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Article title

Use and Perceptions of e-Books in Derbyshire Libraries

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Graham Martindale currently works as assistant subject librarian at the Leek campus of Buxton and Leek FE College, which is part of the University of Derby. Prior to gaining his MSc at the Information School at the University of Sheffield in 2013, he worked overseas for nearly 20 years as an EFL tutor.

Peter Willett is Professor of Information Science at the Information School, University of Sheffield, and has over 530 publications on various aspects of library and information science. He is in *Who's Who* and has received many awards for his research, most recently the 2012 Emerald Outstanding Paper Award for the journal *Library Review* and the 2010 American Chemical Society Patterson-Crane Award for his contributions to chemical information science

Roger Jones, Management Information Officer at Derbyshire County Council, has a background in local government and public librarianship and is currently responsibility for library service performance monitoring and public consultation. He facilitated the field work in Derbyshire associated with the current study.

Structured Abstract:

Purpose To investigate the impact of the new e-lending scheme on the users of libraries operated by Derbyshire County Council (hereafter DCC).
Design/methodology/approach A web-based questionnaire distributed to current and recent users of the e-lending service (452 responses), supplemented by smaller-scale questionnaires of library staff (35 responses) and of library patrons who have not used the service (59 responses).
Findings The service is very highly valued and its users would wish it to be continued and, if possible, extended and improved, most obviously by increasing the stock. The principal motivating factors for use of the service are convenience and time-saving, as opposed to physical remoteness from a library or accessibility issues.
Originality/value This is one of the first, and the largest, surveys in the UK of a public library e-lending service, and provides guidance for the future development of such services.

Keywords:

Derbyshire County Council, e-books, e-lending, public libraries

Article Classification:

Research paper

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Running Heads:

Use and Perceptions of e-Books in Derbyshire Libraries

Introduction

With the maturing of e-book and e-reader technology, e-books have become an established part of library service provision. This happened first in higher education libraries and then, more recently, in public libraries, with a recent CILIP report showing that 79% of English, 95% of Welsh and 57% of Scottish public library authorities already provide e-books (CILIP Policy Department, 2013). E-books offer features such as just-in-time and remote access, full-text searching and portability, although the technology can be associated with complex download procedures, poor e-reader ergonomics and DRM (digital rights management) limitations (Joint, 2010; Walters, 2014; Walton, 2013).

While there is an extensive literature associated with the underlying technology of e-books, their applications in higher education, and the regulatory and legal frameworks for their use (see, e.g., Armstrong (2008), Department for Culture, Media & Sport DCMS (2013), Eschenfelder (2008), Jamali *et al*. (2009), and Vasileiou and Rowley (2011)), there have been only a few public library studies, mostly in the USA. Thus, a 2012 survey by the Pew Research Center (Zickuhr *et al*., 2012) found that while 12% of e-book users borrowed e-books from their public libraries, 58% of library card holders and 48% of dedicated e-book reader owners did not know if their libraries lent e-books. The major problems identified in the survey were the limited availability of e-books and complex check-out procedures. A subsequent report (Pew Research Center, 2013) found that e-book reading had grown for all age-groups between 2011 and 2012, with this being accompanied by an overall decrease in the use of printed books. A 2012 survey showed that professional librarians felt that the major barriers to e-book usage were the limited number of titles available, complex downloading procedures, DRM issues, and the fact that e-books often did not become available until after the print release (The Digital Shift, 2012). Current developments in Canada, the USA and Scandinavia are discussed by Mount (2104) in a report to the Australian Library and Information Association. The principal UK study to date is that by Hockey (2012). She investigated the provision of e-books by Hampshire Libraries and Information Service, analysing usage statistics and carrying out semi-structured interviews with 32 library users (of whom only two used the e-books service) and 36 library staff. The main advantages noted by the participants were portability

and storage while the main disadvantages were cost, the limited number of titles available and the loss of tactility, with a preference for print being the main reason for not using the service.

Palmer (2011) has highlighted the potential benefits of e-books for certain classes of public-library user, specifically the house-bound, those with reading difficulties caused by visual impairment or dyslexia, and the 'time-poor.' These benefits are consistent with those reported anecdotally by users of the e-lending scheme operated by Derbyshire County Council (hereafter DCC), which has been running since July 2011 (Gent, 2013). The starting point for the study reported here was to investigate in greater detail the perceptions of the users of the DCC e-book service, thus enabling DCC to obtain qualitative data complementary to the quantitative data on numbers of users, loans etc. provided by their library management system. The detailed results presented here are clearly specific to this particular service, but it is hoped that the findings here may be of more general interest and applicability given the increasing provision of e-books in UK public libraries.

Methodology

Given the presupposed potential characteristics of the e-book user population - geographically dispersed, time-poor – it was felt that physical, e-mail or telephone interviews would be too time-consuming and complex to arrange, so a web-based survey distributed as a link in an email was chosen as the data collection method. The principal issues investigated in the user survey reported here were as follows: current use made of the service; difficulties in using the service and the degree to which these difficulties hampered use; what influence, if any, did library borrowing have on book buying habits; and general feedback on the service, what value it added and how it might evolve. There were two versions of this survey: one for current users of the service and one for lapsed users (defined here as a failure to borrow a single e-book within the previous six months) that additionally asked why use of the service had ceased and if it would re-commence.

The survey of users and lapsed users formed the principal data collection method, but it was decided to conduct two additional, smaller-scale surveys to complement the main one. The first was a survey of library staff regarding their experience of the e-book service. The second was a survey of library patrons who did not (as yet) make use of the e-book service (subsequently referred to as 'non-users').

The three self-completion questionnaires contained a mixture of closed dichotomous and tick-box (i.e. radio button) questions, Likert scales and open-ended questions inviting responses regarding, e.g., value, benefit and possible service changes. The responses to the questionnaires are discussed below, focussing principally on the main user survey. Fuller descriptions of the results, including extensive examples of responses that formed the basis of open coding, are presented in the MSc dissertation by Martindale (2013) that forms the basis for this paper.

