

E-BOOK UPTAKE IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN  
IRELAND - AN OVERVIEW  
- SURVEY REPORT  
BY

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A heartfelt thanks to the ANLTC Committee for awarding me the 2009 Library Assistant Bursary and, thereby, providing me with the opportunity to carry out this research.

Finally, thank you to all the staff at the CONUL-member libraries and the Northern Ireland university libraries, who gave so generously of their time to complete my survey and answer any follow-up queries.

## Introduction

This report describes and analyses the results of a research project on e-book uptake in CONUL and Northern Ireland libraries. As many university libraries in Ireland are currently investigating the varying available options for developing e-book collections for the different subject areas, it was considered an opportune time to carry out this research, with particular emphasis on the purchasing/vendor models and marketing strategies available.

As the e-book market is dynamic and constantly evolving, there is a built-in obsolescence to the data in this report, which relate to a particular time period, January-April 2010. However, the findings are significant as they provide an overview of e-book usage at this particular time, and their integration into academic library collections with some challenges highlighted, particularly those associated with platform hosting and vendors.

CONUL-member libraries comprise the following:

- Dublin City University
- Dublin Institute of Technology
- National Library of Ireland
- National Library of Ireland, Galway
- National Library of Ireland, Maynooth
- Royal College of Surgeons
- Royal Irish Academy
- Trinity College Dublin
- University College, Cork
- University College, Dublin
- University of Limerick

Although it was not originally the intention to elicit feedback from Northern Ireland university libraries, on the suggestion of the judging panel, they were included in order to obtain an inclusive view of e-book usage in university libraries in Ireland. The Northern Ireland university libraries were Queen's University, Belfast, (QUB) and the University of Ulster (UU).

The research proposal was the winner of the 2009 Library Assistant Bursary and funded by The Academic and National Library Training Co-operative (ANLTC).

## Methodology

In July/August 2009, prior to commencement of the work on the research proposal, desk bound research was used to obtain an overview of e-book presence on university library websites in Ireland. This revealed a varied e-book picture with some libraries having e-books linked directly from the library catalogue home page, whilst other libraries had e-books embedded within the library catalogue. Numerous e-book vendors and aggregators were also noted.

The methodology was mainly a quantitative data collection approach in the form of an online e-mail questionnaire which was distributed in January 2010, to thirteen academic libraries in Ireland – including eleven CONUL-member libraries and QUB and UU. The questionnaire was compiled using Vovici survey software. For the purposes of validity and reliability, the questionnaire was piloted in the home library and recommended minor changes carried out for clarification. Comprehensive data was gathered from the online questionnaires rendering it unnecessary to make on site visits to university libraries as outlined in the original research proposal. Follow-up queries, via e-mail and telephone calls, were made for clarification regarding questionnaire responses, where necessary.

## Procedure

In November, 2009, an introductory e-mail was forwarded to the Acquisition's Librarians of participating CONUL-member libraries, inviting participation in the research and requesting the name of a designated contact person to which the questionnaire should be forwarded. Confidentiality was assured. The introductory e-mails, with follow-on telephone calls explaining the purpose and context of the proposed research, were sent to QUB and UU in January 2010.

The online questionnaire, in the form of a survey link, was made available via the following link [www.vovici.com](http://www.vovici.com). It was e-mailed in late January 2010 to Acquisition's Librarians, with responsibility for e-books in the academic libraries and re-sent with a reminder e-mail in late March 2010.

## Context of the Research

In August/September 2009, at the time of writing the research proposal, sparse literature was available on e-book diffusion in the university libraries in Ireland. The purpose of the research was, therefore, to fill a knowledge gap and gain a snapshot view of e-book usage in university libraries, specifically CONUL-member libraries and QUB and UU university libraries in Northern Ireland. The research is divided into three sections with objectives outlined as follows:



**Section 1:** To assess the current e-book market;



**Section 2:** To gain an overview of the aggregator and publisher platforms/vendors;



**Section 3:** To assess the marketing channels used to promote e-books.

For the purposes of the research, an e-book is defined as being specifically web-based without any hardware or software required.

## Results

The response rate was high and is outlined as follows:

- 81 % - 9 out of 11 CONUL-member libraries
- 100 % - 2 Northern Ireland university libraries

### Total response

- 85% - 11 academic libraries in Ireland

- ✚ There was one non-response to the questionnaire from a CONUL-member library.
- ✚ Another CONUL-member library did not complete the Questionnaire indicating the survey was not relevant to their activities

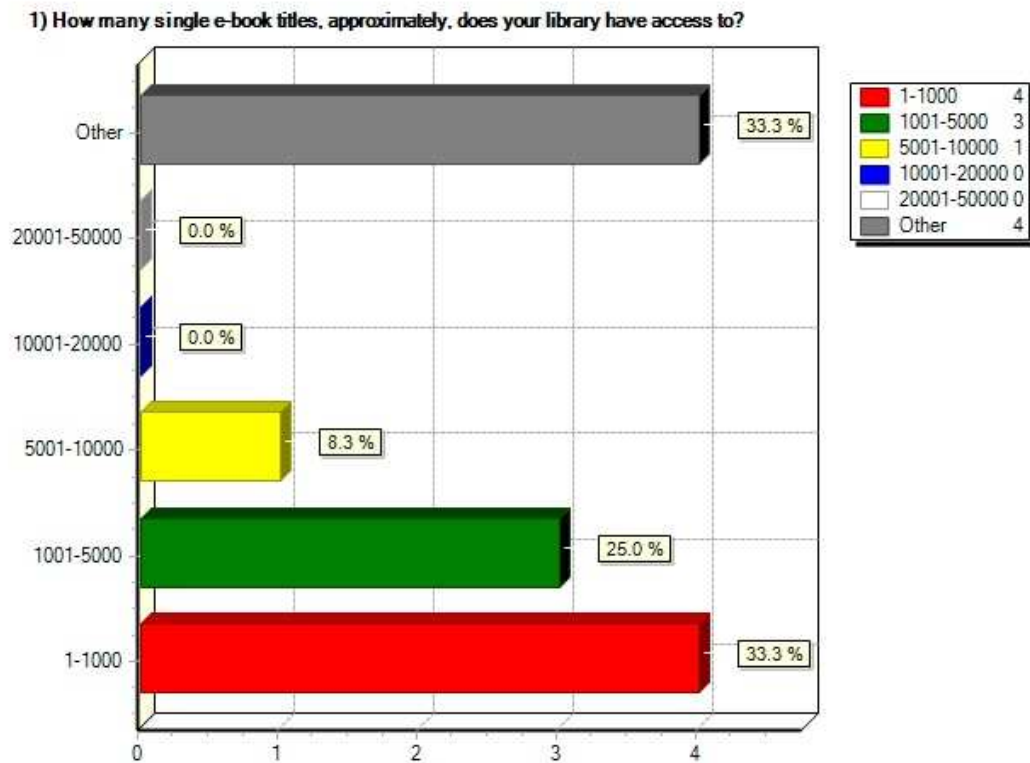
## Key Findings

- e-Books represented less than 10% of academic library collections in CONUL and Northern Ireland libraries with the exception of one CONUL-member library, where e-Books represented 25% approximately of their library collections.
- e-Books represent less than 10% of total book expenditure in **all** of the respondent libraries.
- Print book expenditure averages 85%-96% of total book expenditure in **all** of the respondent libraries.
- The majority of responses indicated a preference for purchasing single e-book titles.
- In the majority of CONUL-member libraries, Science and Technology represents the largest subject area for e-book titles followed by Literature, Arts and Humanities. The largest subject area for e-book titles in Northern Ireland university libraries is Literature Arts and Humanities in Library A and Engineering in Library B.
- The majority indicated that they do not add course text e-books to Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) with 4 CONUL-member libraries and one Northern Ireland Library being proactive in linking e-books to course management software.
- CONUL and Northern Ireland libraries considered library catalogue integration, the most popular means of finding e-books, followed closely by positioning of the e-book link on the library website.
- The results reveal a wide range of vendor and access models in CONUL-member and Northern Ireland libraries with varying licensing and business models.
- The majority of respondents in CONUL and Northern Ireland libraries found the multiple platforms hosting e-books, with their varying licensing and usage restrictions, complex.
- The response from 6 CONUL-member libraries (54%) was “yes” to generating COUNTER Statistics. One Northern Ireland university replied in the affirmative.

