

How American Public Libraries Are Making E-Books Available to Patrons

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Abstract

As e-reading devices grow in popularity, owners of e-readers turn to public libraries as a source for additional e-books. Recent library literature has often focused on the many challenges of successfully incorporating e-books into the library collection, and yet a 2010 ALA report indicated that approximately 5,400 public libraries offered e-books. Clearly, a number of public libraries are incorporating e-books with at least some degree of success. This quantitative study focuses on American public libraries with service populations ranging from less than 1,000 to more than 50,000, and marks the first time that public libraries with populations of less than 10,000 represent a significant portion of participants. The author examined 175 randomly selected libraries to determine what e-book vendors these libraries are using, how they are cataloging e-books, and how e-books are being promoted to online users. The data obtained from these libraries would seem to suggest that a large majority of public libraries have access to e-books in some form, whether through individual, consortium, or state subscriptions.

Keywords: e-books, electronic books, public libraries, cataloging of electronic books

How American Public Libraries Are Making E-Books Available to Patrons

The 2010 State of America's Public Libraries Report indicated that "about 5,400 public libraries now offer e-books" (American, 2010, p. 24). The 2011 report indicated a possible increase, citing an August 2010 survey by *Library Journal*, in which 72% of the 781 public library respondents offered e-books (American, 2011, p. 36). Currently, however, libraries across the country are facing serious deficits and budget cuts. Those libraries which do not provide e-books may point to shrinking budgets to justify their decision. At the same time, many libraries which offer e-books might justify their e-book program with patron demand as well as high circulation statistics (Ellis, 2011; Genco, 2009; McKnight, C., Dearnley, J., & Morris, A., 2008). The purpose of this study is to show how American public libraries are making e-books available to their patrons. In particular, the data will show which vendors libraries are using and how libraries are promoting e-books through catalogs and websites. The data will also show whether libraries loan e-book readers or direct their patrons to sources of free e-books. In order to make results most applicable, data will be grouped by library service area population.

Literature Review

E-books have been a source of interest to librarians for more than 20 years, with increasing attention over the past decade. Within the past year, trade and consumer publications have been full of articles discussing various aspects of e-book use and the e-book industry. Davis (2010) uses expenditure, collection, and circulation statistics to present a picture of increasing e-book use in public libraries. Joss (2011) discusses the relationships between vendors, publishers, and libraries on the e-book front, and many, including Ojala (2011), have responded to HarperCollins' new policies limiting e-book use based on circulation and geographic boundaries. Professional journal articles have also covered e-books, such as Buczynski's (2010) discussion of libraries' use, cataloging, and marketing of e-books.

As patron demand for e-books has grown, an interest in studies to determine user satisfaction with downloadable e-books and web-based e-books has increased. A number of libraries have experimented with loaning out e-reading devices; however, only academic institutions issued formal reports of this practice. Many of these studies of e-reader loans focus on Amazon's Kindle (Clark, 2009; Rodzilla, 2009), but other institutions loaned devices such as the Sony Reader (Behler, 2009) or iPod touch (Mallett, 2010).

While many studies exist for the use of e-books in academic institutions, very few studies address e-books in public libraries. In addition, most studies of e-book use in public libraries took place outside of the United States. Duncan (2010) presents results of an e-book survey completed by members of an Australian public library, while McKnight, Dearnley, & Morris (2008) present user responses to public library e-books in Essex, UK. Although these and similar studies provided interesting data, they are not completely applicable to American public libraries because copyright laws, consumer habits, cultures, and other factors differ. One particularly important study conducted in the United States presented the results of a survey taken by 41 participating urban public libraries, including such data as vendors, circulation models, and funding (Genco, 2009). A much larger survey by *Library Journal* includes survey data for 781 public libraries (Library, 2010a). A work by Polanka (2011) contains an entire chapter focused on e-books and public libraries, including circulation statistics for large e-lending libraries, discussions of e-book vendors, and a case study for a Kindle lending program.

The review of the literature indicates that more studies are needed to determine the use of e-books by public libraries in the United States. Although the study by Genco (2009) addressed issues pertinent to e-book loans in public libraries, there are gaps in that study. In particular, of the 41 responding libraries, none served populations of less than 25,000 and only three

respondents had a materials budget of less than \$900K. In the much larger *Library Journal* survey, categories are included for libraries which serve populations of less than 10,000 and libraries which have materials budgets of less than \$25,000 (Library, 2010b, p. 1-2). However, studies need to be conducted to determine what is being done by the smallest public libraries not yet fully covered in any study. An examination of data from *Public Libraries Survey: Fiscal Year 2009* indicates that libraries with a service area population of less than 10,000 account for approximately 52% of all public libraries in the United States (Institute, 2010). It is clear that the use of e-books in public libraries will not be properly represented until these smaller libraries are fully included in the literature.

