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## The Book vs. E-Book: E-Book Survey Report

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## The Book vs. E-Book: E-Book Survey Report

### Abstract

During the Spring Semester 2014 at Winthrop University an E-book survey was administered to Winthrop faculty, staff, and students. The objectives of the survey were (1) to inform the patrons that the library does have e-books available to them, (2) to ascertain if they have used any of the e-books for their research, (3) to determine which format, print or e-book, is their primary preference and (4) which format do they think is most important as part of the permanent library collection. The results, including comments from the faculty, staff and students, were compiled and are presented in this paper.

### Keywords

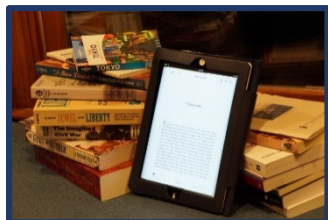
e-books, collection development, usage, assessment



## FEATURED ARTICLE

### The Book vs. E-Book: E-Book Survey Report

By Susan Silverman



#### Introduction

In October of 2011, Dacus Library signed the first agreement with Yankee Book

Peddler (YBP) to establish a Patron Driven Acquisition program. Once a month, YBP would download e-books to the Dacus Library Online Catalog. As it happened, our first e-book purchase was actually two e-books purchased on the same day. The two first e-books purchased on December 13, 2011 were *Destined for Failure: American Prosperity in the Age of Bailouts* and *Cities Going Green: A Handbook of Best Practices*. Both of these titles are still in our collection.

#### Demand Driven Acquisitions or Patron Driven Acquisitions:

Dacus Library has established a profile with Yankee Book Peddler by selecting specific subject areas to be included in the weekly downloads. Then, on a weekly basis, Yankee Book Peddler supplies discovery records for digital titles that match our selected subject areas. These titles remain in the catalog for one year and are available for free browsing, short-term loans and for purchase. Library patrons can locate these e-books through the online catalog and also in the electronic database, *ebrary Academic Complete*.

Our contract with Yankee Book Peddler permits three short-term loans of either 10 minutes or 10 pages with no charges. The fourth short-term loan automatically triggers a purchase. This arrangement allows for individual patrons to add specific titles to our e-

book collection. Therefore, we should see an increase in the number of e-books in the most heavily used subject areas. And on the other side, those patrons using less popular subject areas will be able to access books on a short-term loan basis.

#### ebrary Academic Complete:

Dacus Library has a subscription to a base collection of e-books from *ebrary Academic Complete*. This base collection provides unlimited, concurrent multi-user access to over 75,000 titles, with more titles being added monthly. This collection is currently valued at over seven million dollars if these titles were purchased outright. The collection emphasizes academic scholarly titles. The service also provides apps to download content to the iPad, iPhone, iPod touch, and Android. InfoTools include a multiple searching option, chapter ranking of search results, highlighting and annotating, and usage statistics.

In a brochure for *ebrary Academic Complete*, Anne Cerstvik Nolan, Electronic Resources Coordinator at Brown University Library, states that ebrary provides access to a "multidisciplinary library of e-books from authoritative publishers. Best of all, the collection is available to any number of students at any time and continues to grow at no additional cost."

The table below provides a breakdown by topics of the e-books available for Winthrop faculty, staff and students on April 22, 2014.

Ebrary Academic Complete		
Subject Area	Call Number Range	Number of e-books
Anthropology	GF1 – GT6390	1,408
Business & Economics	HB1 – HJ9999	17,500
Computers & IT	QA71 – QA100	2,675
Education	L1 – LJ165	4,821
Engineering & Technology	T1 – TP1185	7,435
Fine Arts	N1 – NX820	1,941
History	D1 – F3799	13,848
Language & Literature	P1 – PZ90	21,707
Law	K1 – KZD5681	3,392
Life Sciences	QH1 – QR502	4,110
Medicine	R1 – RZ999	10,388
Physical Sciences	QD1 – QC996	3,329
Psychology	BF1 – BF1381	2,138
Religion	BL1 – BX9999	6,861
Social Sciences	H1 – HX971	26,945

### E-book Usage Study in Spring 2013

In the spring of 2013, the acquisitions librarian conducted a study of e-book usage based on a year and a half of gathered statistical data. The table below compares the year to date usage for print books and e-books.

