

1. Background

Why an eContent plan?

eBooks and downloadable audiobooks represent a fundamentally different type of eContent than traditionally offered by libraries. Whereas periodical databases and various online reference and learning resources tended to supplement library offerings, this new type of eContent duplicates and possibly replaces traditional circulating material. The legal status of this type of eContent also radically changes how libraries can purchase and circulate materials. Most eContent license agreements are not favorable toward libraries. There is no right of first sale, no real ownership, and no guarantee of access. Given the complexity of this new eContent world, and its potential to fundamentally change library service, it seems wise to plan, however tentatively, a way to navigate toward this this unknown future.

2. Challenges to Creating an eContent Plan. All is Flux.

All of the continually evolving legal, social, economic, and technological issues that affect libraries and eContent can seem overwhelming. Library influence (compared to Amazon, Apple, Google, and major publishers etc.) is limited. Many key issues may likely be decided with little thought or care for libraries. Where there is concern for libraries, it may be how to keep them out of the loop. From one day to the next we cannot even be certain what will be available and how much it will cost.

What can/should we do?

- Keep up with eBook related news and developments, both in the marketplace and library world.
- Be prepared to make adjustments as the landscape changes.
- Balance what is possible now with what is ideal in the future.
- Report and discuss major “eContent” developments at AAC meetings and email.
- Look for ways to be involved in larger projects that may have an impact on our access to eContent.
- Pray (in a nonsectarian way, of course).

3. Statewide Projects (WPLC)

The eBook summit in 2011 and the subsequent creation of a statewide buying pool for 2012 have all but cemented this statewide approach as our primary avenue for building an eContent collection.

What can/should we do?

- Participate in WPLC activities. System and member library staffs were active in the eBook Summit and have been and continue to be active participants in WPLC board and committee meetings. We should continue *and expand* on this participation.
- Work to make WPLC responsible to “investors” and to make sure that WPLC evolves to effectively manage the responsibilities of a large statewide collection.
- Promote the importance of the statewide digital buying pool.
- Promote the value of the statewide collection to patrons.
- Although Overdrive is our best short-term access to eContent, we should work with WPLC to continually evaluate other vendors and options.

4. What about owning our own eContent: the Douglas County Model.

Rather than wait for all the legal eBook dust to settle, some libraries have attempted to address the major problems libraries face in providing eContent, particularly the loss of ownership, the loss of discount/purchasing power, and lack of integration with the library ILS. In the Douglas County model, a library or a group of libraries negotiates directly with a publisher to purchase and own the digital rights for a book. To do this, the library needs to build the infrastructure to check in and check out digital books and to provide the digital rights management necessary to prevent unauthorized use and copying of the digital titles they own.

What can/should we do?

- Realistically, the time and money needed to build this infrastructure at the system level is likely beyond us at this time.
- If this model proves feasible, it seems more profitable to pursue it as a statewide project.
- Currently this ownership model is only supported by select independent publishers. While, these positive first steps should be supported, without major publisher participation, it can only be a partial solution.
- We should be following the progress of these projects closely, particularly within the context of a statewide project through WPLC.

5. System and Library Level Options

Systems have limited resources to purchase additional eContent. Over the years we have had to cancel subscriptions and limit what eResources the system can offer. Budgetary constraints are the driving force, but limited usage of some databases is also a factor. Member library budgets are also increasingly under stress.

Given that, currently, the state buying pool and working with WPLC is the primary focus for providing eContent, what can we do at the system or local level?

A. Working with Vendors

Continually look for vendors that complement the statewide collection. In 2012 that would be Recorded Books. Appleton Public Library is subscribing to Zinio, “the world’s largest newsstand.” We will closely evaluate current projects and report back on their usage and overall usability.

What minimum standards should we set for working with vendors? Standards might include:

- Ownership of content (or minimal maintenance fee or path to sustainability)
- Ease of use
- Ability to integrate searching and sign in with catalog
- Quality library levels statistics

Currently Recorded Books does not meet any of these potential standards. On the other hand, they have unique content which is available from no one else. This gets back to the question of trying to balance what is possible now with what is ideal or needed in the future. Should we work with “imperfect” vendors now and pressure them for improvements, or wait until they can better meet our requirements?

B. Budgetary consideration

In the past, OWLSnet has generally tried to cover the cost of electronic resources. This model is not maintainable as/if we move to buying more “circulating” items such as eBooks, and downloadable audiobooks.

What can we do?

- Create an OWLSnet level buying pool for additional resources?
- The OverDrive advantage program does allow for individual libraries to add additional money to the collection.
 - Should we continue to purchase advantage titles and if we do, what is the best way to fund these purchases?
 - Should we set goals for the types of items to purchase?
- Keep the focus on statewide collections.
 - Possibly increase buying pool contributions to add new statewide eContent resources?
- Focus on one resource, such as Recorded Books or Zinio and leave it at that?