Definitions

E-books are books produced in an electronic format. For the purpose of this study, e-books will not include electronic audio books. Downloadable e-books are those that can be saved or downloaded to an e-reading device or computer, while web-based e-books are those that must be viewed in an internet browser. Web-based e-books include any e-reference material but may also include non-reference titles. E-book vendors, also known as aggregators or providers, are those companies that provide e-books from various publishers to libraries, with books being either leased or owned. The vendor usually provides a platform for viewing, checking out, or downloading titles. In some cases, e-books may also be purchased outright from the publisher, but these books usually do not come with software or support for patron checkout. E-readers or e-reading devices are those devices on which an e-book can be read. Dedicated e-readers (such as the Kindle, Nook, or Sony Reader) are those devices intended exclusively for reading e-books, but e-reading devices can also include those used for other functions, such as an iPad, personal digital assistant (PDA), or mobile phone (Peck, 2010; Perenson, 2010).

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to determine which vendors libraries are using to obtain e-books, whether most e-books are being obtained through consortia, whether e-books are included in library catalogs, and how libraries make patrons aware of available e-book titles. Because data will be divided by service area population size, libraries wishing to start an e-book program will be able to determine what vendors and methods have been successfully used by libraries of similar size. This study will identify patterns in e-book use, as well as any unique methods being used by individual libraries. As a descriptive quantitative study, data will be analyzed to discover patterns and similarities for libraries of similar size as well as libraries overall. The study's value to the field of library and information science is to present a clear picture of e-book use in public libraries of all sizes. In addition, the study will be useful to individual practitioners thinking about beginning an e-book collection at their library by providing examples of vendors, programs, and methods being used by similar-sized libraries.

Methodology

Data was collected for 175 public libraries in the United States¹. Twenty-five libraries were chosen from each of seven population categories: libraries serving a population of less than 1,000, libraries serving a population of 1,000-2,499, libraries serving a population of 2,500-4,999, libraries serving a population of 5,000-9,999, libraries serving a population of 10,000-19,999, libraries serving a population of 20,000-49,999, and libraries serving a population of 50,000 or more. The original list of libraries was compiled from *Public Libraries Survey: Fiscal Year 2009* data located on the Institute of Museum and Library Services website (Institute, 2010). Each of the more than 9,000 libraries was sorted into one of the seven population

¹ A complete list of the 175 libraries selected for this study can be found in Appendix A.

categories based on its legal service area population. The order of libraries in each category was randomized using Microsoft Excel and then libraries were selected using systematic sampling.

Data for each library was located using the individual library's website and online catalog. Data was also obtained from state library websites, library system or consortium websites, Facebook pages, library blogs, and Overdrive.com download sites. Websites were selected as a means of finding data because if a library offers e-books, they will be likely to make sure this information is clearly accessible on their site. Because many libraries subscribe to Overdrive as a state or regional consortium, group Overdrive sites were examined, as each contains a list of member libraries. Member lists on Overdrive sites turned up several subscribing libraries that did not have a website or had not created an e-book link. Of the 175 libraries, 154 had a website, or at least a single page through their system or consortium. Online catalogs were located and examined for 139 libraries. When a website or catalog could not be found or if more data was needed, the library was contacted by phone. Because content and subscriptions tend to change with the fiscal year, any data obtained before July 1st was checked for possible changes.

Each library website was examined for:

- Homepage link(s) to e-book sites (Overdrive, NetLibrary, etc.) or an e-book page
- Web-based e-reference
- Downloadable e-books
- Specific e-book vendors used to lease and mediate content
- E-reader lending programs
- Website links to sources of free e-books (not owned by library)

Each library catalog was examined for:

- An e-book search category or limiter
- The appearance of e-books in a catalog
- Links to the location of individual e-books

The library catalog searches were completed using an author/keyword search for “Grisham” and a subject/keyword search for “business” in order to retrieve both fiction and nonfiction results.

Results

E-Reference Materials

The majority of libraries had reference e-books of some type. For the smaller libraries, the majority of e-reference was provided by statewide database licensing, but some of the mid-sized or larger libraries added additional e-reference content. As seen in Table 1, 171 libraries had access to the e-version of at least one reference book, such as a dictionary, encyclopedia, or almanac. Opinions may differ, however, on whether some of these materials would be considered e-books or simply databases.

Table 1

E-Reference Availability

Population category	Web-based reference		Gale Virtual Reference, Oxford, Credo, Grolier, ABC-CLIO, etc.	
	Number	%	Number	%
0-999	22	88	13	52
1,000-2,499	24	96	9	36
2,500-4,999	25	100	9	36
5,000-9,999	25	100	14	56
10,000-19,999	25	100	14	56
20,000-49,999	25	100	17	68
50,000+	25	100	16	64
Total	171	98	92	53

Note. Percentages were calculated using category sizes of 25 and total size of 175.

