

Instant fulfilment: the successful use of patron driven acquisitions to satisfy interlibrary loans

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As ebooks continue to rise in popularity, the implementation of Patron Driven Acquisitions¹ (PDA), with EBL as the vendor, has already proven a very successful model at the University of Sussex. It allows our users to decide on ebook titles that may become permanent additions to our collection. Using technology to make content more accessible, EBL offers a flexible access model, including free browsing (time-limited), non-linear lending (multiple concurrent accesses to content) and short-term circulation, with the fourth loan triggering an automatic purchase.

With the economic realities of an agreed budget, we make only a subset of the entire EBL catalogue available to our users, carefully chosen with a focus on key subject areas as well as the most recent publications. In order to extend the use of the enormous repertoire of titles offered by EBL, we decided to pilot the use of the entire catalogue of approximately 450,000 ebook titles available through the EBL administrative dashboard LibCentral, to satisfy interlibrary loan (ILL) book requests. We were already offering desktop delivery to our users for journal articles through the British Library, and our aim was to extend desktop delivery to books, fulfilling book requests with ebooks wherever possible. The

¹ Patron Driven Acquisitions, also referred to as Demand Driven Acquisitions

How to cite this book chapter:

Moore, A. 2014. Instant fulfilment: the successful use of patron driven acquisitions to satisfy interlibrary loans. In: Woodward, H. (ed.) *Ebooks in Education: Realising the Vision*. Pp. 79–90. London: Ubiquity Press. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/bal.i>

pilot service was launched in February 2013 and evaluated through the Spring and Summer terms, generally our busiest months for ILL requests.

Using quantitative statistics on availability, subject coverage, cost and usage, as well as qualitative feedback from users, in this paper I evaluate the success of the pilot with reference to Ranganathan's (1931) five laws of library science:

1. Books are for use
2. Every reader his or her book
3. Every book its reader
4. Save the time of the reader
5. The library is a growing organism

Although Ranganathan first conceived the five laws of library science at a time when the term open access (OA) referred to the newly found freedom for users to browse along the open book shelves, there is an interesting similarity here with what is happening now with OA publishing. Again it allows users greater access to research material, but now outside of the constraints of the library building itself. Although technology has changed the information landscape beyond all recognition, Ranganathan's clearly elucidated laws are arguably (McMenemy 2007) still relevant today, and serve to refocus our attention firmly back on our library users, to reflect on how best we can serve their needs in a climate of economic constraints, higher user expectations and continual change.

Implementing desktop delivery for ILL book requests

We launched the pilot service in February 2013 as part of a new desktop delivery service for ILL with a new form for placing requests online. The default option for a journal article request was "secure electronic delivery"² to the requestor's email address, although users could choose from other delivery methods if preferred. For book requests, users were first offered access to an ebook, where available, but we would continue with a request for the hard copy ILL from the British Library, if print was the preferred format or the title was not available as an ebook.

Following discussions with our collection development librarian, we agreed to use the same access model for satisfying ILL book requests as for our current PDA model, largely because our users were already familiar with this. When a user opens a title for the first time, there is a five minute browse period (ten minutes for owned titles)³ that is not counted as a loan instance. A

² Secure electronic delivery is a service offered by the British Library for supplying journal articles as encrypted PDF files using the FileOpen digital rights management tool – <http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/atyourdesk/docsupply/help/receiving/deliveryoptions/electronic/index.html>

