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## E-Book Platforms for Academic Librarians

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## E-Book Platforms for Academic Librarians

by Audrey Powers (Associate Librarian, University of South Florida Libraries) <apowers@usf.edu>

Digital disruption of library resources and services has been taking place for approximately half of a century. As each new electronic library resource or service is developed and implemented, skepticism leads the way. Over time we become accustomed to incorporating these changes into our workflows and our professional lives settle down for a short while until the next big disruptive technological event or product challenges our way of thinking and conducting business.

As I reflect on this progression of events, it occurred to me that we continually repeat the same process; products are developed, implemented, assessed, and improved. Yet lack of standardization from the beginning of the process inhibits our ability to compare and measure the effectiveness of the technology in question. Only *then* do we insist on standards that aid us in making effective decisions for our libraries and our patrons. This is a long and arduous process.

This is the process we went through with the development and implementation of databases, electronic journals, and online public access catalogs. Over time standard elements in most article databases have evolved, i.e. basic and advanced search options, faceted classification and navigation, numerous methods to refine a search, etc. Keep in mind, the use of information retrieval systems by librarians in specialized fields began in the early 1980s. It takes time to monitor user behavior, implement revisions, monitor user behavior and further refine and improve products.

In addition, the development and implementation of usage statistics has taken an inordinately long time to come to fruition. The development and use of e-books began in 1971 with Project Gutenberg, the development and use of databases began in the early 1980s, and COUNTER set the standard for reporting use statistics in 2003.

Are there elements we can agree on from the onset of product development as technology rapidly advances? As the ongoing growth of digital content shapes our professional lives and alters our work environments, what can be done to make navigating the digital landscape more manageable for everyone?

As you read through the articles in this issue of *Against the Grain* keep in mind how incorporating e-books into our collections has disrupted our way of thinking, working and conducting business. How we can proactively engage developers and sellers of e-book platforms to develop products that will promote effective decision making for our libraries and patrons?

The goal of this issue is to provide a succinct overview of e-book platforms for academic librarians as well as insights into where e-book platforms are headed in the future. Most of the authors work in academic libraries and their job responsibilities include developing, procuring, promoting, and educating users about e-books. The topics covered include an overview of e-book platforms including technical aspects and business models, lending platforms, aggregator platforms, commercial publisher platforms,

and university press platforms. It is our hope that when you read these articles it will add to your knowledge base about the current and future state of e-book platforms in academic libraries.

## **E-Book Platforms: Lessons Learned From Managing Multiple Providers**

No two e-book platforms are alike, which is part of the challenge in managing multiple platforms at one institution. In most cases, e-book providers are keeping to their traditional library markets with separate products for K-12, public, and academic libraries, though these lines are starting to blur. For example, a public library may have only one e-book platform such as Overdrive or 3M, but their neighboring university may have a combination of over thirty aggregator and publisher platforms. This article will give an overview of the experience associated with the management of multiple e-book platforms from the perspective of a large academic library.

### *Lay of the Land*

#### DRM

“Digital Rights Management technology offers the ability to control the distribution and use of the intellectual property (including media/content) and thereby protect the associated revenue or investment for the digital content businesses.” - *Encyclopedia of Multimedia*<sup>1</sup>

There cannot be a discussion about e-books without a discussion of Digital Rights Management (DRM). This is an issue that stretches across the various platforms. Knowing the DRM restrictions of a platform is very important, and it should play into a library’s decision-making process. DRM can mean the difference between eager adoption and complete abandonment of an e-book by users. Table 1 shows the spectrum of DRM (including interlibrary loan restrictions) and how it affects the use of e-books. While interlibrary loan restrictions are license-based, as opposed to technology-based, they play an

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<sup>1</sup> Furht, Borivoje and SpringerLink (Online service). *Encyclopedia of Multimedia*. New York, NY: Springer, 2006. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/0-387-30038-4>.

integral role in the access and use of e-books. Therefore, these restrictions are also included in the table.

Table 1: Spectrum of DRM with ILL restrictions

Grade	Characteristics
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No restrictions for licensed users (printing, downloading, etc...)</li><li>• No interlibrary loan restrictions</li></ul>
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chapters/sections can be printed/downloaded with no page restrictions</li><li>• Multiuser accessible</li><li>• Interlibrary loan restricted</li></ul>
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Print restrictions of 21-60 pages or arbitrary segments</li><li>• Single user access/Multiuser access disabled when whole book is checked out</li><li>• Interlibrary loan restricted</li></ul>
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Print restrictions of 20 pages or less</li><li>• No downloading</li><li>• Single user access only</li><li>• Interlibrary loan restricted</li></ul>

When the ability to download an entire book as a loan is available, it will require using Adobe Digital Editions or other software where the DRM for the loan period will be applied. These features always require users to create an account or accounts. This creates data on the user, but the data collected and what is shared with the library varies by provider.

### Format Options

There are many e-book formats in existence,<sup>2</sup> but in platforms available to academic library users the primary forms are: PDF (Portable Document Format), HTML (Hypertext Markup Language), and EPUB. Currently, PDF is the format that academic users seem the most comfortable with because it mirrors their well-established relationships with e-journals. HTML is also a comfortable and familiar style, but

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<sup>2</sup> Junus, S.G. Ranti, "E-books and E-readers for users with print disabilities," Library Technology Reports 48.7 (2012): 22-28, accessed 9/17, 2013.

users become frustrated when e-books are broken up into small, arbitrary segments that they have to continually page through. Increasingly, providers are starting to offer their content in the EPUB format, with EPUB3<sup>3</sup> being the most current release of the standard. EPUB is the most flexible format allowing for more media integration and user interactivity.

### Aggregator vs. Publisher Platforms

Publisher platforms provide access to e-books only published by that particular publisher and their subsidiaries. Aggregator platforms host e-books from a variety of publishers. There are numerous differences and similarities that intersect the aggregator and publisher-supplied platforms. This section will highlight some broad generalizations that may distinguish the two.

Publisher platforms tend to be simple interfaces, and if the publisher is also in the journal market, e-book and e-journal content is often integrated. Many have little to no DRM, though there are some exceptions. Consequently, very few publisher platforms provide the option to download/loan an entire e-book. Format options are usually PDF or HTML. Their platforms are less likely to have user features, perhaps driven by the knowledge of the users' reluctance to create one more account. Compared to aggregators, pricing for an individual book on a publisher platform is often better when considering multiuser access. However, the management of these multiple publisher platforms results in an increased workload with respect to title lists, record downloads, licenses, invoices, statistics, etc.

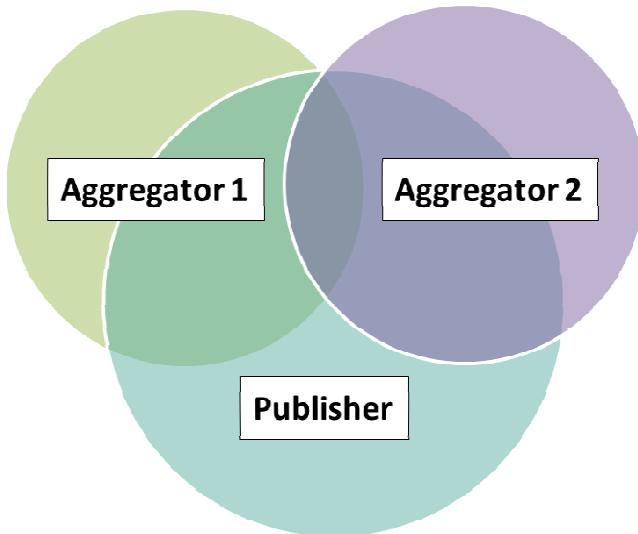
The notion of an aggregator as a possible one-stop-shop for all e-books is appealing (one interface, one point of contact, one license, one vendor), but the reality is more complicated. First, there are several aggregators to choose from with catalogs that can range from multidisciplinary to subject specific.

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<sup>3</sup> "Epub 3." International Digital Publishing Forum, accessed 9/26, 2013, <http://idpf.org/epub/30>.

Therefore, institutions with a broad discipline base will likely need to work with multiple aggregators in order to meet their users' needs. Second, there are several content-driven issues that affect aggregator selection. Figure 1 presents one such example of the content overlap that is commonly seen between aggregator and publisher. In this example, the Publisher releases overlapping titles to Aggregator 1 and 2; however, the Publisher also releases unique titles to Aggregator 1 or 2. In addition, the Publisher often retains other titles for exclusive distribution. Please note that the intention of Figure 1 is to illustrate the concept of overlapping and unique titles between aggregators and a publisher, not to represent actual percentages of overlapping or unique titles for any publishers or aggregators.

Figure 1: Content Overlap Between Publisher and Aggregator



There is also the librarian's worst fear. A library contracts with an aggregator where one of the biggest selling points was content from a specific publisher. Then, that publisher's contract ends and they decide to remove their e-books from the aggregator. Of course, this is only true of subscription options. If you purchased a perpetual option, titles will remain in your collection but only in a static form (i.e. you cannot upgrade from single to multi-user). Aggregator platforms tend to have more features such as

creating bookshelves and making notations or bookmarks. There are usually more restrictions associated with an aggregator platform which are publisher-driven and can create disparity even in the same platform system (i.e. one publisher allows 60 pages to be printed and another only allows 10).

### *Business Models*

#### Perpetual Access vs. Subscribed Access

Many factors influence the decision to purchase, subscribe, or even rent content on an e-book platform. One-time funds, course reserve needs, or the need for regular content updates often dictate the decision-making process. Single titles are typically purchased outright with perpetual access rights to the content, though the short-term loan (i.e. renting) is becoming a popular way to provide temporary access to a title (further explained in License Models). Many packages offer the option for either perpetual purchase or an annual subscription. However, there are packages, especially those with content that changes periodically, which may only allow for subscriptions.

