



## Still an Issue: The Use of Electronic Books in University Libraries in Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

The advent of information and communication technology has greatly provided an enabling means of electronic version of book that is vital to today users educational pursuit. Therefore, this study review literature on the conceptual overview of e-book, growth, relevance, challenges to university libraries and opportunity for sustainability. Hence, to overcome the turbulence issue of discourse, university libraries should endeavour to provide technological facilities that will facilitate effective use of e-book. Therein publishers, aggregators, vendors and librarians should collaborate on a streamlined mutual congenial business models which will enable effective subscription platform stable for easy restitution.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The arrival of e-book bought a new look to collection development procedure; this is as a result of the change to electronic mediated texts. Such developments generate pressures on libraries to make research output more widely available through search engines and open access mechanisms which in turn result in rising accessibility of research material via downloads and citations (Rosenzweig 2005). The rapid technological changes greatly influence the format of information resource carriers which is a welcome development in university libraries in Nigeria but their readiness to cope with this rapid development becomes an issue. More recently, the development of e-books has been forcing libraries to review their collection development policies and rethink how they build collections, organize OPACs and how they provide information services to their patrons (Marques, 2012).

In Nigeria, the emergence and integration of e-books has been at a slow pace, but in the last few years electronic books are gradually representing an increasingly important component of the resource collection of academic libraries which is evident in the accreditation requirements for libraries by the Universities Commission (Salau, 2015). This revolution in the opinions of enthusiasts is destined to not only change the

reading habits of many but has also been widely acknowledged as a solution to the paucity of textbooks which is most pronounced at the tertiary level of education in Nigeria (Thomas, 2011). The provision of e-book is still a perturbing issue in Nigeria leading to backlog to students' utilization, due to high subscription rate and for university libraries to maintain continuous subscription becomes a serious problem. Hence a review of the current battle for e- book in university libraries appears to be timely.

## 2. THE CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW OF E-BOOK

According to Reitz (2004) electronic book is the digital version of a traditional print book design to be read on a personal computer or an e-book reader (a software application for use on a standard-sized computer or a book-sized computer used solely as a reading device). Armstrong et. al (2002) defined e-books as pieces of electronic text regardless of size or composition, excluding journal publications, made available electronically (or optically) for any device (handheld or desk-bound) that includes a screen. In a more recent study, Nelson (2008) defined e-book as an electronic book that can be read digitally on a computer screen, a special e-book reader, a personal digital assistant (PDA), or even a mobile phone. It is pertinent to note that Rao, (2005) and Soules (2009) in their respective study has made it clear that some of the definitions of e-book include several elements: digital format, online delivery, text (with or without audiovisual content), monographic rather than serial publication, and accessibility through an optical display. Precisely, it is an obvious fact, that e-book is the electronic version of information carriers which could be access through the medium which they are hosted. McFall, Dershem and Davis (2006) noted that e-textbooks have the potential to address some of the paper textbook's shortcomings, taking advantage of the digital context and new learning techniques. Cheek and Hartel (2012) assert that the concept of computerized mechanisms for expanding the way people acquire, store, and process information has been explored since at least 1945 when Vannevar Bush urged scientists to turn their energies from war to the task of making the vast store of human knowledge accessible and useful. In the study of Marques (2012) the first major developments of e-books began in the 1970s with Project Gutenberg and the Oxford Text Archive. He also noted that in 2004, e-books represented the fastest-growing segment of the publishing industry. During the first quarter of the year, more than four hundred thousand e-books were sold, representing a 46 percent increase over the previous year's numbers. Cheek and Hartel (2012) also noted that Amazon released the first version of the Kindle in 2007. Priced at \$399, the Kindle first offered nearly 90,000 e-book titles. Since then, Barnes and Noble, Sony, and other companies have followed Amazon with their own handheld e-book readers.