Many libraries had additional reference materials defined on the library websites and by publishers as e-books. The most common e-reference product was Gale Virtual Reference, but other vendors included Oxford, Grolier, ABC-CLIO, and Credo. As seen in Table 1, 53% of all libraries had one or more of these sources of reference material which are clearly categorized as e-reference.

Vendors

The most common e-book vendors for non-reference e-books were Overdrive and NetLibrary. Several libraries had subscriptions which included only audio content, but Overdrive e-books were offered by 100 libraries (see Table 2), and NetLibrary e-books were offered by 77 (see Table 3). Individual library subscriptions to Overdrive were found in only three instances, comprising three of the four largest libraries in the study. Statewide access was found for all libraries in the states of Kansas and Wisconsin. In other states, subscription to Overdrive was most likely to be by a consortium, in which individual libraries or library systems chose to purchase access. Even some of the smallest libraries were found on these consortium subscription lists, including 7 libraries with populations of less than 1,000.

Table 2

Libraries Using Overdrive

Population category	Overdrive (Total)		Overdrive (Single)		Overdrive (Consortium)		Overdrive (State)	
	Number	% ^a	Number	% ^b	Number	% ^b	Number	% ^b
0-999	8	32	0	0	7	88	1	13
1,000-2,499	10	40	0	0	5	50	5	50
2,500-4,999	11	44	0	0	7	64	4	36
5,000-9,999	16	64	0	0	14	88	2	13
10,000-19,999	16	64	0	0	15	94	1	6
20,000-49,999	21	84	0	0	21	100	0	0
50,000+	18	72	3	17	15	83	0	0
TOTALS	100	57	3	3	84	84	13	13

^aTotal percentages were calculated using category sizes of 25 and total size of 175. ^bIndividual, consortium, and state percentages were calculated using the numbers found in the Overdrive (Total) column.

NetLibrary subscriptions were most likely to be found on a statewide basis. Of the 77 NetLibrary subscribers, 61 received access through their state. Subscription content and number of available titles varied widely. A number of libraries with individual subscriptions provided downloadable audiobooks from NetLibrary; however, no libraries provided e-books which could be downloaded to a portable device. Because none of the libraries provided the “Check Out and Download feature for eBooks,” all NetLibrary e-books were to be read online.

Table 3

Libraries Using NetLibrary

Population category	NetLibrary (Total)		NetLibrary (Individual)		NetLibrary (Consortium)		NetLibrary (State)	
	Number	% ^a	Number	% ^b	Number	% ^b	Number	% ^b
0-999	2	8	0	0	0	0	2	100
1,000-2,499	14	56	0	0	2	14	12	86
2,500-4,999	9	36	0	0	3	33	6	67
5,000-9,999	13	52	1	8	2	15	10	77
10,000-19,999	11	44	2	18	0	0	9	82
20,000-49,999	10	40	3	30	0	0	7	70
50,000+	18	72	3	17	0	0	15	83
TOTALS	77	44	9	12	7	9	61	79

^aTotal percentages were calculated using category sizes of 25 and total size of 175. ^bIndividual, consortium, and state percentages were calculated using the numbers found in the NetLibrary (Total) column.

Learning Express provided a third common source of e-books. Unlike Overdrive and NetLibrary, Learning Express focuses only on test preparation and skills improvement, through tests, online courses, and e-books. Although Learning Express would not be considered a standard e-book vendor, more than 150 e-books created by Learning Express, LLC can be downloaded from the vendor website in PDF format. Eighty-one libraries had access to Learning Express with 48% through statewide subscriptions and 35% through individual subscriptions, as seen in Table 4.

Table 4

Libraries Using Learning Express

Population category	Learning Express (Total)		Learning Express (Individual)		Learning Express (Consortium)		Learning Express (State)	
	Number	% ^a	Number	% ^b	Number	% ^b	Number	% ^b
0-999	5	20	0	0	3	60	2	40
1,000-2,499	7	28	0	0	0	0	7	100
2,500-4,999	9	36	1	11	8	89	0	0
5,000-9,999	14	56	4	29	1	7	9	64
10,000-19,999	13	52	3	23	0	0	10	77
20,000-49,999	18	72	10	56	2	11	6	33
50,000+	15	60	10	67	0	0	5	33
TOTALS	81	46	28	35	14	17	39	48

^aTotal percentages were calculated using category sizes of 25 and total size of 175. ^bIndividual, consortium, and state percentages were calculated using the numbers found in the Learning Express (Total) column.

