-Books into the Collection: Some Practical Considerations," *The Christian Librarian*: Vol. 50 : Iss. 1 , Article 3.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/tcl/vol50/iss1/3>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ George Fox University. It has been accepted for inclusion in *The Christian Librarian* by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ George Fox University. For more information, please contact [arolf@georgefox.edu](mailto:arolf@georgefox.edu).

# Integrating E-Books into the Collection:

## Some Practical Considerations

*John Doncevic*  
Library Director  
Trinity Episcopal School  
for Ministry  
Ambridge, Pennsylvania

*Kathryn Floyd*  
Cataloging Librarian  
Geneva College  
Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania

*People prefer to use e-books for quick reference and for searching, as they would use a print book's index*

### Introduction

About five years ago, when many believed digitization would become the panacea for libraries, some of our colleagues predicted that e-books would supplant print. For example, Andrew Pace wrote in 2000: "In five years e-book sales will match those of traditional print; in ten years, e-books will outsell print. There is little doubt left in my mind – e-books are among us and are here to stay."<sup>1</sup>

While the proliferation of e-books has not matched the lofty predictions, the availability and usability of e-books is expanding each year. The options for reader and search platforms have increased, more titles are becoming available, prices have stabilized, and selection options have evolved. Library information infrastructure has likewise matured. Remote access by proxy authentication is more widespread than five years ago; some libraries are part of a wireless network enabling students to conduct distributed research; and online distance education is burgeoning. E-books are finally a reasonable option for supplementing the library collection.

This paper will provide a short primer on cataloging and access for librarians who are planning to add e-books. While several platforms for e-books exist (such as a digital book on a CD-ROM or a digitized book that the library itself has created), this paper will limit the discussion to the prevalent platform model: a vendor-supplied, web-accessible content, such as NetLibrary.

### The E-book Niche

Two facts make e-books unique. First, because the text is digitized, every word is searchable from anywhere readers have web access. Second, reading digitized pages is cumbersome to many people; few can tolerate staring at a screen through page after page. Library users have adapted to these two facts by using e-books differently than print books. Helfer found that most people would rather use e-

books as a reference tool. Users want to search the text, locate the relevant portion, and return the book. For prolonged or comprehensive reading, users want paper.<sup>2</sup> Connaway and Snyder report that the average session for an e-book use was about 11 minutes, and the average pages viewed was about 14 pages.<sup>3</sup> People prefer to use e-books for quick reference and for searching, as they would use a print book's index. Chuck Richard, an analyst who monitors digital content, notes that "People are using them to solve specific problems or to look up facts, as opposed to reading from cover to cover the way you would read a book on the beach."<sup>4</sup>

These unique adaptations of e-books should inform cataloging and access for e-books.

### Cataloging

Perhaps the easiest question faced when acquiring online e-books is whether to include them in the OPAC or to let patrons find them through a web portal or the vendor's interface. The obvious choice should be to add the records to the catalog. Recent studies have shown that patrons expect searching the catalog to work like Google, with one search box that covers all available resources, and some users do not realize that it may be necessary to search several places for different formats, such as journal articles.<sup>5</sup> Collection management and development functions derived from OPAC data will include e-books more easily when they are integrated into the catalog.

As e-books become more prevalent, copy-cataloging records are more readily available from bibliographic utilities. A 2003 survey showed that 83% of responding libraries cataloging online material (all kinds, not just e-books) contribute their records to a bibliographic utility.<sup>6</sup> Standards are becoming better adapted to the electronic format. Robert Bothmann provides an excellent overview of e-book record requirements, with examples, that both helps the librarian faced with cataloging

e-books for the first time and shows some benchmarks for evaluating vendor-created or other copy-cataloged records.<sup>7</sup> Some vendors, such as NetLibrary, now supply the MARC records as part of the subscription, but even when it is necessary to do original cataloging for each e-book acquired, the advantages of individual records can make it worth the time.

Instead of creating separate records for the e-books, libraries may add the online e-book URL to an existing record for the print version, when the electronic book is an exact reproduction of the print. If the library already owns the title in print, a separate record for an item that will be identical in author, title, and subjects may seem redundant. Using one record is an option, but a record for each version has some distinct benefits. For instance, if the print copy is lost and not replaced, that entire record can be deleted without having to find a new record for the e-book version or leaving the print item record in the catalog when all that is held by the library is the electronic version. Patrons may be confused when some e-books are listed and described as such on individual records, while other e-books appear only as links in print records.

Since online e-books are accessed by hyperlinks in the bibliographic record, locating a work does not require a call number as for physical materials. Classification, though, is more than a “mark and park” system. It can be used, for instance, to locate books on a similar topic or to evaluate subject strengths and weaknesses. There are several factors to consider regarding the classification of e-books. First, when classification numbers are already present in records, or can be copied easily from the print version, using them does not add much burden on staff time and expertise. When the classification does have to be individually created, the cost should be weighed against the use and benefits. Second, the degree to which browsing by classification is taught and used in the library will help determine how much time and effort should be committed to that part of the bibliographic record. Third, the library should consider whether patrons will confuse the classification number with a call number and try to find e-books on the shelves. The

location of the number in the record display may be modified so that the catalog interface shows it differently than call numbers used to locate books. Another option for clarifying the number is adding a suffix or prefix. If it is not possible to mitigate potential misreadings, it may be better to scrap the classification number. These three issues should guide the decision of whether and how to include classification in e-book records.