SECTION ONE - This section gives an overview of e-book market diffusion in participating libraries.

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**Question 1: How many single e-book titles does your library have access to?**



- 1-1000 = 4 CONUL libraries. Two CONUL libraries specified “about 100 single e-book titles” and “less than 200 e-books titles.”
- 1001-5000 = 2 CONUL libraries + Northern Ireland university library, hereinafter, referred to as Library A
- 5000-10000 = Northern Ireland library, hereto referred to Library B.
- 400,000 = (“Other”) – CONUL library

**Question 1: How many single e-book titles does your library have access to? cont.**

Regarding “other” in the analysis - one library indicated “none” in reply to the question and another presented \*EEBO and \*ECCO e-bundle figures of “around 300,000”.

(\*EEBO = Early English Books Online; ECCO = Eighteenth Century Collections Online)

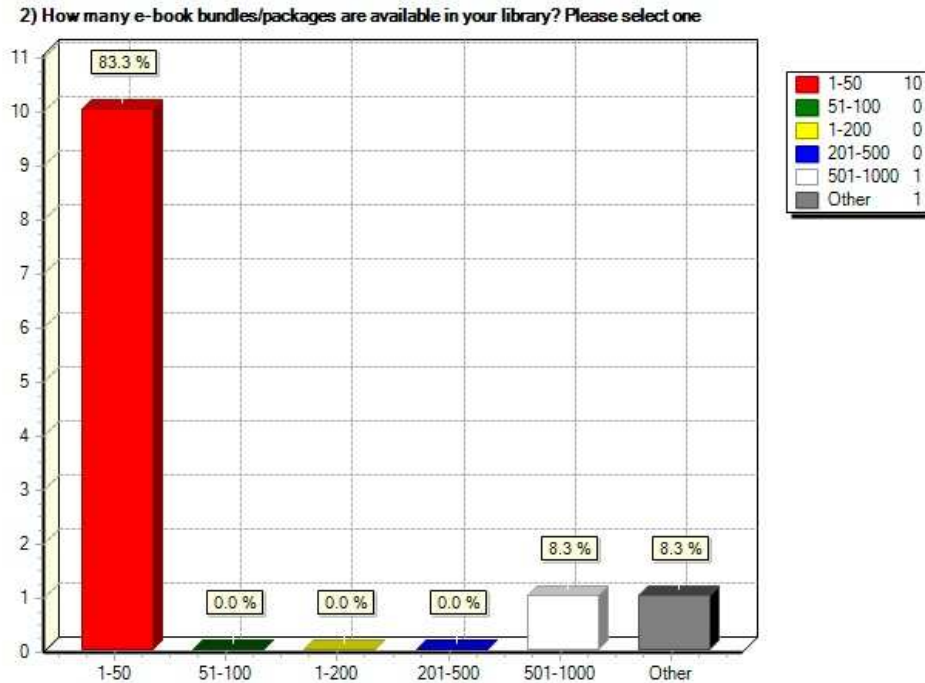
**Other Responses:**

<i>“none</i>
<i>Approx. 400,000</i>
<i>I guess around 300,000</i>
<i>EEBO and ECCO”</i>

**Verbatim Comment Responses:**

<i>“about 100</i>
<i>Currently we probably have less than 200 e- books which we purchased as single titles. However, we have purchased several bundles in the last year with 50 or more titles and IReL gives us access to thousands of e-books</i>
<i>I include EEBO and ECCO in this figure.</i>
<i>If EBBO, ECCO titles included then total = 266,000</i>
<i>aside from EEBO and ECCO we have about 1,000 e-book titles.”</i>

## Question 2: How many e-book bundles/packages are available in your library?



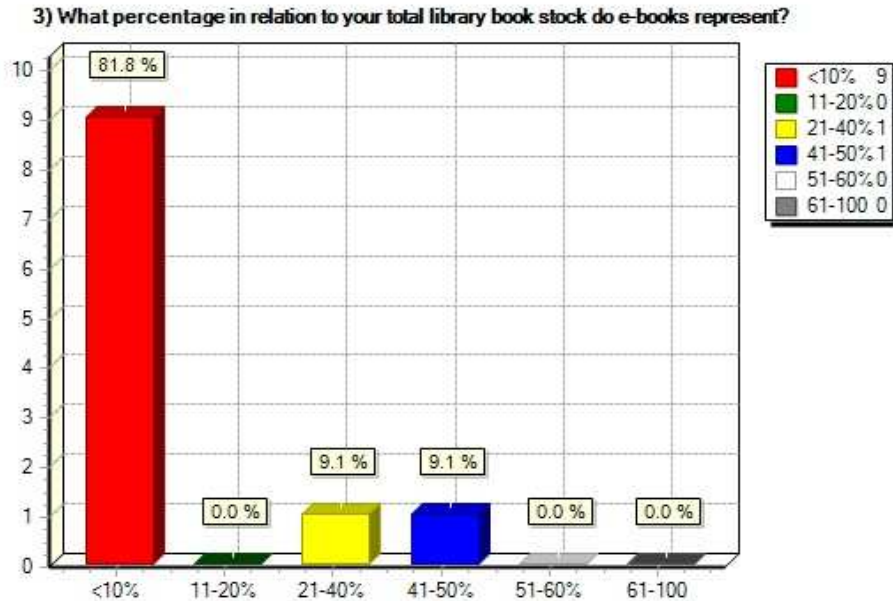
- The majority response for CONUL libraries indicated 1-50 e-book bundles with one library specifying 501- 1000 e-book bundles and one non-reply.
- Both libraries in Northern Ireland specified 1-50 e-book bundles in their replies.

### Verbatim Comment Responses:

*“2 packages*

*It's difficult to say for certain as we are just getting to grips with managing e books. However we have purchased several in the last year and IReL supplies us with 1000s of bundles.”*

### Question 3 What percentage in relation to library stock do e-books represent?



- With the exception of one CONUL–member library, where e-Books represented 25% approx. of library stock, in **all** surveyed libraries including the Northern Ireland libraries, e-books represented less than 10% of total library stock. In one academic library, “less than 1%” is the usage figure for e-books.

\* The figure 41-50% includes EEBO and ECCO e-book collections.

\* Please note the results are slightly distorted by the inclusion of EEBO and ECCO figures.