#### Packages vs. Title-by-Title

Packages of e-books offer a great way to provide access to a large number of titles for a relatively low cost, but packages rarely can provide all the e-books your patrons will need. Firm orders are a great way to cherry pick e-books to build your collection and fill in the gaps. However, some titles may not be available for individual purchase and can only be found in packages. BYO (Build Your Own) models offer the flexibility of choice, but often do not carry the discount of traditional packages. This model can serve as a starter package, with the ability to add more content title-by-title.

## PDA/DDA

Patron or Demand Driven Acquisitions (henceforth referred to as PDA), is a hot topic in e-book acquisitions and has become increasingly popular. PDA e-book models use an approval plan type profile to generate titles lists and MARC records which are loaded into a catalog and/or discovery service. Purchases are triggered based on use. The number of uses which trigger a purchase is negotiated with the vendor. Actions such as viewing tables of contents, indexes, or limited page browsing typically do not constitute a use. Some PDAs require that libraries pay for short-term loans on uses prior to perpetual purchase. The benefit of this model is that it places the power of selection in the hands of the users, and libraries only pay for content that is used. Our institution's analysis of PDA return on investment indicates that the cost per use of titles purchased via PDA is lower than titles purchased through firm orders.<sup>4</sup>

## *License Models*

There are several e-book licensing models which affect concurrent access. These models are generally referred to as the following: single-user, multi-user, unlimited, access/Non-Linear™, and short-term loan. The single-user model is the simplest and provides access to an e-book one user at a time. While single-user models inherently block access to more than one user, the access block is only in place while the title is being actively viewed online by another patron. Most single-user models do not allow for loans, but there are exceptions. These exceptions can cause problematic situations when titles are checked out for days or weeks and are inaccessible to other patrons. Most platforms do allow libraries

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<sup>4</sup> Shelton, Trey, Steve Carrico and Michelle Leonard. "Assessing E-Books Cost & Usage: How E-Books Cost & Usage Varies by Acquisitions Methods Across Subject Disciplines." , accessed 9/16, 2013, [http://lgdata.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com/docs/124/722282/ACRL\\_Poster\\_revised\\_4-22-2013\\_v.1.pdf](http://lgdata.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com/docs/124/722282/ACRL_Poster_revised_4-22-2013_v.1.pdf).

to purchase multiple single-user licenses, but this can become very costly. The multi-user model is a popular way to provide access to more than one user at a time, and is usually significantly cheaper than buying multiple single-user licenses. Multi-user licenses typically allow for three concurrent users, but there are models, particularly for database-like reference works on publisher platforms, that have concurrent seat limits that can range from 3-99. Depending on the publisher and platform, some multi-user licenses do allow titles to be loaned, with one concurrent use always reserved for online access.

The access or Non-Linear™ lending model is a type of multi-user license that allows for a set number of uses of a title within a certain period of time, typically a year. Each year the number of uses is refreshed for no additional cost to the library. While this model has the potential to reduce turnaways, it could also mean having to purchase multiple licenses for high use titles in order to maintain access to titles for the entire year. The short-term loan (STL) provides single-user access to a title, but it is limited by a set time period. STLs involve paying a percentage of the list price to gain access for a set period of time, with cost correlated to the length of the loan. The STL model is akin to renting, and it may prove to be a cost effective alternative to borrowing titles via interlibrary loan. STLs are increasingly integrated into PDA plans, where libraries are charged STL fees for all uses before the use that triggers a purchase.

## *User Features*

The features a platform provides to its users can drastically affect the usability (or lack thereof) of the e-books a library purchases. Today's traditional undergraduate students have high expectations in regards to online functionality, and not all e-book platforms meet those expectations. Table 2 provides a checklist of features to keep in mind when making e-book purchasing decisions. The section below will discuss these very important features in more detail.

Table 2: User Features Checklist

<b>Full-text searching</b>	
<b>Highlights search terms</b>	
<b>Create bookshelf</b>	
<b>Create bookmarks and notes</b>	
<b>Print notes</b>	
<b>Automatic citations</b>	
<b>Mobile accessibility</b>	
<b>Printing/Downloading</b>	
<b>Whole book downloading/loans</b>	

## Browsers

It is best to investigate how a platform works in various browsers. Even if it does not play into purchase decisions, it is essential to know for marketing and user support. A provider whose main format is PDF is usually not a problem. But platforms that have their own readers (even built-in PDF readers) and special functions, are likely to have the most variation from browser to browser. It is also a best practice to investigate how content displays on Internet Explorer, Firefox, Chrome and Safari at the minimum.

### Mobile Accessibility

Libraries should also always investigate mobile access when it is promoted as a feature of an e-book platform because mobile access can mean a lot of things. Is there a mobile compatible site? Does the provider have their own app? Does that app just give table of contents for their books? Is it an app with full searching capabilities and whole book downloads? Is it accessible on both IOS and Android devices? Bluefire Reader is a common third-party e-book app that works with many providers to apply the DRM which allows whole book reading on the device. In most cases, users will need an account for the e-book platform and an Adobe Digital Editions account.

### Other Features

Many e-book platforms have interactive features which almost always requires users to establish an account on the platform. Common features include a bookshelf where you can save the books you are interested in, as well as the ability to create bookmarks within the books and make notes that will be attached to pages. These features are not all standardized across platforms, however. One potential frustration for users is the inability to print/download/email the notes they have attached to the pages in the book. A feature that students particularly appreciate is an automatic citation option where, with a click, the interface will provide the proper citation to that book or chapter in a few of the more common styles. Being able to search the full-text of the e-book is expected by most users, but it is not always available. There are still platforms which only search the citation and abstract. When full-text searching is available, it does not always work the same way across platforms. The more robust platforms not only search the full-text, but they also display a list of where search term(s) can be found in the book and highlights the term(s) within the text.

## *Acquisition and Management*

Managing multiple e-book platforms can be daunting. Just keeping track of administrative usernames and passwords is a task in and of itself. However, it is the administrative interface that allows libraries to make limited changes to affect how patrons interact with the platform, increase the discoverability of the content, add or purchase content, and ascertain how patrons are using the content in order to determine return on investment. Just as no two platforms are alike, neither are the administrative modules. Sometimes, just locating the administrative interface login screen can be difficult, and once you login the interface itself can be intimidating (“What happens if I accidentally click the wrong button?”). Expert training on the functionality from vendor representatives can go a long way to reduce librarians’ anxiety, but knowing what features are available can help librarians understand the possibilities or restrictions a platform may provide. While no platform’s administrative interface offers all of the features discussed here, Table 3 provides a checklist of administrative features to keep in mind when making e-book purchasing decisions.

Table 3: Admin Features Checklist

<b>Acquisitions &amp; PDA Management</b>	
<b>Admin Alerts</b>	
<b>Authentication Method Management</b>	
<b>Institutional Branding</b>	
<b>Manage Download/Loan Period</b>	
<b>Manage User Accounts</b>	
<b>(free) MARC Records</b>	
<b>Correct &amp; Current KB Metadata</b>	
<b>Discovery Service Indexing</b>	
<b>Usage Reports</b>	
<b>Title Lists</b>	

### Acquisitions

Many aggregator platforms offer a collection management and acquisitions modules within their site, whereas most publisher platforms require one to request quotes and place orders through a sales rep.

Some aggregators also offer their content through book vendors, such as YBP and Ingram/Coutts, though, to date, none of the distributors have rights to sell content from all of the aggregators. This means that to determine availability, licensing options, and pricing for a single title, library staff must potentially:

- search their primary domestic book distributor's database
- search the acquisitions module of multiple aggregators
- contact publisher vendor reps

The administrative module of most aggregators allow the librarian/staff to search that provider's entire e-book catalog, view licensing options and pricing, and place orders. Many also allow for individual librarian/subject specialist accounts. These multiple accounts can accommodate workflows where

subject specialists tag titles they would like to order, and acquisitions staff authorize and submit the order to the vendor. The ability to create and add titles to lists or carts is common, as is the ability to input and attach fund codes and purchase order numbers. Some aggregators also offer the ability to create custom course packs, which can incorporate chapters from multiple titles at a rate lower than purchasing the title outright. When running PDA programs some platforms offer the ability to add, remove, or block titles; to adjust profile options; and to manage mediated short-term loans or purchases within the administrative module. In addition, downloadable invoices and fee reports can be especially useful when managing budgets.

### Administration

The ability to view and download title lists for subscriptions and/or purchases is a highly valued tool. For example, title lists can facilitate the reconciliation of titles in an Electronic Resource Management (ERM) system or Integrated Library Service (ILS) to ensure that all entitlements are accounted for and accessible. Such lists can also come in handy when performing collection assessment tasks, such as determining which disciplines are supported by a package subscription or performing an overlap analysis. License type or concurrency limits are very often included in these reports.

A convenient feature is the ability to create additional administrative and staff accounts and to set staff permissions. It is always a good idea to ensure that at least one additional acquisitions or electronic resources staff member is able to login to the administrative module and is at least somewhat familiar with the settings. Of course, the flip side of that is to have too many administrators or staff with more permissions than they need or understand. The ability to update contacts and bill to/ship to addresses is fairly common and can be useful during staffing or location changes. Some platforms also allow

librarians to setup alerts for specific situations, such as turnaway notifications, short-term loan or purchase mediation notifications, and the end of a loan period.

Many platforms offer the ability to control authentication methods. The ability to set, update, or at least view IP ranges is extremely common in most administrative interfaces. Being able to see which IP ranges a provider has on file for your institution is probably the most basic bit of information needed when troubleshooting access problems, and having to e-mail customer service to confirm IP ranges is inconvenient. Some platforms also offer the ability to configure Athens or Shibboleth authentication (or other single sign-on system), but unless one has experience doing this it is a good idea to get guidance from library/campus IT staff. Referring URLs and/or proxy server credentials can also be established for some platforms. Providers can also offer administrators the ability to establish and manage guest or patron accounts, including resetting passwords or revoking access; however, this is usually only necessary for institutions which do not employ IP range or proxy access.

