Embracing Ebooks: Acquisition and Collection Development Landscape in Philippine Academic Libraries

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Abstract

> *In the recent years, libraries are evidently expanding their embrace in adoption of ebooks. This may be attributed to the real and perceived advantages demonstrated by ebooks in terms of accessibility, functionality and cost effectiveness. Increasingly, ebooks form a growing part of the collections in academic libraries as a viable format to support the information needs of their patrons. Some libraries have adopted ebooks on a large scale while others are still tentative in their acquisitions. This study aims to examine the current status of collection build-up of ebooks in different academic libraries in Metro Manila. Specifically, it will look at the extent by which they collect and acquire ebooks as well as the issues being faced by the libraries in their efforts to build their ebook collection. This paper employs a survey method to determine the collection size, selection models, methods of acquisition, budget allocation, collection development policy and other related items. The results of the study will provide an overview of the extent of ebook adoption among the academic libraries in the Philippines. It will also serve as a basis for proposing possible solutions to common issues that confronts the libraries of today concerning integrating ebooks in the collection. Lastly, the findings may also serve as a benchmark for best practices for other libraries.*

Keywords: *Collection development (Libraries), Acquisitions (Libraries), Electronic books, Academic libraries, Philippines*

Introduction

Since 1945 when Vannevar Bush envisioned a hardware device called Memex (Bush, 1945), which developed into what we now call electronic book reader (e-reader), to Project Gutenberg by Michael Hart (Lebert, 2009) in 1971 to the launch of NetLibrary (Hane, 1999) in 1999, ebooks have emerged as a viable format to improve information discovery and delivery. Electronic books or more popularly known as ebooks is defined as "book-length works in electronic, or digital, format that are read on e-readers, smartphones, tablets, and desktop computers" (Dreeuws, 2016, para. 1). Ebooks primary strength lies in the convenience of 24/7 access from anywhere, full text functionality and portability

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(Shelburne, 2009). As such, many academic libraries became early adopters of ebooks and were provided with multiple opportunities to enhance electronic access for their students by supplementing printed book collections with e-book collections (Walton, 2012).

Increasingly, ebooks form a growing part of the collections of academic libraries (Springer, 2008). Walters (2013) reported that a simple Google search will reveal that some libraries have already adopted ebook collection on a large scale, adopting "e-first" approach, while others are still tentative in their acquisitions. This transition has been expected with reference to the success of online journals (Walters, 2013). As so aptly put by Wells and Sallenbach (2015), fundamental to this trend is the "realization that electronic online environment enables libraries to provide a much richer set of resources to a much wider audience, and to remove the barriers of space and time which applied to traditional, print-based collections" (Wells & Sallenbach, p. 169).

In the recent years, Philippine academic libraries are evidently expanding their embrace in adoption of ebooks. This may be attributed to the real and perceived advantages demonstrated by ebooks in terms of accessibility, functionality and cost effectiveness. Many publishers would also reach out to libraries to discuss trends and development in the ebook publishing industry and would offer flexible access terms or consortial deals.

This study examined the current status of collection build-up of ebooks in different academic libraries in Metro Manila. Specifically, it attempted to describe the extent by which they collect and acquire ebooks as well as the issues being faced by the libraries in their efforts to build their ebook collection. It looked into collection size, selection models, methods of acquisition, budget allocation, collection development policy and other items related to ebooks. The results of the study presented an overview of the extent of ebook adoption among the academic libraries in the Philippines. The information gathered may be helpful as a basis for proposing possible solutions to common issues that confronts the libraries of today concerning integrating ebooks in the collection. Lastly, the findings may also serve as a benchmark for best practices for other libraries.

Scope and Limitations

The ebook collections examined in this paper are confined to ebooks that are purchased and exclude open access ebooks. This research is intended to provide background knowledge of the status of ebook collection development and acquisition. It does not look into users' preferences or ebook usage. It also does not drill down to the very specific practices of individual libraries. It is not exhaustive and focuses only on the university libraries in Metro Manila where majority of universities are located.

Methodology

This paper employed survey method to determine the availability of ebooks in libraries, the collection size, acquisition models and budget allotted to acquiring ebooks. Using Google Forms, a survey questionnaire containing 9 questions was developed and sent out to university libraries across Metro Manila (see Appendix 1 for the survey questions). The options presented on questions 8 and 9 which deal the challenges and advantages of acquiring ebooks was adopted from the Springer White Paper entitled *eBooks — Costs and Benefits to Academic and Research Libraries* which was authored by Rita A. Renner in 2007.