The user survey

The web-based user survey was implemented using Survey Monkey and was distributed in two ways. First, an email was sent on 5th August 2013 to 1,250 users for whom email addresses were available, inviting them to participate and with a link to the survey embedded. Second, on 13th August 2013, a link to the survey was embedded on the e-book service log-in page hosted by Askews & Holts Library Services Ltd., DCC's supplier of adult and children's books. Responses were collected until 16th August, i.e. for a total of 12 days. The timing was determined by academic submission dates, and it would have been preferable for the survey to have run for longer. Even so, 460 responses were received, 397 of them by the time that the link on Askews & Holts' site went live. This latter figure constitutes a return rate of over 31% (even before the number of emails that 'bounced' is taken into account), with the overall response rate being 12.7% of the total number of active users as of July 2013.

The fact that users were so eager to respond would tend to suggest that they had something either very positive or something very negative to express: as will be seen, the responses were overwhelmingly of the first type, albeit with both caveats and some marked exceptions. However, an inevitable limitation to the methodology used is that the respondents constituted a self-selected sample; i.e. users who had had negative experiences might well not be expected to make any response to the survey, though this may be seen as being offset to a degree by the relatively high response rate.

A total of 452 of the responses were usable; as the survey instructions stated that none of the questions were mandatory and any could be skipped, the sample size varied from question to question. The user survey has been included in Appendix I at the end

of the paper, and the numbers in what follows reflect the numbering in the questionnaire (with questions 11-13 relating specifically to the lapsed users as defined by their response to question 10).

Demographics (questions 1 - 3) The responses to the first three demographic questions indicated that 64% of respondents were in the 40 – 64 age group, with 28% in the 65+ group, and 8% in the 18 – 39 group. The majority (59%) of the respondents were female, while only a small minority (11%) considered themselves to have a disability.

Library usage (questions 4 – 6) 11% of respondents had not visited a Derbyshire library building at all in the last year (question 4, "In the last year, how often have you visited a Derbyshire building?"); of the remainder, 36% had visited at least monthly, 25% had visited every few months, and 28% once or twice. The majority of the respondents hence made only infrequent physical visits to the service.

In response to question 5 ("Do you currently use any other libraries apart from Derbyshire Libraries?"), only 15% of respondents said that they did. The most popular service used (according to the responses to question 6, "Which of the following Derbyshire Library services do you currently use?" (multiple answers allowed)) was, unsurprisingly, borrowing e-books (91%), followed by borrowing print books (59%) (so that nearly a third borrowed e-books but not printed books). The full set of responses is shown in Chart 1.

These responses suggest that the e-book service is not being used by the majority as a replacement for borrowing books from the physical library but rather to supplement such borrowing. This is demonstrated by a comparison between printed book and e-book borrowing according to the frequency of visiting library buildings, as shown in Chart 2. The one obvious exception to the trend is the group of users who had not visited a library at all in the past year. This group's responses were cross-referenced against responses to question 25 (relating to reasons for using the e-book service, see Appendix), but it did not prove possible to identify any deciding factors in the choice to use the e-book service. There was also no obvious correlation between the frequency of visiting a library building and use of the other remote services.

E-book usage (questions 7 – 10) The largest percentage of respondents (37%) first heard about the service (question 7) through the DCC website, followed by 30% through information in the library (30%) or the local media (12%); 15% responded that "someone told

me about it" with the remainder coming across the service through general web searching, researching e-readers etc.

60% of the 435 respondents to the question "When did you first start using Derbyshire Libraries' e-book lending service?" had begun using it over a year before, 29% had used it for between a year and 6 months, with the remainder joining within the previous six months. Not only are there many long-term users but there are also many frequent users: 39% of the respondents to the question 'How frequently do you borrow e-books from Derbyshire libraries?' stated that they used it at least monthly, 33% used it "every few months", 17% "once or twice a year" and only 11% used it less than that.

Finally in this section, question 10 ("In the last six months have you borrowed an item from Derbyshire Libraries' e-book service?") was used to identify the 24% of the respondents who were classed as 'inactive' users. These then followed a branch in the survey to answer three questions (questions 11 – 13) relating to former frequency of borrowing, reasons for discontinuing borrowing and if they were likely to use the service again.

Inactive users (questions 11 – 13) In response to the question, 'Although you have not recently borrowed e-books from Derbyshire Libraries, how often did you borrow them in the past?' 52% of the 102 respondents answered "once or twice a year", 23% had used it more frequently, with the remainder stating that they had never borrowed e-books, indicating they had managed to register but not to use the system (or that they had forgotten so doing).

Question 12 asked respondents to explain why they had not borrowed books in the previous six months. The most significant reason (36% of respondents) was that the selection of material was poor. Typical comments included: "I am finding the fiction section limited on scope of authors. Also most books, because of shortage, are out on loan" and "Titles are very limited". The second reason (25%) was that the system was incompatible with the popular Kindle platform, and technical problems comprised a further 20% of the responses, e.g., "Found it hard to understand what to do on the e-book site", "The system of downloading an e-book from DCC is not as straightforward as downloading to a Kindle". The remaining inactive users provided a range of responses, e.g., "Just haven't got round to it", and "Only borrow when I go on holiday and I have not been on holiday recently".

Question 13 asked if respondents thought they might start borrowing e-books again in the future, and the 106 responses here, unsurprisingly, mirrored those for question 12. Thus, of the 72 respondents who answered 'yes' to this question, 14 wanted a better selection of material, 13 referred to difficulties using the site and six wanted compatibility with Kindles. It should be pointed out that some of the 'yes' responses were very conditional, e.g., one respondent said they would use the service "if there is a better range and titles are more current" and another said "if the format changes for Kindle." Of the twelve negative responses, five were that the system was too difficult to use, six that the respondents used Kindles, and the final negative response was based on poor stock. In like vein, the 22 'don't know' responses were that future use of the system depended on it offering compatibility with other devices (Kindles and iPads), on it being less cumbersome to use, and on a wider range of material being available.

Three separate themes are hence evident: the problem of incompatible devices; the complexity of the interface and the need to download additional software; and the apparent lack of stock.