Comparison of Print Books and e-Books Usage by Subject				
January – April 2013				
Subject Area	Print Books		E-books Usage	
	Check Outs	Rank	Titles Accessed	Rank
Anthropology	94	20	31	13
Biology	374	8	144	3
Business	207	15	144	2
Chemistry	135	19	21	15
Computer Science	1194	5	55	9
Dance	61	24	5	24
Design	1593	2	7	23
Education	2219	1	55	10
English	1388	4	172	1
Fine Arts	679	6	11	22
Geography & Geology	73	23	17	17
Health & PE	145	18	17	18
History	1409	3	138	5
Human Nutrition	86	22	14	19
Mass Communication	201	16	13	20
Music	271	10	36	12
Mathematics	87	21	12	21
Philosophy & Religion	450	7	99	7
Physics	45	25	44	11

### E-book Survey 2014

The e-book survey was conducted for these reasons:

- To inform the library user that Dacus Library currently has e-books
- To ascertain if they had ever used one of the e-books
- To determine their preference between a printed book and an e-book
- To seek their opinion on e-books as part of the permanent collection in their discipline
- To identify means to increase usage of the e-books

The survey was developed using Qualtrics. One survey was distributed to faculty, staff and administrators. It was sent electronically to the Library News e-mail group. One hundred twenty-three of these surveys were returned.

Survey Faculty, Staff, and Administrator Demographics	
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	33%
Female	67%
<b>Administrator &amp; Other 11%</b>	
Office of the President	13%
Academic Affairs	63%
Student Life	13%
Other	13%
<b>Faculty 61%</b>	
College of Arts & Sciences	54%
College of Business Administration	6%
College of Education	13%
College of Visual & Performing Arts	15%
Dacus Library	6%
University College	6%
<b>Staff 28%</b>	
<b>Years at Winthrop</b>	
New this year	14%
1-5 years	25%
6-10 years	20%
11-15 years	11%
16-20 years	8%

A second slightly different survey was distributed to students through the All-Students daily announcements. As only 14 of these surveys were returned, paper copies of the survey were distributed at the Information Commons. With the added enticement of candy, 170 surveys were completed. These surveys were then entered into Qualtrics to calculate the results.

Survey Student Demographics	
Gender	
Male	30%
Female	70%
Undergraduate Students	
Freshman	18%
Sophomore	20%
Junior	32%
Senior	30%
Graduate Students	
	5%

## Analysis of Results

### Does Dacus Library currently offer access to e-books? How many do we have?

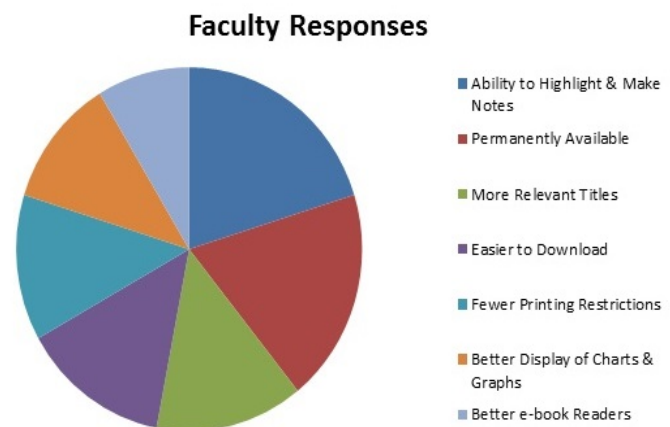
The first two questions were designed to inform the library patrons that we do have e-books and we actually have over 140,000 of them. Sixty-two percent of the faculty/staff knew that we had access to e-books; whereas 36% did not know if we had e-books. A larger percent of the students (74%) knew we had e-books, with only 25% who did not know.

### Have you ever used an e-book for your academic work?

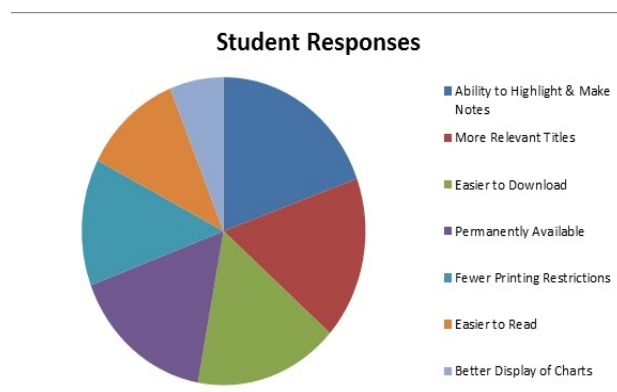
A high percentage of the faculty/staff (67%) have not used one of the e-books from our collection for their academic work. Forty-five percent of the students indicated that they had used one of the e-books for their academic work.