Although institutional branding may not seem like a very important piece to managing e-book collections, it can go a long way in ensuring that students and faculty understand that the library or, at the very least, the college/university provided the content. Most platforms allow administrators to upload logos and banner text for display in the patron interface. Additional branding elements might include links to the library homepage, interlibrary loan login site, and ask-a-librarian sites.

Perhaps the most important functions of the administrative interface are those that allow a librarian to change settings to influence how patrons are able to access and interact with the platform and the content. Although the power the librarian has to change the platform is limited, small changes in the settings can be perceived as significant (either negatively or positively) by the user.

Platforms that allow for downloads and checkouts often allow administrators to set loan period defaults, either for the collection as a whole or for individual titles. Although it is tempting to allow users the maximum checkout period, it is not always the best idea, depending on the platform options and license. When a title that is available for download is adopted as a course text, it is advisable to shorten the loan period for that particular title if possible. If the platform only allows administrators to set loan periods for the entire collection, then this title almost invariably ends up getting checked out by one person and (depending on the license) may not be available to other users for days or weeks. Hopefully, more platforms will allow for adjusting loan periods or turning off the download option at the title level in the future.

Some platforms offer additional options that can enhance the user experience such as setting the default landing pages, the default search settings, and whether all content or only owned/accessible content is displayed. If you choose to display all content on the platform, it would be wise, if possible, to also configure the settings for your institution's OpenURL link resolver. Although there are many options and settings available within some administration sites, once these settings are established, it is rarely necessary to make changes.

### Discovery Considerations

Ensuring that your patrons are able to discover the content you have purchased or are providing access to is key. Why go to the trouble of spending the money or setting up the PDA if you are not going to make the content discoverable? There are three basic methods of ensuring discoverability:

- Load MARC records into the library catalog

- Tag titles or collections within an ERM and/or link resolver knowledge base
- Include titles within a discovery service (via MARC record upload and/or tagging in the knowledge base)

The method or combination of methods you implement will, of course, depend on the types of services your library offers its patrons.

Many e-book providers will offer MARC records to load into your library's catalog, often at no additional charge, for the titles or collections it sells or provides access to through a PDA. Generally speaking, the quality of the records provided by vendors has increased over the years, but this varies based on the vendor, the collection, and even the title. Many platforms allow downloading of MARC records from the administrative or acquisition module. Other platforms deliver the records via e-mail or FTP, while some allow download from a public site by anyone. Some providers include OCLC numbers in the MARC records, but most catalogers familiar with e-book records are quick to point out that just because there is an OCLC number in the record, does not mean it is a true OCLC record. There are providers, primarily aggregators, who are working directly with OCLC to deliver MARC records, and this number is likely to grow with the advent of OCLC's WorldCat® knowledge base and WorldShare™ Metadata service.

Tagging e-books in ERMs and/or link resolvers (this is often one in the same for many libraries) can provide additional access points for patrons, such as a searchable A-Z e-book list or access to e-book content via the link resolver. Many ERMs also offer e-book MARC records as an additional service. E-book records from ERM services have some of the same quality issues as those from the platforms. It would be wise to assess the quality of records before loading them and to take into account other technical services workflows. One benefit of using MARC records services from ERM providers is that the

URL in the MARC is maintained by the ERM provider, so library staff will rarely have to reload or overlay records when platforms undergo changes.

As more and more libraries begin to rely on discovery services as a supplement to the traditional OPAC, this will likely become one of the most crucial methods of providing e-book access. It is very common for libraries to upload their entire catalog into the index of their discovery service, but tagging titles within the discovery service itself may provide additional benefits such as the inclusion of table of contents and full-text indexing. No discovery service indexes all e-book platforms (yet), so it is a good idea to work with both your discovery service and e-book platform representatives to determine which platforms are or are not indexed and to what extent (chapter level, front and back matter, full-text, etc.).

### Getting Data

Usage reports are one of the best tools librarians have at their disposal to see which of the resources are being used and how they are being used. The vast majority of e-book platforms offer a wide range of usage reports. Most aggregators and publishers offer COUNTER compliant usage reports, and almost all offer platform-specific reports (non-COUNTER compliant). While COUNTER compliant reports are the standard, platform-specific reports can also be extremely useful and informative.

The fourth release of the COUNTER Code of Practice was issued in April 2012<sup>5</sup>, though some providers may only offer reports based on the first COUNTER Code of Practice released in 2006. The following five reports from the 4th release of the COUNTER Code of Practice<sup>6</sup> deal directly with e-books:

- Book Report 1: Number of Successful Title Requests by Month and Title
- Book Report 2: Number of Successful Section Requests by Month and Title

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<sup>5</sup>“COUNTER Code of Practice,” last modified August 2013, [http://www.projectcounter.org/code\\_practice.html](http://www.projectcounter.org/code_practice.html)

<sup>6</sup>“Code of Practice Release 4,” accessed August 9, 2013, <http://www.projectcounter.org/r4/INTROR4.pdf>

- Book Report 3: Access Denied to Content Items by Month, Title and Category
- Book Report 4: Access Denied to Content Items by Month, Platform and Category
- Book Report 5: Total Searches by Month and Title

The first release also included Book Report 6: Total Searches and Sessions by Month and Service which, for all practical purposes, is being replaced with Platform Report 1. Other notable changes between the first and fourth releases are that turnaways are now being referred to as “Access Denied to Content Items” and Book Report 1 and 2 now exclude titles with zero usage. It is rare for all five COUNTER Book Reports to be available from the same platform. How each platform makes its content available and tracks usage and turnaways will affect which COUNTER reports are available.

Platform-specific usage reports vary greatly. The objective of some platform-specific reports is to provide granularity on types of usage that are not accounted for within the COUNTER framework. For example, it would be impossible to drill down in a COUNTER report to determine the number of short-term loans a PDA generated. Some platforms also allow collection-specific statistics. This is exceedingly useful when one has a subscription based collection, a PDA pilot that ended two years ago, a current PDA, and firm orders all on the same platform. Some platforms also give the option to limit the report by subject discipline. Other platform-specific reports give you most-used title reports and may include charts and graphs.

When it comes to gathering usage data, there can be other challenges. For example, there are platforms which do not offer title-by-title usage. In addition, there are providers that tout COUNTER compliance, but because of the way they treat their content, only journal or database reports are available as opposed to title-by-title book reports. There are also platforms which do not offer

downloadable reports, but e-mail the reports monthly, instead. Before committing to purchases on a platform, make sure that the usage reports meet the needs of the library.

### *The Perfect E-Book System*

This article has discussed many of the issues and features surrounding academic e-book platforms. The e-book platform of a librarian's dream would include every feature discussed above and more. Since no single e-book platform seems to contain all of the features described above, each library will have to make decisions about which features are most important to its users and staff. Table 4 represents responses collected from a live (non-scientific) poll at the Charleston Conference preconference session *Off-the-Shelf: E-Book Platforms for Academic Librarians* and is intended to give readers a picture of an ideal academic e-book ecosystem.

Table 4: Ideal Academic E-book Ecosystem

User Side	Administrative Side
Both PDF and EPUB3 format options	Beautiful, robust, and free MARC records from OCLC
DRM Free = no additional software to download	DRM Free = no need to set loan periods
Compatible in all major browsers and mobile devices	Multiple librarian accounts with permission levels
Single sign-on Authentication with library/institutional accounts	Single sign-on for admin modules with library/institutional accounts
Truly <i>unlimited</i> user access	High profile institutional branding
Ability to personalize	Manage loan period title-by-title or turn off download option
Interactive content	COUNTER & Non-COUNTER usage book reports (i.e. no journal reports for book series)
Full-text searchable	Price equivalent to print
Ability to download entire book to any device (all titles, all publishers)	Full-text and chapter level indexing in discovery services
Uniform features across all platforms (i.e. e-journal evolution)	Seamless, comprehensive integration with ERMs and discovery services (i.e. no manual tagging)
	Ability to purchase titles and download MARC records directly from admin module
	All purchasable titles displayed in all book vendor interfaces (i.e. GOBI, OASIS, etc..)

### *Recommended Readings*

Aaltonen, Mari, Petri Mannonen, Saija Nieminen, and Marko Nieminen. "Usability and Compatibility of e-Book Readers in an Academic Environment: A Collaborative Study." *IFLA Journal* 37, no. 1 (03, 2011): 16-27. doi:10.1177/0340035210396775.

<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,uid&db=lxh&AN=59474768&site=ehost-live>.

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## E-book Lending Platforms

For the purposes of this article, the definition of an e-book lending platform is one that contains e-books from multiple publishers that patrons may browse and checkout. Though these platforms have e-books that allow for multiple and simultaneous users, in general they have a one-book, one-user model. Details about the major e-book lending platforms for academic libraries, e-book lending platform characteristics, why and how an academic library would license one, and finally what the future of this rapidly changing environment may hold are explained in this article.

Examples of e-book lending platforms discussed in this section are Axis 360, 3M Cloud Library, Freading, LexisNexis Digital Library and Overdrive. The following characteristics are what most of these platforms share. First, patrons have the option of reading e-books in a variety of platforms, whether in the cloud via their preferred browser, on a dedicated e-reader (or e-ink reader like the Kindle, Nook, Sony Reader, etc.) or an app on a tablet device. They each have an off-line version of the e-book that users can download and access. To protect e-book piracy and to enforce circulation periods, these e-books are encoded with Digital Rights Management (DRM) software. DRM for these e-books is usually managed with Adobe Digital Editions and a user-created Adobe ID. In this one-book, one-user model, libraries can set loan periods for e-books that generally last one to three weeks. Libraries can also limit the number of checkouts per patron and develop a hold queue for patrons to receive e-books once they are returned. To satisfy demand, it is common for libraries to purchase multiple copies of an e-book on these platforms. The above e-book lending platforms will also develop a customizable Web site that allows patrons to browse e-book content available from their academic library. MARC records are provided to the academic libraries, sometimes at a cost, and all have detailed help pages designed to help patrons get started with e-book borrowing.