Although Overdrive, MyiLibrary, and other vendor titles included children's materials, two vendors dealt exclusively with e-books for children. Their products were TumbleBooks and Scholastic BookFlix. Subscriptions to these platforms were on an individual basis only, and were mostly found in larger libraries. Of the two, TumbleBooks was more than twice as prevalent, but was still found in only 17% of libraries, as seen in Table 5. Only three libraries, all from the largest population category, subscribed to both TumbleBooks and BookFlix.

Table 5

E-Books for Children

Population category	TumbleBooks		Scholastic BookFlix	
	Number	%	Number	%
0-999	0	0	0	0
1,000-2,499	0	0	0	0
2,500-4,999	1	4	0	0
5,000-9,999	0	0	0	0
10,000-19,999	8	32	2	8
20,000-49,999	11	44	2	8
50,000+	10	40	8	32
TOTALS	30	17	12	7

Note. Percentages were calculated using category sizes of 25 and total size of 175.

Other e-book products provided by a statewide subscription included ProQuest's eLibrary and eLibrary Elementary and EBSCO's Book Collection: Nonfiction. Several products were found exclusively in large libraries, including Safari Techbooks (4 libraries), Gale's eLibrary (3 libraries), MyiLibrary (3 libraries), and ProQuest's eLibrary (1 library). Data for these less common products can be found in the tables in Appendix B.

E-book Readers

Libraries which loaned e-book readers were not very common. Several had links on their homepage to e-reader lending policies and e-reader content as well as catalog listings for the e-reading device. Others only mentioned e-reader lending programs on blogs or Facebook pages. The only devices loaned were the Kindle, Nook, and Sony Reader, with the Sony Reader being the most common. No libraries with populations of less than 5,000 circulated e-readers to patrons. However, the librarian at one library serving less than 1,000 indicated that they would be circulating a Kindle as soon as they finished preparing their lending policy, so it is possible that other libraries may also be in planning stages for e-reader circulation.

Table 6

Libraries Lending E-Reading Devices

Population category	Kindle	Nook	Sony Reader
0-999	0	0	0
1,000-2,499	0	0	0
2,500-4,999	0	0	0
5,000-9,999	1	0	0
10,000-19,999	2	0	1
20,000-49,999	0	0	2
50,000+	0	3	3
TOTALS	3	3	6

Website Content

Because most of the data was retrieved from web pages, it was first necessary to locate official library websites. Many were listed in the data files downloaded from *Public Libraries*

Survey: Fiscal Year 2009. Others were located using state library listings, city or county government sites, and Google searches. Overall, 154 of the 175 libraries had websites, including two which used a frequently updated Facebook page rather than a website.² Of the 21 libraries without a website, 18 served populations of less than 2,500.

Table 7

Website Components That Promote E-Book Discovery

Population category	Has website		Home page links to e-book page or e-content		E-book page or category on website		Recommends sources of free e-books	
	Number	% ^a	Number	% ^b	Number	% ^b	Number	% ^b
0-999	15	60	2	13	0	0	1	7
1,000-2,499	17	68	0	0	0	0	0	0
2,500-4,999	24	96	5	21	1	4	0	0
5,000-9,999	25	100	15	60	7	28	6	24
10,000-19,999	23	92	14	61	3	13	8	35
20,000-49,999	25	100	16	64	10	40	5	20
50,000+	25	100	18	72	13	52	6	24
TOTALS	154	88	70	45	34	22	26	17

^aPercentages were calculated using category sizes of 25 and total size of 175. ^bPercentages were calculated using the total number of libraries with a website, as found in the Has website column.

The first item looked for on each library website was a homepage link to the library's source of e-books or a tab or link leading to a library page dedicated to e-books or e-resources. As seen in Table 7, only 45% of libraries with a website had a homepage link to the e-book source or an e-book tab, with the largest percentages coming from libraries that served more than 5,000. Most of these homepage e-book links connected to Overdrive or NetLibrary, but a few also linked to MyiLibrary or e-reference materials. Some libraries had a specific page or category for e-books, with the most common topics including instructions for use, download and compatibility explanations, and the library's sources of e-books. Libraries that actively

² It should be noted that a number of libraries used Facebook pages in addition to their regular websites; however, only two used a Facebook page instead of a library website.

promoted e-books from two or more vendors were more likely to have an e-book page. Some libraries included sources of free e-books not owned by the library on their e-book page, while others listed sources of free e-books in a ready reference list. Overall, however, the number of libraries listing additional sources of free e-books was very low. Only 17% of the libraries with a website directed patrons to sources of non-library owned e-books, with the most common recommendation being Project Gutenberg. Surprisingly, listing of free e-books was roughly equal for libraries that did not provide any e-content and those with subscriptions to one or more e-book sources.

