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Selection and acquisition of e-books in Irish Institutes of Technology libraries: a study

Wanda Carin and Lucy A. Tedd

Abstract

Purpose: To report on a study of the acquisition of e-books in libraries in Institutes of Technology (ITs) in Ireland undertaken in 2009.

Methodology: Websites of the libraries of the 15 ITs were studied and this was followed by telephone interviews, using a structured set of questions, with the acquisition librarians. Details are provided of the e-book suppliers used, reasons for acquiring (and not acquiring) e-books, links with Virtual Learning Environments and methods of promotion.

Findings: Librarians from 12 of the 15 ITs agreed to be interviewed giving a response rate of 80%. The ITs are using e-books from a wide variety of suppliers and teaching staff in the ITs had little, if any, involvement in the selection of e-book titles. Staff in the libraries find that business models for the acquisition of e-books cause difficulties. Most of the IT libraries were investigating a consortial arrangement for e-book acquisition. Better liaison with lecturers and improved promotion of e-books is necessary.

Originality: A baseline study of acquisition of e-books in one sector of a country.

Keywords: E-books, Acquisition, Ireland, Institutes of Technology.

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Background

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Libraries can use e-books to build their collections while saving on storage space, and e-books can be beneficial for learning and teaching. Bennett and Landoni (2005), in a project funded by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) in the UK in 2003 found that “e-books could help to solve some of the challenges currently facing further and higher education, including a burgeoning student population, a changing student profile, the advent of MLEs (Managed Learning Environments) and VLEs (Virtual Learning Environments), and students’ lack of funds for purchasing texts”. At Auburn University in Montgomery, Alabama, USA, Hightower *et al.* (2008) found that librarians needed to be proactive in encouraging faculty to incorporate library resources, including e-books, into a VLE. Beard and Dale (2008) discuss how VLEs were introduced in Bournemouth University and how they provide links to e-books amongst other resources. Library staff at the University of Worcester have set as a prerequisite for purchasing e-books that they would need to be accessible

via the catalogue and reading lists in order to ensure use (Taylor, 2007). Taylor-Roe (2006) reported that at Newcastle University library, “increasingly, the availability of e-versions of core textbooks will become one of the important selection criteria for inclusion on reading lists”. The goal in both cases is to ensure usage justifies the costs involved in acquiring e-books. Cox (2004) reported that a project of the Conference of Heads of Irish Universities to support the acquisition of e-books in business and computing had “yielded encouraging results for academic libraries” and that these libraries had acquired and adapted to using e-book collections and plan to continue progress towards a hybrid of e- and print books.

This paper reports the results of a study, which was carried out for a masters dissertation, regarding the acquisition of e-books in Institutes of Technology (ITs) in Ireland. There are 15 ITs and these cover courses with similar subjects and course texts to the universities in Ireland, and yet, to date, only some have acquired e-books to support these subjects. This study aimed to consult with acquisition librarians in the ITs to investigate the issues affecting their acquisition of e-books.

Part-time and distance learners are common variations on the ‘traditional’ student populations of the ITs in Ireland. The student numbers at the ITs vary, with Dublin Institute of Technology having many more students than the others – over 20,000. Many of the ITs also have more than one campus and/or library site. For instance, Dublin IT has seven campuses and seven libraries, Galway-Mayo IT has five campuses and two libraries, the ITs in Carlow and Tipperary both have three campuses and one library, Tralee IT has two campuses and two libraries and the Limerick and Letterkenny ITs both have two campuses and two libraries.

Methodology

The websites of the 15 ITs were searched during December 2008 – February 2009 to determine:

- whether e-books were advertised or promoted and how;
- whether the e-books were searchable on the OPAC;
- the number of different library sites at each IT;
- the makeup of the student body and so on.

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A disadvantage in gathering information from public web pages is that their design varies. IT librarians may or may not have much input into how their websites look and/or operate, therefore information may not be presented exactly as the library would like. Websites are also updated regularly and do not leave documentation of previous web pages. Historical information leading to acquisition of e-books, or any other earlier planning for that matter, is invisible and needed to be discovered by interviewing the persons involved.