Because remote resources are not physical items, it is not necessary to attach a barcode so that a patron can check them out, which brings up the issue of what to include in the MARC holdings fields or item record, or whether any of that information is necessary. Various integrated library systems use item data in different ways, so blanket recommendations are not possible. It is vital to understand how the integrated library system uses the information in the holding fields or item record in order to decide what is necessary for e-books. Considering these four questions will help guide this decision. First, do you normally run processes in the database that will affect e-book records if they are left without barcodes or holdings fields? For instance, item counts may depend on having a holdings record for every bibliographic title. Second, does the presence of a barcode or holdings field in the record affect any searches? In our OPAC, there is an option to select searching only “available” items, which means bibliographic records that have barcodes attached and are marked checked-in, and it is undesirable to exclude e-books from searches based on these criteria. Third, how will the display be affected in the online catalog? E-books’ access and availability information should appear in similar locations as for print books to help patrons find the information quickly. Fourth, does the ILS offer any short-cuts or conveniences that could save time in the process of adding the items? For instance, a software system may be able to create dummy barcode numbers during a batch loading of the MARC records instead of processing and adding a barcode to each one. If there are no short-cuts available, the time it will take to add the item fields should be weighed against its usefulness to the library and the patrons.

*The principle to follow in setting up an access method is Ranganathan’s rule “Save the reader’s time.”*

## REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> Andrew K. Pace, "From Atoms to Bits: The E-Evolution of the Book," *Computers in Libraries* 20, no.6 (June 2000): 64.

<sup>2</sup> Doris Small Helfer, "Leading Libraries: E-books in Libraries: Some Early Experiences and Reactions," *Searcher* 8, no. 9 (2000): 63-65.

<sup>3</sup> Lynn Silipigni Connaway and Clifton Snyder, "Transaction Log Analysis of Electronic (E-Book) Usage," *Against the Grain* (February 2005): 85-89.

<sup>4</sup> Chuck Miller, quoted in Ron Miller, "Ebooks Worm Their Way into the Reference Market," *EContent* 28, no. 7/8 (2005): 31-34.

<sup>5</sup> Holly Yu and Margo Young, "The Impact of Web Search Engines on Subject Searching in OPAC," *Information Technology and Libraries* (December 2004): 176; and Eric Novotny, "I Don't Think I Click: a Protocol Analysis Study of Use of a Library Online Catalog in the Internet Age," *College & Research Libraries* 65, no. 6, <http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlppubs/crljournal/crl2004/november/Novotony.pdf> (accessed July 7, 2006): 529.

<sup>6</sup> Jacqueline Byrd, et al., "Report of the Task Group to Survey PCC Libraries on Cataloging of Remote Access Electronic Resources," (2004), [http://www.loc.gov/catdir/pcc/archive/tgsrvyeres\\_final.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/catdir/pcc/archive/tgsrvyeres_final.pdf) (accessed July 13, 2006): 11.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Bothmann, "Cataloging Electronic Books," *Library Resources & Technical Services* 48, no.1: 12-19.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

The final issue to consider regarding the bibliographic records of e-books is how to separate them from other items when needed. Users may want to search only e-books or to eliminate e-books from their searches. There are several ways to accomplish this. The simplest method may be to use a genre or form heading (655 field) for the format. The Library of Congress subject term "Electronic books" may be used in that field.<sup>8</sup> Using an authority controlled field is an advantage because it allows cross references to be established from several vernacular terms to the authorized term. Other phrases that patrons will easily recognize and understand can also be used, such as "Online book." A second method, adding an entry for the vendor of the e-books could be the access point to finding the other e-books, may be used in addition to the form heading so that when several different vendors supply e-books, searches could be further limited to a particular collection or interface. Establishing a separate collection or location for e-books is a third method of segregating e-books. The display in the catalog that shows the holdings can then be configured so that patrons can readily distinguish between print and electronic books. Additionally, reports of collection usage may be configured specially for e-books, so that anomalous characteristics of the records, such as barcodes that are never used or bibliographic records without items, do not skew reports or statistics.

## Access

Since people seem to prefer e-books for quick reference, such as to locate a particular passage or to do a word search, then ease of access is important. Easy access to content is especially important when we remember that researchers today move at a faster clip than in years past. So the principle to follow in setting up an access method is Ranganathan's rule "Save the reader's time."

The quickest method is a direct connection to the resource when a patron clicks on a link from the OPAC. When that is not possible, access to the full text should be transparent with as few intermediary steps as possible. The more complicated a process of access is, the greater the need for directions in the bibliographic

record, additional reference help, and longer instruction sessions. Several principles are important when developing the interface to enable the seamless access. First, to mitigate confusion, the list of titles in the OPAC results should clearly differentiate between the e-book and the print material. Second, the link to the full-text content should be obvious. Third, the authentication should be as "frictionless" as the library's network security protocol will allow.

Authentication options available to most libraries today include: on-site IP recognition, individual user names and passwords established in the vendor's system, using library card ID's for authorization through the patron database, or a proxy server. Local computer equipment and the vendor's system may determine what technology works best, but the goal remains to get patrons to the text before they become frustrated, confused, or bored by intermediary pages and additional log-in steps. Therefore, IP authentication for users inside the library network is the most seamless.

For users accessing e-books from home, the best method is a proxy server. A proxy server allows a one-time authentication gateway, allowing the user to then access any number of restricted resources. The proliferation of online, subscription content, such as e-books and online databases, makes the proxy server almost a necessity – the user needs to know only one password and username to access all kinds of library content.

## Conclusion

E-books should occupy a place in our libraries, but they will perplex some users at first. High profile advertisement will alert library users to the new resource and encourage them to try it out. Posting thorough instructions will forestall some confusion, but all library staff should be prepared to answer the most common questions and problems, such as distinguishing e-books and print material in the catalog, accessing the texts online, and navigating through the pages. If carefully planned and integrated they can function as do online databases: they supplement, not supplant, our print collections, and bring the power of searching with usability of remote access. †