Catalog Searching

The next research component involved searching library catalogs. Fewer libraries had online catalogs than had websites: only 139 of the 175. Again, size was an obvious component, and all but four libraries serving populations of 5,000 or more had an online catalog. When reached by phone, librarians at all four of these locations indicated that they had automated catalogs within the library. Librarians at some of the smallest libraries also indicated the presence of on-site catalogs. One explained that an online catalog was in process, another said the library still used a traditional card catalog, and many explained that their library was simply too small to have a catalog. Most of the small libraries with online catalogs used a system or consortium catalog shared with others in the region; however, one small library's website indicated they had received a grant for their individual catalog, and another used the website LibraryThing.com to catalog their collection.

The first item examined in a catalog was whether an advanced search or power search would allow the searcher to focus only on e-books. As noted in Table 8, 71% percent of libraries with a catalog had an e-search option, with the largest percentages rising from libraries that

served 5,000 to 49,999. E-search options which resulted in e-book listings included a variety of limiters such as “e-books,” “e-resource,” “book digital,” “book download,” “web resource,” and “downloadable media.” Of the 99 libraries that offered a standard e-book limiter, only slightly more than half (54) retrieved e-book results from such a search. However, it was not essential to specifically search for e-books in order to find them. Searches in 77 library catalogs included results with links to specific Overdrive, NetLibrary, or Safari e-books in their personal collections and one catalog linked to Project Gutenberg books. The greatest percentages of libraries which cataloged e-books again fell in the range of 5,000 to 49,999.

Table 8

Online Catalogs and E-Search/E-Discovery Components

Population category	Online catalog		E-search option in catalog		E-search results in books for this library		Catalog links to e-books	
	Number	% ^a	Number	% ^b	Number	% ^b	Number	% ^b
0-999	12	48	7	58	3	25	5	42
1,000-2,499	13	52	7	54	4	31	5	38
2,500-4,999	18	72	12	67	8	44	10	56
5,000-9,999	23	92	19	83	7	30	14	61
10,000-19,999	23	92	17	74	10	43	15	65
20,000-49,999	25	100	21	84	12	48	17	68
50,000+	25	100	16	64	10	40	12	48
TOTALS	139	79	99	71	54	39	78	56

^aPercentages were calculated using category sizes of 25 and total size of 175. ^bPercentages were calculated using the total number of libraries with an online catalog, as found in the Online catalog column.

Discussion

In order to determine the percentage of public libraries making e-books available, it is necessary to determine how we would define e-books. As previously noted, 98% of the libraries in this study had access to at least one online dictionary, almanac, or encyclopedia. However, unless the format includes a browse feature, it is possible that some of these may be more appropriately considered a database. For example, one encyclopedia’s main page contained only

a search box, bearing no resemblance to an e-book. Patrons who call to ask if the library offers e-books are most often searching for downloadable media. Patrons who have read or heard that public libraries offer e-books may not consider Safari Techbooks, NetLibrary's online collection, or TumbleBooks to be the e-books they were searching for. Following this line of reasoning, and despite library access to Learning Express, TumbleBooks, NetLibrary, and e-reference, one reference librarian's consistent response to the e-books query was that the library did not offer any e-books.³ Other libraries and patrons, however, would not limit e-books to those which can be downloaded to a portable device.

If we considered only those e-books which could be downloaded, we would look at the libraries which offer Overdrive e-books as well as downloadable titles from NetLibrary or MyiLibrary. We might also include subscriptions to LearningExpress. Since none of the libraries in this study provided access to downloadable titles from NetLibrary or MyiLibrary, downloadable e-books would likely be limited to the 100 libraries with Overdrive subscriptions or the 81 libraries with Learning Express subscriptions. If considered together, 123 libraries provided downloadable e-books through Overdrive and/or Learning Express (see Table 9).

If e-books were to include both those that had to be viewed online and those that could be downloaded, we might begin with the two main e-book vendors, Overdrive and NetLibrary.⁴ When combined, 127 libraries provided access to Overdrive and/or NetLibrary. This would account for 73% of the libraries in the study, which is a number similar to that reached by Library Journal's 2010 survey. However, Library Journal's survey question for categories of

³ This was witnessed several times at a public library near the author's home.

⁴ Although Learning Express provides access to 81 libraries versus NetLibrary's 77 libraries, Learning Express is not traditionally considered an e-book vendor and provides access only to titles created by the company. Thus, NetLibrary is counted as the second main e-book vendor, rather than Learning Express.

e-books the library offered included several fiction and nonfiction categories as well as “reference (non-circulating)” (Library, 2010b, p. 2). If we include e-reference such as Gale Virtual Reference along with other products such as TumbleBooks, Learning Express, EBSCO Book Collection, and ProQuest eLibrary, 152 of the libraries in this study could be considered to have e-books. This would mean that 87% of the libraries could claim e-book offerings, with the majority of those without any e-books arising from libraries serving less than 5,000.