#### Verbatim Comment Responses:

<i>“Actually less than 1%”</i>
<i>&lt;10% individual 41-50% for bundles e.g. EBBO, ECCO</i>
<i>Approx. 25%</i>
<i>We would hope to increase this percentage and definitely interest from the academic community has picked up. We would hope to provide e access to every book held in our desk reserve collection as we only allow a maximum of 10 copies for hard items</i>
<i>Again I use EEBO and ECCO here</i>
<i>Total library stock is over 4 million due to legal deposit.”</i>

**Questions 4 - 9: To gain an overview of e-book usage over a 3-month period, could you provide the following information: total number of e-book accesses and turnaways for October 09/November 09/December 09?**

The response rate to the questions on e-book accesses and turnaways\* for September, October and November 2009 was low at 36% in CONUL libraries.

### CONUL-MEMBER LIBRARIES

<u>ACCESSES</u>	<u>OCTOBER 09</u>	<u>NOVEMBER 09</u>	<u>DECEMBER 09</u>
Lib 1	520	466	296
Lib 2	2,287	3,711	2,942
Lib 3	16,000	15,000	8,000
Lib 4	235	549	501
Table 1a			
<u>TURNAWAYS</u>			
Lib 1	0	0	0
Lib 2	0	0	0
Lib 3	0	0	0
Lib 4	1	4	3
Table 1b			

- 4 out of 11 (36%) CONUL libraries provided data, specifying the reasons for not providing e-access figures as being “to difficult to give exact figures on stats questions” or “only have usage data on a yearly basis for 2009 - not on monthly basis”

\*Turnaways are the frequency with which a user is denied access generally due to the maximum number of allowed concurrent sessions in use. (Cox, 2007, p 194).

### Questions 4-9 Cont.

The objective of these questions was to establish usage for e-books at the beginning of the 2009 academic year. Course text e-book usage tends to be seasonal, frequently varying more than 50% month-on-month, linking specifically with the academic calendar. (JISC e-Book Observatory Project Executive Summary, 2009, V. 1.1, p. 1)

- Where e-books represented 25% of its library stock, e-book usage was high in Library 3, at 16,000, 15,000, and 8,000, respectively for the months of October, November and December 09.
- The pattern of usage in two CONUL-member libraries was higher in October than the November period. As may be viewed from **Table 1a** above, Library 1 had 520 accesses in October, falling by 54 accesses in November. Library 3 had 16,000 accesses in October falling by 1,000 accesses in November to 15,000. Within an academic year, November is generally viewed as a peak period for book usage, in preparation for Christmas semester examinations. Therefore, expectations of higher e-book accesses for November would be considered a normal trend for pattern usage rather than the October period. Perhaps, these figures of higher e-book accesses in October are indicative of students starting preparatory research work earlier and exploring available academic content.
- Regarding 'Turnaways' as presented in **Table 1b**, in three replies from CONUL-member libraries, there were zero turnaways, with Library 4 having 1, 4, and 3 for October, November, and December 09 respectively. A possible reason for "turnaways" is over demand of core texts with licensing restrictions on limited simultaneous access for multiple users.

**Questions 4-9 Cont.**

Northern Ireland university library e-book accesses and turnaways figures for October, November, December 2009, are as follows:

**NORTHERN IRELAND**

<u>ACCESSES</u>	<u>OCTOBER 09</u>	<u>NOVEMBER 09</u>	<u>DECEMBER 09</u>
Lib A	14,433	16,543	15,980
Lib B	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>NORTHERN IRELAND</b>			
<u>TURNAWAYS</u>	<u>OCTOBER 09</u>	<u>NOVEMBER 09</u>	<u>DECEMBER 09</u>
Lib A	1	10	14
Lib B	n/a	n/a	n/a

- The usage figures for e-book are high with turnaways of 1, 10 and 14 for the October, November, December 2009, respectively for Library A in Northern Ireland.

**Verbatim Comment Responses:**

*"I don't have usage data on a monthly basis only a yearly basis for 2009.*

*It would be too difficult to give exact figures for any of the above questions. I would say that ebook usage is high, we endeavour to have as much simultaneous usage as possible to avoid turnaways.*

*Regarding usage statistics - we will be gathering 2009 stats in April so cannot supply these now."*

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**Question 10: What percentage of overall book expenditure do e-books represent?**
**CONUL Libraries**

Lib 1	5%
Lib 2	<i>“Unable to calculate, given no of titles purchased on one off basis”</i>
Lib 3	8%
Lib 4	9%
Lib 5	<i>“.....in terms of book expenditure e-books would represent a very low % of our overall book expenditure. We still spend way more of our book budget on print than ebooks. Most of our e-books come from large databases and our online budget. ..”</i>
*Lib 6	7%
Lib 7	<i>4% . “currently looking for a reliable supplier and when we get a full understanding of the digital rights management of each supplier we should greatly increase the number of purchases .”</i>
Lib 8	5%
Lib 9	n/a

**Table 1**
**Northern Ireland Libraries**


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**Library A - 9%**
**Library B - 10%**
**Table 2**

- e-Books represent less than 10% of total book expenditure in all of the surveyed libraries. Tables 1 and 2 above presents the breakdown for CONUL and Northern Ireland libraries.
- \*In Library 6, 7% of the library book budget =25% of e-book titles.

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**Questions 11-12: What percentage of overall book expenditure do print books represent?**

CONUL Libraries	
Lib 1	95 %
Lib 2	n/a
Lib 3	92% <i>"refers to individual purchases"</i>
Lib 4	88%
Lib 5	No % figure given but commented ..... <i>"still spend way more of our book budget on print than ebooks. Most of our e-books come from large databases and our online budget. .."</i>
Lib 6	93%
Lib 7	96%
Lib 8	95%
Lib 9	n/a