It was decided that structured interviews were the best approach to ascertain what influence lecturers had on acquiring e-books. Restricting the group to be questioned to acquisitions librarians was thought to allow more in-depth questioning. An interview protocol was established so that the interviews would be conducted in a consistent manner. This consisted of the following steps:

- E-mails sent to prospective interviewees describing the research question and requesting time for an interview.
- Interviews arranged to be conducted by telephone due to time constraints and distances to the interviewees.
- A pilot list of 12 questions was initially compiled and trialled with one of the librarians in the library of Dublin IT. This was pared down to a core of six questions.
- A standard list of six 'essential' questions was used for all respondents, and further questions were added to the list based on individual circumstances or on the answers given in the interview.
- Responses to interview questions were recorded by hand-written notes.
- Further questions or clarifications were later obtained via further e-mails if necessary.
- Summaries of the interview responses were typed up.

The interviews were carried out in the period March -July 2009. **Results**

Response rate

Twelve of the 15 ITs (i.e. 80%) responded to a request to participate in this survey. The three libraries which did not respond (Blanchardstown IT, Cork IT and Waterford IT) did not have information on their websites relating to e-books.

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Of the 12 responding ITs, those that did not presently have e-books in their collection were hoping to acquire them in the future, or had had them previously but for various reasons had discontinued them.

Funding for e-books

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When asked which funds were used to acquire e-books, the following responses were received:

- The ITs at Dundalk, Carlow and Dublin IT Business Library had e-books which were considered to be supplemental to the print book collections (i.e. they had multiple copies of print books as well as e-books of high demand books) and so used the general book fund to pay for the e-books.
- The ITs at Athlone, Dundalk, Galway-Mayo, Dun Laoghaire, Sligo and Limerick all used electronic resource funding to acquire e-books.
- Tralee IT had previously used the library database budget to fund e-book subscriptions, but that funding had recently been changed to the book budget.

Where e-books were looked at as an e-resource separate from the print collection, the source of funding generally reflected this, being from the e-resources budget. Single e-book purchases were not usually made due to e-book business models allowing only collections/packages to be acquired.

Where the budget for e-books came from was not of great concern to the librarians interviewed. Their concern was that the funding allocated was considered low in either case.

Free e-book URLs included in library web pages

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Four IT libraries, Athlone, Carlow, Dundalk and Galway-Mayo included links to the URLs of free e-book web pages at the time the research was being carried out. Two main reasons were given for including these links on the library websites:

- A desire to make as many information resources as possible available via the library web pages.
- Increasing awareness of existence of e-books as an information resource.

The goal of the libraries was to get users used to e-books as information sources so that e-books that were acquired by the library may be more likely to be utilised.

E-book suppliers

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The suppliers of e-books used by respondents are given below. A brief description of the offerings from the e-book suppliers at the time of the interviews is given in the Appendix.

Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) – Dun Laoghaire

Biz-Ed – under consideration at Athlone and Tallaght

Dawsonera – under consideration at Dundalk and Limerick

Ebrary – Sligo and Limerick

Encyclopedia Britannica – Athlone, Dublin, Galway-Mayo and Tipperary

Gale Publications – Athlone

Knovel – Dublin

MyiLibrary/Coutts – Dublin (and used previously at Tipperary)

NetLibrary – Dundalk (and used previously at Dublin but now discontinued)

Oxford Reference Library – Dublin and Galway-Mayo

Safari Books Online – Dundalk, Galway-Mayo, Dun Laoghaire (as part of ACM),

Tralee and also under consideration at Letterkenny, Carlow, Sligo, Tallaght and

Tipperary had previously subscribed to this supplier.

Springer-Verlag – under consideration at Galway-Mayo

Stat!Ref – under consideration at Letterkenny.

Some of the comments and observations given by librarians interviewed in regards to e-book suppliers are given below.

