

CARLI E-Book Survey - Executive Summary

The CARLI E-Books Survey was conducted by the E-Resources Working Group in February and March 2009 order to better understand members' opinions and experiences: what content and features they think are important, how they are managing e-books in their collections, and their plans for e-books over the next few years. Ninety one detailed survey responses from 68 member libraries were made, of which this is a summary.

Respondents by Institutional Type

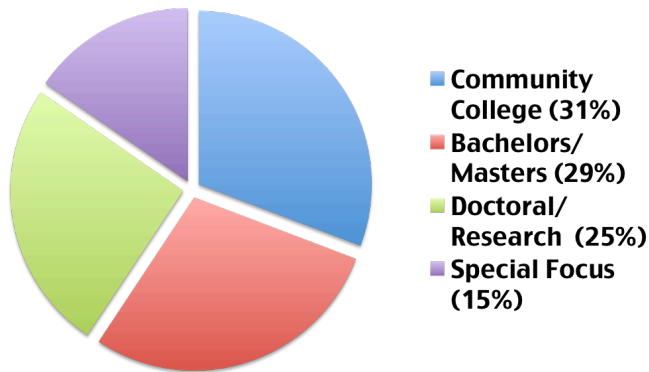


Figure 1

91 respondents, 31% community colleges/associate-degree granting institutions; 29% bachelors & masters degree granting institutions; 25% doctoral granting/research institutions; 15% special focus libraries.

Results

We received 91 responses from 68 member libraries with a mix of library types and sizes (Fig 1.)

When asked which *scholarly*, non-reference e-books their libraries have purchased in collections (i.e., by group, not title-by-title) 82 responses named fourteen e-book collections (Table 1). To a subsequent question asking about current vendors of *e-reference books* showed that libraries are purchasing 91% of *reference* e-books from only four vendors: Gale Reference, Credo Reference, Oxford Reference and SAGE E-Reference. (Table 2)

When asked about desirable features, a significant majority of respondents wanted multiple concurrent users; I-Share resource sharing; and the ability to download and print substantial amounts of the materials. Many listed desirable interface features: interactivity and attractive design; personalization features; advanced search functions; title-level MARC records; and openURL compliance. Issues about contents were also raised: how current e-reference books should be; whether illustrations were available; how other content such as dictionaries are integrated.

When asked how many e-books have been purchased *title by title* in the last 2-3 years, 45 respondents bought fewer than 20 titles, 7 respondents bought 20-50 titles; just 4 respondents bought 50-100 titles ala carte.

When asked what e-book collections have been *considered and not purchased* and *why*, librarians perceived two significant drawbacks: that e-books were too expensive or a luxury instead of a necessity; and DRM limitations on access by multiple simultaneous users. The specific comments are a valuable source of information about unacceptable features (Table 3. E-book collections *not purchased* and *reasons given*.)

In 68 responses, the average rankings indicated librarians are only somewhat satisfied with e-book usage (2.64 out of a possible 5) and slightly more satisfied (3.05) with format and contents of the e-books in their collections.

Next the survey asked about subject areas ranking by interest. Areas of greatest interest were medicine, education, sciences, psychology, computer sciences & IT, biology, social sciences, business, chemistry, history, literature, sociology & social work, environmental studies, political science & international studies, religion, and nursing & allied health. In addition, librarians indicated that they are substantially more interested in frontlist titles and collections in subject areas than in backlist titles.

In answering a question about preferred pricing models, most respondents asked for subsidized or consortial reduced prices for e-book collections. Several comments indicated that their acceptance of pricing would depend greatly on the type of content.

The question of when the libraries are likely to acquire new e-book collections indicated they anticipate waiting for 2-3 or 4-5 years. In comments, librarians said they are waiting for hand-held readers to catch on; for funds to be available and for better products to become available in the market. Many librarians are cautious about purchasing e-book collections until e-books are clearly accepted by users and offered on good terms by publishers. However, if libraries were considering e-book purchases now, they clearly preferred front-list titles and multiple concurrent users. (Q. 14).

The survey found that libraries expect a variety of discoverability features. They significantly expected to have title-level MARC records readily available. Platform dependent features necessary to enable libraries to integrate e-books into discovery tools were mentioned: openURL for title-level links; XML for RSS; and search engine compatibility with Google Scholar, federated searching, and research guides.