Technical matters (question 14 - 18) At question 14 the branch of the survey for 'inactive' users only ended and all users were asked to respond to the remaining questions, which focussed on how users access e-books, what kinds of e-books are preferred, and what difficulties are encountered.

Question 14 asked about which devices were used to read e-books (multiple answers allowed): 55% of the respondents used dedicated e-readers, while 49% used tablet devices. The 20% 'other' responses covered laptops, mobile and smart phones, PCs and pocket PCs. The next question asked "How easy or difficult was it to start using Derbyshire Libraries' e-book service for the first time?" 50% of the 435 responses were that it was fairly easy, 28% that it was very easy, 16% that it was quite difficult and 6% that it was very difficult. The corresponding percentages for question 16, relating to how easy or difficult it was subsequently to download e-books, were: 46% fairly easy, 42% very easy, 8% quite difficult and 4% very difficult.

Downloading was studied in more detail in question 17 ("Have technical difficulties ever made you abandon the process of borrowing an e-book?"). Of the 431 respondents, 68% said that it had not, 5% said it had happened often and 27% said that it had happened sometimes. The question went on to ask for specific reasons from the

respondents in the latter two categories. A wide range of reasons were given, the most frequently mentioned being incompatibility issues (either at the device or the application level), the complexity of the process, the system being down or offline, and slow connection speeds. Comments made in relation to having problems often are, as is to be expected, more negative, e.g., "It just doesn't work or is not intuitive – and I worked in IT". Respondents who reported problems only 'sometimes' were generally more positive, e.g., "Downloading e-books to the Adobe Digital Library on my laptop used to be a bit hit and miss but it never stopped me from getting books when I wanted them. However, your download process has recently changed and it's now no problem at all" and "System problems in the beginning which were sorted out after contacting the helpline." That said, other respondents have obviously found the experience more difficult: "The library web site is messy, the books are not easy to find and the search engine is useless, plus Adobe does not always load". Such comments indicate that the interface and download procedures could be made more user-friendly and straightforward, and that additional support could be given. At the same time, these comments need to be kept in perspective: over two-thirds of all the respondents had always been successful in using the site, and the 27% who have abandoned it sometimes included a substantial number who had given up because of issues over which DCC has no control, *viz* slow connections, incompatible devices and the Askews & Holts' site being offline.

Question 18 then asked "Do you ever alter the way your device displays text (e.g. by enlarging font size, changing the font, changing the screen brightness, etc.) in order to make it easier to read?", with respondents who replied "yes" being asked to specify how and why. After open coding of the 257 separate positive answers, 182 (71%) referred to altering the font or font size and 52 (20%) to altering the screen brightness. 24 respondents mentioned having poor eyesight and that adapting the display was a help; of these five referred to specific visual impairments. 19 comments were made about having to adapt the font and/or layout to screen size, for example when reading on a Smartphone or reading picture books for children, where the books display better in landscape mode. Based on these responses, only 12% of the respondents use the accessibility features of the various devices because of some degree of visual impairment or a reading disorder. However, this may be an under-estimate of the level of use for this purpose for two reasons: although the question asked respondents to specify why they used such features, many simply responded that they do use them, or answered very literally, e.g. "Enlarging font size & changing brightness to make it easier to read

(strange question!)"; and the age range of the sample (with 28% of the respondents to the survey being 65 or older) might suggest that age-related deterioration of eyesight could be a reason for the use of such features. That e-books do enhance accessibility for some, however, is quite clear: "I have type 2 diabetes and my sight varies from day to day, even with spectacles. This for a long time had stopped me from reading any books which I had been borrowing from [the] library since 1975. Then I got a Kobo Touch and I can now read every day (and night). I would be totally lost without my e-reader and your wonderful e-book lending service. I am re-discovering the wonderful world of books and it's changed my life."

E-book borrowing habits (questions 19 - 21) Questions 19 and 20 sought to discover the users' e-book borrowing habits. The 420 responses to the question "How many Derbyshire e-books do you/did you usually borrow at one time?" are summarized in Chart 3. 35% of the responses to the "It varies" option (coded to allow multiple responses) were that it depended on availability, while 15% were that it depended on how much free time users had to read; another 15% of the responses indicated that users borrow more when travelling and going on holiday.

Comments about the lack of choice and most e-books being out on loan were common. Poor stock has already been identified as a problem when discussing the inactive users, and availability - or, more accurately, the lack of it - seems to be the main driver of how many e-books are borrowed. As of July 2013, the e-book lending service had 3,542 active members and offered 5,400 separate items of which 5,022 were unique titles, with just under half being fiction, the most popular category. While users can borrow up to five e-books at a time, for a maximum of 21 days, the stock would need to be increased threefold to allow everyone to borrow the maximum number, even before a breakdown of borrowing by most popular categories is considered.

Responses to question 20 ("What kinds of e-books do you/did you most often borrow from Derbyshire Libraries?") showed that fiction is overwhelmingly the most popular choice of most users, with 354 responses (84% of total separate respondents; multiple answers allowed) as shown in Chart 4. The most popular choices in the "Other" category were 'technical' books, instructional manuals and 'how-to' books, history, and travel books and guides. The "fiction" category is heavily oversubscribed (despite constituting nearly half of the stock) and the same is true of the next two most popular categories,

"biography and true stories" and "lifestyle, sport and leisure", which collectively make up 17% of the stock but 36% of the borrowing choices.

Question 21 then asked "How would you describe the selection of e-books available?" The 420 responses are summarized in Chart 5. While 41% of the respondents said it was satisfactory, 30% described the selection as 'poor' or 'very poor.' When these responses were correlated with questions 26 and 27 (about possible improvements to, and the overall value of, the e-book service), general comments were positive; with only five completely negative (e.g., "As it stands, I don't think it has any value") and three others ambivalent (e.g. "Increase the range and I'll use it more"). However, 194 of the responses to question 26 were about the need for more stock and a better selection.