Table 9

Libraries With E-books From Any Source

Population category	Subscription to Overdrive and/or NetLibrary	%	E-books from any vendor	%
0-999	8	32	16	64
1,000-2,499	17	68	20	80
2,500-4,999	16	64	20	80
5,000-9,999	19	76	23	92
10,000-24,999	22	88	25	100
25,000-49,999	22	88	24	96
50,000+	23	92	24	96
Totals	127	73	152	87

Note: Percentages were calculated using category sizes of 25 and total size of 175.

Because e-books often appeal to the internet-savvy user, it might be assumed that libraries with e-books would take care to ensure that e-book availability is clearly displayed on their websites. Surprisingly, only 70 libraries had a homepage link to the e-book source or to a library page highlighting e-book availability and policies (see Table 7). If we consider that libraries are only promoting downloadable content, we might still expect to see homepage links for more of the 100 libraries offering Overdrive e-books. Some libraries had links or further information located in a reference folder, an adult services folder, or on a Facebook page or blog, while others did not list their e-book subscriptions anywhere on their websites. Perhaps the

mention of e-books will become easier to find on websites as individual libraries see the growing interest in such materials.

Listing e-books in a catalog may be difficult, not only in finding time to add e-books to the catalog, but also in determining whether to add e-books to a consortium catalog. This may be an especially difficult decision if consortium members all have access to the catalog, but only some subscribe to e-books. In this study, however, many consortium catalogs included e-book results for individual, group, or entire consortium libraries. Seventy-eight of the 139 catalogs linked directly to e-books from Overdrive, NetLibrary, Safari Techbooks, Project Gutenberg, and other sources. This would seem to indicate that a number of libraries are recognizing that if they want e-books to be used, they must make sure that patrons can find them.

Catalog limiters and links were also intriguing. It was noted that 99 of the 139 library catalogs had an e-book (or similar) category or limiter on their online catalogs. However, searches in only a little more than half of these catalogs retrieved e-book results. A patron who searched for a specific e-book might determine that the library does not have such a book, when, in fact, it is simply not cataloged. Some catalog homepages included links to “digital catalogs,” in order to help patrons find e-books, while others simply included a link to Overdrive on the navigation bar. If a library uses only one source for e-books, such as Overdrive, it seems perfectly acceptable to use the vendor’s search interface to locate e-books. However, catalog results and links for e-books would be highly useful when using more than one vendor, so that a patron does not have to search three or four catalogs to find a book. In addition, e-book links in the main catalog would make patrons aware of additional sources when a print copy they are seeking is currently unavailable.

Conclusion

From the data obtained in this study, it would seem that a majority of public libraries in the United States are finding a way to make e-books available to patrons. Additionally, it appears that a large majority are doing so through state or consortium agreements in order to provide the appropriate funding. This is a point of special interest when considering possible future limitations such as HarperCollins' proposed geographic lending restrictions. Publishing companies and e-book vendors should be made aware that few libraries can afford extensive purchases individually.

With 87% of studied libraries providing e-book content from at least one vendor, it would seem that e-books are definitely here to stay. Unlike the surges of e-book interest in previous years, this trend is unlikely to die. Fortunately, libraries are responding by providing e-books to patrons. It would also seem that many public libraries are focusing on the specific type of content their patrons are requesting. For example, with 57% of libraries providing downloadable e-books it would seem that libraries are realizing that many patrons want offline access or e-books they can read on portable e-readers. With more than 20% of libraries providing e-books specifically for children, it would seem that libraries are beginning to realize that there is also a growing market for children's e-books. Perhaps some libraries have not experienced any community interest in e-books, but for many, e-books are simply something that will need to be added to the collection to satisfy patrons. Many libraries appear to be doing their best to achieve patron satisfaction by beginning or expanding e-book collections despite shrinking budgets.

Libraries are also working to make patrons aware of available e-books through library websites and catalogs. However, some websites and catalogs could still use improvements and additions to make them more user-friendly and to accurately represent e-book ownership.

Overall, the majority of the libraries in this study are finding ways to provide e-book content in accordance with both community interest and budgetary constraints. Small libraries are making good use of consortium agreements to afford e-books, and state and consortium purchases are emphasizing e-books from various vendors. Other libraries are making creative use of free e-books by adding them to their catalogs or listing them on their websites. In general, it would seem that libraries have realized that patron demand for e-books will continue to increase, and most are doing their best to find ways to make e-books available to patrons.