The respondents of this study were the various university libraries in Metro Manila. The list of universities and colleges was retrieved from finduniversity.ph. Of the initial list of 138 colleges and universities, 39 of them have university status.

Aside from emails sent some respondents were also interviewed through the telephone for inquiries and follow up questions. The results are reported as descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies, mean values, and percentages.

Results and Discussions

Twenty-seven (27) universities have responded — 16 (59%) are private universities and 11 (41%) are public — which translates to 69% response rate. Majority of the responses received are from Manila (48%), Quezon City (15%) and Pasig (7%).
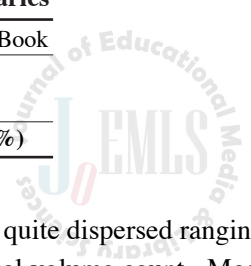
eBook Collection Development

Results show that 19 (70%) of the universities who responded already have ebooks in their collection while 8 or 30% do not have ebooks yet. Table 1 also illustrates that 14 libraries or around 74% of those with ebooks are private universities and 5 (24%) are state universities. Based on the phone interview conducted, the limited budget is often the main reason cited for not acquiring ebooks. On the other hand, one library said that they are set to purchase ebooks by 2017.

Table 1   Availability of eBooks in Libraries

type of institution	with eBook	without eBook
public	5	6
private	14	2
Total	**19 (70%)**	**8 (30%)**

a. Collection size

The number of ebook holdings among the libraries is quite dispersed ranging from less than 100 titles to more than 30,000 titles on actual volume count. Most of the libraries would still have fewer than 100 titles (37%) and followed by those with more than 100 to 500 titles of ebooks (26%). The remaining libraries already

have thousands of ebooks in their collection denoting that the growing acceptance of ebooks in the universities (see Table 2). Corollary to this, ebooks would comprise 1-5% of the collection of most libraries (47%) and less than 1% of their entire collection for 7 (36.84%) of the respondents. The remaining percentage (15.79%) said that ebooks form part of 10-20% of their entire collection already.

Table 2　Size of eBook Collection

No. of Title	No. of Institution	%
less than 100	7	37
101-500	5	26
501-1,000	1	5
1,001-2,000	2	11
2,001-3,000	0	0
3,001-4,000	1	5
4,001-5,000	1	5
5,001 and above	2	11

b. Inclusion of ebooks in the collection development policy

Since electronic book is considered a new format or medium, there is a need for libraries to revise their collection development policy to serve as guide in acquisition and selection decision as well as to include some principle that would govern ebook selection and acquisitions. While some of the basic principles for other formats still remain true and applicable to ebook, there are still various terms and new business that came with this new medium that need to be introduced and clearly stated.

In the survey conducted, results reveal that 13 (68%) of the libraries have already included ebooks in their collection development policy while 6 (32%) have yet to add ebooks in their policy.
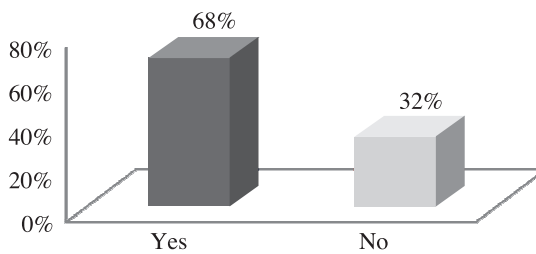

Figure 1　eBook in the Collection Development Policy

eBook Acquisitions

Among the many factors that affect ebook acquisitions (users' preference, infrastructure, access models, etc.) budget remains to be the main consideration. Depending on the license preferred, ebooks may cost more than the printed book and especially when acquired by individual title. For some, the source of fund

may be a dilemma. Will it be from the budget of "books" or from "e-resources?" The next question then would be what proportion of the budget will proceed to ebook acquisition.

a. Expenditure on eBooks

Looking at the average annual expenditures on ebooks, results showed that on average, 4.52% of the yearly budget allotted for books is spent on ebooks. This figure came from the 63% of the respondents who were able to specify the percentage of their budget that goes to ebooks. The remaining 7 (37%) however, did not give a specific amount spent on ebooks; instead they have provided their budget for all their electronic resources. This made it difficult to ascertain the amount they may have spent on ebooks on an annual basis.