³ Titles your library has purchased or autopurchased via the EBL system

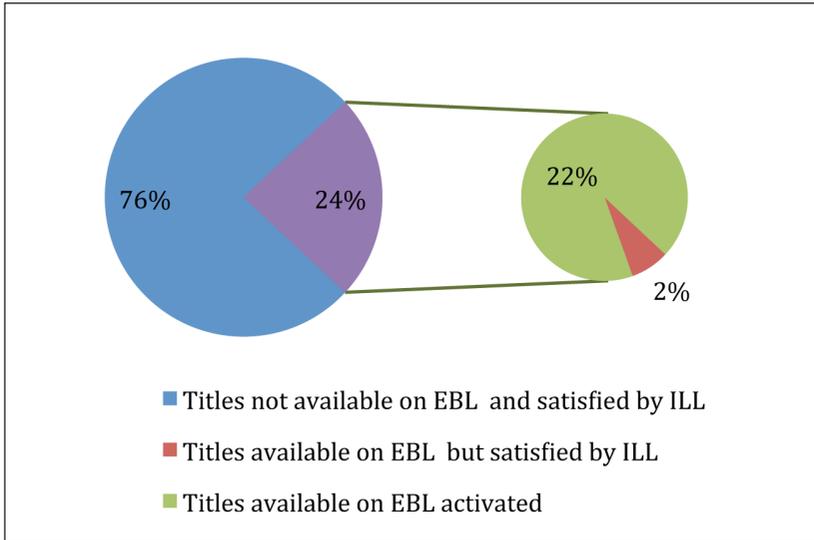


Figure 1: Percentage of ILL titles available on EBL.

loan is triggered by a user initiating a print, a copy or a download of the title or when the browse period expires. A loan period lasts for 24 hours and within this time an individual can read online, download the ebook, print and copy text, within certain limits, and access the ebook anytime within the 24 hour period. Additionally, we set a limit of £150 on the purchase price of an ebook and allocated £5,000 from the ILL budget for the pilot. Above £150, we would order through the ILL system unless no other lending locations were found.

Each day, all interlibrary book requests were checked against the full catalogue of EBL ebooks for a direct match, using the advanced search. We set up a list within LibCentral to track titles used to satisfy ILL requests and also set up a new fund code for ILL to track costs. Activating an ebook title is achieved simply by turning visibility on from the results page or from the item full record. The requestor was notified by email that the title was available as an ebook and a link to the ebook was sent along with further access information. Additionally, if an ebook was not their preferred option, the user was invited to get back to us and we would continue with a traditional ILL request and order a print copy from the British Library, in which case a £2 admin charge for obtaining an ILL would apply.

Once an ebook is activated in LibCentral, it becomes part of our Sussex EBL collection and is discoverable through Library Search (powered by ExLibris Primo)⁴, although it does not appear on the library catalogue, Capita Prism,

⁴ Primo is ExLibris' solution for discovery and delivery – <http://www.exlibrisgroup.com/category/PrimoOverview> – allowing users to search across the library catalogue as well as ebooks, ejournals and other online resources

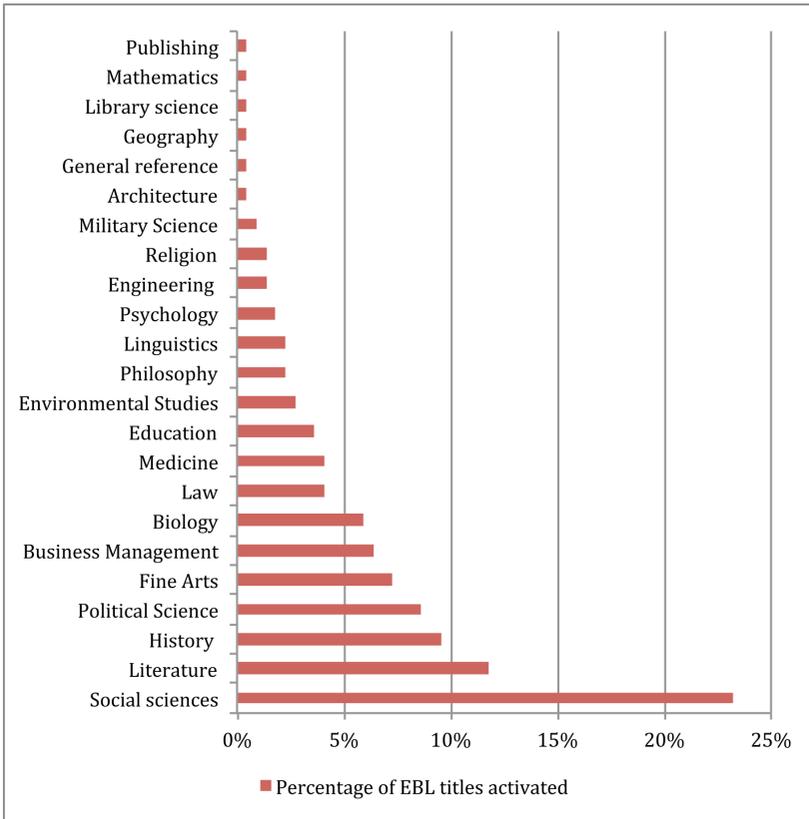


Figure 2: Subject categories.