When asked "Is it an issue if an e-book requires a specific hardware device to use?" most responded yes. Respondents clearly disliked the costs and labor to purchase and maintain devices, as well as technical barriers if patrons are required to use them. Librarians expect the e-books to be able to be viewed or downloaded to a laptop or PC, or all handheld readers. Very few librarians would purchase e-books with DRM prohibiting use on a wide variety of devices. The e-book reader is still unaffordable and relatively uncommon.

A significant minority (38%) of libraries are considering purchasing e-textbooks, and there were several who identified themselves as biomedical libraries. However, the majority reported no interest in e-textbooks, with some comments citing a deficiency of e-textbooks on the market; and the libraries' need for more e-reference books.

Lastly, respondents gave detailed responses about what their libraries wish to do with e-books and what CARLI can do to help: Leadership in using Google books; e-book collective pricing and brokering; I-Share resource sharing; and gathering expertise in marketing, cataloging, management of collections; and usage studies.

Conclusions

Our survey's major findings indicated

- that librarians would consider DRM limitations on access and contents to be unacceptable;
- that the e-book marketplace has not yet matured to the point of title-by-title selection;
- A majority are interested in acquiring e-books in the next 2 to 5 years,

- They will prefer front-list collections in reference and several subject areas, especially medical and nursing.
- Talking about their current collections, a majority of librarians were only somewhat satisfied with the usage and contents of e-books.

In addition, we have gained new knowledge of what kinds of help our members are looking for from CARLI. Shortly after the survey, CARLI sponsored an educational e-books symposium open to all members which presented the big picture of e-books. Participants discussed many details of publishing, usage, hand-held devices and innovative cataloging and acquisition practices. The survey responses will give guidance to CARLI's future efforts around e-books.

Table 1. Scholarly (non-reference) e-book products licensed or purchased as collections

Title of E-Book Collections	No. of Libraries
NetLibrary	44
Ebrary	11
Safari Tech Books	9
Springer E-books	4
ACLS Humanities E-books	4
Oxford Scholarship Online	3
Books@Ovid	3
Wiley Interscience E-books	2
SourceOECD E-books	2
Books 24/7	1
MyiLibrary	1
Knovel E-books	1
Royal Society of Chemistry E-books	1
Synthesis Engineering & Computer Science E-books	1

Table 2. Reference E-Books Currently Purchased/Licensed

Product	No. of Libraries
Gale Virtual Reference Library	35
Credo Reference	27
Oxford Reference	27
SAGE E-reference	17
ScienceDirect reference works	3
Wiley Online reference	3
Books@Ovid	2
STAT!Ref	2
MD Consult	2
NetLibrary	2
ABC-CLIO/ Greenwood	2
Brill encyclopedias of religion	1
McGraw-Hill	1
Routledge	1
Salem Press	1

Table 3. E-Books Collections Considered but NOT Purchased

No. of Responses	Collection	Reasons Given
8	Oxford Scholarship Online/Oxford Digital Reference/Oxford Reference Online	Too expensive; poor interface; incomplete frontlist; relevance of contents
8	NetLibrary	Too expensive; single concurrent user; quality and relevance of contents; complicated check-out process; lack of portability; patrons dislike reading books on a computer screen.
4	Safari Tech Books	Too expensive; swap in/out too complicated
3	Credo Reference	Low usage; poor interface; relevance of contents
3	SAGE E-Reference	Too expensive; poor interface; relevance of contents; patrons haven't shown interest in e-books and print was already owned.
3	Springer E-books	Collection too big or broad; Too expensive; patrons haven't shown interest in e-books
3	Ebrary	Relevance of contents
2	Rittenhouse R2 Library	Single concurrent user; high platform fee; missing images
2	ScienceDirect E-books	Too expensive
2	Wiley E-Books	Too expensive; ongoing fees
1	Gale LCO	Too expensive to purchase; ongoing fees
1	STAT!Ref	Missing images; low concurrency model
1	Books@Ovid	Too expensive
1	NursingConsult E-books	Too expensive
1	Access Emergency Medicine	Too expensive
1	Greenwood Press	Platform; storage/server; too expensive
1	Wiley	Too expensive
1	Gale Virtual Reference Library	Too expensive; patrons haven't shown interest in e-books and print was already owned.