E-book lending platforms are popular and user-friendly. First, there are no overdue charges and apps are available that allow users to read their book on a variety of e-reader or mobile devices. Patrons can also download e-books from their library at any time and anywhere there is internet access, provided that the e-book is not checked out. The e-book lending platforms also support some assistive screen-reader technologies that allow patrons with reading and visual disabilities to read e-books. For example, last year, Axis 360 was honored by the National Federation of the Blind for their work in making e-books accessible with the additional ability to be read aloud through their Blio app.<sup>7</sup>

Comparing e-book lending platforms with aggregator platforms such as EBL, ebrary and Ebscohost, one finds some similarities. They all deal with multiple publishers and some aggregators, like ebrary, provide a reader for mobile devices that users may access to view e-book content. Additionally, the differences between e-book lending platforms and aggregators are shrinking. For example, ebrary is beginning to

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<sup>7</sup> "National Federation of the Blind Honors Baker & Taylor's Axis 360 Digital Media Platform," *baker-taylor.com*, last modified July 25, 2012,

[http://www.baker-taylor.com/viewnews.cfm?press\\_id=320&typ=c](http://www.baker-taylor.com/viewnews.cfm?press_id=320&typ=c)

explore “checkout-based distribution systems . . . where library users can ‘check out’ an e-book.”<sup>8</sup> Until the patron checks-in the e-book, it would be unavailable in the same way it is not available in an e-book lending platform. Downloaded e-books on both platforms also have DRM associated with them.

A big difference between aggregator and e-book lending platforms are the mass-market content available primarily in the latter platform. Content from the Big Six publishers (Hachette, HarperCollins, Macmillan, Penguin, Random House, and Simon & Schuster) is found primarily in these e-book lending platforms, and some publishers have their own, and sometimes exclusive, relationship with these platforms. For example, HarperCollins books have a 26 uses per year checkout limit on each of its e-books, which means that after the year is up, libraries need to "purchase" another e-book. Purchase is an inaccurate term, for libraries do not buy e-books in this model. Instead, they lease it. Publishers not only define the leasing terms, but prices as well. For example, at the time of this writing, Random House charges libraries wanting to license an e-book 3 times the commercial price of its print counterpart. The State Library of Kansas has created a Facebook page entitled *The Big 6 – eBooks in Libraries* (<https://www.facebook.com/thebig6ebooks>) that details the current state of licensing mass-market material from these publishers based on information from the 3M platform.

There is one niche e-book lending platforms worth highlighting, the LexisNexis Digital Library. LexisNexis has been working with the legal community for decades, and their e-book lending platform provides access to “primary law, deskbooks, code books, [and] treatises.”<sup>9</sup> To distribute these e-books, LexisNexis has partnered with Overdrive to provide customized legal content to law firms and academic libraries. Due to their relationship with legal publishers, LexisNexis can provide more types of lending options (such as simultaneous users and longer checkout periods) to their subscribers than one might get from a regular e-book lending platform license.

There are challenges and issues for libraries within this e-book lending platform landscape. For example, the preservation of cultural heritage mission of the library is threatened. It is hard to preserve the heritage of materials when you license, not own, the content. Without ownership, interlibrary loans are difficult in an e-book environment. DRM associated with these e-books provides access challenges, for DRM’s “purpose is to limit access to e-books to select devices and users - essentially making ‘digital objects not behave digitally’ (Neiburger).”<sup>10</sup> The popularity of the content of these e-books, and patron desire to read this on their preferred mobile device, puts the library in a difficult position of satisfying public demand and negotiating favorable licensing terms with e-book lenders (and publishers) without much leverage.

E-book prices for libraries are also a big challenge. Since many e-books cost more than their print equivalent, duplicating formats of the same content puts an additional strain on budgets that have been

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<sup>8</sup> Andrew Revelle and Sue Polanka, “Reading Transformed by the Mobility of E-books,” in *The Handheld Library: Mobile Technology and the Librarian*, eds. Thomas A. Peters and Lori Bell (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2013), 116.

<sup>9</sup> “Introducing LexisNexis® Digital Library...,” *LexisNexis.com*. Accessed July 3, 2013.

<http://www.lexisnexis.com/ebooks/lending/>

<sup>10</sup> Lisa Carlucci Thomas, “Making Sense of Change: E-books, Access and the Academic Library,” in *No Shelf Required 2: Use and Management of Electronic Books*, ed. Sue Polanka (Chicago: American Library Association, 2012), 62.

slashed during the recent recession. As e-books command more and more dollars of an ever-shrinking budget, directors of public libraries have led the charge to find solutions and promote public awareness of the economics of the e-book lending landscape. For example, Jamie (James) LaRue, director of the Douglas County Library in Colorado, has opted for a campaign of transparency, publishing monthly reports that compare e-book prices of bestsellers from Overdrive and 3M with the print and consumer e-book price.<sup>11</sup> The July 2013 report indicates that 12 out of 20 top amazon.com titles are available to be borrowed from either 3M or Overdrive. Costs for the e-book lender versions of the 12 available titles range from \$7.99 to \$90.00; the print equivalent from vendor Baker & Taylor has costs that range from \$7.79 to \$21.58. The average price difference between purchasing a print book on amazon.com and licensing the e-book is \$32.35 per book. With an annual budget of \$3.4 million, the \$32.00/book difference can significantly eat into Douglas County Library's ability to provide a variety of material to its patron base.

Most academic libraries license content from e-book lending platforms to support their leisure, or popular, reading collection. This e-book service is somewhat analogous to McNaughton plans, which allows libraries to lease popular current fiction and nonfiction print books so that patrons can have quicker access to new releases. E-book lending platforms could also complement or replace the e-reader lending program that some academic libraries have started. For an institution, it may be more cost-effective and easier to license an e-book that users may then place on their own e-reader device than to purchase multiple Kindles or Nooks, load digital content on them, and then circulate to patrons.

There are more reasons for academic libraries to consider an e-book lending platform. For example, e-book lending platforms can provide access to juvenile literature. At the University of Nevada Las Vegas, my home institution, we have started offering patrons access to juvenile literature in Overdrive to supplement our children's literature collection that supports our College of Education's K-12 program. Some of these e-book lending platforms also provide audiobooks, an option that can expand the popular literature possibilities for your patrons. Another development to track is Overdrive's announcement in the summer of 2013 that they will provide streaming video on its platform. When ready, this service could be an affordable alternative for providing films to patrons on a user-friendly platform.

There are some limitations to these e-book lending platforms that you will also need to consider. First, printing is limited, if it is available at all. These e-books are meant to be read online or on a tablet/reader. Second, adopting a new technology means staff training will be needed to allow public service providers to support the variety of e-readers these lending platforms utilize. Third, though the content is popular, it is a limited selection and not all of your popular and juvenile literature needs will be satisfied by any one e-book lender. Fourth, if you want to avoid de-duplication, it will take work to synchronize your e-book lending program with your print profile. Fifth, e-books on these lending platforms are not cross-searchable, so a user cannot trace the use of a word or phrase within these e-books as you can on a publisher or aggregator based e-book platform. And finally, you may have to decide whether or not to include the public and alumni access to these e-books. Base prices for

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<sup>11</sup> Douglas County Libraries, "Douglas County Libraries Report: Pricing Comparison as of July 1 2013," last modified July 1, 2013, <http://evoke.cvlsites.org/files/2013/07/DCL-Pricing-Comparison-7-1-13.pdf>

maintenance fees are often based on the number of patrons you are serving. By limiting access to e-books, you can cut costs. However, by excluding access to alumni and the public you are excluding this segment of your population to a potentially popular program.

No e-book lending platform is the same, and the following are things to consider when selecting a vendor. First, content and availability differ among the e-book platforms. For example, Overdrive provides the most e-book titles of any e-book lending platform. Overdrive also has the most academic clients of the e-book lending platform providers. However, at the time of this writing, front list titles from Penguin press are not available on Overdrive; these titles are available on the 3M platform. And though e-book leasing prices vary a little from platform to platform, annual administrative and hosting fees can. Freading is the exception, as they provide libraries with tokens which patrons may use to checkout material. It operates similar to a patron driven acquisition model for libraries. E-book lending platforms are also developing API (Application programming interface) integration, which would allow patrons to check out and place holds from the library catalog. If this feature is important for your library, then be sure to ask each e-book vendor what the timetable is for API integration and if your ILS or library catalog will be compatible for this integration. Comparing e-reader apps will also be important, for outside of Overdrive, none work with the kindle e-ink reader and each reading app used by the vendors has different functions.<sup>12</sup>

The future of e-book lending platforms is in flux, but there are models and developments that point the way to future relationships between publishers, distributors and libraries. One model that could be attractive to academic libraries is where the library becomes the distributor and works directly with publishers to obtain and distribute e-books. On blogs and in library articles, this is being called the Douglas County Libraries (or DCL) model, based on this library system's success in providing e-books to its patrons. DCL negotiates deals directly with publishers, obtains e-book rights to distribute, and delivers these e-books to its patrons via a DCL-maintained platform. By owning and maintaining the e-books, the DCL-model allows library to re-capture its mission to preserve the cultural and print heritage of its community.