In addition, the results also reveal that the average annual expenditure on ebooks ranges from Php50,000 to 500,000. This is true for the 58% of respondents while there is one library who a slightly ahead than the others posting an average annual expenditure of more than Php1M on their ebooks. Although they are a relatively small part of a library's budget, ebooks are being adopted by librarians, providing an alternative source of information to end users.

b. Acquisition models

Nowadays, librarians are actively engage in reviewing and evaluating ebook offerings. Several acquisition models are offered by ebook publishers or aggregators, each one has its own advantages. Exploring the right model for the library can be challenging.

Basically, ebooks can be selected or acquired as individual titles or as package. Respondents have shown strong preference for the Pick-and-Choose model (42%). Also, there is a significant number (47%) that uses a combination of Pick-and-Choose and By Collection/Packages. In addition, there are libraries that were able to acquire ebooks solely opting the By Collection/Packages or DDA or PDA (see Figure 2).
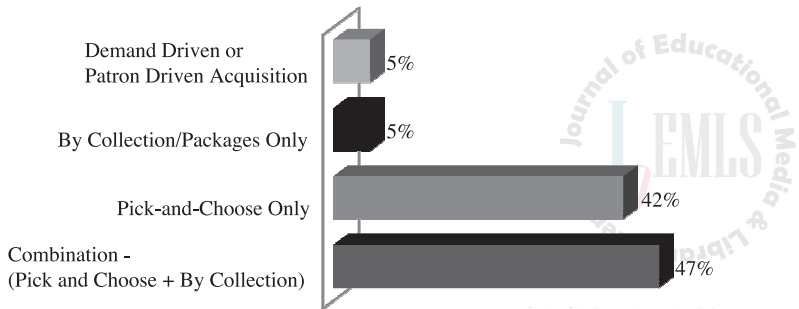

Figure 2 eBook Acquisition Models Used

Pick-and-Choose or title-by-title is popular because this model means libraries only get what they "want" or "need' as opposed to getting more unwanted titles when choosing ebook packages. Also, selecting individual title usually grants libraries perpetual access to the title much like buying a print book. Patron Driven Acquisition on the other hand, allows patron to select book for the library without staff mediation and has a potential to increase the use of academic ebooks.

c. Access and licensing

Unlike print books, ebooks are leased. Publishers and vendors offer three kinds of ebook leases: annual access, perpetual access and pay per use (Walters, 2013). For annual access, library pays a fee to access books for a year and this can be renewed each year. A one-time fee is required for "perpetual access" while on "pay per use," library pays on titles that have been access or pages that have been viewed.

Figure 3 illustrates that the perpetual access model is the one preferred by 13 or 68% of the libraries. Some (21%) have acquired their ebooks by opting the annual access and 11% currently have ebooks which are purchased on either perpetual or annual access.
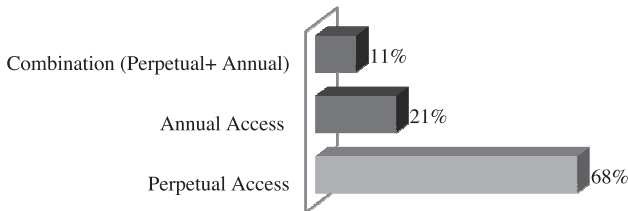

Figure 3   eBook Access and Licence Used

d. Consortial purchasing of eBooks

The role of consortia in acquiring ebooks is evidently growing in importance. It plays a bigger part in development, acquisition and integration of digital scholarly communications in academic institutions (Horava, 2013). Consortia intend to bring added value to any contract in terms of improved pricing, better contract terms and simpler business relationships for libraries (Lowe & Aldana, 2015).

In the Philippines where financial resources are always limited, the participation in consortial license agreements when purchasing ebooks, or e-resources for that matter, is already being practiced by several consortia. This gives the advantage of purchasing resources at a reduced price while having broader access to more titles for members of the consortium.

A positive progress is evident on the survey results as it shows that 4 libraries equivalent to 21% have already participated in consortial deals for

purchasing ebooks. In contrast, 15 or 79% still have not. Despite the benefits, consortial licensing tends to be a bit complicated because some publishers, aggregators or vendors impose greater restrictions on sharing ebooks (Lippincott et al., 2012). Walters (2013) also stressed out that the difficulties of leasing ebooks are multiplied when consortia, rather than individual libraries, handle licensing and payment.