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Appendix A

Libraries Included in Study, Listed by Population Category

Less than 1,000

B. Elizabeth Strong Memorial Library – Turin, NY
Bedford Park Public Library District – Bedford Park, IL
Campbell Public Library – Campbell, NE
Cold Bay Public Library, - Cold Bay, AK
Cook Public Library – Cook, MN
Elmwood Public Library – Elmwood, NE
Harvard Public Library – Harvard, NE
Irene School/Community Library – Irene, SD
John G. Smith Memorial Library – Dawson, NE
Lake Andes Carnegie Library – Lake Andes, SD
Michael Nivison Public Library – Cloudcroft, NM
Ogden Rose Public Library – Ogden, IL
Palmyra Memorial Library – Palmyra, NE
Pretty Prairie Public Library – Pretty Prairie, KS
Peacham Library – Peacham, VT
Randolph Public Library – Randolph, IA
Renwick Public Library – Renwick, IA
Ringsted Public Library – Ringsted, IA
Rolette Public Library – Rolette, ND
Smith Memorial Library – Chatauqua, NY
Steamboat Rock Public Library – Steamboat Rock, IA
Valley District Library – Fairview, IL
Valparaiso Public Library – Valparaiso, NE
Waterville Town Library – Waterville, VT
Wilder Memorial Library – Weston, VT

1,000 to 2,499

Anson Public Library – Anson, TX
Blue Rapids Public Library – Blue Rapids, KS
Blue Ridge Township Public Library – Mansfield, IL
Canton Township Carnegie Library – Canton, KS
Chrisman Public Library – Chrisman, IL
Clarksburg Town Library – Clarksburg, MA
Clayton Public Library District – Clayton, IL
Cole Memorial Library – Enfield, ME
Cordova Public Library – Cordova, AL
Guilford Memorial Library – Guilford, ME
Hennessey Public Library – Hennessey, OK
Idalou Community Library – Idalou, TX
Iron Ridge Public Library – Iron Ridge, WI
Linn County Library District #1 – Parker, KS

Maud Public Library – Maud, TX
Motley County Library – Matador, TX
Oxford Public Library – Oxford, NJ
Piedmont Public Library – Piedmont, WV
Royal Center – Boone Township Public Library – Royal Center, IN
Royalton Public Library District – Royalton, IL
San Juan Bautista City Library – San Juan Bautista, CA
Slate Memorial Library – Gill, MA
Stonewall County Library – Aspermont, TX
Tecumseh Public Library – Tecumseh, NE
Wyocena Public Library – Wyocena, WI

2,500 to 4,999

Alice M. Farr Library – Aurora, NE
Annie P. Ainsworth Memorial Library – Sandy Creek, NY
Bartlett Public Library – Bartlett, NH
Bertha Bartlett Public Library – Story City, IA
Bethany Public Library – Bethany, MO
Brimfield Public Library District – Brimfield, IL
Burrell Township Library – Black Lick, PA
Caestecker Public Library – Green Lake, WI
Deadwood Public Library – Deadwood, SD
Gordo-Ruth Holliman Memorial Public Library – Gordo, AL
Highgate Public Library – Highgate, VT
Hillsboro Public Library – Hillsboro, IL
Hoisington Public Library – Hoisington, KA
M. Alice Chapin Memorial Library – Marion, MI
Mechanicsville Public Library – Mechanicsville, IA
Mitchellville Public Library – Mitchellville, IA
Pepin Public Library – Pepin, WI
Richland Community Library – Richland, PA
Rio Community Library – Rio, WI
Sloatsburg Public Library – Sloatsburg, NY
South China Public Library – South China, ME
Sparta Public Library – Sparta, IL
Sumiton Public Library – Sumiton, AL
Voluntown Public Library – Voluntown, CT
Wimodaughian Free Library – Canisteo, NY

5,000 to 9,999

Audrey Pack Memorial Library – Spring City, TN
Clyde Public Library – Clyde, TX
Columbus Public Library – Columbus, WI
Goodrich Memorial Library – Newport, VT
Harlan Community Library – Harlan, IA
Holland Township Free Public Library – Milford, NJ

Huntington Woods Public Library – Huntington Woods, MI
International Falls Public Library – International Falls, MI
Jordan Valley District Library – East Jordan, MI
Litchfield Public Library District – Litchfield, IL
Lunenburg Public Library – Lunenburg, MA
Mayville District Public Library – Mayville, MI
McCowan Memorial Library – Pitman, NJ
Page Public Library – Page, AZ
Perry Public Library – Perry, NY
Prospect Park Free Library – Prospect Park, PA
Putnam Public Library – Putnam, CT
Rockland Public Library – Rockland, ME
Sand Lake Town Library – Averill Park, NY
Sparta Carnegie Township Library – Sparta, MI
Sweet Home Public Library – Sweet Home, OR
Tomahawk Public Library – Tomahawk, WI
Tupper Lake Public Library – Tupper Lake, NY
Weiser Public Library – Weiser, ID
Wells Public Library – Wells, ME