Rochelle Logan, in her article "Working Directly with Publishers: Lessons Learned," talks about the benefits and difficulties Douglas County Libraries have had working directly with publishers.<sup>13</sup> First, not all publishers are the same, and though the Big Six did not work with DCL, they found many small to medium-sized presses to work with DCL. Second, there are potential savings working with publishers, who are often willing to give up to 45% off retail price to DCL. Additionally, directly dealing with publisher bypasses a distributor's markup, offering opportunities for additional savings. The downside, though, is that bypassing distributors means that DCL must work with publishers unfamiliar with MARC records and the many ways libraries make e-books accessible to readers.

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<sup>12</sup> For a valuable comparison of e-book platform content and technical specifications, see Chapter 3 in Mirela Roncevic, *E-book Platforms for Libraries* (Chicago: ALA TechSource, 2013).

<sup>13</sup> Rochelle Logan, "Working Directly with Publishers: Lessons Learned," *American Libraries: E-content Supplement to June 2013* (2013): 8-11.

When a library can provide e-books to patrons, this creates new possibilities in its relationship with third party vendors and with its patrons. For example, DCL recently announced that it is working with OdiloTID to handle its locally managed e-book collection. Unlike other e-book lending platforms, OdiloTID is not a content provider. Instead, this company provides the technology that allows libraries to manage e-books and provide access to them. Jamie (James) Larue, director of Douglas County Libraries, argues in his article “Wanna Write a Good One?” that the “infrastructure to manage ebooks directly from publishers . . . [is] the same infrastructure [that] allows it to *be* a publisher.”<sup>14</sup> LaRue then ponders a world in which the library recruits content from authors that can then be distributed on a library platform. This publication model could provide an alternative to the Big Six publishers for authors to reach their audience.

Even without competition from libraries as publishers, the world of the Big Six publisher’s, and their stance on e-books in public libraries, is in flux. For example, Penguin and Random House finalized their merger. Interestingly, both publishers had different stances with respect to e-books. Penguin did not provide front-list material to Overdrive; Random House does provide front-list material. Simon & Schuster is now experimenting with e-book lending in a limited target area, New York City. Now that the Big Six are all involved in some way with e-book lending platforms and libraries, along with more e-book lenders outside of Overdrive to work with Big Six publishers, libraries will have to track and see if pricing and lending practices for all the Big Six publishers become more uniform.

To actively shape the future of e-book lending platforms, libraries and librarians are participating in e-book lending advocacy groups that are working to create solutions that are beneficial to publishers, vendors and libraries. For example, the American Library Association sponsors the Digital Content Working Group. Part of the charge of this group is to “explore, analyze and share information on various options for expanding access to digital content for libraries and the public and for overcoming legal, technological, policy and economic barriers to equitable access.”<sup>15</sup> Readersfirst.org is another advocacy group, describing itself as a “movement to improve e-book access and services for public library users.”<sup>16</sup> The movement focuses on providing ideal characteristics for e-content distribution services (like e-book lending platforms) that will create a user-friendly e-book borrowing experience. In their draft document, *ReadersFirst Content Access Requirements*, this group articulates the ideal for a number of categories like metadata, customization and administrative features, patron privacy, and ease-of-use that would make any e-book lending platform more user and library friendly.<sup>17</sup>

For now, academic libraries are not major licensors for e-book lending platforms. But this could change as content grows and/or as libraries become distributors of content. In the research environment, the success of the LexisNexis Digital Library could pave the way for University Presses to place content on e-

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<sup>14</sup> James LaRue, “Wanna Write a Good One?: Library as Publisher,” *American Libraries: E-content Supplement to June 2013* (2013): 18.

<sup>15</sup> “Digital Content Working Group: Charge,” [ala.org](http://ala.org/groups/committees/special/ala-dcwg), accessed July 3, 2013, <http://www.ala.org/groups/committees/special/ala-dcwg>

<sup>16</sup> “ReadersFirst,” *ReadersFirst.org*, accessed Aug 20, 2013, <http://readersfirst.org/>

<sup>17</sup> “ReadersFirst Content Access Requirements [DRAFT],” *ReadersFirst.org*, accessed August 20, 2013, <http://readersfirst.org/ReadersFirst-Content-Access-Requirements.pdf>

book lending platforms, allowing patrons to access materials in their preferred format at their point of need. Growing demand from academic libraries could also spur publishers to place more academic content on e-book lending platforms. Through purchasing power, advocacy groups, and their relationships with publishers, academic libraries can help shape the future of e-book lending platforms into a model that is beneficial for all.

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## **E-Book Aggregators: A Primer**

The academic library market for e-books is now well developed; often a library has more than one option to license access to a title. Most large publishers now have their own proprietary platforms, and also license their books through multiple aggregators. However, before 2005, aggregators were the only commercial supplier of e-books for academic libraries.<sup>1</sup>

### *Market History*

E-book aggregators, companies that license access to e-books from multiple publishers, have been part of the library marketplace since 1998, with the founding of Netlibrary. Netlibrary was the first company to license rights from publishers to convert print books to digital files for the academic library market.<sup>2</sup> Netlibrary offered e-books to academic libraries through a variety of business models: purchases at the individual title level, subscription subject collections, shared consortial collections, and patron driven acquisition.

From 1998 to 2001 other aggregators began licensing access to specialized e-book collections: Xrefer (now Credo Reference), Books 24x7, Safari Tech Books, and Knovel Engineering Library, were all founded during this time. In 2001 ebrary began licensing e-books to academic libraries through subscription collections, and in 2004 MyiLibrary and Ebook Library began licensing e-books through the patron driven acquisition business model.<sup>3</sup> EBSCO acquired Netlibrary in 2010 and Proquest acquired ebrary in 2011 and Ebook Library in 2013. These four aggregators: Ebook Library, ebrary, EBSCO eBooks, and MyiLibrary continue to be the four major vendors in the academic library e-book aggregator market. There are also numerous smaller aggregators with specialty collections in areas such as: medicine, law, engineering, business, technology, reference, and international titles.

### *Sales Models*

Aggregators license access to e-books through a variety of sales models: patron driven acquisition, title level purchasing, collection purchasing, or collection subscriptions. Carolyn Morris and Lisa Sibert provide an overview of e-book acquisition models in the book, No Shelf Required.<sup>4</sup> Each business model has its own benefits and challenges for libraries. Subscription collections provide temporary access to large collections of titles for a relatively low price. Titles are not owned in this model and the aggregator can withdraw titles from the collection without warning.

Aggregators also license perpetual ownership at the individual title or collection level. When the title is purchased in this way the library has access to the title in perpetuity, either through the aggregator's platform or, if the platform becomes unavailable, hosted from the library's servers. The cost for perpetual ownership of titles is often the list price of the print book, or some multiplier of that price. These titles are often controlled by single use, multiple use, or non-linear lending licenses. A single use license limits use to one book one reader. A multiple use license provides some limited number of users at the same time or an unlimited number of users. Non-linear lending allows an unlimited number of readers to access the book at one time, but limits the total number of uses within a one year period. If the book reaches the number of allowed uses during the 12 months, access to the title is temporarily suspended until a new period begins.

Patron driven acquisition, also known as demand driven acquisition, turns library acquisitions on its head: putting the patron in charge of purchasing titles for the library collection at the time of need. E-books enable this revolution in library purchasing because there is no delivery time necessary for access to digital content. Libraries using patron driven acquisition load records into library discovery systems and patron use triggers the generation of fees for temporary use or the purchase of titles.

Libraries can license content from aggregators through any combination of these sales models. Decisions about which models are best should be based on your unique community of patrons and their use patterns, the collections under consideration, and the price offered by the aggregator. Multiple business models and vendors can be used, but libraries may want to remove duplicates from their e-book collections to reduce unnecessary spending.

#### *Benefits and Challenges for Libraries*

Libraries choose to license content through aggregators for a number of reasons: to make use of patron driven acquisition; to provide access through one preferred platform; or as part of a multi-vendor approach to building collections. Sourcing large collections of e-books from an aggregator allows libraries to simplify their work processes for selection, invoicing, and MARC record downloads. Some libraries prefer to make e-books available through an aggregator's platform because of the advanced functionality such as downloading of EPUB files, highlighting and exportable notes.

Some libraries choose to limit their use of aggregators due to concerns about digital rights management and preservation. In order to reduce publisher concerns for the security of their intellectual property when licensed through a third party, aggregator platforms must use more restrictive digital rights management (DRM) than what is offered directly from a publisher's platform. A disadvantage of buying perpetually owned e-books through an aggregator is that the four leading aggregators do not have preservation agreements with Portico, LOCKSS or CLOCKSS. This might be due to the third party nature of rights management. The publisher, as the copyright holder, might be the only entity that can make such an agreement with a preservation service.

#### *Benefits to Publishers*

It is clear that there are benefits for libraries using aggregators, but why would a publisher choose to sell e-books through an aggregator? Although many big publishers now have their own platforms for e-books, most did not have the facility to host and sell e-books directly until 2006, years after the aggregators were up and running. Many small publishers still do not have their own e-book platforms or the ability to sell e-books directly. Publishers commonly use third party book vendors to sell print books to libraries; so using an aggregator as a sales channel is another opportunity for their publications to reach readers. Publishers benefit from the aggregator's platform, which can offer enhanced security through digital rights management. Aggregators manage the technical aspects of e-book creation such as file format conversion, library support, MARC record creation, and integration with library discovery services.

Aggregators must balance the expectations of library customers with the expectations of publishers. Library customers often want lower prices, removal of DRM, and permission for interlibrary loan.

Publishers often want reduced financial risk, security of their intellectual property, and the opportunity for their content to be discovered, used and purchased. Although these expectations can be in conflict, as Mark Huskisson, Director at Ebook Library, explained, it is the aggregator's role to find "where the tension is taut, but not stressed, and is not pulled too far in one direction"<sup>5</sup>

### *Choosing an aggregator*

Although aggregator business models have converged over the past four years, there are still significant differences between vendors. In preparation for this article the four main aggregators (Ebook Library, ebrary, EBSCO eBooks, MyiLibrary) were asked to submit information about their collections, platform functionality and sales models. This information has been edited for accuracy and brevity. An excerpt of the response is shown in Figure 1 and the full report is available as a publicly shared Google document.<sup>6</sup> It is important to remember that this information was collected in October 2013, and will be out dated soon. The data can be used as an initial comparison, but it is important to contact each vendor directly for up-to-date, complete information.

