

Meeting Review

Developing and Managing e-book Collections

John Rylands University Library, 2nd Feb 2005

It seems that everyone wants to know about e-books now. Perhaps we see them as the solution to multiple copy problems, or a way of resolving space issues or increasing access to our collections 24/7. I certainly have hopes that they will help with all these issues, but I have also been struggling with practical problems of finding out just what is available, how I can buy it and a myriad of technical problems. This workshop promised to help with some of these issues.

I was surprised that the majority of participants were not subject librarians, like myself, but came from acquisitions departments and technical support sections too. Perhaps this is an indication of how the move towards e-books is affecting processes right across the Library.

The workshop began with a definition. What exactly is an e-book? There are a variety of different descriptions available, but Chris Armstrong and Ray Lonsdale, the workshop facilitators, provided the following; "any piece of electronic text regardless of size or composition (a digital object), but excluding journal publications, made available electronically (or optically) for any device (hand held or desk bound) that includes a screen."

Armed with this useful explanation, we then had a practical opportunity to explore a range of e-book types: reference, fiction, textbooks and monographs. As we looked at the examples, we were asked to comment on the suitability of each resource for our own library and what we felt the advantages and disadvantages were. I particularly liked the Spartacus history textbook (<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk>), in spite of the intrusive sponsored links and the range of texts available in NetLibrary (<http://www.netlibrary.com>). Conversely, I was concerned about the opportunities for plagiarism encouraged on the Literature Network site (<http://www.online-literature.com>).

The main focus of the day was a practical group exercise in which we discussed a set of issues relating to the development of e-book collections. This was an extremely useful way of sharing experiences and learning from both the facilitators and other participants. EBook Library and its link with Dawsons was mentioned as a good means of identifying ebooks, but the group felt that a national bibliography of ebooks would be very useful. Problems relating to acquisition of ebooks included issues of licencing, cost, bundling, archiving, hardware, networking and many more. My group discussed the frustrations of sourcing a single textbook title rather than a whole collection. Facilitating

access, evaluating use, marketing and promotion were amongst the other topics covered and it was interesting to hear how other libraries are dealing with these issues.

We concluded the day by summarising what we felt the main advantages and disadvantages of e-books were at present. Advantages include space saving, no damage, 24/7 access, multiple access, off campus access, no shelving, integration with curriculum, value added features such as searching content and manipulation of data (<http://www.knovel.com/knovel2/default.jsp>) and tailoring texts.

Top of the disadvantages for my group was that publishers still don't understand library budgets, followed by the lack of availability of key texts, incompatibility of software and lack of library control, to mention just a few! The workshop was supported by a useful workbook which includes a lot of background reading and links to examples of e-books, which I have been able to share with my colleagues at work.

All in all, a very informative and enjoyable day.

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Book Reviews

The content management handbook **Martin White. London: Facet Publishing, 2005** **ISBN 1-85604-533-1 176pp £39.95**

If your organization is struggling with managing its intranet or internet website, then you have probably thought about getting a content management system. This book should be your starting point. It provides step-by-step guidance on how to develop a content management strategy, sets out the elements of a content management system and gives advice on the specification, selection, implementation and management of content management software.

The author's aims for the book are modest, and it is intended to be complementary to those well-regarded texts, Boiko's *Content Management Bible*, and Rockley's *Managing Enterprise Content*, by taking a project view of what it takes to get from wondering how implementing a CMS could benefit the organization through specifying, selecting and procuring a CMS product, to implementing the product on time and on budget. It draws on seminars held by UkelG on content management.

It has three sections: information issues, technology options and governance issues. There are chapters on: creating an information-enabled organization; content management functionality; information architecture and