unless the title becomes an automatic purchase on the fourth short loan. EBL provide a weekly list of purchased titles as well as the associated MARC records which are added to the library catalogue.

Summary of findings

Availability

Over the six month period of the pilot, we were surprised at the number of ILL book request titles that were available through the EBL full catalogue (**Figure 1**). Of the 996 interlibrary loan book requests fulfilled during this period, 238 (24%) of the titles were found to be available on EBL. Of these, 220 were activated and 18, although available, were not activated as the requestor's preference was for a print copy.

The reasons given by users for preferring a print copy to an ebook fell into several key categories:

| | No. of Titles | % of titles | Cost (exc. VAT) | Average cost per title |
|---|---------------|-------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| EBL titles leading to automatic purchase (4th SL) | 24 | 11% | £1,874 | £78.08 |
| EBL titles with between 1–3 SLs | 130 | 59% | £2,000 | £15.38 |
| EBL titles browsed (less than 5 mins) | 66 | 30% | £0 | £0.00 |
| Total | 220 | | £3,874 | £17.61 |

Table 1: Cost of EBL titles.

- Needing to read the whole book and not comfortable reading online for any length of time
- A problem accessing the ebook due to IT Services password not working [temporary problem with user's account]
- Technical restrictions on the number of pages that can be printed [this can vary from one publisher to another]
- Preference always for a print copy rather than an ebook

Overall the feedback from users has been very positive, with favourable comments on the speed of delivery offered by the new service in providing online access to the material requested. The traditional ILL takes five to ten days to arrive, depending on the lending location, compared to within 24 hours to provide access to the ebook. In addition to a small number of users with a preference for a print copy, there were an equal number of requestors that specified they would prefer an ebook, if available.

Subject coverage

The top five subject categories covered by ebooks used to satisfy ILL requests were: the social sciences (51 titles), literature (26), history (21), political science (19) and fine arts (16) (**Figure 2**). For comparison, the top five subject areas (based on the user's department) for the ILL requests were very similar English literature, art history, history, international relations and politics, and media and film. With around 450,000 titles made available for selection from key academic publishers, such as Taylor and Francis, Oxford University Press and Palgrave Macmillan, EBL offers a wide range of academic material that matches the needs of our users.

Costs

Of the 220 ebooks activated on EBL, only 24 titles became automatic purchases, triggered by the fourth short loan (**Table 1**). The majority of titles

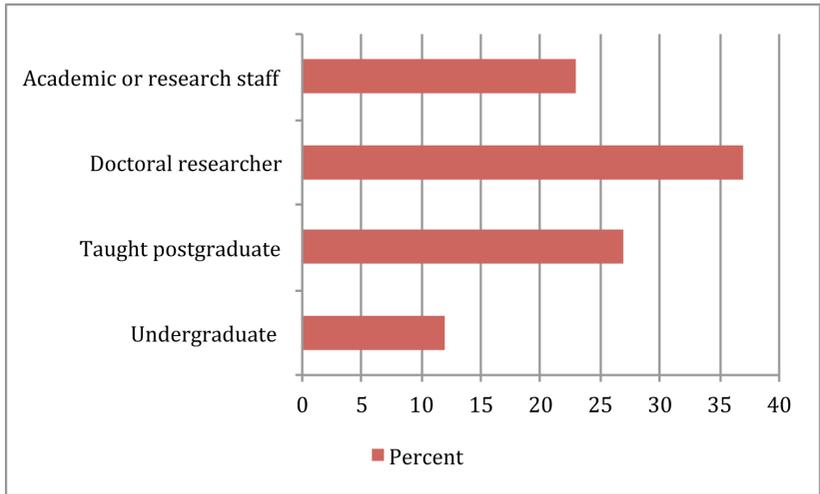


Figure 3: Borrower type.