Acquisition of books (*questions 22 - 24*) The next two questions related to whether or not e-book library users ever buy their own books or e-books. Aggregating the "Yes, often" and "Yes, sometimes" responses, a significant proportion (29% of respondents as regards print books and 22% as regards e-books) responded positively to the question "Do you ever buy books or e-books because having borrowed them from the library you want to keep your own copy?", demonstrating that library users do indeed buy books and are not totally reliant on the library stock for their reading. Much higher proportions (57% of respondents as regards print books and 53% as regards e-books) responded positively to the question "Do you ever buy books or e-books because you've wanted to borrow them but they've been unavailable from your library?", emphasizing the stock problems evidence in response to other questions in the survey). These sets of responses are summarized in Charts 6 and 7, which emphasize the similarity in behaviour regarding the two types of material.

Finally in this section, the e-book users were asked if they ever obtained e-books from other sources than DCC, such as free sites or commercial sites like Amazon.com. The latter was by far and away the most popular alternative source, at 70% of the 347 responses (multiple answers allowed), which further emphasises the fact that the majority of library e-book users are also e-book buyers. Free sources received 53% of the responses, and "Others" 20% (though it should be noted that some responses that mentioned Amazon, the Sony store, or iBooks could potentially belong to other categories, as these commercial outlets also provide free books). It is worth noting that

121 of the 139 respondents who stated that they "often" or "sometimes" abandoned borrowing e-books from DCC in response to question 17 use alternative sources to obtain books, suggesting that problems with the DCC provider's site are not due to a lack of experience or knowledge of other e-book channels.

General feedback (*questions 25 - 28*) Question 25 comprised three separate statements to which respondents were asked to rank their level of agreement according to a five-step Likert scale. The three questions were: "I use Derbyshire Libraries' e-book service because I don't have time to visit a library"; "I use Derbyshire Libraries' e-book service because there isn't a library close to where I live"; and "I use Derbyshire Libraries' e-book service because I have a disability which makes it difficult to get access to my local library". It is noticeable that, while the percentage of "agree" or "strongly agree" responses was 20% for the first statement, it was only 7% for the second statement and 6% for the third. The responses to question 25 were cross-referenced with those to questions 27 and 28 (see Appendix I) and it was found that respondents equate the e-book service with convenience and appear to equate convenience with saving time. Thus respondents who made comments about borrowing "from the comfort of my own home," of being housebound, of the e-book service saving "petrol, parking and CO2 emissions," and of saving a "12-mile journey" all emphasised the time factor rather than remoteness. Only two respondents specified, both in question 25 and in comments in response to question 26, that the e-book service was valuable to them because they lived in rural areas.

The next question, number 26, asked 'If you think that there are any changes or improvements that could be made to Derbyshire Libraries' e-book service, please provide details below.' The 342 comments received were subjected to open coding, with the single most frequent comment (no less than 57% of the total) being for the amount of material available to be increased and to be brought up to date. The next most frequent set of comments, the 'other' category (at just 14%), included references to the system not working with Kindles and suggestions to "streamline the system at the...account level," to increase the back lists, add classic authors and "convert retired print books to e-books." In addition to these two categories, the other most frequent responses related to the need for a returns option and for a renewals option, and the need to improve the search facility. Examples of such comments included: "I would like to see more detailed information about e-books...similar to the 'Look inside this book' facility...on the Amazon website. The summaries currently

available are a little too limited"; "I would like to be able to read a few pages of the book to ascertain the author's style. It would be good to have the reviews or links to book reviews for each book too"; and "It would be good to be able to return books once I have finished them" (this comment arising because although the loan period can be selected by the user, thereafter early return is not technically possible, preventing any more borrowing should the borrowing limit have been reached).

Question 27 then asked 'What value, if any, do you think the e-book service brings to the broader range of Derbyshire Libraries' services?' The responses were coded initially into the two broad categories 'negative' and 'positive', of which no less than 276 (93%) of the 298 distinct comments fell into the latter category, e.g., "huge value," "great asset," and "absolutely fantastic." Within this, responses were coded as to the specific value that had been added. Flexibility, convenience and accessibility were mentioned 162 times, with comments such as "You don't have to plan to borrow in the same way which with a busy life and children/work commitments makes the library service far more accessible" and "INVALUABLE for rural communities, especially with bad winter weather limiting travel/access to library buildings". Comments such as these need to be considered against the data from question 25, which suggested that physical remoteness from a library was not as important a factor for users as saving time. It may be that, for someone used to travelling to avail themselves of services anyway - Derbyshire is a big county with, in northern and western parts especially, a relatively low population density - convenience is interpreted more as a means of saving time than as having to do with remoteness or distance.

Eleven comments suggested that the service is valuable but has not yet reached full potential or making other caveats, such as "[t]here is value but more commitment needs to be given. If you consider that you buy one printed book for each library surely there should be more than one e-book available for the whole of Derbyshire?" Others recognised limitations, e.g., "I suppose it's the future, but publishers will need to stop having ridiculous rules like re-buying books after a certain number of loans or not permitting multiple loans of the same 'book' ". Of the nine outright negative comments, six correlated with the poor or very poor choice option in Question 21 regarding the selection of material available, while one respondent had never been able to obtain access using an Apple Mac, and said they were "bitterly disappointed". Three other respondents, all Kindle users, have also never borrowed e-books. One respondent was unwilling to download

extra software for their iPad, and said that they would be interested if the service became compatible with EPUB. Another abandoned e-books because "the Aldiko reader on the Nexus gives very small print so I have given up trying to read e-books." Based on desk research and the DCC FAQs, at least three of these respondents' devices should be compatible, suggesting their problems could have been resolved with support from the library.

