E-books: Sciences Library users?

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Introduction
Context 2012

• ≈13,000 e-books in the Life Sciences Library at the University of Liège

• (very) low e-book consultation rates
  ▫ why?
  ▫ is it the right time to change to e-books?
  ▫ how can we improve usage?
Objectives

• to investigate usage and attitudes toward e-books
• to identify perceived obstacles to using e-books
• to identify how the library can facilitate e-book usage
Survey methodology
Online survey

- target population: students and faculty members in
  - educational sciences
  - medicine
  - psychology
  - veterinary medicine
- contacted via institutional e-mail (March 2012)
- anonymous and voluntary participation
- no incentive
Structure of the questionnaire

1. 13 questions to gain general information about
   - the respondent (gender, age, degree and faculty...)
   - information-seeking behavior
   - comfort level regarding computer use

2. Two sets of questions for users and non-users
   - Depending on their answer to the question:
     “When you consult scientific books, is it always, sometimes, or never in their electronic version?”
     - designed to identify e-book users versus non-users
Results
Results

• Response rate: 14% (1140/8032)

• Demographic distribution
  
  • 75% undergraduate and graduate students

  • 25% university staff members: researchers, fellows, faculty
Information-seeking behavior

- frequency of information needs
  - every day (32%) – at least once a week (49%)
- perceived competence in finding relevant information
  - 6.5 /10
- where?
  - Google (87%)
  - bibliographic databases (68%)
  - personal library (57%)
  - academic library (41%)
- preference for electronic journals (78%)
Comfort level regarding computer use

• electronic resources at their disposal
  • computer (100%)
  • smart phone (31%)
  • tablets (14%) and e-readers (1.7%)

• time spent per day
  • more than 2.5 hours
E-book awareness and usage

1140 respondents

86% e-book users
14% non-users

48% of non-users frequently utilized digital resources, such as e-journals
Non-users' opinions (1)

• Barriers to e-book use
  ▫ 82% discomfort of reading on screen
  ▫ 59% preference for paper
  ▫ 40% ignorance of e-book availability
    • 51% poor advertising by library of e-book availability
    • 47% difficulties in using library catalog
Non-users' opinions (2)

• Possible incitements to use e-books
  • better description of e-book content (44%)
  • information about value-added options (56%)
  • more comfortable reading (tablet or e-reader) (42%)

• Awareness of e-book advantages
  • “anytime, anywhere” (60%)
  • full-text search (58%)
E-book usage

• average consultation: once or twice a month

• preference for electronic version if available (77%)
  • however, the choice of a book depends on content, and not on format (73%)

• Mitigated satisfaction: 5.8/10
  • restricted consultation (64%)
  • eyestrain (61%)
  • difficulty of finding an e-book corresponding to needs (46%)
What future for books in academic libraries?

- Anticipated timing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coexistence of print + electronic forms</th>
<th>60%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disappearance of paper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>within 5 years</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>within 10 years</td>
<td>22%</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; 15 years</td>
<td>10%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Users' feelings

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Totally positive</th>
<th>9%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clearly against</td>
<td>27%</td>
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</table>
Discussion
Initial findings of the survey

- no obstacle to accessing e-books
  - 100% had a computer and the internet at their disposal
  - tablets, smart phones and e-readers: still infrequent but not for long

- e-book qualities appreciated by users
  - “anytime anywhere”
  - ability to search full text content

- mitigated satisfaction
Key roles for librarians

- E-book awareness
  - user education and training
  - improving e-book indexation

- Optimizing usage
  - value-added options: annotation, highlighting, hyperlinks, bookmarks, etc.

- User frustration due to prohibited access

- Changing purchase criteria
Recommendations

• coexistence of print version and e-books

• time needed for perfect integration

• acquisitions matching exact needs of all categories of end user
Perspectives

• to find ways of improving the coexistence of print books & e-books

  creating flashcodes (QR codes) that would query the catalog to find e-books available

• to preserve the physical identity of the library in a virtual world
Thank you for your attention
References

In particular


and many other interesting surveys ...