Aggregators play an important role in the current academic library e-book marketplace. The availability of various sales models, and the diversity of publishing partners, provides an opportunity for libraries to easily develop robust e-book collections. Libraries will see increased demand for e-book collections as patron acceptance of, and preference for, e-books continue to grow.<sup>7</sup> Aggregators will continue to play an important role if they continue to provide good value to publishers looking for alternative sales channels and to libraries looking for flexible sales models and platforms that provide patrons with desired functionality.

Figure 1

Ebook Aggregator Comparison				
Vendors	ebrary	Ebook Library	MyiLibrary	EBSCO eBooks
Data was collected from vendors in October 2013.				
Please contact vendors directly for updated information.				
Content				
Number of titles	500,000+	400,000+	Nearly 435,000	Nearly 477,800
Scope	ebrary's collection includes academic subject areas, but also has very targeted content for corporations, government institutions, medical libraries, public libraries, and K12 libraries.	EBL's catalog contains content in a broad range of disciplines with a strong selection of titles in Science, Technology, and Medicine (STM), Business, Social Sciences, and Humanities with a focus on frontlist	MyiLibrary provides access to ebooks from all LC Classes, focusing on academic, scholarly, scientific, technical, engineering, and medical content	EBSCO eBooks titles cover a wide variety of academic subjects. EBSCO also offers content in subject areas relevant to corporate, medical, public, K-12/school and government libraries.

		titles.		
<b>Number of new front-list titles being added this year</b>	Estimate 50,000 titles will be added in 2013.	Anticipate adding 120,000 in 2013	Averaging 60,000 or more per year in new content	Anticipate approximately 90,000 frontlist titles to be added in 2013.
<b>Number of publishers</b>	600+, representing 1200+ imprints	520+ publishing partners	>1,550 publishers	Nearly 900 publishers.
<b>Number of university press publishers</b>	ebrary has comprehensive selection of titles from 150+ university press partners worldwide.	[no answer provided]	>80 university presses	Approximately 132 university press publishers.
<b>Average delay for ecopy after print release date? Provide specific time periods for specific publishers if available.</b>	ebrary works closely with publishers to make sure their new ebook titles are published as close to the print edition as possible. We track these percentages on a monthly basis. Taylor & Francis=70% of titles are within 8 weeks of print; Cambridge UP-65% of titles are within 8 weeks of print.	[no answer provided]	The majority of the more than 1,550 publishers on the MyiLibrary platform provide simultaneous eContent for their new print titles on the MyiLibrary platform. Some publishers may have a 6-8 week time frame before e catches up with print, but this gap appears to be shrinking.	The time between a print publication and eBook availability on the EBSCO eBooks platform varies greatly and could be anywhere from 30 days to six months, dependent on publisher decisions and EBSCO's processing. Some publishers may simultaneously release electronic and print editions, while others may place a six-month embargo on the electronic version.

				Titles are prioritized based on demand.
<b>Sales models</b>				
<b>Purchase by title price (describe cost relative to hard cover list price)</b>	<p>Single user pricing is usually close to the hard cover list price.</p> <p>Multi/unlimited user and three-user pricing is set by the publisher and is comparable to pricing from other ebook aggregators: between 1.2 and 2 times the hardcover list price.</p> <p>ebrary offers “Extended Access” as a way to automatically upgrade from single user to multiple user access to prevent turn aways.</p> <p>Titles purchased at the title level are owned in perpetuity.</p>	<p>Most of EBL's titles are priced close to the hard cover list price with the non-linear lending model. Non-Linear Lending provides access to unlimited simultaneous users for a limit of 325 loan instances per year.</p> <p>Some EBL titles are licensed as “unlimited” or “textbook” titles, and pricing is set by the publisher and is comparable to pricing from other ebook aggregators: between 1.2 and 2 times the hardcover list price.</p> <p>Titles purchased at the title level are owned in perpetuity.</p>	<p>Single user MyiLibrary price averages 1.2 x print price; multi-user (3 concurrent) averages 2 x print price.</p> <p>Access Model (325 uses per year with free annual renewal): price ranges between 1.2 and 2 times the hardcover list price.</p> <p>Titles purchased at the title level are owned in perpetuity</p>	<p>Single user pricing is usually close to the hard cover list price.</p> <p>Three user and unlimited pricing is set by the publisher and is comparable to pricing from other ebook aggregators: between 1.2 and 2 times the hardcover list price.</p> <p>EBSCO does not charge a platform fee.</p> <p>Titles purchased at the title level are owned in perpetuity</p>
<b>Discounted subject collections</b>	<p>Subject collections are available often with discounted cost.</p> <p>ebrary's on-staff librarians curate collections of ebooks in an array of different subject areas.</p>	<p>EBL does not have pre-packaged, discounted subject collections, but libraries can define their patron-driven acquisition collections using profiles that use subject headings and many other parameters.</p>	<p>Ingram Coutts can provide customized subject collections with discount based upon number of titles and publishers included.</p>	<p>EBSCO's Collection Development Librarians provide numerous subject-specific content packages.</p>

<b>Patron Driven Acquisition</b>	Yes  There is a free browse period.  Short term loans are triggered at 10 minutes of active viewing; 10 pages excluding TOC or index; copy/paste; print; download request  The library can set the number of short term loans before auto-purchase based on their local needs	Yes  There is a free browse period.  Short term loans are triggered after five minutes of viewing; copy/paste; print; download request  The library can set the number of short term loans before auto-purchase based on their local needs	Yes  MyiLibrary does not provide a free browse period.  MyiLibrary ebooks can be borrowed before purchase via WorldCat ILLiad. This is outside of the PDA program.	Yes  There is a free browse period.  Short term loans are triggered at 10 minutes of viewing; 10 pages viewed; copy/paste; print; download request.  “Loan to own” the library can set the number of short term loans before auto-purchase based on their local needs.
<b>Contact information</b>	sales@ebrary.com	info@eblib.com	800 263-1686	information@ebsco.com

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## **Commercial Publisher E-Book Platforms**

### *Defining Commercial Publishers*

The April 2013 Library Technology Report, "E-book Platforms for Libraries," provides an excellent overview of eBook publishers and providers, including a comprehensive directory of eBook platforms. The directory lists eBook platforms for a wide variety of markets, age groups, and library types, and includes publishers, aggregators, distributors, and university presses.

While many eBook platforms can be clearly classified as aggregators, university presses or commercial publishers, others are more difficult to label and identify. For example, Safari Books Online initially included content largely from O'Reilly Media and Pearson Education, but it has expanded to include content from almost 200 different publishers. The same is true of Gale, who publishes its own eBook content, but is classified in the Library Technology Report as an aggregator because of the content from other publishers available on the platform.

For the purposes of this analysis, a commercial eBook publisher is defined as a publisher whose eBook platform contains primarily its own content. Looking through the Library Technology Report, the list of commercial publishers that cater specifically, at least in some part, to the academic market is surprisingly short, with only 14 eBook publishers listed: ABC-CLIO, De Gruyter, LexisNexis, McGraw-Hill, Routledge (a division of Taylor & Francis) the American Psychological Association, SAGE, Elsevier, ME Sharpe, Springer, Taylor & Francis, Wiley, and World Book.

This article examines the eBook platforms of five large commercial academic eBook publishers, Elsevier, SAGE, Springer, Taylor & Francis, and Wiley, with the goal of identifying general trends across commercial publisher eBook platforms. (Note that this examination does not include university presses, which face their own unique challenges and are dealt with in a separate article in this issue of Against the Grain.)

### *Platform Content*

An important consideration for the evaluation of a publisher's platform is the eBook content itself, as well as the publisher's treatment of that content. Issues to consider include the number of eBook titles available, subject areas covered, whether or not monographs and reference titles can be cross-searched or are available on different platforms, and if the publication of the electronic version is delayed or embargoed from the time of the publication of the print version.

The subject areas covered and the number of titles available in each subject area will clearly vary from publisher to publisher. When considering a broad subject collection of eBooks, it is helpful to look at the

number of titles included in the collection, the average cost per title, and whether the collection includes monographs, reference works or both.

It is important to note that commercial publishers vary in their treatment of monographs and reference books. Some publishers, SAGE, Springer, and Wiley, for example, make monographic works, reference materials, and journal articles available on a single platform. Wiley also makes many of its major reference works available on the Blackwell Reference Online platform. Other publishers provide access to eBooks (both reference and monographs) on one platform and journal content on another separate platform. SAGE, for example, provides access to 388 reference titles and almost 2400 monographic titles through the SAGE Knowledge platform, where all eBook content is cross-searchable. However, SAGE's journal content is on the separate SAGE Journals platform. Taylor & Francis makes its reference materials, monographs, and journals on three entirely unique platforms, which are not cross searchable.

Libraries are familiar with the fact that journal publishers often embargo content in aggregated journal databases. The same can be true of eBook content. Commercial publishers often delay the release of an eBook until after the print version has already been available for some period of time. The release date of the eBook can vary from anywhere from a few weeks to a full year after the publication of the print. Publishers fear that, if the eBook is released the same time as the print, the two formats will compete for sales. By delaying the release of the eBook, libraries could be in a position to purchase a title twice, first the print version to provide immediate access and later the eBook to provide the benefits of electronic access. The less time between the publication of the print and electronic versions, the better it is for libraries.