Advantages and Challenges on eBook Acquisitions

Undoubtedly, ebook offers several unique benefits to libraries and their users. It allows "24/7 access, simultaneous user access, wider selection, and immediate updates, while libraries also benefit from back-end efficiencies, such as a lack of storage requirements, reduced maintenance costs, and reduced staffing time for physical handling and processing of print books" (Renner, 2007, p. 2).

Among the top 5 reasons why libraries provide ebooks are: 1) Enhanced user access (100%); 2) Space savings (95%); 3) Cost and time savings (57%); 4) Access to more content (52%); and 5) Greater security, reduced book loss/ damage (43%). This result somehow mirrors the report of Renner (2007, p. 4) in Springer's white paper on ebooks cost and benefits where "enhanced user access, enhanced functionality, and access to greater amounts of content areas all scored highly as areas in which ebooks provided clear advantages over print publications to all participants."
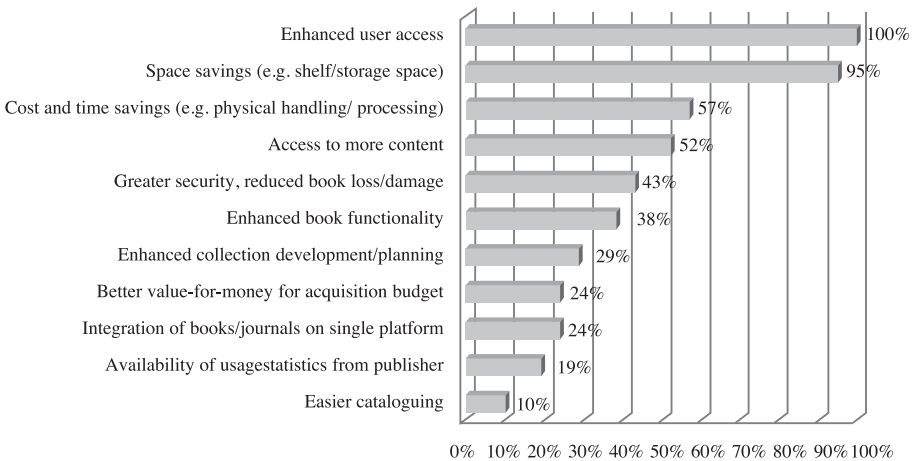

Figure 4   Reasons for Acquiring eBook

Despite the promising benefits of the adoption of ebooks, libraries who are building their ebook collection are also facing several challenges that come with it such as: business models offered by publishers, DRM, delays in the release of ebooks, price and absence of archiving rights.

In the survey, respondents were asked to select the top 5 factors that from

their experience became a deterrent or challenge in acquiring ebooks. As shown in Figure 5, all respondents have said that Cost (100%) is the top concern. Other issues belonging to the top 4 are: Requires good internet connection (84%), Restrictive license provision (79%); Annual recurring payments (74%); and, lastly Requires ebook reader software & varying file formats (e.g., epub, pdf, xml, etc.) (47%).
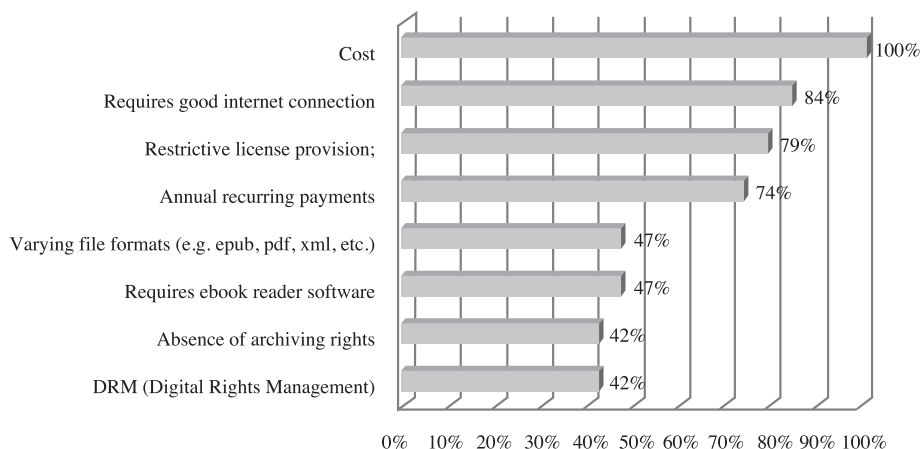

Figure 5   Challenges to eBook Acquisitions

Strong internet connection is definitely necessary to be able to make electronic resources such as ebooks accessible. In the Philippines, this is a common dilemma that most libraries have no control of. On the other hand, restrictive license provision is also a concern. Of the three types of ebook licenses -- annual access, perpetual access, and pay per use -- only perpetual access model supports the principle of sustainable access. However, some publishers may still require platform fees aside from the one-time payment for the content. The other two access type will require a recurring payment from libraries and failure to do so will mean loss of access. Another issue is that many ebooks packages allow suppliers to remove titles from the database without notifying the licensee. This becomes a problem because this hinders them in providing reliable, long-term access to the individual titles within the collection (Walters, 2013).