E-book can be access either online or offline based on the way the library has agreed in the subscription with the publisher or vendor. Many e-book databases provide options for accessing for keywords or phrases within the book, and some have enhanced features such as hyperlinks, video and audio, animations and dictionaries. However, for users to effectively access e-book online; there must be a computer with an Internet connection, PDF software and web browser. Although, some e-books provides their own inbuilt reader which displays content similar to PDFs, while some e-book publishers requires you to download additional software such as Adobe Digital Editions to save or download an e-book. Railean (2012) asserts that many publishers have begun distributing e-books, such as Cambridge University Press, Oxford University Press, Springer, Elsevier, RSC Publishing, Wolters Kluwer/Ovid, Taylor and Francis etc. Furthermore, Jamseer (2013) categorically outlined the various formats of e-books with different type of software needed to view them.

Format	Filename Extention	Open Standard
Kindle	azw	No
DjVu	.djvu	Yes
EPUB (IDPF)	.epub	Yes
Multimedia e-book	.exe	Yes
FictionBook	.fb2	Yes
HTML	.html	Yes
Microsoft Reader	.lit	No
eReader	.pdb	No
Plucker	.pdb	Yes
Portable Document Format	.pdf	Yes
Mobipocket	.prc, .mobi	No
PostScript	.ps	Yes
Tome Raider	.tr2, .tr3	No
Plain text	.txt	Yes

Source: [Jamseer \(2013\)](#)

Therein, with the understanding of the above, it would be difficult for university libraries to manage e-books effectively because of these varieties of formats, software and hard ware, acquisition and usage models.

However, for users to have effective and easy link to e-books collection, they have to source to open access e-books in the Internet or subscribe to have a licensing right to be able to access. Therefore, there are three major kinds of e-book access subscriptions:

- Annual access: This means that the library pays an annual fee for a year's access which can be renewed each year.
- Perpetual access: The library pays a one-time fee and annual maintenance fee for subsequent updates.
- Pay per use: The library pay for the specific subjects or titles the users are interest in; usually base on the agreement with the publishers. Most times this kind of subscription could be annually, in case the library needs additional subject or title.

Considerably, fund has greatly influence the decision of most university libraries in Nigeria to subscribe for e-book regularly, since they will continue to maintain the annual subscription free. This is as a result to the slight budget allocated, which leaves them with convoluted decision on the possible way to serve their user's needs and maintain library paraphernalia.

### 3. THE RELEVANCE OF E-BOOK

The growth of technology in education has improved an efficient and easy means to information resources, thereby providing university libraries with avalanche information resources to meet the information needs of users. This necessity becomes a paramount goal for librarians in the New age to source e-resources in different format that will better serve this present generation of users. Nonetheless, [Vassiliou and Rowley \(2008\)](#) asserted that:

Digital libraries can eliminate manual and physical processing such as packing, unpacking, "shelving and physical circulation of books and also to save cost in the whole acquisition process because of the instant delivery of an ordered e-book title. In addition, there is no risk of the book being lost, stolen or damaged nor are there any physical space requirements. Given appropriate licensing models, e-books provide concurrent access to heavily used titles. E-books enable libraries to stock a broader range of material in individual subjects and access essential material that is out of print.

Specifically, [Cheek and Hartel \(2012\)](#) discussed the advantages of e-book as follows:

- Searchability — Readers can search for and find an exact word or subject in seconds.
- Modification — E-books can be updated more frequently and seamlessly.
- Portability — One device can carry thousands of e-books.
- Variety — There are many e-reading devices and handhelds from which to choose.
- Readability — Readers can increase or decrease the font size of text and the size of images and figures for ease of reading.
- Value-added features — Many e-books come with video, audio, quizzes, and animation effects that make them more interactive.
- Space savings—E-books reduce shelving space requirements for libraries.

