E-readers: devices for passionate leisure readers or an empowering scholarly resource?

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Overview

- Introduction: e-books and e-readers (UC perspective)
- Loughborough University study: using Kindles, iRiver Story, Sony Touch, iPad with:
  - e-books on reading lists
  - PDFs
  - Inter-library loans
  - Newspapers
  - Teaching support
- Conclusion

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Introduction

- Leisure reading: in 2011 e-book sales outstripped paperback sales at Amazon  
  Source: Business Insider 19/05/2011
- Scholarly journals: e-journals predominate...
- ...but e-books used as a scholarly resource is a more complex landscape...

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“I have worked with e-books (downloadable from the library and purchased from Kindle). Let me put this as plainly as possible: they are completely unsatisfactory to work with for those of us in the humanities…”

(Faculty, Arts & Humanities, University of California, 2011)
Convenience

“An e-book, if it meant that I could have it without going to the library, or having to recall it from circulation.”

(Postdoctoral Researcher, Physical Sciences, University of California, 2011)
24/7 availability of e-books
“E-books are a convenience to see if I need that book. Once I have figured out that I do indeed need the book, I either go purchase it or borrow it from the library.”

(Undergraduate, Life & Health Sciences, University of California, 2011)
“Prefer paper format, which allows me to write on the pages (only in my books, of course; not the library copies!) and use a highliter pen to make notes, etc.”

(Graduate Student, Arts & Humanities, University of California, 2011)
“I prefer electronic, as long as I am able to annotate and comment the copy.”

(Graduate Student, Social Sciences, University of California, 2011)
"I think e-books reduce the amount of search needed by the students or researchers. A benefit not available via hard copies."

(Graduate Student, Business or Law, University of California, 2011)
“Not enough of the current edition textbooks are available in electronic format in our library”

(CIBER, UK, 2009)
"I answered that I prefer print books, generally. However, the better answer would be that print books are better in some situations, while e-books are better in others...."

(Graduate Student, Humanities, Social Sciences, University of California, 2011)
“[The ebook] is significantly more restrictive. It limits where and when I can work as PC access is required

(Student, JISC focus group, UK)
Could e-readers help?

- E-ink technology
- Portability of mobile devices
- Can store large number of texts
- Fast, 24/7 access to material
- Word searchable
- Some annotation features
- Devices becoming commonplace
Low cost, small scale study
6 devices purchased
Background To Loughborough study

- North Carolina State University, USA
  Lending Kindles for leisure reading, Sony readers for classics, Kindle DX for newspapers

- University of Newcastle, UK
  Lending Sony Readers for use with pdfs

- Loughborough College, UK
  Lending iPads for searching databases (e.g. Mintel) within the Library

- No Shelf Required… Princeton University etc.
E-Readers: features for scholarly use

- **Tools for academic use** – highlighting, notes, bookmarks
- **Navigation** – search features, page numbering system, jump to page
- **Reading on the device** – screen orientation, font sizes, zoom features, reading PDFs
- **Downloading content** – wifi, buying books, free content, PDFs, formats supported
- **Battery life and charging**

Photo by Joe Hsu (My sight, as You see) taken from Flickr, used under cc licence
E-books on reading lists

- LU study: downloaded EBL content to Sony Reader and iRiver Story
  - 9 step process
  - too laborious
  - Download only available for limited period (1 day)
- UC trial used BlueFire app on iPad much easier
- Download available 1-4 days
Digital Rights Management

PDF → ePUB

Unversity of Canterbury
Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha
Christchurch New Zealand
Can’t adjust font size on Kindle, Sony Reader and iRiver Story

More readable on larger screens (Kindle DX and iPad)
British Library
inter library loans

- Downloading Secure Electronic Delivery (SED) inter-library loans
  - Technically possible
  - Just too hard
  - Not robust
Newspapers

- Used on iPad
- Only some newspapers available as apps
- *The Times* pay subscription was most satisfactory
- Potentially an expensive way of lending newspapers
Lending Kindles to students on a Shakespeare Page to Stage module

If all the world’s a stage...

...why don’t I get better lighting?
How do you rate the success of the project?

- “Well, we found out that for some academic purposes the choice of editions of a literary text really is crucial, and that because Kindle doesn't have the very best editions the Kindle is no good for this kind of class. It may well be that other modules (mine and others') are less highly sensitive to choice of edition and hence that Kindles are suitable for those classes. I consider this a significant find that makes the project a success as an exploration of the issue”.

- Dr Gabriel Egan, Reader in Shakespeare Studies, Loughborough University
What we learned

- Digital Rights Management severely restricts the ability of academic libraries to lend e-readers with pre-installed content.
- Developed library staff expertise in the use of and support for e-readers (e.g. how to reference an e-book read on a Kindle)
Conclusion

- iPad offers promise for some scholarly uses
- Other e-readers may offer a good leisure reading experience but are not an empowering scholarly resource just yet

Photo from Flickr by Veronica Belmont – iPad used under cc license
Thank you for listening

Questions and Comments

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Bibliography (3 of 3)

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