The final question asked 'Is there anything else you would like to add that hasn't been covered in this survey or any other feedback you would like to give about Derbyshire libraries' e-book services?' Responses to this were consistent with those thus far: after opening coding there were 116 separate comments, of which 54 were positive expressions of thanks, good wishes, and comments on recent improvements, e.g., "I have only used technical support once for a stuck download. This was sorted speedily and cheerfully by a human. Congratulations" and "This is an amazing service. Thank you for providing it". There were 20 comments referring again to the need for more and better choice of material, six about issues with DRM and reading apps, and three direct suggestions that more support could be provided, either online or in libraries. Thirteen comments were made about how it would be convenient to be able to return e-books once read, and to extend loan periods or renew loans if wished. Six comments were made about Kindle incompatibility. Interestingly, four comments were that e-books would never replace a physical library service; "It is important that the e-book service is not allowed to be seen - intentionally or otherwise - as a replacement for traditional lending," and "There is value in visiting a library, meeting people, finding out what's happening in the community, lectures, etc.". Four people suggested a need for more marketing, e.g., "Reading using an e-reader is on the increase. Consequently, the e-book service should be a service that is ripe for development, broadening both its offer and its readership-base...DCC should be shouting about it - but it's probably Derbyshire CC's best kept secret".

The non-user and staff surveys

While the principal aim of the project was to obtain the views of users of the library e-book service, two additional, smaller scale surveys were carried out; one of DCC staff's views on the e-book service, and one of

library users who make use of other library services but not e-books. The purpose of these surveys was to provide additional perspectives on the qualitative data gathered from the main survey. Full details of these are provided by Martindale (2013); the main conclusions are presented here.

The major conclusion from the staff survey was that interest in and knowledge of the e-book service has declined since the original launch, and that it possibly requires more promotion; as one respondent says, a "re-launch" would "spark more/continued interest". The major conclusion from the non-user survey was consistent with this; of the 59 usable responses obtained, 68% of respondents had not heard about the e-book service and said they would become users given sufficient marketing of it. That said, over half of those who *had* heard about the service had failed to take it up, citing a combination of other factors, ranging from inertia to an adherence to 'traditional' reading.

Conclusions

This paper has reported a detailed study of users of the e-lending service provided by Derbyshire County Council's library service. It is, to our knowledge, the largest such survey carried out to date in a UK public library service, and provides evidence to support what has, in the UK context, hitherto been evidenced only anecdotally regarding the popularity of e-book lending in public libraries. The results may hence be of value to other library services wishing to enhance their existing e-book provision.

It is clear from the data presented here that the service is highly valued and that the users want to see it continued and if possible extended and improved. Two further conclusions can be drawn from the data. The first is that the principal motivating factors for the library's e-books users are convenience and the saving of time, as opposed to physical remoteness from a library, or accessibility issues. The second is that, as other commentators and surveys indicate, e-book readers *do* buy both printed books and e-books – but apparently not if they are available from the library. However, there is little evidence from this study to suggest that with the wider availability of e-book titles from libraries, this would significantly impact on publishers' printed or e-book sales. The respondents who indicated that they never go out and buy a title first read as a library e-book still stated in many cases that they bought other e-book titles. The

research did not sufficiently establish whether and to what extent library e-lending stimulates future purchasing. This is something that the forthcoming national e-book pilot study may clarify.

In line with studies in the USA (The Digital Shift, 2012; Zickuhr *et al.*, 2012), the major issue is the lack of availability of e-books. Apart from the simple solution of purchasing more stock, this issue could be addressed by implementing a returns option or by making the user-defined loan period option clearer, and adding user-friendly information about book length so that users could estimate how long a loan period to choose. Two further possible enhancements are: improving the search facility with an option to filter out unavailable titles; complementing the FAQs that are already available with screenshots, leaflets and screen-casts. The overall level of usage could be increased by enhanced publicity and by supporting a wider range of e-book readers. Developments such as these could, however, further exacerbate the availability problems and it is hence likely that hard decisions will need to be taken regarding the future development of the service given the current economic climate.

This study of e-book lending has proved very useful in helping the library service in Derbyshire to understand users' responses to the current e-book offer, their borrowing behaviour and other relevant concerns. To some extent the research confirmed what was already known or suspected: that there is a significant amount of frustration with the limited availability of titles and also a degree of difficulty experienced by users with systems and technology. It had been established at an early stage though, that some users previously unknown to the service were registering to borrow e-books alone, while others had effectively re-joined the library after a period of inactivity not only to borrow e-books but also to re-engage with the physical service. It is now better (though not completely) understood how e-book readers' library activities fit with their wider reading habits, including their purchase of e-books from other sources.

The research has prompted some further investigation of 'e-book only' library users with a view to finding out whether over time these users are retained or whether their engagement with the library service for e-books alone is transitory, especially in view of the current limitations on titles.

Also of interest is the age profile of e-book users, which has been shown to be older than originally supposed. In terms of traditional book borrowing, there is strong evidence to support the view that

older users are more committed to regular long-term borrowing as long as the choice does not dwindle, in contrast with younger adults who are more episodic in their usage and as a group subject to a lot more 'churn'. With e-book borrowing, then, there is a growing realisation that the commitment of the older users, who constitute a greater-than-expected proportion of all users, will only be sustained through a plentiful supply of new e-book titles.

The adequacy of staff knowledge and expertise about a new service largely invisible to daily operations in libraries was always going to be an issue since initially the level of enquiries about the operation of the service could not be predicted. In the light of experience and these research findings, not only is additional staff training being put in place, but also some library-based information sessions for the public, to be launched in 2014.

The Derbyshire research contributed to the authority's success in September 2013 when it was given the National Acquisitions Group's Award for Excellence for its e-book service. It also paved the way for Derbyshire to become one of the participating authorities in the forthcoming national pilot study.

Since the evidence gathering concluded in summer 2013, e-book provision in public libraries has continued to be a much debated topic and the basic difficulty with publishers' willingness to supply to the public library market, as articulated by the Sieghart report (Department for Culture, Media & Sport, 2013), is now being addressed, with the pilot arrangements allowing Derbyshire to greatly expand the range of e-books available and implement a click-to-buy option on its e-book web pages. The authority has also recently launched an e-audiobook lending service which it is expected will attract further interest from lapsed traditional users as well as appeal to some existing e-book borrowers.