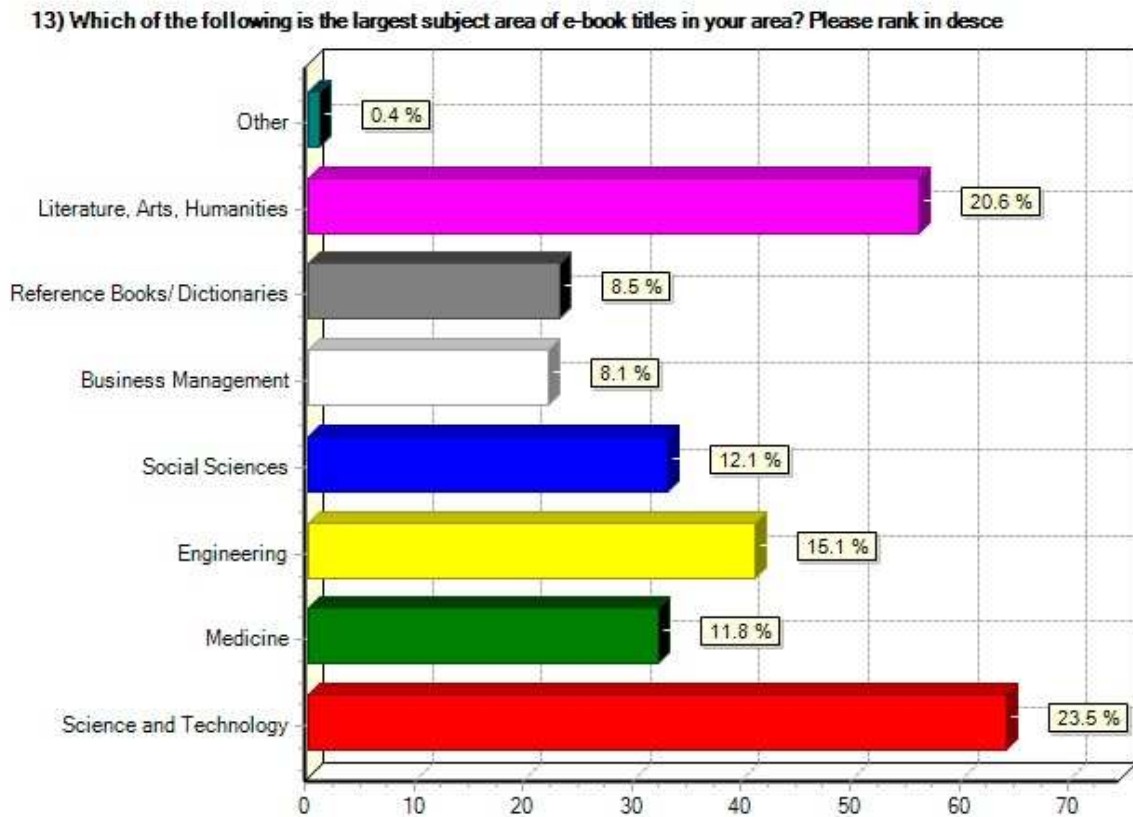
**Table 1**

Northern Ireland Libraries	
Lib A	89% <i>"book" expenditure also includes a small proportion spent on CDs DVDs and other "non-book" material. 2% is a guess at the proportion"</i>
Lib B	85%

**Table 2**

- Book expenditure on print book averages 85%-96% in **all** surveyed libraries. The breakdown for CONUL and Northern Ireland libraries are shown in Tables 1 and 2 above.

**Question 13: Which of the following is the largest subject area of e-book titles in your area? Please rank in descending order.**



- In 6 out of 11 ( 55%) CONUL-member libraries, **Science and Technology** represents the largest subject area of e-book titles following by **Literature, Arts and Humanities**, Engineering, Social Sciences, Medicine, Reference Books/Dictionaries, Business Management and Other e-book titles.

### Question 13 – cont

In the **Northern Ireland** university libraries, the largest subject areas are as follows:

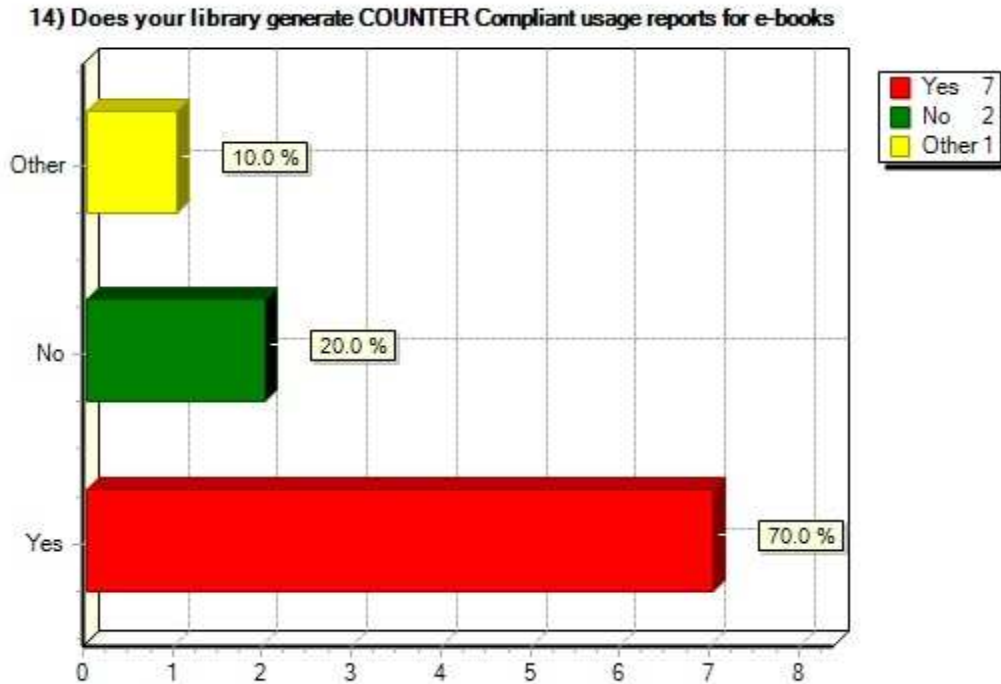
Lib A	1 Engineering	2 S & T,	3 Lit. Arts & Hum
Lib B	Lit. Arts & Hum	Social Science	Bus Mgt

The surprise in this category are the **Literature, Arts and Humanities** subject categories.

Generally, subject content in the Humanities area, tends to be more narrative, for example, novels, which require sustained reading, are generally considered unsuitable for spending long periods in front of a screen. (Breede, 2008, pp 15-16) Findings from the JISC National Observatory 2008 and 2009 surveys, found prolonged screen reading tiring, with difficulties in concentration and absorption of information. (JISC National Observatory e-Book Project Findings, 2009 V. 1.1. S. 6, p. 18).

However, results from an in-house undergraduate survey in NUI, Galway, in 2009 on student views of library collections, reveals that Arts students were the most dissatisfied with the availability of printed books, requesting additional copies of core texts at peak exam periods, indicating that students use the e-versions of core textbooks when available, over the printed version, during periods of heavy use.

This supports Littman, Sillipigni and Connaway's (2004, p. 261) contention that e-books are satisfying the information needs of users during peak periods of usage and are excellent for additional copy purchases when printed copies of titles are much in demand.

**Question 14: Does your library generate COUNTER Compliant usage reports for e-books?**

- Not all libraries replied to this Question. However, 6 CONUI -member libraries (54%) responded “yes” to generating COUNTER Statistics with one Northern Ireland library also replying in the affirmative.

**Verbatim Comment Responses:**

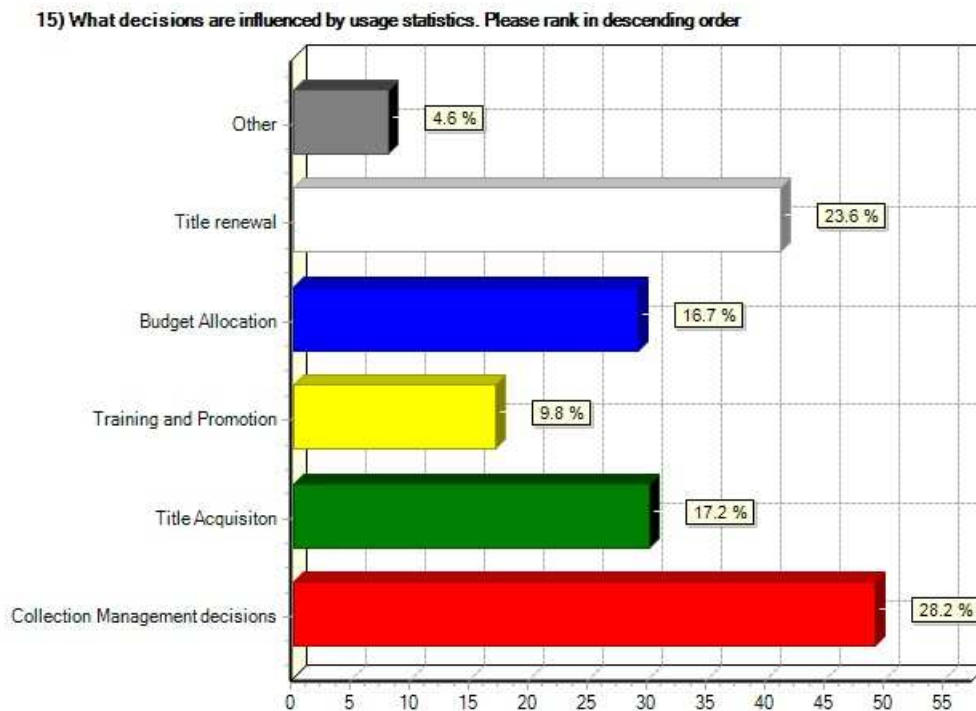
*“wherever possible*

*where available*

*We do use COUNTER for journals to assess value for money. However given the e book model of one off purchases it doesn't seem necessary to collect stats. However we may review this”*

