E-books in academic libraries

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Abstract
Purpose
This paper provides an analysis of the current state-of-the-art in e-books, and attempts both to set the scene and provide reasons for their low uptake.

Design/methodology/approach
The different approaches to e-books of academic librarians, authors, publishers and readers are considered, using the results of a recent survey commissioned by the Joint Information Systems Committee.

Findings
The findings of this study make it clear that those who know about e-books see them as potentially useful tools. However, a number of users of ICT resources are still unaware of e-books even when their academic libraries’ e-book holdings is high. The lack of promotion from within the university, particularly from the academics, and to a certain extent from the librarians, is indeed a major reason for this knowledge gap.

Practical implications
Publishers, e-book providers and aggregators, academics and intermediaries (i.e. librarians and information specialists) should concentrate on raising awareness of what is available and what are the advantages related to e-books for specific categories of users. At the same time e-book suppliers should make e-books easier to find and purchase. Crucially, both the research and commercial development communities have to address these major issues: definition of common bench marks for research to progress; user-centred design as a paradigm; better and stronger links with all stakeholders.

Originality/value
This paper offers a stepping stone for all parties interested in moving forwards to achieve this common goal.

Keywords
Academic libraries  Electronic books

Citation

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