10,000 to 19,999

Clymer Library Association – Pocono Pines, PA
Collingswood Free Public Library – Collingswood, NJ
Demopolis Public Library – Demopolis, AL
Flint Memorial Library – North Reading, MA
Fulton County Library – McConnellsburg, PA
Girard Free Library – Girard, OH
Glen Rock Public Library – Glen Rock, NJ
Grace Balloch Memorial Library – Spearfish, SD
Hamburg Public Library – Hamburg, PA
Harrison Community Library – Harrison, MI
Hudson Area Association Library – Hudson, NY
Lane Memorial Library – Hampton, NJ
Nowata City-County Library – Nowata, OK
Parsons Public Library – Parsons, KS
Pittsburg-Camp County Public Library – Pittsburg, TX
River Forest Public Library – River Forest, IL
Sugar Grove Public Library District – Sugar Grove, IL
Unicoi County Public Library – Erwin, TN
Union Springs Public Library – Union Springs, AL
Washington County Cooperative Library Services – Hillsboro, OR
West Fargo Public Library – West Fargo, ND
William Y. Wadleigh Memorial Library – Milford, NH
Wimberley Village Library – Wimberley, TX
Winn Parish Library – Winnfield, LA
Worth Public Library District – Worth, IL

20,000 to 49,999

Bayliss Public Library – Sault Ste. Marie, MI
Bessemer Public Library – Bessemer, AL
Bradford County Library System – Troy, PA
Bristol Public Library – Bristol, VA
Burlington Public Library – Burlington, MA
Carroll and Madison Library System – Berryville, AR
Delta County Public Library District – Hotchkiss, CO
Dunham Public Library – Whitesboro, NY
Helen M. Plum Memorial Library – Lombard, IL
Hershey Public Library – Hershey, PA
Hewlett-Woodmere Public Library – Hewlett, NY
Kingsport Public Library – Kingsport, TN
LaGrange County Public Library – LaGrange, IN
Mastics-Moriches-Shirley Community Library – Shirley, NY
Mount Pleasant Public Library – Pleasantville, NY
New Brunswick Free Public Library – New Brunswick, NJ
Oneonta Public Library – Oneonta, AL
Otsego County Library – Gaylord, MI
Plainview-Old Bethpage Public Library – Plainview, NY
Plumb Memorial Library – Shelton, CT
Prescott Valley Public Library – Prescott Valley, AZ
Rowan County Public Library – Morehead, KY
Russell County Public Library – Lebanon, VA
Simsbury Public Library – Simsbury, CT
West Lafayette Public Library – West Lafayette, IN

50,000+

Allen Public Library – Allen, TX
Blue Earth County Library – Mankato, MN
Cabarrus County Public Library – Concord, NC
Cambridge Public Library – Cambridge, MA
Chesterfield County Public Library – Chesterfield, VA
Davenport Public Library – Davenport, IA
Davidson County Public Library System – Lexington, NC
Duluth Public Library – Duluth, MN
Florence County Library System – Florence, SC
Fountaindale Public Library District – Bolingbrook, IL
Haverhill Public Library – Haverhill, MA
Haywood County Public Library – Waynesville, NC
Hazleton Area Public Library – Hazleton, PA
Henry County Library System – McDonough, GA
Laredo Public Library – Laredo, TX
Live Oak Public Library System – Savannah, GA
Lyon County Library System – Yerington, NV
Ocmulgee Regional Library System – Eastman, GA

Perrot Memorial Library – Old Greenwich, CT
Pope County Library System – Russellville, AR
Sacramento Public Library – Sacramento, CA
San Francisco Public Library – San Francisco, CA
Tippecanoe County Public Library – Lafayette, IN
Torrance Public Library – Torrance, CA
Washington-Centerville Public Library – Centerville, OH

Appendix B

Additional Tables

Table B1

Additional E-Book Vendors

Population category	eLibrary Elementary (ProQuest)	eLibrary (ProQuest)	EBSCO Book Collection: Nonfiction
0-999	1	7	1
1,000-2,499	1	1	1
2,500-4,999	1	1	3
5,000-9,999	4	0	2
10,000-19,999	3	2	2
20,000-49,999	2	1	5
50,000+	2	0	3
TOTALS	14	12	17

Table B2

E-Book Vendors at Larger Libraries

Population category	MyiLibrary	Ebrary (ProQuest)	Safari Techbooks	eLibrary (Gale)
0-999	0	0	0	0
1,000-2,499	0	0	0	0
2,500-4,999	0	0	0	0
5,000-9,999	0	0	0	0
10,000-19,999	0	0	1	0
20,000-49,999	0	1	1	2
50,000+	3	0	2	1
TOTALS	3	1	4	3