*Where they are available. Done on an annual basis”*

**QUESTION 15: What decisions are influenced by usage statistics? Please rank in descending order?**



- The main purpose of usage statistics in all CONUL-member libraries is facilitating acquisitions decisions. **Collection Management** decisions are significantly influenced by usage statistics followed by **Title Renewal**, **Budget** and **Title acquisition** decisions.
- Collection Management and Title Acquisition decisions were identified by the Northern Ireland universities as the primary decisions influenced by usage statistics with Title Renewal and Budget respectively ranking high up there as influenced by usage statistics.
- Training and promotion was down the list in the options provided for decisions influenced by usage statistics, perhaps indicating insufficient titles available to warrant training.

SECTION TWO: In this section an overview is given of the different platform/vendor models available in CONUL-member libraries and two Northern Ireland university libraries.

**Question 16: From which vendors does your library purchase or subscribe to e-books?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Safari	7	58.3%
ebrary	2	16.7%
MylLibrary	9	75.0%
Dawsonera	6	50.0%
Books24x7	1	8.3%
Other (please specify)	6	50.0%

**Verbatim Comment Responses**

“Thieme, StatRef
Elsevier, Taylor & Francis, Wize Knordic (Knovel), EBL
RSC
Gale, OVID, NetLibrary, Proquest
We also use Netlibrary and will be expanding to use MyiLibrary in the near future.
NetLibrary,
NetLibrary, Ebsco, Palgrave MacMillan, RSC, Elsevier
Knovel, ACLS Humanities E-books, CISNet, Past Master, EBBO, ECCO, Books@Ovid
NteLibrary
Springerlink, Wiley, ACLS, Ovid, RSC, Alexander Press”

- The results reveal a wide range of vendors. MyiLibrary topped the poll in CONUL and Northern Ireland libraries. Safari proved popular with CONUL-member libraries but is not used by the Northern Ireland libraries. Dawsonera ranked high with CONUL-member libraries and is used by one of the Northern Ireland libraries.

**Question 17: Do you find different publisher and aggregator platforms complex?**

- This elicited a unanimous “Yes ” response from all respondents.

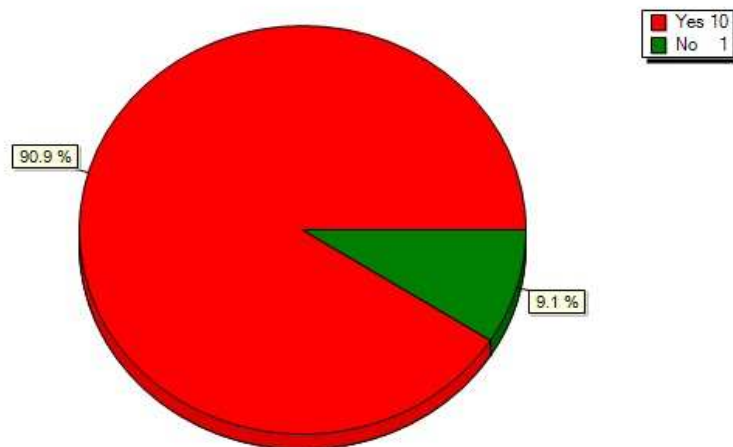
**Verbatim Comment Responses**

*“It is particularly irritating to have to purchase bundles where we only want one title. Wiley for instance has a minimum purchase of 20 ebooks. However large publishers have excellent website infrastructure that is readily recognizable to ejournal users*

*Yes - The fact that publishers front lists are not available as e-books is the biggest barriers to e-book take up. Essential to have Marc records in the catalogue for e-book titles.”*

### Question 18: Would you prefer a single e-book platform to minimize user confusion?

18) Would you prefer a single e-book platform to minimize user confusion?

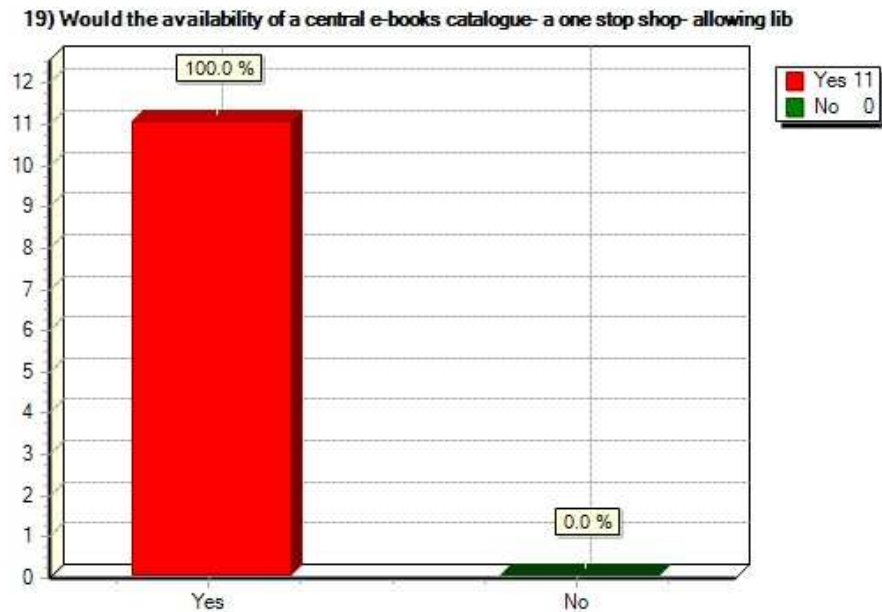


This question revealed a strong “Yes” response from all surveyed libraries. One CONUL-member library replied “No”, viewing “*quality of textbooks and platform functionality is key*”. A Northern Ireland university presented a qualified “Yes” commenting that a variety of platforms maybe required to “*stimulate competition and improvement.*”

#### Verbatim Comment Responses:

<i>“We would prefer one but probably need a variety to stimulate competition and improvement</i>
<i>Depending on single platform being satisfactory</i>
<i>but everything not available on one platform</i>
<i>Yes but single e book platform providers have varying DRM terms and conditions and some of the platforms are absolutely awful. Publisher and aggregated platforms have much better technology and are more restrictive for copying/pasting and printing</i>
<i>Not necessarily. Quality of textbooks and platform functionality is key</i>
<i>unlikely to happen in the current business climate - publishers do not have the incentive to participate”</i>

**Question 19: Would the availability of central e-books catalogue - a one stop shop - facilitating searches for available e-book titles, platforms and costs, be time-saving and cost-effective? (Thompson, Sharpe, 2009, p 136)**



- There was a resounding “yes” response to the availability of a central e-book catalogue.