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Appendix I

1. What is your age group?
☐ Under 18
☐ 18 - 39
☐ 40 - 64
☐ 65+

2. What is your gender?
☐ Male
☐ Female

3. Do you consider yourself to have a disability?
☐ Yes
☐ No

4. In the last year, how often have you visited a Derbyshire building?
☐ At least monthly
☐ Every few months
☐ Once or twice
☐ Never

5. Do you currently use any other libraries apart from Derbyshire Libraries, e.g. public libraries outside Derbyshire, university or college libraries?
☐ Yes
☐ No

6. Which of the following Derbyshire Library services do you currently use? Please select all that apply.
☐ Borrowing e-books
☐ Borrowing printed books
☐ Borrowing audio books
☐ Using printed reference materials in the library
☐ Using computers/internet in the library
☐ Using your library card number to access online reference resources from home
☐ Home library service (books delivered to your home)
☐ Attend events/talks
☐ Any other services: please specify:

7. Where did you first hear about Derbyshire Libraries' e-book lending service?
☐ Derbyshire County Council website
☐ Information in the Library
☐ Local media
☐ Someone told me about it
☐ Other: please specify:

8. When did you first use Derbyshire Libraries' e-book lending service?
☐ Less than six months ago
☐ Six months to a year ago
☐ Over a year ago

9. How frequently do you borrow e-books from Derbyshire Libraries?
☐ At least monthly
☐ Every few months
☐ Once or twice a year
☐ Less than once or twice a year

10. In the last six months have you borrowed an item from Derbyshire Libraries' e-book service?
☐ Yes
☐ No

11. Although you have not recently borrowed e-books from Derbyshire Libraries, how often did you borrow them in the past?
☐ At least monthly
☐ Every few months
☐ Once or twice a year
☐ I never borrowed e-books.

12. Please tell us why have you not borrowed e-books recently?

13. Do you think you might start borrowing e-books again?
☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know
Please specify why/why not:

14. What kind of device(s) do you use to read e-books? Please select all that apply.

☐ Dedicated e-reader e.g. Kindle, Kobo
☐ Tablet e.g. iPad, Samsung
☐ Other (please specify):
.....

15. How easy or difficult was it to start using Derbyshire Libraries' e-book service for the first time?
☐ Very easy
☐ Fairly easy

☐ Quite difficult
☐ Very difficult

16. How easy or difficult did you find it subsequently to download e-books?
☐ Very easy
☐ Fairly easy
☐ Quite difficult
☐ Very difficult

17. Have technical difficulties ever made you abandon the process of borrowing an e-book?
☐ Yes, often
☐ Yes, sometimes
☐ No, never

If yes, please describe what the difficulties were:

18. Do you ever alter the way your device displays text (e.g. by enlarging font size, changing the font, changing the screen brightness, etc.) in order to make it easier to read?
☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ My device does not have this function

If you ticked yes, please explain what features you use and why:

19. How many Derbyshire e-books do you/did you usually borrow at one time?
☐ 1
☐ 2
☐ 3
☐ 4
☐ 5
☐ It varies – please explain:

20. What kinds of e-books do you most often borrow from Derbyshire Libraries?
Tick all that apply:
☐ Fiction
☐ Children's, young adult and educational
☐ Biography and true stories
☐ Lifestyle, sport and leisure
☐ Other: please specify:

21. How would you describe the selection of e-books available?
☐ Very good
☐ Good
☐ Satisfactory
☐ Poor
☐ Very poor

22. Do you ever buy books or e-books because having borrowed them from the library you want to keep your own copy?

	Yes, often	Yes, sometimes	No, never
Books			
e-books			

23. Do you ever buy books or e-books because you've wanted to borrow them but they've been unavailable from your library?

	Yes, often	Yes, sometimes	No, never
Books			
e-books			

24. Do you ever obtain e-books from (please select all that apply):
☐ Other free source, e.g. Project Gutenberg
☐ Commercial source, e.g. Amazon
☐ Other:

25. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
A. I use Derbyshire Libraries' e-book lending service because I don't have time to visit a library					
B. I use Derbyshire Libraries' e-book lending service because there isn't a library close to where I live					
C. I use Derbyshire Libraries' e-book lending service because I have a disability which makes it difficult to get access to or to use the library					

26. If you think that there are any changes or improvements that could be made to Derbyshire Libraries' e-book service, please provide details below:

27. What value, if any, do you think the e-book service brings to the broader range of Derbyshire Libraries' services?

28. Is there anything else you would like to add that hasn't been covered in this survey or any other feedback you would like to give?

Thank you very much for taking part in our survey.

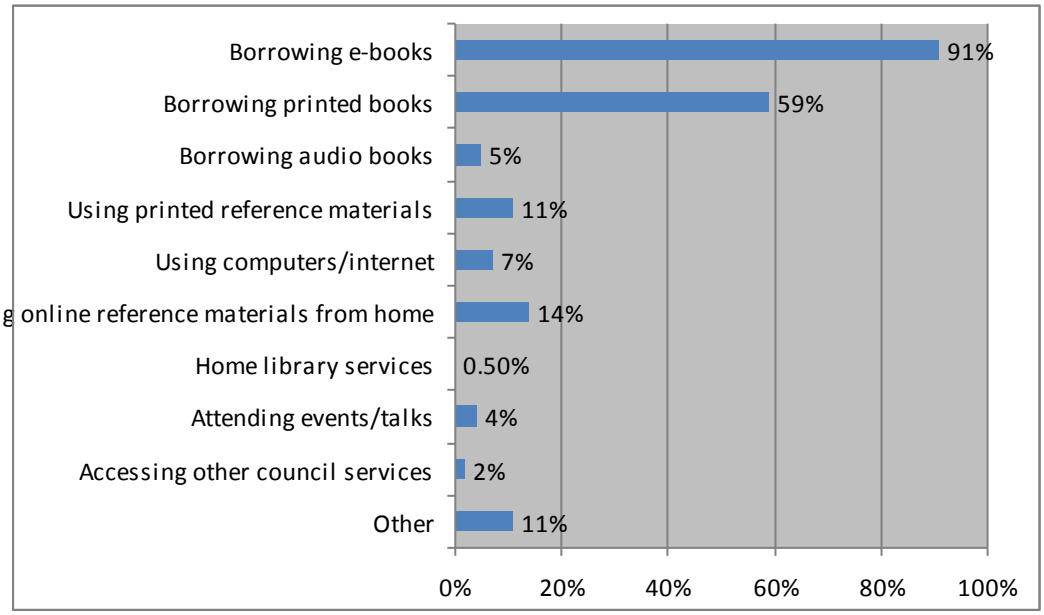

Chart 1. Responses to the question "Which of the following Derbyshire library services do you currently use?" (Note that as multiple answers were allowed throughout, totals exceed 100%).