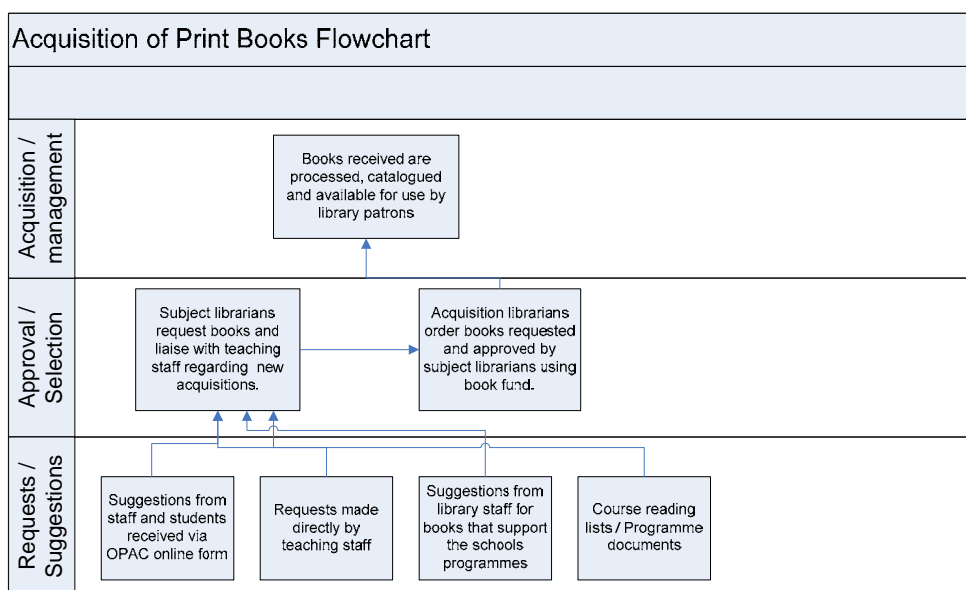
- **Ebrary:** The IT at Sligo switched to this supplier, based on feedback received after trials of different companies after dropping its subscription to Safari and now has access to 3500 Ebrary e-books. The main reasons for using Ebrary are similar to those given by Limerick IT – unlimited concurrent users and a multidisciplinary range for books.
- **Gale Publications:** Athlone IT's subscription includes encyclopaedias of science, business, history and biography but its website does not include a link to Gale Virtual Reference in its e-book listings, but rather in its databases section, despite being mentioned as an e-book source in interview.
- **Knovel** is subscribed to by the Bolton Street branch of Dublin IT as a source of engineering e-books.

- **MyiLibrary /Coutts:** Dublin IT's subscription costs are shared by two (the science library and the business library) of its seven library sites. Tipperary IT library had purchased e-books via MyiLibrary in the past but discontinued its subscription due to perceived high costs when compared to the usage of the e-books in question. The library still owns the books, but they are no longer updated as they would be if the service was ongoing.
- **NetLibrary.** Dublin IT purchased books from NetLibrary a few years ago as a 'once-off' purchase and chose not to subscribe on an ongoing basis since the funding for the e-books at the time not expected to continue. The 164 e-books purchased are still in the catalogue but they are not updated as they would be with an ongoing subscription.
- **Safari Books Online:** Lecturers at Dun Laoghaire IT were initially unhappy with the low number of concurrent users allowed for Safari e-books available via their ACM subscription – but have now accepted this. The IT at Dundalk is maintaining its subscription to Safari, but has found recently that use of the collection is decreasing and so has decreased the number of e-books in the collection. The reason for the drop-off in use is unknown by library staff as promotion has been ongoing. Funds saved in reducing the Safari collection are used to fund e-books from another supplier (NetLibrary), so the e-book collection as a whole is not decreasing. Galway-Mayo IT is unusual in that its Safari e-book collection is restricted to use by the students of only one of its five campuses. Lecturers at Tralee IT are happy with the e-book collection but unhappy with the low level of concurrent users allowed, but the library has said that it cannot afford an increase in those numbers at present. Letterkenny IT is still researching e-books but is most interested in Safari as a supplier as it likes the fact that books can be removed and replaced by different e-books at any time. The IT at Sligo subscribed to Safari originally on the suggestion of its institution's computer department. However, once it was acquired, it was not used very much at all and the subscription was discontinued. The ITs at Tallaght and Carlow had ordered Safari e-books on their own initiative, and lecturers were enthusiastic about the e-books at first. Lecturers were unhappy though that the subscription did not allow for concurrent users and so they did not actually use the e-book collection.

Generally in the IT libraries, many different parties could request books to be ordered by the library and head (or acquisitions) librarians approved the orders which were purchased with a book fund. Requests for e-books were extremely rare, and could not always be acted upon due to restrictions of e-books packages. The following figures (Figures 1 and 2) illustrate the differing acquisition processes for print and e-books.