#### Verbatim Comment Responses:

*“As long as it didn't increase prices by reducing competition*

*if integration possible with LMS acquisitions module*

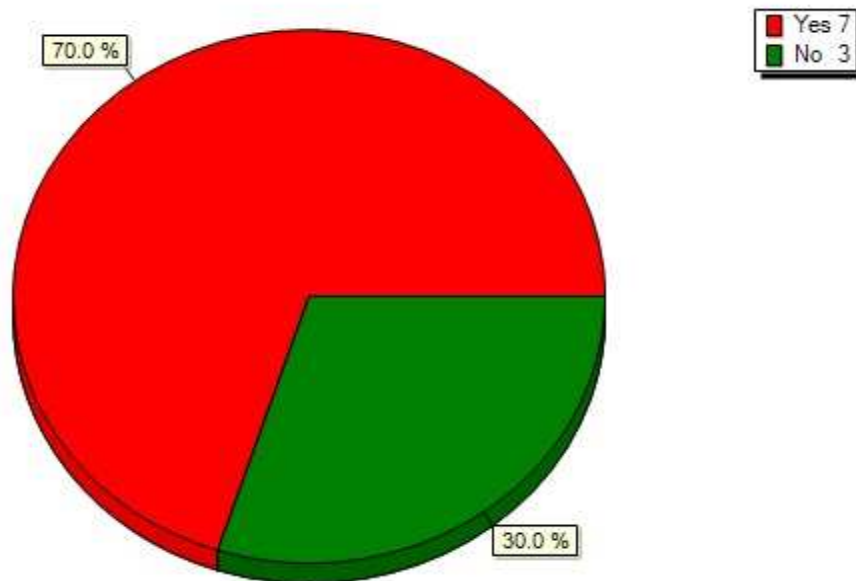
*Absolutely. Swets are currently developing this on Swetswise and all the IUA acquisitions Librarians are looking forward to it. However many providers do co-operate by negotiating for single titles with publishers when not hosted on their platforms*

*Another essential - currently very difficult”*

The replies to Questions 17 and 18, with attendant ‘comment responses’, reveal the majority of respondents found the multiple platforms hosting e-books, with their varying licensing and usage terms, complex, with some platforms “absolutely awful”. The replies to Question 19 reveal a substantial demand for a central e-books catalogue which can be assessed easily to establish whether a title is available as an e-book, on which platform(s) and how much it costs (Thompson, Sharpe, 2009, p 138).

**Question 20: Would you have a preference for purchasing single titles or e-book packages?**

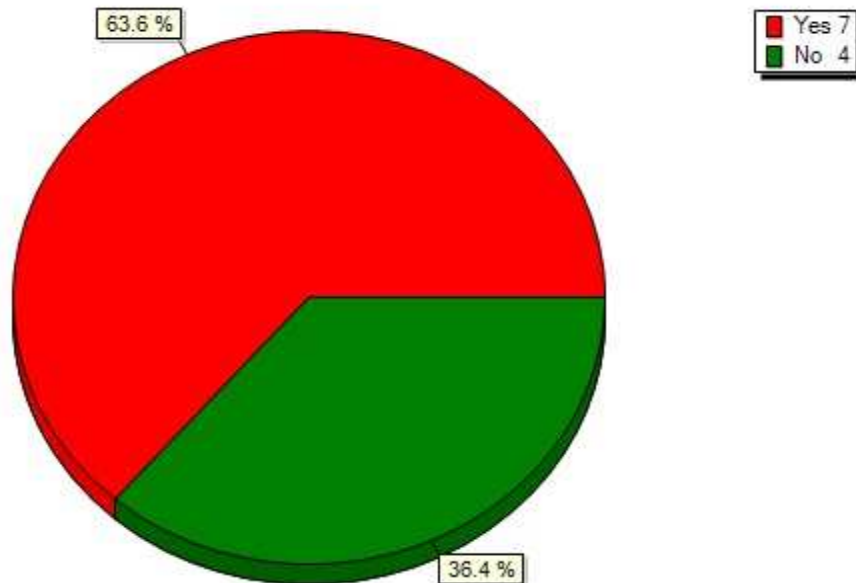
20) Would you have a preference for purchasing single titles or e-book packages?



- There is clearly a majority “Yes” response from all surveyed libraries for a preference for purchasing single e-book titles with one qualified “Yes” who indicated that their library had a preference for single e-book titles “as long as it didn’t increase prices by reducing competition”.
- Though there are three “No” replies, these in fact came up in the actual questionnaire as having “no preference” for single titles or e-book packages - but this option was unavailable on the questionnaire question..

### Question 21: Is availability of e-book packages a good way of achieving critical mass?

21) Do you think the availability of e-book packages are a good way of achieving critica



- The overall response from 6 CONUL-member libraries supports critical mass. One Northern Ireland library commented “Yes, but only if they contain the right content”. Additional comments are as follows:

#### Verbatim Comment Responses:

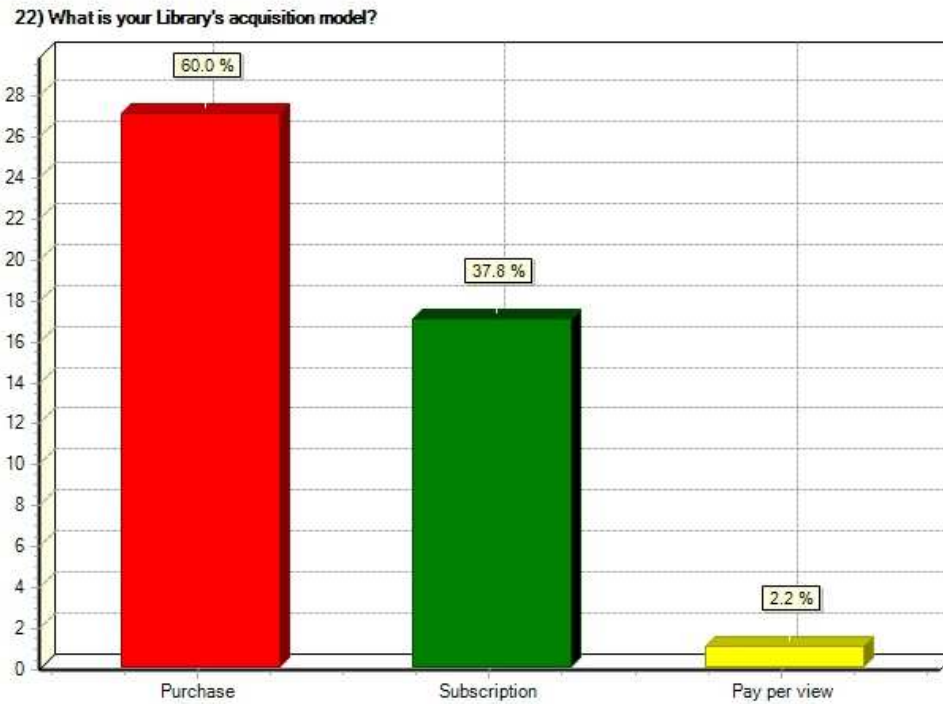
*“Only if they contain the right content*