When you have the option of using either the electronic or print version of an academic book, which do you typically use?	
I typically select the e-book.	
Faculty / Staff	14%
Students	19%
Selected Comments:	
Faculty & Staff	Students
• Searchable	• I can highlight the e-book.
• With poor vision, e-book is easier to read.	• Easier to access wherever you go without toting around a heavy book.
• More convenient to take when traveling	• I can easily find key words in e-book
• They provide immediate access to information.	• I don't have to concern myself with wear/tear, spills, return dates.
• Because if I need to access multiple books, I can carry them all in one tablet.	• e-book allows me to save on space as single device can give me access to thousands of books.
I typically select the print book:	
Faculty / Staff	52%
Students	53%
Selected Comments:	
• Portability customization and ownership	• Too much screen time bothers my eyes
• Easy to carry around – doesn't need batteries to operate	• It is easier to flip back or put tabs on pages I want to revisit
• Nostalgia, plus it's still easier to flip around a physical book than to wait on an e-book to turn pages	• It doesn't distract me with blinking visuals

### What improvements would increase your usage of e-books?







The top two reasons to increase e-book usage for faculty and staff were the “ability to highlight and make notes” and “permanently available.” Whereas for students the top two reasons were the “ability to highlight and make notes” and “more relevant titles” for their topics

### Various Comments Concerning e-books:

The next group of questions asked the participants to agree, neither agree nor disagree, or disagree with different comments. These comments expressed diverse opinions on e-books. The first comment was taken from a research article in Scientific American, which stated, “In many studies people understand and remember what they read on paper better than what they read on screens. Researchers think the physicality of paper explains this discrepancy.” Students (75%) overwhelmingly agreed with this statement; whereas half of the faculty/staff (50%) agreed.

Slightly more than half of all respondents agreed with this statement, “E-books will eventually become the most popular format for books.”

### Which format do you believe is most important for the Dacus Library collection?

For this question we wanted the respondents to make a choice between e-books and printed books for the future of the collection. The obvious choice is both; however, we were interested in their opinions specifically within

their discipline. Overall both the faculty & staff (63%) and student (80%) groups selected the print book as most important for the collection. The tables below breaks these results down by specific discipline and demographics.

Which format do you believe is most important for the Dacus Library collection?					
Faculty & Staff			Students		
Years at Winthrop	E-books	Print Books	Year in School	E-books	Print books
New	5	7	Freshman	4	22
1-5 years	12	14	Sophomore	6	24
6-10 years	11	10	Junior	10	38
11-15 years	4	8	Senior	9	36
16-20 years	2	6	Graduate	3	5
21-25 years	2	7			
Over 25 years	3	8			
Males	17	14	Males	14	34
Females	22	44	Females	18	93

Which format do you believe is most important for the Dacus Library collection?			
Academic Unit & Department	E-books	Print Books	Total
<b>College of Arts &amp; Sciences</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>32</b>
Biology	3	3	6
Chemistry, Physics and Geology	0	2	2
English	2	4	6
History	0	2	2
Human Nutrition	1	1	2
Interdisciplinary Studies	1	0	1
Mass communication	2	1	3
Mathematics	0	1	1
Philosophy and Religious Studies	2	0	2
Political Science	1	0	1
Psychology	0	0	0
Social Work	0	1	1
Sociology and Anthropology	0	1	1
World Languages and Cultures	0	2	2
<b>College of Business Administration</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>
Accounting, Finance and Economics	0	0	0
Computer Science and Quantitative Methods	1	1	2
Management and Marketing	1	1	2
<b>College of Education</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>
Counseling, Leadership and educational Studies	3	1	4
Curriculum and Pedagogy	0	2	2
Physical Education, Sport, and Human Performance	2	1	3
<b>College of Visual &amp; Performing Arts</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
Design	0	3	3
Fine Arts	0	5	5
Music	0	0	0
Theatre and Dance	0	2	2
<b>Dacus Library</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>University College</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>

### General Observations:

- More students (45%) responded that they had used an e-book from our collection for an assignment than faculty/staff (33%) indicated that they had used an e-book for their academic work.
- Over half of both surveyed groups responded that when given a choice they would use a print book rather than an e-book. An even larger percentage of both groups (72%) felt that the print books were more important for the library collection.
- When reviewing data by specific departments, it is hard to conclude definitive statements due to the relatively small numbers of respondents by departments. However, all participants from the College of Visual and Performing Arts agreed that print books were most important for the collection in their disciplines.
- Also, the newer faculty and staff members (at Winthrop less than 10 years) are basically evenly divided between print books and e-books.

### Conclusion:

- It is recommended that this survey be re-administered in 2 – 3 years. This will give faculty, staff, and students more time to actually use the e-books and the technical issues with the e-books and the e-book readers should have improved.
- The next time the survey is administered, it is recommended that the 'Faculty Conference' mailing distribution list be used. Hopefully this would increase the number of responses from faculty members in different departments.

- Unless the All Students distribution list is enhanced and the survey link can be emailed directly to the students, the

best way to get responses from the students is to distribute a printed copy of the survey within the library.

- The two tables below list selected comments from students, faculty and staff concerning their general views of e-books as part of the Dacus Library collection.

**Susan Silverman** is the Director of Library Assessment at Winthrop University

Photo by Alex Silverman

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