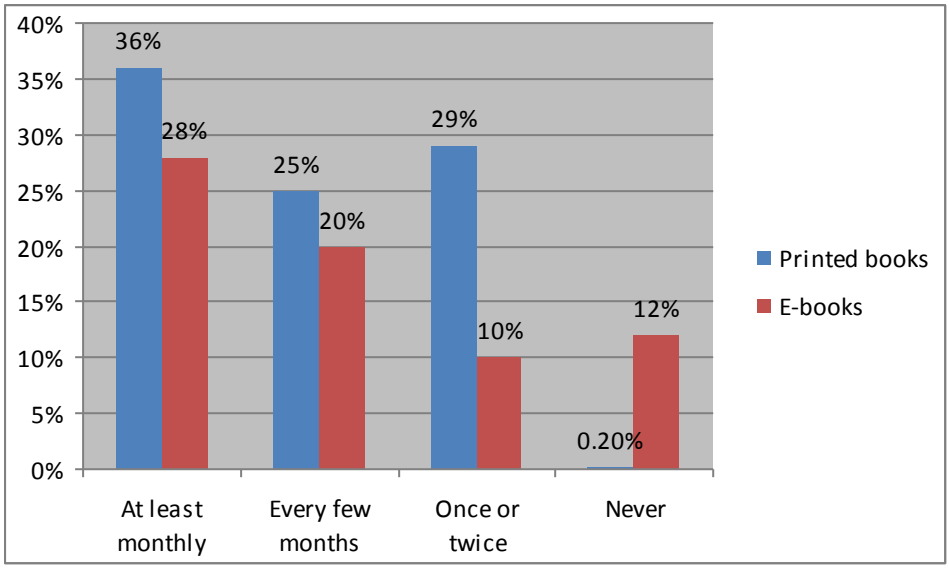

Chart 2: Comparison between printed book and e-book borrowing according to frequency of library visits.

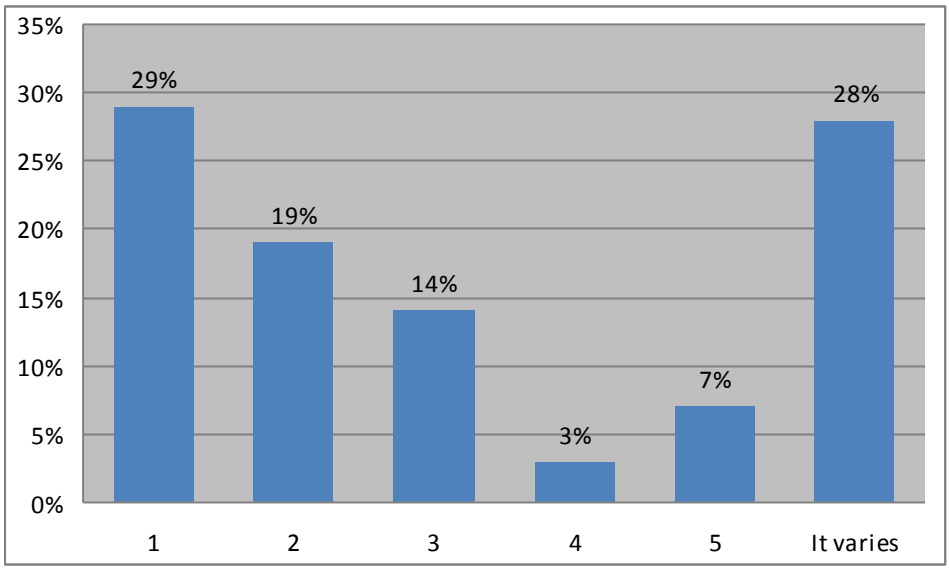

Chart 3. Responses to the question "How many e-books do you/did you usually borrow at one time from Derbyshire Libraries?" N = 420

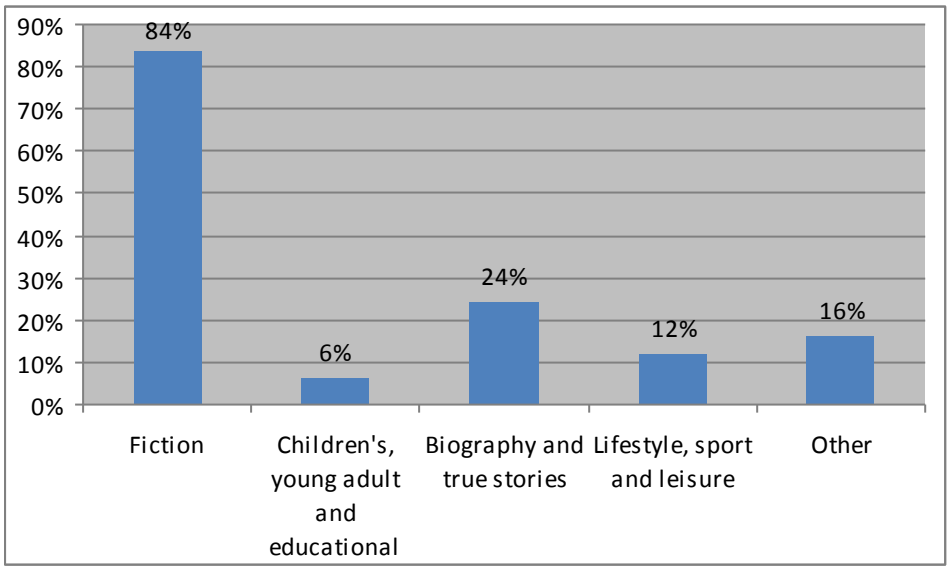

Chart 4. Responses to the question "What kinds of e-books do you most often borrow from Derbyshire Libraries?" N = 420