*but only if content meets curriculum or researcher requirements*

*The jury is out on this. We see e books as a supplement to hard copies which gives users access when all hard copies are loaned. However it is hard to say whether they will take off like e-journals which revolutionized serials*

*But only if the collections are relevant to the information needs of the university. E book bundles per se might not be used, similar to the big deal bundles offered for e journals.*

*In our experience, if reading list material is available online it will be used”*

**Questions 22-23: What is your Library's Acquisition Model?**

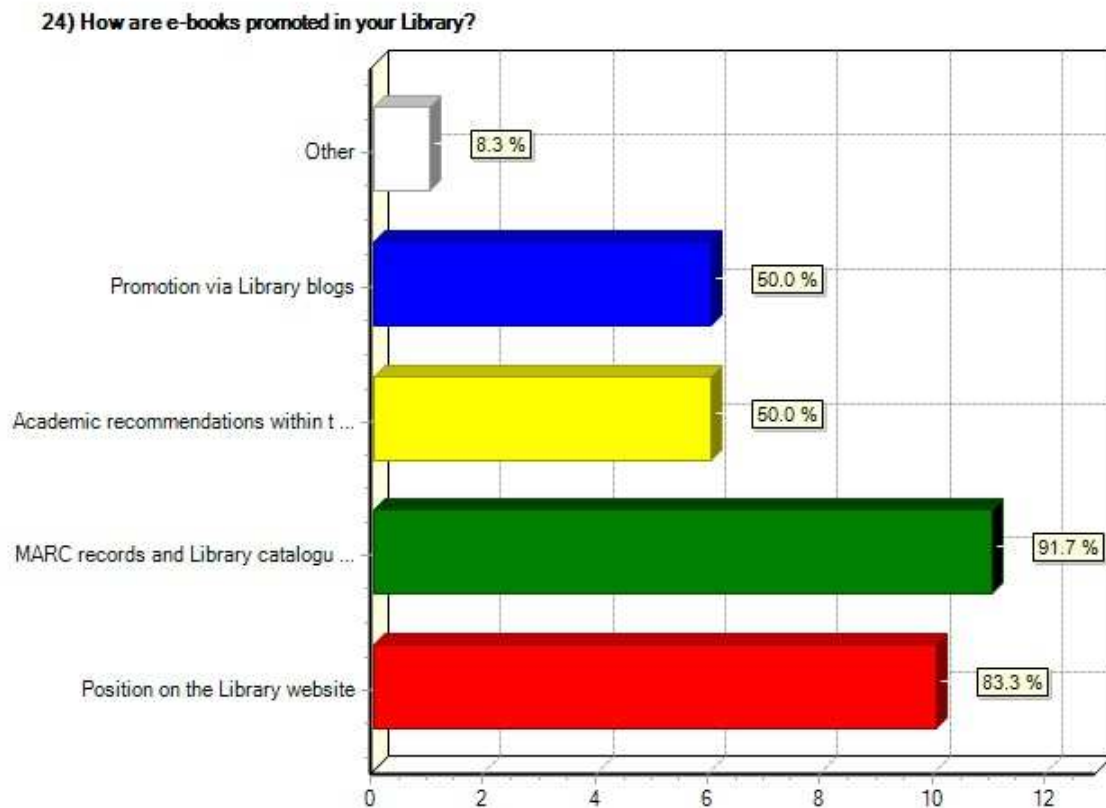
- The response to the above question reveals a clear preference for the “Purchase” model with verbatim comment responses overleaf:

**Questions 22-23: Acquisition Model and comments - cont.****Verbatim Comment Responses**

<i>"We prefer individual purchase but do subscribe to packages where these seem to give good value</i>
<i>Preference is for perpetual access of single titles (mainly due to fears about scalability of managing individual subs at monograph level - it's difficult and time consuming enough to manage periodicals!). For packages: we buy some outright, others are on a subscription basis - depends on budgets, and purchase options from vendor</i>
<i>We never pay per view or subscribe to e books. Outright purchase is the traditional model for book purchases and allowing for a subscription model for books would be difficult to administer. Recurring costs for journals is difficult enough to administer!! However we might some time in the future look to allowing a pay per view system and this could perhaps be administered by ILL. However we don't have a credit card system here</i>
<i>I think ebooks now come in a variety of ways from large ebook packages with current material eg ebrary to ECCO for older digitised material and we also buy titles individually for reading lists from a variety of sources. The e-books landscape is becoming more and more difficult for library staff to navigate.</i>
<i>Our preferred option is purchase in perpetuity with multiple user access. Following this a subscription model with multiple user access is the preferred model.</i>
<i>We use both subscription and purchase models as appropriate. We have not used pay-per-view to date</i>
<i>We prefer being able to purchase single titles in a group"</i>

SECTION 3 - This section attempts to gain an overview of promoting and marketing of e-books in CONUL-member libraries and university libraries in Northern Ireland.

**Question 24: How are e-Books promoted in your Library?**



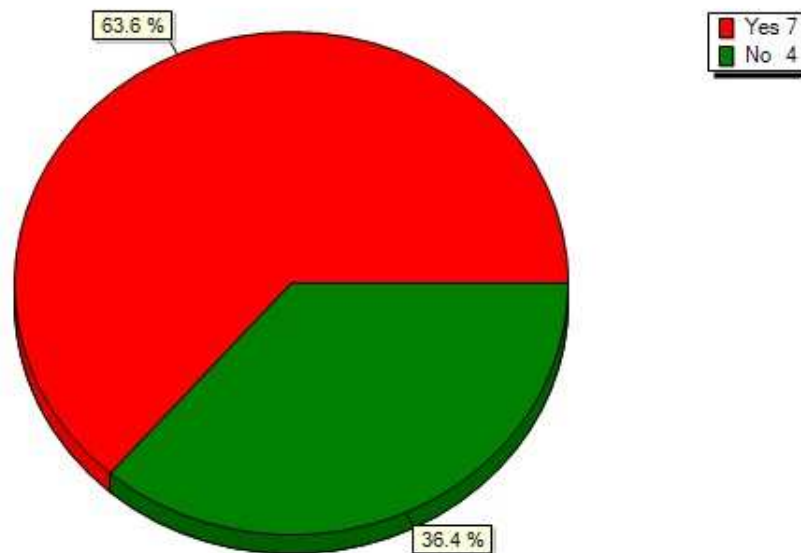
- CONUL and Northern Ireland universities considered MARC records and library catalogue integration, the most popular means of finding e-books, followed closely by e-book position on the library web. Academic recommendations within school disciplines is a popular way of finding out about e-books for 4 CONUL libraries and both Northern Ireland libraries. Library blogs did not feature as a means of promoting e-books amongst the Northern Ireland libraries and was strong with 6 CONUL libraries.

**Verbatim Comment Responses**

*IL training sessions with students and academic staff*

**Question 25: Are instruction/training sessions available on e-book usage in your Library?**

25) Are instruction/ training sessions available on e-book usage in your Library?