In terms of format, there is no standard format for ebooks and many formats are readable only through a particular publisher's website or device. The common ebook formats are epub, pdf, html. Epub file standard was established by International Digital Publishing Forum in 2007 to address the issue on content transfer to other systems. However, it still does not ensure consistency in the presentation of text. A file format may be readable on many different platforms but it will not necessarily look the same on each one.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Libraries in the Philippines, specifically in Metro Manila, are apparently beginning to supplement their print holdings with ebooks. The size of collection varies from a minimal number for most to a larger scale (thousands of volumes) for few libraries. This is expected to gradually increase in the following years. Collection development policies still need to be updated for majority of the libraries to reflect the principles applicable to ebook selection, acquisition and evaluation.

In terms of acquisition, a small percentage of the library budget is already being spent on and allotted to ebooks. Libraries have indicated a strong preference for perpetual access for licence options and pick-and-choose model for selecting titles. Some have also opted for subscription based access to ebooks which has advantages of its own. In the case of consortial purchasing, this strategy still has to be explored for many libraries while a few others have already ventured this type of deal.

Clearly, ebooks provide libraries with many benefits but along with this, come many challenges as well. Enhanced user access, space, cost and time savings, greater security, cost and access to greater content are among the many advantages that motivate libraries to purchase ebooks. On the other hand, cost, restrictive license provisions, lack of standard file format and the necessity for additional devices and infrastructures are considered as the main challenges to integrating this format in the collection.

Provision of ebooks is becoming a trend for academic libraries which is an ideal opportunity to enhance the current collection as well as the users' research experience. However, future research to determine the perspective and level of acceptance among the end users is recommended. Lastly, since there are varying factors to consider in ebook acquisitions, there is a need for libraries to establish a clear collection development strategy to guide them in their decision making process.

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Appendix. eBooks in Philippine Academic Libraries Questionnaire

eBooks in Philippine Academic Libraries

* Required

Name of Institution *

Your answer

Type of Institution *

○ Public

○ Private

1. Approximately, how many ebooks (purchased) does your library currently have? *

Your answer

2. Approximately, what percentage of your collection are ebooks? *

Your answer

3. Approximately, how much is your average annual expenditure for ebooks? *

Your answer

4. Please select the acquisition models that your Library have used when purchasing ebooks. *

☐ Pick-and-Choose Only

☐ By Collection/Packages Onlly

☐ Combination - (some are acquired by Pick and Choose and some are By Collection)

☐ Demand Driven or Patron Driven Acquisition

☐ Other:

5. Which access models have you chosen when you purchased your ebooks? *

☐ Annual Access (Subscription-based)

☐ Perpetual Access

☐ Combination (i.e., some are purchased on subscription bases and some on perpetual access basis)

☐ Other:

6. Has your Library participated in any consortial purchase of ebooks? *

○ Yes

○ No

7. Is ebook acquisition part of your collection development policy? *

○ Yes

○ No

8. Which of the following factors do you consider are challenges to ebook acquisitions? Please select your top 5.

☐ Cost

☐ Restrictive license provision

☐ Varying file formats (e.g. epub, pdf, xml, etc)

☐ DRM (Digital Rights Management)

☐ Annual recurring payments

☐ Absence of archiving rights

☐ Requires ebook reader software

☐ Requires good internet connection

9. What are your reasons for acquiring ebooks. Please select your top 5. *

☐ Enhanced user access

☐ Enhanced book functionality

☐ Access to more content

☐ Integration of books/journals on single platform

☐ Greater security, reduced book loss/damage

☐ Space savings (e.g. shelf/ storage space)

☐ Better value-for-money for acquisition budget

☐ Cost and time savings (e.g. physical handling/ processing)

☐ Availability of usage statistics from publisher

☐ Easier cataloguing

☐ Enhanced collection development/planning

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