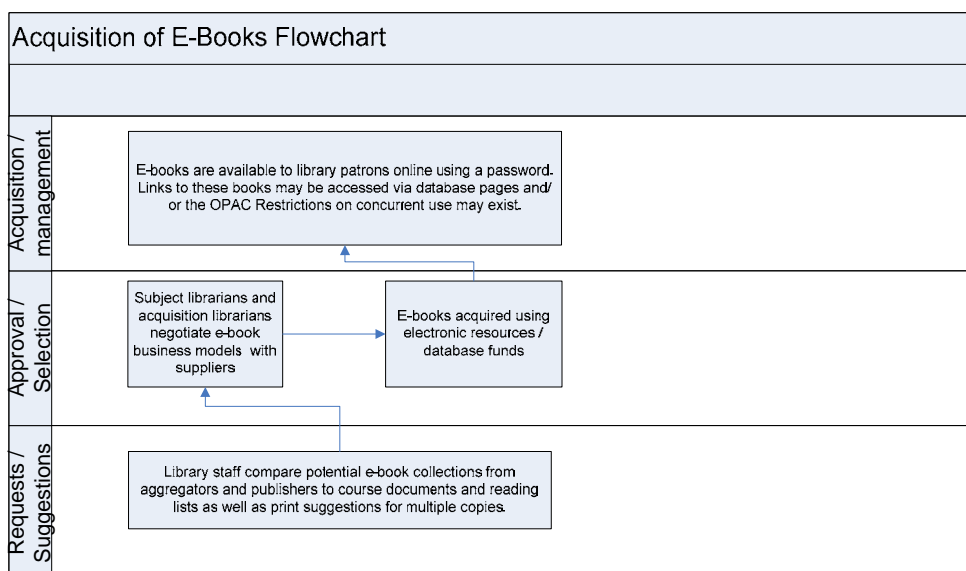
Take in Figure 1

Figure 1: Acquisition of print books flowchart



Take in Figure 2

Figure 2. Acquisition of e-books flowchart



Despite a variety of ways of requesting print books, none of the librarians interviewed had found that e-books had been requested using these methods. A few librarians mentioned that they did not think individual e-book requests could actually be made due to restrictions on the e-books ‘packages’ that needed to be acquired. Staff at Dublin IT mentioned that its subscription to NetLibrary did not allow individual e-books to be added one at a time, but only as a bulk annual request. Tralee IT also keeps its print and e-book orders separate since single e-books cannot be ordered, but only a minimum order of multiple e-books on subscription. In Dun Laoghaire IT , the e-books package it receives is part of its ACM subscription and so not amendable. In Galway-Mayo IT one computer science lecturer monitors the Safari collection and changes the content periodically. Carlow and Letterkenny ITs can only order electronic resources of their own volition whereas print books are ordered on request of lecturers. In this way, subject librarians may order e-books even where lecturers do not.

Reasons given for acquiring e-books

The reasons given for acquiring e-books in the IT libraries were provided by six respondents:

- extend access to resources to off-campus users/distance learners (Athlone, Dundalk)
- supplement print book collections to improve access to essential texts (Athlone, Dublin and Carlow)
- combination of making high-demand items more available with saving money and space (Athlone, Dublin, Carlow)

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- help departments with school review (Dublin)
- supply as wide a variety of resources to all students as possible wherever/whenever (Limerick)
- to support a specific course (Athlone, Dublin, Dundalk, Galway-Mayo)

Reasons given for not acquiring e-books

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The reasons given for not acquiring e-books in the IT libraries were:

- costs involved in acquisition/maintenance of the e-book collection (Dun Laoghaire, Galway-Mayo, Tallaght, Tralee, Letterkenny, Tipperary)
- users have access to e-books elsewhere already (Tipperary)
- perception of low demand for e-books (Galway-Mayo, Tallaght, Tipperary)
- lack of manpower to expand collection (Galway-Mayo)
- e-books previously acquired went unused (Tallaght, Tipperary)
- inability to find a suitable e-book business model/package.

Problems with e-book acquisitions

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Issues mentioned by respondents regarding the problems influencing acquisition of e-books included:

- There is often a mismatch between print book requests and e-book versions available so either one book or another must be ordered. The librarians had to liaise with lecturers to find a compromise in the options available (Athlone, Dublin, Dundalk, Tallaght).
- Lack of trial subscriptions made available by suppliers/publishers to help in determining the best packages for their schools and getting feedback from users (Athlone).
- Lack of content related to Ireland in e-book collections available (Dublin, Galway-Mayo, Carlow and Tralee).
- Technical difficulties (Sligo).
- Lack of flexibility of e-book business models (Galway-Mayo and Tralee).
- Staff required to research, run trials, catalogue e-books etc. (Galway-Mayo and Tallaght).
- Interface problems (Tallaght).