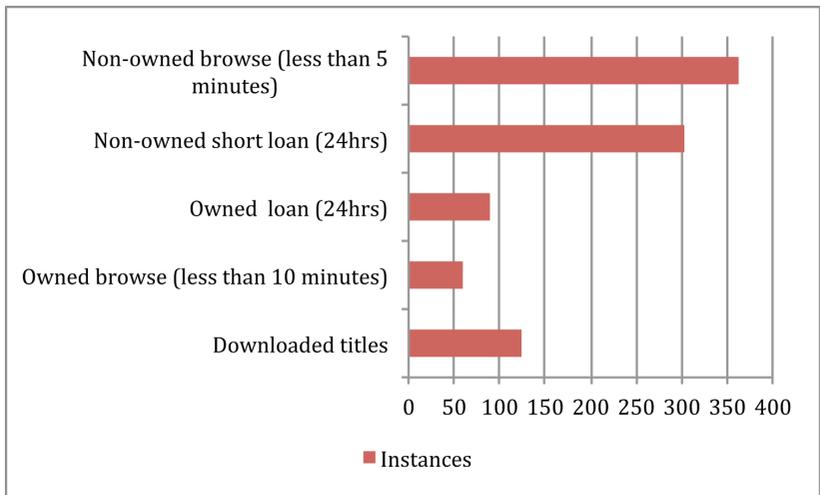


Figure 4: Usage type.

received only one short loan (30%), 14% received two short loans and 15% three short loans. The average cost per title varied considerably depending on whether the reader accessed the ebook for one or more 24-hour loan periods. The cost of a loan period is set by the publisher and can vary considerably; however a guide price for a 24 hour loan is 10–15% of the purchase price.

The most surprising result was the high percentage (30%) of ebooks that were only “browsed” by the reader and did not result in a short loan. The

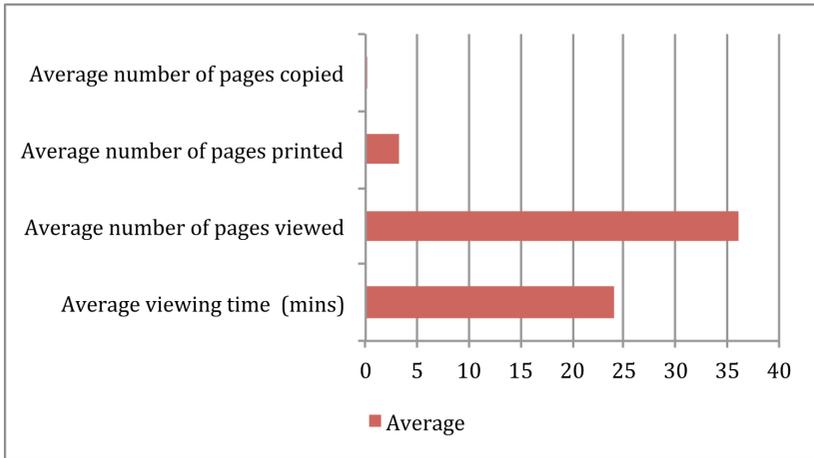


Figure 5: User activity.

browse feature of EBL allows the reader to view a non-owned ebook for up to five minutes without triggering a loan. With 66 titles viewed without a charge, this brought the average cost per title (loans and purchases) down to £17.61. Although this cost remains higher than the direct costs of a traditional interlibrary loan from the British Library, £11.60 (at the time of the pilot) plus return carriage costs, 24 titles became owned titles during the pilot and therefore remain part of our permanent collection. For comparison, if all 220 items had been obtained through the British Library, the full cost would have been £2,772, taking into account the £2 handling charge paid by the requestor on collecting an ILL.