- The response to the availability of user education training sessions from 5 CONUL-member libraries and both Northern Ireland libraries was “Yes” with some qualifications as indicated by the comments below:

**Verbatim Comment Responses**

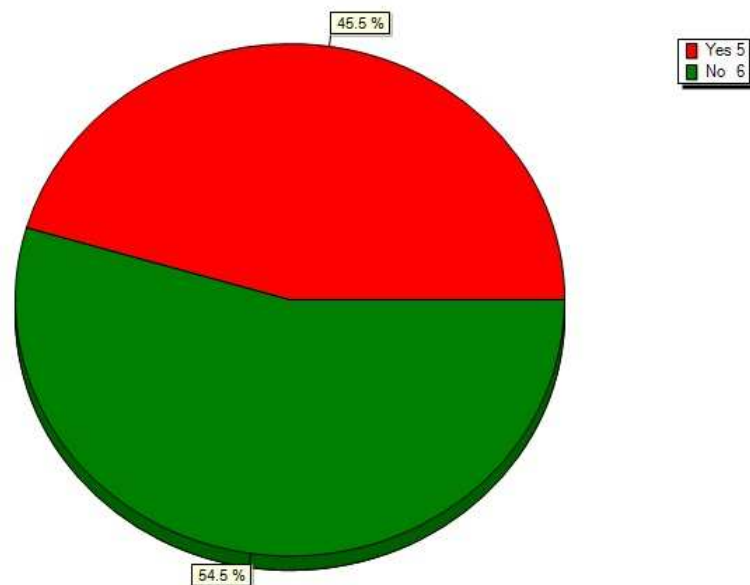
*“probably only in more general sessions*

*Not as yet, however we hope to get the subject librarians on board to promote them and to train users on use. Once we have settled on a provider for single titles it is hoped they will regularly visit and provide training*

*We regularly offer this course and it is well attended with good interest from undergrads, postgrads and staff*

*Not as separate sessions. Incorporated into training sessions”*

**Question 26: Is your Library being pro-active in adding course text e-books to Virtual Learning Environments and reading lists?**



The majority response for this Question is “No” with 4 CONU-member L libraries and one Northern Ireland library proactive in linking e-books to course management software. McKiel (2007, p 7) in his Ebrary survey analysis comments that VLE integration is significant in order to raise awareness of e-books and get students into the habit of using them.

**Verbatim Comments Responses**

*“We hope to eventually provide jump starts and quicklinks in Blackboard, however we are a long way away from this - subject librarians will play a role*

*We are proactive in sourcing ebooks for reading lists but not adding to the VLEs*

*This is an area we hope to improve on for the coming academic year”*

**Question 27: How do you see e-books impacting on your library's future?**

The final question invited comments on the impact of e-books in the surveyed university libraries' future. The majority of the replies indicate that e-book usage is gaining ground and will continue to have a significant impact on the information landscape. However, issues affecting e-book take up in academic libraries, include complex licensing and business models, lack of standardized epub format and insufficient core e- textbooks titles available . The following is a list of interesting verbatim responses from survey respondents:

**Verbatim Comment Responses**

<i>"It will grow and it may quite suddenly start to replace print books in a serious way.</i>
<i>e-books will become more important as core texts become increasingly available and when texts are in epub format for ebook readers</i>
<i>1. Huge issues around ordering workflows as ebook purchase increases - need for print monograph ordering staff to become aware of serials/e-resource type issues such as licensing, varying purchase models, access rights and requirements. 2. Budget - growing demand for e-textbooks will put pressure on funds given e books are more expensive, both in terms of list price and VAT (a huge 21%)</i>
<i>Difficult to say for certain. E journals revolutionised acquisitions for serials and it is hard to say if e books will do the same. It all depends on the publishers buying into the idea and providing easy access to content. The technology and platform providers are still a little rudimentary and well behind e-journals, however this is rapidly changing. From a philosophical point of view one hopes that users will still come to Libraries to read books but generational expectations for instant access to information will undoubtedly change the landscape. As things stand we see them as a back up only for titles with high demand, however academics are beginning to buy into the idea and increasingly requesting purchase of e books first rather than hard copies. This is not restricted to any faculty and Arts are as enthusiastic as STM subjects. Time will tell.</i>
<i>I think they challenge libraries in terms of collection development and also in terms of collection management. ..vastly improve access to material for our students in terms of 24x7 access to resources. I think we still have a long way to go to having all standard texts available as e-books but I hope to see that day! I think we need to start preparing for that time and now is the time to start preparing for the end of the print book as we know it.</i>
<i>Will continue to impact the information landscape and become a natural part of collection management, impacting on budgets, training, workflows etc.</i>
<i>In order for e-book usage and take up to increase, we need all reading list type material to be available in e-book format. We need to work with publishers to develop models that will work</i>
<i>Becoming more important in the future"</i>

## CONCLUSION

The data and comments from the survey reveal, that e-book usage currently remains a small part of the academic library offering, with issues such as multiple platforms and availability hindering wider adoption. The usage of e-books is likely to increase when issues with accessibility, availability of additional core e-textbooks, and a more standardized epub format become more clearcut. Also, when epub book formats are pushed out to pervasive mobile devices like iPhones and iPads and as the display technologies become more available and less costly, e-book usage will gather momentum.

A particular challenge for libraries affecting e-book uptake, highlighted in the survey are the diversity of access models with their varying licensing practices, offered by the e-book vendors which provide barriers to effective usage. The research literature indicates that e-book vendors and academic libraries need to work together towards developing enhanced and more unified e-book platforms, to improve usability and accessibility. Nariani (2009, p. 7), identifies this as being especially relevant as the number of online courses and distance learners increase and course materials provision can be met by e-books.

The issue of user unfriendly licensing practices was highlighted in the findings of a recent joint project study at the Open University and Cranfield University looking at how e-readers could be used in a library setting. The study findings reveal that licensed subscribed e-books were licensed for PC use only and could not be downloaded to e-book readers. Furthermore, it was impossible for libraries to purchase suitable downloadable copies. In one case, the student had to purchase the e-book and reclaim the cost, as the library could not purchase the book with a credit card due to licensing issues. (Brock, 2010, pp 15-17)

Lack of a standardized epub format is a further barrier to e-book adoption as identified by the survey data. *"In order for e-book usage ...to increase, ... reading list type material [needs to be made] ... available in e-book format"* This viewpoint is substantiated by Dougherty, (2010, p 255) who contends that readily available e-books, using a common format – the epub format - will add value to the reading experience and have a significant impact on libraries in the future.

Further challenges to e-book uptake as highlighted by the survey data include lack of available core e-textbooks. Barr and Landoni's (2007 p 23) research on usage of e-books in four academic libraries in Scotland, substantiates this viewpoint, emphasizing the lack of relevant content as being a major contributing factor in the present low uptake of e-books with publishers reluctant to provide relevant e-book content due to fears regarding reductions in print sales.

Here again, success requires publishers, authors, and librarians working together, in order to rethink the models and solutions for making additional e-book content available.

**CONCLUSION – cont.**

Undoubtedly, e-books will reshape how books are read and owned with “the definition of the book itself up for grabs” – a comment made by John Makinson, Chief Executive of Penguin, at the launch of the iPad in Great Britain (Dredge 2010). E-books are likely to become progressively more interactive, evolving into a wholly new form that is difficult to envisage today and becoming increasingly enhanced with extras, producing “mash-ups” – with combinations of digital video, audio, text and graphics. Publishing platforms will increasingly be digital with the delicate balance between authors, publishers and readers shifting and continuing to evolve with new technologies. (Warren, 2009, p. 89)

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### ADDITIONAL READING

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### USEFUL WEBSITES

[www.anltc.ie](http://www.anltc.ie)

[www.projectcounter.org](http://www.projectcounter.org)