Virtual Learning Environments, the library and e-books

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A variety of VLEs were in use in the ITs in Ireland.

Blackboard – Carlow and Letterkenny

Edusoft – Athlone

Moodle – Dundalk, Galway-Mayo, Sligo, Tallaght, Limerick and Tipperary

WebCT – Dublin, Dun Laoghaire and Tralee

As VLEs become common in tertiary education, links to library electronic resources directly from teaching material could become more common as well. Direct links to e-books could in theory connect with VLEs and so promote their use. IT librarians were asked if they were involved in linking the library to their ITs online courses in this way, but none were. Only information regarding information literacy (IL) has been actively added where libraries did have access to the VLEs. For instance, Galway-Mayo IT library has an IL skills module set up in Moodle, Letterkenny IT library liaises with lecturers to add IL elements to Blackboard, and Dublin and Tralee libraries are involved in WebCT courses in terms of IL. Carlow IT library indicated that it is unable to access the Blackboard VLE in use at the IT as lecturers and information technology staff are in charge of it. Tipperary IT library does not interact with lecturers regarding Moodle, but does have its own section where it can potentially link e-books. Mostly this is used to promote the library and the library blog. Limerick IT library is exceptional in that its staff actively recommend that lecturers link e-books and other e-resources into Moodle content. As a result, many Limerick lecturers do use e-books in their VLEs.

E-books – target audience

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Computing is the subject most supported by e-books in the IT libraries (Dublin, Dun Laoghaire, Galway-Mayo and Limerick), followed by nursing (Athlone and Dundalk) and science/engineering (Dublin and Limerick), with only Limerick IT actively supporting a multidisciplinary e-book collection. Libraries considering acquiring or expanding their e-book collections are looking mostly to multi-disciplinary collections (Athlone, Dublin, Dundalk, Carlow and Sligo) and business e-book collections (Dublin, Dundalk and Tallaght). However, nursing (Letterkenny) and science/engineering (Athlone and Tallaght) were also mentioned. Libraries which have had success with e-books in one subject area hope to expand into other subjects, whilst libraries without e-books are considering more diverse collections to ensure use.

Most of the Irish ITs except Dublin (excluded due to size of student population), Dun Laoghaire (excluded due to more specialised subjects) and Sligo, are in the process of compiling a list of their most popular textbooks with the aim of determining whether or not these could be acquired by the ITs as a group purchase/subscription and so acquire a multidisciplinary collection. The top 100 highest use items in any discipline are being looked at for online purchase. Dundalk IT's librarian is co-ordinating this investigation.

Promotion of e-books

The following methods for e-book promotion were given, along with, in some cases, comments given by the responding librarians.

- Inclusion in library induction tours/demonstrations and information literacy classes (Dundalk, Dublin, Tralee, and Limerick).
- Addition of links to free e-books on library website (Athlone, Carlow, Dundalk and Galway-Mayo). The idea was put forward that if users like the free e-books found on the library website, they will request and use paid-for e-books. The librarians felt that users need to get used to e-books first before money is spent on them.
- E-books links on library web pages (Athlone, Dublin, Dundalk, Sligo, Tralee and Limerick). Dundalk IT indicated that it included a number of links to the e-books section on the website besides the OPAC to ensure the e-books are found even if users are searching in the 'wrong' place.
- E-books catalogued in the library OPACs (Carlow, Dublin, Dun Laoghaire, Carlow, Tralee, Limerick and Dundalk).
- Poster campaign (Carlow and Limerick).
- E-mails to stakeholders (Dublin, Carlow, Tralee and Limerick).
- Subject librarians promote e-books to academics personally (Dundalk, Dublin, Tralee and Limerick). In Dublin e-books have been promoted on a strictly local basis, where the science librarian e-mailed science faculty directly or handed out fliers locally, with the business librarian doing likewise in her faculty.
- Blogs (Dublin). Staff at the Kevin St., Aungier St. and Bolton St. branches posted messages on their individual library blogs promoting e-book sites relevant to their faculty.
- Newsletters (Limerick).
- Inclusion of e-books in general e-resources promotion (Limerick).

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Reading lists

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Librarians were asked whether course reading lists were included in library web pages or were online elsewhere in the IT's web pages. It was thought that if reading lists were available online and any e-books were contained in them, they could be immediately accessible via hyperlinks. Several libraries (Dun Laoghaire, Galway-Mayo, Letterkenny and Tipperary) did not have reading lists available online. Other libraries expressed concern about difficulties in receiving up-to-date course documents from lecturers in any form – paper or electronic. Carlow IT had all its reading lists available online via the library website – others had some – either on the library website or elsewhere on the institution website.