#### 4. CHALLENGES OF ELECTRONIC BOOK UTILIZATION

The major challenge associated with the adoption of e-book among university libraries in Nigeria are selection, licensing, acquisition and proper management of e-book. They will be expatiated as follows:

a. **Selection:** Selecting e-book is a complex task pose to librarians since many scholarly titles are not accessible in e-book format; it becomes difficult for users too to decide titles and its compatibility format. As [Just, \(2007\)](#) noted that most e-book publishers and vendors focus on popular titles rather than the academic market.

b. **Licensing:** For users to effectively access e-book, they need to get access right to use e-book, unless it is an open access e-book database. Whereas most e-book requires subscription which could be annual, Perpetual and pay per use. [Ball \(2005\)](#) observes that the shift from ownership to leasing — from product (printed book) to (online access) — has major implication for libraries and their patrons. However, for users to have perpetual license to the collection of e-book forever which is basically on high subscription and some publishers grant such access on old editions while on annual subscription, most libraries in Nigeria are unable to maintain constant subscription which has greatly limited effective access.

c. **Acquisition:** According to [Bennett and Landoni \(2005\)](#) money influences the decision to purchase e-books for libraries, since they need to make not just “one off” purchases but continue to fund annual access fees. [Maceviciute et al \(2014\)](#) observed that it can be a very challenging task for libraries to decide how to allocate the financial resources if the new collection has to be funded from the existing library budget and how to proceed with its updating. [Vasileiou et al. \(2012a\)](#) suggest that the most important selection criteria in academic libraries are the cost of e-books, high usage, and demand by the library users, licenses, business models, platforms, interfaces, subject coverage, and match to reading lists for studies. Therefore, if e-books are to be widely used, the funding and revenue issues of the two main groups of stakeholders, i.e., librarians and academics on the one hand, and publishers and aggregators on the other, will have to be intelligently resolved ([Walters, 2013](#)). However, university librarians and library managers have to give serious thought on the library's budget before wise decision could be made on how best to manage the acquisition of e-book. [Vasileiou, Rowley and Hartley \(2012c\)](#) believe that librarians face challenges and issues with e-book management, collection development and budgeting throughout the whole e-book life-cycle in an academic library, i.e., to the point of cancellation or re-ordering of e-books.

d. **Proper management of e-book:** Many university librarians regard the multiplicity of e-book file formats as a major challenge. Wherein, Walters (2013) asserts that, it limits the cross-platform compatibility of e-books and also maintains that many formats are readable only through a particular publisher's web site or device. For example, Kindle e-books can be read only on a Kindle (Baker, 2009). Moreover, Baker also emphasizes that many file formats have been abandoned after just a few years as e-book suppliers merge or go out of business. Therefore, management of e-book is a major task for publisher and vendors to ensure standard format in its distribution. However, e-books are fast spreading, especially now that most academic institutions are adopting ICT. Although their use is not prevalent among students in academic institutions in Nigeria. The reasons for this are many: poor Internet connection, lack of proliferation of ICT tools, poor awareness, and high subscription rate of e-book to academic institutions. All these make e-book not to take their proper place in people's collections, educational institutions, libraries, and corporate offices. Therefore, academic institutions as a matter of fact, should endeavour to provide e-books for students so that, they can produce competent graduates who can compete favourably with others around the world.

## 5. OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUSTAINABILITY OF E-BOOK

E-book is a vital resource to academic growth which has greatly added value to the quality of education. Therefore, it is the paramount duty of academic institutions to ensure its availability, and also maintain stable subscription so that users can use it to the fullest. Nevertheless, institutions should ensure that there is effective Internet connection in order to promote its proper utilization. Therefore, for libraries and educational institutions, the task of ensuring that e-books are available for use is not just a marketing issue; there is also the need for effective subscription platform, stable for easy restitution and also e-books require cataloguing, integration with other library resources and easy access by users. From the study, it is obvious that those who are currently not users of e-book can still see cause to use the library as their main information resource base. Notwithstanding, it is important for e-book publishers, to provide a stable format, software and hardware, acquisition and usage models that will be easy for its potential users.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The emergence of electronic book is crucial to students' academic pursuit and achievement; in that the exponential growth of information has called for attention of publisher to provide an effective and portable means to present these resources for easy use at anywhere and anytime. However, in the past emphasis was laid on ownership of information but the emergence of e-book has greatly developed and strengthened universal access of information which has increased emphasis on access to information to all irrespective of your location, which has tremendously promoted quality in education. Therefore, academic institution should endeavour to provide and make available e-books and its resources to meet the challenging information needs of users.

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