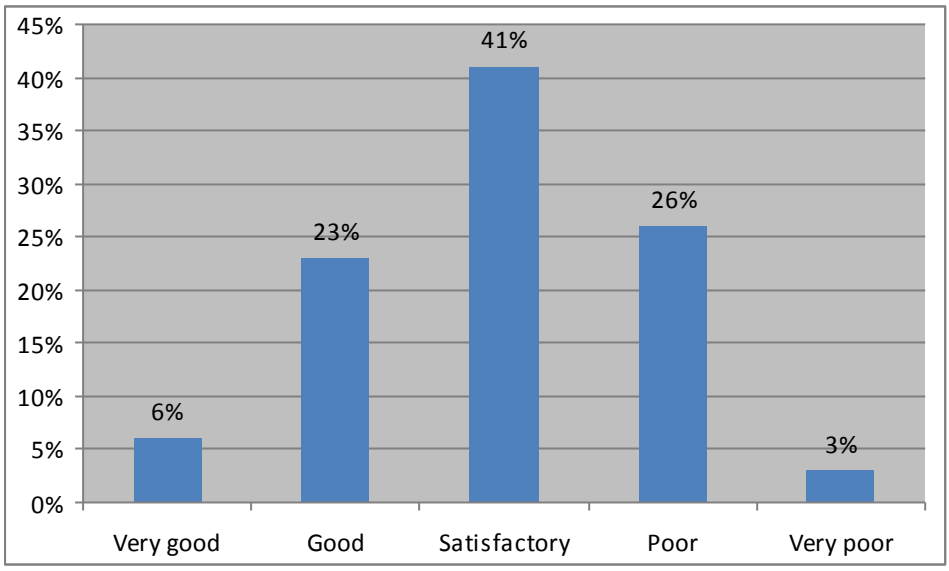

Chart 5. Responses to the question "How would you describe the selection of e-books available from Derbyshire Libraries?" N = 416

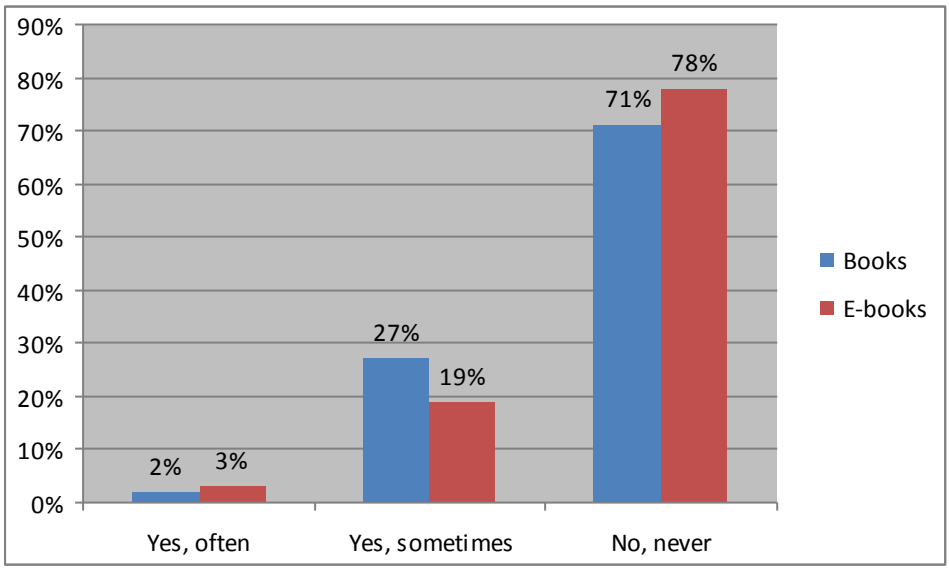

Chart 6. Responses to the question "Do you ever buy books or e-books because having borrowed them from the library you want to keep your own copy?"

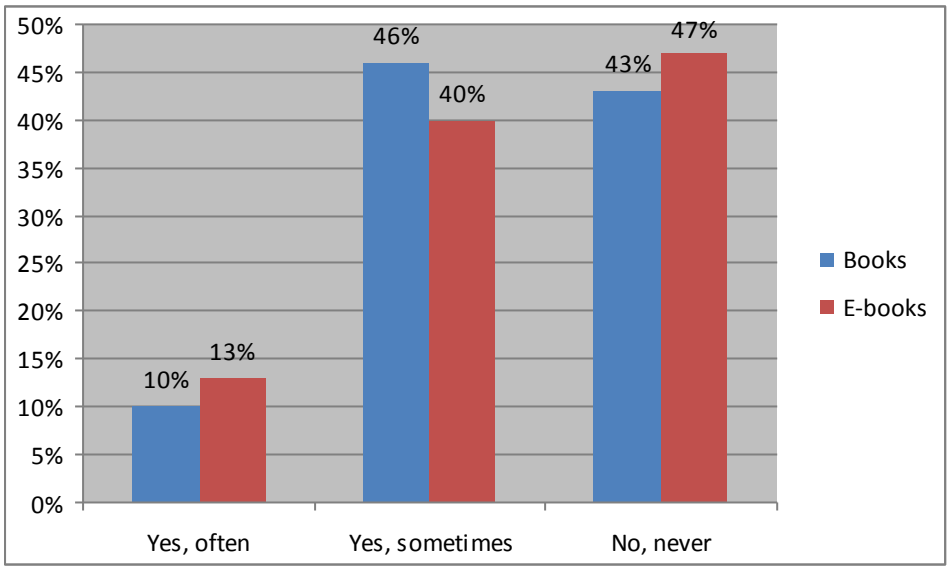

Chart 7. Responses to the question "Do you ever buy books or e-books because you've wanted to borrow them but they've been unavailable from your library?"