Discussion

Based on the results of interviews, it seems lecturers in Irish ITs have not influenced the selection, acquisition and management of e-books except in an indirect way. Librarians interviewed indicated that they are considering/using e-books to support their schools' courses, which increasingly include online elements, while also increasing their book collection generally. E-books selected have been chosen based on course documents and students' needs, but not on actual lecturer requests. Continued lack of lecturer demand post-acquisition has occasionally meant the discontinuation of e-books. The factors slowing the uptake of e-books seem to be this lack of lecturer demand combined with difficulties in finding appropriate e-book business models.

Confusion over whether e-books are books or databases has led to problems in the selection and acquisition of e-books. Publishers and suppliers may use business models similar to those for e-journals which may not be appropriate for e-books. As Ball (2009) states:

“stakeholders in the publishing and library industries still tend to use the terminology and administrative classifications of the print era. This can lead to misunderstandings, to difficulties for publishers and libraries in finding suitable business models, to ambiguities in managing e-resources in libraries, and to absent or inappropriate systems for their administration.” (p18.)

Not only is this confusing for libraries, but lecturers may also not understand what e-books are, and this may contribute to their not being requested along with printed books. If librarians liaised more with lecturers about e-books, more requests and use could be possible. Safari allows books to be switched during the year, so an unsuccessful book can be replaced, or, as in Galway-Mayo IT, lecturers can amend

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the e-books available to suit coursework as the academic year progresses. Such involvement may stimulate use of e-books by lecturers, if not requests to acquire them.

As Ball (2009) discusses, finding suitable business models for the acquisition of e-books by academic libraries is still causing difficulties for librarians. This was found with the Irish ITs as well, where much of the difficulty encountered by the acquisitions librarians interviewed had to do with matching the requirements of their stakeholders with the e-book packages offered by suppliers. Packages offered by the various e-book suppliers/publishers do not, the librarians feel, have the right mix of material to attract funds from the stagnant book budgets of some of the smaller IT libraries. In the smaller IT libraries, library staff have yet to be convinced that acquiring e-books is worth the trouble and ‘people effort’ involved when they have to compromise instead of acquiring what their users actually require. Again, as Ball (2009) mentions:

“the e-book market is an imperfect one that is still evolving; products and markets are changing rapidly, there is a lack of technical standards, and there are no structures or standards for sales and distribution models...Almost no provider offers a simple, straightforward model; starting from pure licensing and ranging up to purchasing or consortial acquisition, all conceivable models that are available”. [p 19.]

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Acquisitions librarians, such as those at Galway-Mayo IT and in Tipperary have decided to wait until those standards arrive, or at least until they are offered a business model that suits their needs. Munro and Philips (2008) found similar opinions in interviews with librarians in Australian universities.

Most of the IT libraries were investigating a consortial arrangement for selecting and acquiring e-books that could make e-books packages more affordable and flexible for them, as such an approach had been successfully adopted by universities in Ireland. IT librarians did express doubts about their ability to negotiate a package due to a strong demand for content related to Ireland in the books, and were concerned that consortia may not be able to influence how packages are arranged by e-book suppliers. The experience at Bournemouth University (BU) library in the UK, which joined with four other universities to create a consortium to negotiate for an e-book business model was that “the most depressing aspect of the

tender was that ... general aggregators tended to mimic hard-copy business models very closely, allowing only single concurrent user access, or a fixed number of accesses each year. The electronic medium is ignored and many of its benefits lost under such restrictive models, which do not match the requirements of the modern university student for flexibility and immediacy of access”(Ball, 2006).

As in [Bournemouth University](#), a major concern discussed by acquisition librarians here was that their lecturers were unhappy with concurrent usage limits. Tallaght IT found that its computer lecturers wanted up to 30 concurrent users in order to use the e-books in a classroom setting. Many libraries could not afford the multiple user price packages that teaching staff expected. This is not unusual, as reported by Soules (2009). Better promotion and training in the use of e-books as well as liaising with teaching staff about the benefits and limits of digital collections, as is done in Dun Laoghaire IT, could alleviate complaints from lecturers about lack of concurrent access for class use and also promote usage.