User activity

The highest use of ebooks was by doctoral researchers (37%), closely followed by taught postgraduates (27%), academic and research staff (23%) and finally undergraduates (12%) (**Figure 3**). The combined figure for ILL requests received from postgraduates was 56%, academic and research staff 19% and undergraduates 25%. Comparing these figures indicates that the range of material offered by the EBL catalogue generally satisfies the readership level required by users of the ILL service.

Usage data within LibCentral revealed some interesting patterns (**Figure 4**). Downloading was very popular with over 50% of titles downloaded. During the pilot, we received very few queries from users regarding the technical issues of using EBL ebooks, indicating that users generally found the user interface easy to navigate and were able to download the ebook to a range of devices successfully.

Significant use of the free browsing period was an unexpected result. Our initial concerns at the start of the pilot were that a higher number of titles would result in automatic purchase, significantly raising the cost of the pilot above the allocated budget. In many instances, a browsed title subsequently results in a short loan at a later date; however, in other cases, previewing the contents of the book within the browse period was long enough for the user to decide they did not need to read any further. This pattern of user behaviour sometimes occurs with traditional ILL, where the item is collected from the library and returned almost immediately as the requestor realises that the book does not contain the level of information they were expecting.

Further analysis of use of individual titles revealed low levels of printing or copying of text from ebooks, suggesting that users' needs were met by reading online without the need to print out a paper copy of extracts from the work (**Figure 5**). However, this result may require further examination, as feedback from users indicated some issues regarding the limits of printing from an ebook. EBL uses digital rights management to prevent users printing or copying more than the number of pages allowed by the publisher. This amount varies according to the publisher, which is confusing to users and also acts as a barrier to using the material in different ways.

The average duration online of a short loan was 24 minutes and the average number of pages viewed was 36. This gave us some useful insights into the use of books requested through the ILL service and indicates that users are dipping into a book, with a focus on a particular section or sections, rather than reading cover to cover.

Evaluating the results

The results of the pilot were very encouraging, with plenty of positive feedback from users, costs comparable to traditional ILL, and the new service offering improved access to required reading anytime, anywhere. Revisiting Ranganathan's five laws of library science, we can measure the success of the pilot by examining how well the new service met the fundamental expectations of library users and contributed to the development of effective library services.

Books are for use

Ranganathan's first law of library science is about ensuring books are accessible and easily available for use, with consideration of the location of the library, the development of systems that accommodate the use of library materials, and shelves open stack for the user to browse. McMenemy draws our attention to the relevance of this law to the digital technologies of the 21st century, commenting:

“Books are indeed for use, and if conversion from analogue to digital creates many more users for the one title, then I am sure Ranganathan would have welcomed such a process with open arms” (McMenemy 2007, p.98).

The PDA model of opening up access to a wider selection of scholarly material online has proven a great success with our users, expanding the boundaries of the library to access anytime, anywhere. Extending the use of the full catalogue of EBL PDA titles for satisfying ILL takes this one step further, providing desktop delivery of essential reading within 24 hours of request.

Every reader his or her book

Ranganathan (1931) devotes several chapters of his work to this second law emphasising the need for modern librarianship to serve the needs of *every* reader and to encompass a wide variety of interests and provide books in an accessible format. He is concerned with the equality of access to books and therefore access to education, with the role of the librarian being to remove any barriers to access and understand that individuals will have different needs.

“On the other hand their [library staff] business is to know the reader, to know the books, and to actively help in the finding by every person of his or her book” (Ranganathan 1931, p.291)

The results of the pilot service has demonstrated that use of the EBL full catalogue of ebooks, with its wide subject coverage, has provided an excellent source for finding material required by our users. Additionally, the use of Primo, the discovery service behind Library Search, ensures that once activated ebooks continue to be easily discoverable by other library users.

In many cases, the ebook format is welcomed by the requestor; however, as the results on user activity show, some readers may prefer a print copy in certain circumstances and on these occasions we will use the traditional ILL service to obtain a print copy. Ebook loans satisfy the need of our distance learners very well in crossing the boundaries of space and time. But the barrier of technical protection measures prevents users from printing or copying more than a publisher has allowed under the licence which may restrict the reader from using the material in the desired way, something Ranganathan’s second law warns against.