#### *Platform Functionality*

The good news for libraries is that access and use of eBook content tends to be less restricted in terms of digital rights management on publisher platforms than on aggregated platforms. Institutions are less likely to run into restrictions on viewing, downloading, printing, sharing, etc. Where some aggregated platforms restrict the number of users that may view an eBook at one time or limit the number of pages that can be printed out, publisher platforms are typically without such limitations. Any number of users may view or download a book chapter at any given time, and the entirety of the eBook can be printed out, albeit often only one chapter at a time.

That is not to say, however, that titles from commercial publishers are completely DRM free. For example, while the majority of the Taylor & Francis eBooks are DRM free, some titles have DRM in place to restrict the number of concurrent users and downloading.

With the growing ubiquity of tablet devices and eBook readers, another important issue to consider in terms of platform functionality is whether or not the title can be downloaded and viewed on a tablet device such as a Kindle or iPad. All five of the publishers surveyed for this article make eBook content available in a PDF format, which can be downloaded and viewed on both Kindles and iPads, as well as

many other tablet-type devices. However, it does not appear that alternatives, such as the epub format, are being supported at this time.

Most publishers make eBooks available on a chapter by chapter basis. Users can download or print out the entirety of a book, but they have to do it one chapter at a time. Springer has recently added a feature allowing users to download the entirety of a book all at once as a single PDF, rather than a single chapter at a time, thus greatly improving the navigability and usability of the downloaded eBook.

### *Pricing Models*

EBooks are available from commercial publishers through a variety of pricing models. Options typically include outright purchases of eBook titles, both individually and as part of larger packages, or subscriptions to subject collections. Libraries can opt to purchase or subscribe to titles as part of a package, or they could choose to purchase individual titles and build their own collections.

When purchasing eBooks individually, on title-by-title basis, the price of the eBook is sometimes higher than the price of the print. For example, a Sage eBook runs 125% of the cost of the print version of the same book. The justification for the higher price is the increased accessibility of the content and the added functionality that the electronic format offers.

It is important to note that not all publishers offer all titles for individual purchase. The vast majority of Springer's eBooks are sold as annual subject packages, with tiered pricing based upon the size and research level of the institution. While initially Springer's eBook pricing had a direct relationship to the corresponding print versions, the company has moved away from this model to reflect better the database environment in which the content is hosted.

The decision to purchase or subscribe to a collection of eBooks, as opposed to acquiring the eBooks title-by-title is not that different than the decision libraries face when investigating the Big Deal journal packages. Questions to ask include: What is the average cost per title in the package? What subject areas does the collection cover? What is the possible duplication with the existing print collection? Are the titles in the collection worth the large investment? How many of the titles will patrons actually use?

Demand Driven Acquisitions (DDA), also sometimes called Patron Driven Acquisitions (PDA), describes a pricing model that allows libraries to purchase eBook titles at the point of use. Typically, the library loads MARC records into the catalog, but does not actually pay for a title until a patron clicks on the link in the catalog and is passed through to the eBook. While a number of aggregated eBook vendors have been offering DDA for quite some time, the use of this pricing model by commercial publishers is still relatively new.

Elsevier and Springer both permit libraries and individual users to purchase individual book chapters on demand using a credit card. Wiley permits libraries to access single book chapters using their Article Select Tokens and through Pay-Per-View access. Libraries must purchase a minimum of 100 Article Select Tokens, which then can be used to access journal or eBook content library does not already own or subscribe to. Elsevier's ArticleChoice program allows libraries to place money on deposit, drawing down from those deposited funds as content is downloaded by authorized users. While ArticleChoice is primarily intended for the purchase of journal articles, book chapters can also be purchased through this program. In addition, Elsevier offers what it calls Evidence-Based Selection (EBS) for monographic eBooks. Through the EBS program, the library pays what Elsevier characterizes as a modest up-front fee, and , in exchange, the library gains access to a wide range of eBooks on ScienceDirect. The exact amount of the EBS fee is determined by a percentage of the total value of the content the library chooses, usually in a particular subject area. MARC records for the respective eBooks are provided and access to those titles is turned on for one year. At the end of the 12 month period, the library reviews the usage of the eBooks and decides which titles to keep in perpetuity, priced up to the value of the initial investment.

#### *The Future of Academic eBooks: Interactive Content?*

The demand for enhanced, interactive, and multimedia content is growing in academia, particularly in light of online degree programs and the necessity to support distance education initiatives. One of the most well-known examples of the incorporation of interactive multimedia content into the academic publishing model is JoVE, the Journal of Visualized Experiments. Launched by Moshe Pritzker, a researcher at Princeton University, JoVE publishes biological, medical, chemical and physical research in a video format. All the video content is peer-reviewed and indexed in PubMed.

From its inception in 2006, JoVE has grown to publish sections in 8 different subject areas. A ninth subject area, Environment, will be added this fall. According to Ward Parry, Director of Library Relations at JoVE, since turning to a subscription model only 4 years ago in 2009, JoVE's subscriber base has grown to include 540 institutions in 40 different countries. Parry states that this number has grown 50% over the past year. JoVE's rapid growth can be viewed as an indicator of the market demand for multimedia content in the academic publishing arena, which includes the eBook market.

At this point in time, the interactive content in eBook platforms is largely confined to tools that assist in the navigation through the book or in the bookmarking of content. The inclusion of supplementary interactive, multimedia content, like JoVE's video content, is still relatively low and underutilized. "A recent survey of book publishers conducted by digital publishing solutions provider Aptara, Inc. found that while 64% of publishers are creating ebooks, only 21% are producing enhanced ebooks." (Abel 2011)

Possibilities for enhanced content for eBooks could include embedded videos, maps, music downloadable data sets, and more. A few of the publishers surveyed for this article are including this type of interactive content in their reference sources. For example, Taylor & Francis includes interactive content in reference resources like the Routledge Performance Archive. The same is true for

SAGE, who includes 72 videos as part of their multimedia reference collection. However, none of the surveyed publishers appear to have any interactive, enhanced monographs available at this time.

While SAGE does not have interactive monographs available, the company is actively producing interactive textbooks. These enhanced textbooks include “integrated links to engaging video and audio as well as access to complete academic and professional articles, all from the same pages found in the printed text.” Users also have access to study tools such as highlighting, bookmarking, note-taking, and more. According a November 2012 post on the SAGE Connection blog, the eBook version can be used in conjunction with the traditional textbook (students get access to the eBook for no additional cost with purchase of a new print book) or the interactive eBook can be purchased on its own at a discounted price. Students have access to the eBook for 6 months after registration. Textbooks that have been converted to this interactive format include titles such as *Leadership*, *Social Problems*, and *The Communication Age*. (A demo of interactive features in *The Communication Age* can be seen at <http://www.sagepub.com/edwards/demo/>. In addition to the text and images from the textbook, the demo chapter includes links to audio and video files, as well as journal articles.)

The incorporation of interactive content into monographic eBooks will present a unique set of challenges, both for libraries and publishers. For example, who is responsible for the creation and incorporation of the interactive content: the author of the book, the publisher, a third party? In the case of JoVE, JoVE’s in-house production team produces almost all of the videos on the JoVE site. The production process includes script writing, filming, editing, animation, and voice over work. The entire process takes approximately 7 months, a significant investment of time and manpower.

In terms of interactive content in eBooks, challenges and questions include issues of file format, compatibility, accessibility, and cost. In what file format should the content be? Could libraries select a preferred format? Will additional software be required to make interactive content viewable to and usable by users? How do we ensure compatibility of the interactive content across the wide variety of eBook devices on the market? How should eBooks with interactive content be priced compared to print books or even unenhanced eBooks? What kind of DRM might be required by the publisher as a result of the addition of the interactive content?

It remains to be seen how and at what pace commercial publishers like SAGE might move forward with the creating of enhanced monographs. While the issues outlined above are not insurmountable, they may certainly inhibit a commercial publisher’s ability to move forward with the production of eBooks with interactive content, especially at the rate at which libraries and patrons might demand them.

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## **University Press E-Book Platforms: A Brief Overview**

### *Introduction*

As consumer demand for e-books has grown, so too has the demand for scholarly books (monographs) in electronic format. Libraries are looking to purchase e-books to save shelf space and to better serve patrons who prefer to read books on their computers or e-book readers. While most university press book revenue still comes from print books, publishers at major university presses are planning for the future by actively moving into the e-book space. This is a brave new world of scholarly books online, and current e-books platforms vary significantly. In this article, I will be examining several of the leading university press eBook platforms, including “the big three”—Johns Hopkins’ Project MUSE, Oxford’s University Press Scholarship Online (UPSO), and JSTOR—as well as BiblioVault, Cambridge Books Online, ebrary, and the eDuke Books Scholarly Collection.

Online e-book platforms are facing challenges very similar to those faced by their journal colleagues five to ten years ago. Most of the journal publishers with whom I work at Stanford University’s HighWire Press have successfully transitioned their business from a 1990s print model to a predominantly electronic model. Think of the modern journal website as something akin to the modern car: because all automobile manufactures now use wind-tunnel testing, most cars on the road today have the same aerodynamic profile. Online journal users know what they want (for example, PDFs of articles, hyperlinked references, and article-level usage statistics), and thus journal sites are looking very similar these days. Books, on the other hand, have just begun their online evolution, and their features and functionality have not yet been standardized to allow for a consistent user experience from book to book, site to site, and platform to platform. It will be exciting to watch how these e-book platforms evolve over the next several years.

### *Project MUSE (<http://muse.jhu.edu>)*

Johns Hopkins University Press founded Project MUSE in 1995 as a sales and hosting consortium for university press journals, particularly focusing on the social sciences and humanities. MUSE launched books from the University Press Content Consortia (UPCC) in 2012. Project MUSE now hosts over 20,000 books on behalf of over 90 publishers participating in the UPCC.