Many of the ITs studied have distance or off-campus learners and/or multiple campuses (Dublin, Galway-Mayo and Carlow for example), as well as multiple library sites, all of which have motivated the libraries to consider e-books in order to improve access. Additionally, all the ITs studied have VLE technology in place and so the potential exists to increase the use of e-books by having them integrated into VLEs. However, the IT librarians indicated that generally they were not involved with lecturers in this way, though some had access to VLEs to teach information literacy. The IT libraries are not alone as Hightower *et al.* (2008) studied collaboration between libraries and instructors in terms of embedding library resources in WebCT courses and concluded that the number of faculty providing links to library material in their VLEs was very small.

Besides including links to references in VLEs, IT libraries which had their e-books catalogued seemed satisfied that this was adequate as anyone searching for a title on the OPAC would find them. Libraries that have their e-book collection available via their catalogue have tended to have better uptake of e-books. Training in how to find e-books is crucial for their promotion. The various libraries were as varied in their promotion as they were in their selection of suppliers of e-books. It appears from the interviews that e-book promotion needs to be ongoing and via a number of routes. Limerick IT indicated that its promotion was intensive and the uptake of e-books was increased as a result. In some IT libraries (Dundalk, Dublin

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and Limerick) IL instruction is an important promotional tool. However, if students are taught how to find e-books, but receive no recommendations from their teachers, will they still be used? Promotion would need to be directed to all stakeholders in order to maximise use. Lonsdale and Armstrong (2010) outline lessons learned regarding the promotion of e-books based on the JISC's National e-Book Observatory and these could be useful within the Irish IT context.

In a survey of academic collection development librarians and faculty regarding the transition to an increasingly electronic academic environment, Schonfeld and Guthrie (2007) found that e-books had had only a mixed impact to date and that "Only a minority of faculty members use e-books (16% reporting often or occasional use, and 36% reporting rare use)". As found in interviews with acquisition librarians in the Irish ITs, they also found that librarians were more enthusiastic than lecturers in the use of e-books. Another example of librarians deciding to acquire e-books, not faculty, was in India's Indira Gandhi University where "librarians decided to reach the unreached distance learners, as far as possible, through electronic collections by subscribing to e-journals, e-databases, and e-books (Tripathi and Jeevan, 2008) .

With library budgets stagnating or decreasing in real terms, libraries such those as in Athlone, Dublin and Carlow ITs are considering e-books as a solution to balancing their need to acquire multiple copies of many books with the struggle to find physical space for these duplicate books. Furthermore e-books may assist in avoiding duplication between multiple sites. Despite this potential, the Irish ITs which have already acquired e-books have indicated that they consider these as supplemental to print books and do not look to e-books to reduce multiple print copies.

The IT libraries have had success in finding e-books to support courses mostly in computing, science/engineering and nursing. Nursing has been successful due to the off-campus nature of the coursework, Computing e-books are successful because more are available, and are less country-specific.

Costs are very important in deterring IT libraries from venturing further into e-books. Despite potential savings e-books could provide in shelf space, as well as avoiding the necessity of multiple copies, many IT libraries feel they do not have the resources or manpower to change their collections when they are unsure e-books will actually be used. As Tripathi and Jeevan say, "Many questions reside in the hearts of

library administrators and users about the returns accrued from the effort and the costs committed in electronic books.” (2008, p. 113) At present this is a vicious circle, with librarians with limited budgets not wanting to acquire e-books until there is demand from lecturers, and lecturers not requesting e-books because they are unfamiliar with them. The idea of adding free e-book links to library websites is a result of this conundrum. Librarians hope that these will drum up interest but it should be recognised that libraries are competing for the attention of stakeholders with Google and other resources available freely on the Internet As Limerick IT found, ongoing consideration of e-books did not bring in users; taking the plunge and acquiring a collection and promoting it widely did.

As the supply of published e-books increases and suppliers become more competitive, and the demand the libraries are waiting for materialises, librarians are more likely to expand their collections in the future (Vassiliou and Rowley, 2008)

Conclusion

It was found that in general teaching staff in the ITs had little, if any, involvement in the selection and management of e-books in the ITs libraries. It was surprising to find that lecturers’ suggestions/requests were a strong element in determining what print books the libraries ordered, but not in e-books acquisition. This may be in part due to lack of awareness of or that lecturers are not yet accustomed to e-books. In either case, promotion by library staff would appear to be necessary to involve lecturers in using e-books. If librarians liaised with lecturers more about how e-books can be used and possible benefits to their teaching, especially for online instruction, more requests and use are possible. Furthermore, in the case of the subscription business model, liaising with lecturers could alleviate qualms they may have relating to the terms for concurrent use which is different in nature from e-journals.