Every book its reader

The principle of the third law is the complementary reverse of the second law, “Every reader his or her book”, stating that every book should be helped

to find its reader. The interlibrary loan service is central to this law, where library staff are locating and connecting the book with the reader using a range of catalogues and online resources. Although satisfying interlibrary loan requests using ebooks makes this connection between the book and its reader, the results of the pilot indicate that it may not always have the desired result of satisfying the user's requirements as 30% of ebooks activated were only browsed rather than used extensively. Reflecting on this outcome, the flexible model provided by EBL allowing a five-minute browse period is a benefit to users if only to clarify their need for the information contained within the ebook. In terms of traditional ILL, the reader may only have seen the item as a citation in a list of references and may be requesting with the hope that it will be useful to their research. Any tool that allows the user to browse content before a cost is involved is clearly very useful.

Another benefit of the online access that ebooks provide within this context is the opportunity for full-text searching, which assists in the location of relevant information within the work.

Save the time of the reader

The fourth law is recognition of the measure of an excellent library service as its ability to meet the needs of library users efficiently. Ranganathan follows the path of a reader through the library, from returning books to leaving with new ones "critically examining each process that he has to go through, with an eye to the economy of time that can be effected at each stage" (Ranganathan 1931, p.337).

Saving the time of the reader is a central element of the new pilot service. Traditionally there is an expectation of waiting involved in obtaining an ILL from another library, as the speed of delivering a book is limited by the means of delivery, the parcel post or courier system. While journal articles are now routinely delivered by secure electronic delivery, the same improvement in efficiency has not been apparent with the delivery of books until now. Online requesting and desktop delivery of ebooks both serve to save our reader time, providing access to resources without the need to visit the library. Additionally, ebooks save the time of library staff as there are no further processes involved, such as making the book available for loan, renewing or processing the item for return to the lending library.

Leiter (2003, p.417) describes other ways of satisfying this law by "employing the best available technologies to provide quick access to materials". In terms of the pilot, the EBL ebook interface provides the reader with a user friendly, intuitive interface incorporating a range of tools for navigation and use of the resource online as well as downloading to a range of mobile devices.

The library is a growing organism

Ranganathan's fifth law uses the analogy of the library as a "growing organism", describing the ways in which a library must evolve and metamorphose, changing size, shape and format in an effort to remain healthy and stay relevant. This is nowhere more apparent than in the provision of PDA ebooks; new models of delivery, access and content provide a new environment for librarians to develop added value services and for users to experience new ways of learning. As Wicht (2011) concludes in her article discussing the changing nature of resource sharing,

"ILL departments in academic libraries are operating in a time of major change that presents new opportunities to expand and redefine services in ways that best serve evolving patron needs".

Conclusions

The results of the pilot service demonstrate that using ebooks to satisfying ILL requests complements our traditional ILL request service, offering a speedier delivery direct to the user's desktop, anytime, anywhere. Analysis of the results with reference to Ranganathan's five laws of library science highlights the benefits to our users, saving them time, recognising individual needs and helping them to find the essential books they need for their study and research.

In discussing the relationship between ebooks and ILL, Gee (2007) notes that:

"... while some loathe ebooks, many others have become accustomed to using them, often even demanding e-articles for their research, and also are quickly adopting ebooks" (Gee 2007, p.24).

Gee also identifies the cost and efficiency benefits of satisfying requests through access to an ebook in satisfying patron needs. With the benefits of using ebooks for instant fulfilment clearly demonstrated during the pilot, this is a service that we were keen to continue offering and using ebook loans to satisfy ILL requests is now a key part of the service we offer our users.

Finally, revisiting their relevance in the 21st century, Ranganathan's five laws of library science continue to remain appropriate in the digital environment, providing a framework for reviewing service delivery and helping to ensure that every reader does have access to his or her book.

"Five simple statements that say so much of what we are about and what we strive to achieve for society" (McMenemy, 2007, p.100).

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