Books first entered the picture when MUSE partnered with the University Press e-book Consortium (UPeC) in 2009 to explore the feasibility of a university press-based ebook initiative. UPeC received funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to survey the needs of the library community and, based on the results of that survey, to develop and test a business model. Project MUSE was selected in 2011 to implement UPeC's plan for a transformative and sustainable product offering digital versions of book-length works from many distinguished scholarly presses. As a result, UPCC Book Collections on Project MUSE launched in January 2012.<sup>18</sup>

Project MUSE as an aggregator is particularly attractive to university presses publishing books in the humanities and social sciences because of the already-established critical mass in those disciplines, and as a result it has a very compelling collection package for selling to libraries. A benefit of the MUSE platform to both university press publisher partners and library buyers (and their end users) is a fully integrated search across both books and journals. The established and easily discoverable journal content helps drive usage of the book content, and vice versa.

Project MUSE is currently hosted in-house by Johns Hopkins University Press. The platform has a clean design that is appealing to end users. Book content is available as full-text PDF downloads without digital rights management and is available to subscribing institutions via Shibboleth and IP recognition. In April 2013, Johns Hopkins University Press announced plans to move the hosting of Project MUSE to HighWire Press in late 2014.<sup>19</sup>

#### *University Press Scholarship Online (<http://www.universitypressscholarship.com/>)*

Oxford University Press (OUP) is the owner and primary sales driver behind UPSO, Oxford's academic monograph platform. UPSO hosts nearly 14,000 e-books within 28 different subject areas on behalf of OUP and 13 other major university presses. While Project MUSE is the largest aggregator of university press e-book content, Oxford was the first to put academic books online, via Oxford

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<sup>18</sup> MUSE Recent Announcements, <http://tools.muse.jhu.edu/cgi-bin/announcements.cgi#20130618151156> accessed on September 29, 2013.

<sup>19</sup> HighWire Press Releases, <http://highwire.stanford.edu/news/pr.dtl> last accessed on September 29, 2013. The Stanford–Johns Hopkins Universitypress release about Project MUSE can be found at [http://highwire.stanford.edu/PR/ProjectMUSE\\_HighWire.pdf](http://highwire.stanford.edu/PR/ProjectMUSE_HighWire.pdf).

Scholarship Online, in 2003.<sup>20</sup> OUP looked closely at its successful journals program and determined that an XML workflow would be used. While other book programs focus on PDFs, UPSO has concentrated on a full-text XML workflow, which allows richer linking via references (from in-line references as well as end notes) and full-text search.

UPSO is powered by PubFactory. Search is across UPSO or specific to a publisher, but is limited to e-book content at the book and chapter level, without integrated journal content. Many familiar journal features, such as download to citation management tools, are available. The design is clean and looks attractive on large monitors, laptops, and tablets alike.

UPSO's key value proposition for university press publishers is the ability to tap into OUP's massive global sales network. This partnership gives OUP more content to sell and offers partner university presses the ability to extend the reach of their content via OUP's well-developed international channels. The appeal for libraries is the high quality of the content and the delivery of content with robust features that are appealing to patrons with experience navigating online literature.

#### *JSTOR (<http://books.jstor.org/>)*

JSTOR is a digital library consisting of over 1500 journals that was originally founded in 1995 with a grant from the Andrew Mellon Foundation. JSTOR merged with ITHAKA in 2009, creating a larger not-for-profit organization for journal hosting (JSTOR), journal archiving (Portico), and research and consulting (ITHAKA S+R). JSTOR Books was announced in 2011 and now includes more than 15,000 ebooks on behalf of 30 university presses.<sup>21</sup>

JSTOR Books is built on Atypon technology and features integrated searching between book and journal content. The search results default to content the reader is authorized to access, but search can be modified to include all content hosted by JSTOR. JSTOR Books is a natural option for university press publishers using JSTOR for journal hosting and sales. The JSTOR sales network is well established. Pricing is set by the publishers and tiered according to JSTOR's classifications.

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<sup>20</sup> Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) Oxford Scholarship Online, [http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/FAQs\\_oso/frequently-asked-questions-faqs](http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/FAQs_oso/frequently-asked-questions-faqs) last accessed September 29, 2013.

<sup>21</sup> Frequently Asked Questions | About JSTOR, [http://about.jstor.org/librarians-faq#Which\\_publishers\\_are\\_participating\\_And\\_what\\_titles\\_are\\_available](http://about.jstor.org/librarians-faq#Which_publishers_are_participating_And_what_titles_are_available) last accessed September 29, 2013.

JSTOR Books offer librarians flexibility in the manner in which content is purchased. Institutions can purchase by collection or by individual title, and volume discounts are available. Books may be purchased under either a single-user or multi-user model. The single-user model does not allow concurrent use and limits download quantities, while the multi-user model allows concurrent use and unlimited downloads. JSTOR indicates that a demand-driven acquisition model is also available.<sup>22</sup>

#### *University Publishing Online (<http://universitypublishingonline.org/>)*

Now that I've covered "the big three" platforms, let's take a look at what some other major university presses are doing about ebooks. Cambridge University Press, like OUP, is one of the oldest and most prestigious university press publishers. Also like OUP, Cambridge University Press has joined forces with other university presses (nine, including the University of Edinburgh Press and Liverpool University Press) to launch a consortium called University Publishing Online.

Of course, the lynchpin of the University Publishing Online portfolio is Cambridge University Press. Cambridge Books Online (<http://ebooks.cambridge.org/>) alone hosts 20,000 ebooks. Both Cambridge Books Online and Cambridge Journals Online are hosted by Cambridge University Press in-house. Search is integrated, in that a search can return both book and journal results, at the chapter and article levels, respectively. However, if the user chooses to follow a journals result, he or she is asked to navigate through to Cambridge Journals Online.

#### *BiblioVault (<http://www.bibliovault.org/>)*

The largest university press in the United States is the University of Chicago Press.<sup>23</sup> In 2001, the University of Chicago Press launched BiblioVault as a repository for book files and metadata for scholarly publishers. The service has since grown to support more than 90 university presses and not-for-profit publishers by storing files and metadata on over 30,000 books. Unlike the other platforms discussed above, BiblioVault is not intended to be an ebook platform for end-readers. It is intended to provide a

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<sup>22</sup> Frequently Asked Questions | About JSTOR, [http://about.jstor.org/librarians-faq#What\\_is\\_the\\_functionality\\_of\\_books\\_prior\\_to\\_being\\_triggered\\_for\\_purchase\\_Are\\_there\\_concurrency\\_limits](http://about.jstor.org/librarians-faq#What_is_the_functionality_of_books_prior_to_being_triggered_for_purchase_Are_there_concurrency_limits) last accessed September 29, 2013.

<sup>23</sup> Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University\\_of\\_Chicago\\_Press](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Chicago_Press), last accessed September 29, 2013.

number of services to the publishers of e-books, including the fulfillment of digital files from purchases made from a publisher's website shopping cart.<sup>24</sup>

Searching on BiblioVault returns information about the book and conveniently provides links to sites where a user may access or purchase the book. As an example, a listing might return a link to purchase the book from the publisher's website as well as links to purchase ebook versions for Amazon Kindle, Apple iBook, Barnes & Noble Nook, and Kobo. There are no links for licensing institutional access.

*eDuke Books Scholarly Collection (<https://www.dukeupress.edu/Libraries/edukebooks>)*

Duke University Press has a backlist of over 1500 books and publishes 100 new books per year, all of which are included in the eDuke Books Scholarly Collection. Duke is currently in the process of moving its ebooks from the ebrary platform to HighWire. One goal of the transition is to provide Duke's institutional customers and end-users with seamless integration between books and journals (Duke journals are already hosted by HighWire at <http://dukejournals.org/>). A video preview of the new site can be found on YouTube, here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lOnA5LwhpKQ&feature=share&list=UUslznVkvENwJmpWrhAfGyEw>

*Exclusivity, or Lack Thereof*

University presses are notorious for having divisions for books and journals that are challenged to work together effectively. This political office environment is reflected in the digital realm, often with books and journals on different platforms and sold under very different business models. Usually, journals will have one "official" site hosting the version of record. This is not at all the case for books.

For university presses (and all book publishers), the ebook hosting platform is often viewed as a sales channel. As a result, a book—unlike a journal—can be hosted on a number of different platforms. A good example is a book called ***ABSOLUTE MUSIC, MECHANICAL REPRODUCTION***, by Arved Ashby (University of California Press, 2012). An ebook version can be purchased directly from the University of California Press website (<http://www.ucpress.edu/book.php?isbn=9780520264809>), and it can also be

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<sup>24</sup> BiblioVault – About BiblioVault, <http://www.bibliovault.org/BV.about.epl>, last accessed September 29, 2013.

found at California Scholarship Online, part of the UPSO offering (<http://california.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.1525/california/9780520264793.001.0001/upso-9780520264793>); it is also available via JSTOR Books (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1pn8wv>).

While it is understandable that university press publishers would try to extend their market reach by putting books on a number of different platforms, this practice does make library purchasing decisions more complicated. Librarians have to work harder to make sure they are not ‘doubling up’ on the purchase of a title by licensing it from two or more different sources.

### *Conclusions*

While e-book sales are growing, the institutional library licensing income for most university press publishers remains far less than their print book sales. The university press publishers I spoke with told me that Amazon is by far their largest customer, for better or worse. While the technology behind an e-book hosting platform is important for delivering a good end-user experience, at this point the single most important factor is revenue. Where can a university press put their books to maximize revenue while minimizing risk of diminishing print sales? The Big Three university press ebook platforms, from Oxford (UPSO), Johns Hopkins (Project MUSE), and Ithaka (JSTOR Books) all have an appealing value proposition for university press content partners and strong sales channels and “bang for the buck” offerings that appeal to library buyers.

As more attention is placed on technology, an important trend will be the ability to effectively integrate book and journal content. Platforms that do this well now, like Project MUSE, are well positioned for the future.