Librarians want to order e-books, despite lack of requests from lecturers, anticipating a near future where students are used to receiving most of their information online, as well as one where storage space for print books is at a premium. Students of today may not be familiar with e-books, or may not recognise them as e-books despite having perhaps found information in e-books while searching online resources. With the increasing popularity of personal e-book devices such as the Amazon Kindle in homes and schools however, it is anticipated that within a few years IT students will be well used to e-books from their use within secondary schools.

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In the meantime, Irish IT libraries will be busy trying to find business models they can afford which give them the content and flexibility their users expect. Better liaison with lecturers and promotion of e-books is required. Further study into what teaching staff want from e-books collections in relation to coursework may assist in getting them used in courses in the future.

Note: This work is the result of research carried out by Wanda Carin for her dissertation for a Masters degree in Information and Library Studies at Aberystwyth University, Wales.

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Appendix. Brief descriptions are given of the e-book suppliers and the products offered at the time of this research

Association for Computer Machinery (ACM) -<http://www.acm.org/>. The ACM Online Books Program includes 600 selections of computing and technical books from Safari Books Online. When libraries subscribe to the ACM database, they also receive as part of their subscription access to these 600 Safari e-books. A premium package is also available which offers e-books from Books24x7 in addition to the Safari items.

BizEd - <http://www.bized.co.uk/premier/> . BizEd, from Thomson Learning publishers, is an e-book supplier specialising in business books for the UK market. It contains 26 leading textbooks in business and economics

Dawsonera.com - <http://www.dawsonera.com/> . Dawsonera is a web-based collection of 90,000 e-books from 185 publishers run by Dawson Books. The

Dawsonera software allows libraries to purchase, access, manage and 'lend' e-books to users.

Ebrary - <http://www.ebrary.com/corp/> . Ebrary is a private company headquartered in California which is partnered with 350+ publishers and has about 50,000 academic e-book titles.. Ebrary offers subscription packages as well as options to purchase e-books, allows unlimited concurrent users, and provides free MARC records for cataloguing..

Encyclopaedia Britannica Academic Edition -<http://www.britannica.com/> This service offers subscribers access to the Encyclopaedia Britannica as well as the Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary and Thesaurus, magazines and periodicals.

Gale Publications - <http://www.gale.cengage.com/gvrl/about.htm>. Gale Publications offer the Gale Virtual Reference Library by subscription and offer reference print titles in e-book form covering 3200 e-reference books from a variety of subjects.

Knovel - <http://www.knovel.com/web/portal/home>. Knovel is an online technical/engineering reference collection, that is subscription based and offers access to approximately 2,000 reference works and databases from over 40 international publishers and professional societies.

MyiLibrary / Coutts - <http://www.myilibrary.com/>. MyiLibrary is the Coutts e-book hosting platform with more than 190,000 e-book titles, in a range of subjects. E-books may be purchased outright (with an annual hosting fee) or subscribed to annually. MyiLibrary also supplies MARC records.

NetLibrary - <http://www.netlibrary.com/>. NetLibrary's catalogue consists of more than 190,000 titles from hundreds of global publishers. Netlibrary is primarily a source for computing, trade and business books but is expanding its collection to include social sciences and fiction books. E-books may be purchased outright or subscribed to annually, and MARC records **are available**.

Oxford Reference Library - <http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/GLOBAL.html>. This service is offered on a subscription basis and provides access to 175+ reference titles published by Oxford University Press such as dictionaries, language reference, encyclopaedias, and subject reference works, as well as titles in the Oxford Companions series.

Safari Books Online - <http://www.safaribooksonline.com/Corporate/Index/>.

Safari offers e-book collections on an annual subscription basis and specialises in technology, creative, business and management books from over 50 different publishers. MARC records can be supplied..

Springer-Verlag - <http://www.springer.com/e-content/ebooks?SGWID=0-40791-0-0-0>. Springer-Verlag provides access to over 30,000 e-books and operates using an ownership business model, and also makes MARC records available. .

Stat!Ref - <http://www.thomsonhenry.co.uk/statref.html>. Stat!Ref , from e-books on a subscription basis from a variety of publishers and medical societies.