C. Better Integration

Regardless of whether a collection is statewide or local, or whether we are working with vendors or own the content, better integration with our ILS/OPAC is a high priority. Having multiple vendors, logins, websites, and procedures for accessing eContent may be a short term necessity, but is also a major hurdle for libraries attempting to provide eContent. We have a number of options to explore, but no simple solutions.

Some available options to consider

- Rely on ILS vendor (e.g. Ill moving toward better integration with OverDrive).
- Rely on content vendor (e.g. OverDrive making APIs available to better integrate with ILS).
- Rely on third party discovery layers, some of which incorporate eContent into the ILS.
- Pay for programmers to help us take advantage of these options.
- All of the above.

What can we do?

- Explore options for making eContent resources easier to find, particularly options for better integrating eContent directly into InfoSoup.
- Some subscription based discovery layers are beginning to provide better integration of third party eContent resources. These discovery layers are currently priced beyond what we are willing or able to spend. We can evaluate this annually and keep our eyes open for new developments.
- Explore the potential for a statewide discover layer.
- Explore cooperation with other systems or third parties using open source discovery layers.
- Contract for developing an open source solution.

D. Educational Role

Along with offering eContent, Libraries can also play a variety of educational and promotional roles. According to a June 2012 Pew Internet report [Libraries, patrons, and e-books](#):

- 58% of all library card holders say they do not know if their library provides e-book lending service.
- 47% of all those who read an eBook in the past year did not know if their library lends eBooks.

What can we do?

- Make sure patrons know we have eBooks.
- Help patrons new to eBooks learn about their options.
- Help patrons use library eBooks. System staff will continue to provide eBook training, documentation, and support.
- Libraries can help patrons understand some of the economic and licensing issues surrounding eBooks.
- Libraries can share information on why we are struggling to offer eBooks and why many eBooks are not available (show Douglas County report).

E. Communication

As we are spending more (of your) money on eContent, good communication to and from WPLC, OWLSnet, and member Libraries becomes more essential.

What can we do?

- Work with WPLC to improve communication to libraries.
- Make eContent updates and discussion a regular part of AAC and email updates.
- Have a plan (and update it regularly).
- Work more closely with the resource library & member libraries to take advantage of the eContent work they are doing, such as guides, handouts, training, and blogs <http://www.apl.org/blogs/pulp-less-fiction>

F. Miscellaneous

- Work with the state to find a good solution for reporting circulation of eContent.
- Get more patron feedback?
- Develop guidelines for dealing with commercialization and eContent. Examples include:
 - Advertising in OverDrive
 - Zinio blurring lines between Library Subscription and buying a personal subscription

6. Other thoughts

It is clear that there are many difficulties libraries face in offering eContent and that there is a lot of uncertainty about the future. While I'm hopeful, I think it is also important to recognize the possibility that this could turn out pretty badly for libraries. This view was most notably expressed by Eli Neiburger in his 2011 "We are screwed" presentation during *EBooks: Libraries at the Tipping Point* online conference. Neiburger argues that circulation of physical items is an outmoded technology and that decline is inevitable. He is also very skeptical that the legal and economic framework of eBooks will change significantly to allow libraries to survive primarily as distributors of books. This isn't going to happen overnight, he says, but it is inevitable.

While I'm skeptical that anyone has a crystal ball, it is clear that the challenges libraries face in providing eContent are daunting. Libraries should be thinking about how to adjust to a world where physical items play less and less of a role and where eContent may not be available to fill the void.

While this paper deals primarily with eBooks and, to a lesser extent, audiobooks (the formats primarily offered through OverDrive) it is important to keep in mind that all physical formats that libraries offer are also affected by the changing eContent environment. The economics of the music and newspaper industry have already changed dramatically. The marketplace for movies and magazines is changing rapidly. The economic and access models for all of these traditional library formats have similarities, but each format also presents unique challenges to libraries. Any eContent plan will likely need to address each format separately.

Summary

- Work with WPLC for the best short-term and long-term solutions for a healthy statewide eContent collection.
- Promote the eContent that we currently offer.
- Work to better integrate eContent into InfoSoup (possibly as part of new discovery layer).
- Keep aware of the ever evolving eBook/eContent world, keep talking, and be prepared to adjust accordingly.



Douglas County Libraries Report Pricing Comparison as of September 5, 2012

	BOOKS				EBOOKS			
	Library Pricing	Consumer Pricing	Library Pricing	Consumer Pricing				
Fiction (NYTimes)	Baker & Taylor (1)	Ingram (2)	Amazon	Barnes & Noble	Overdrive	3M	Bilbary	Amazon / Barnes & Noble
1 Fifty Shades of Grey	\$8.97	\$9.41	\$9.57	\$10.04	\$47.85	\$47.85	\$9.99	\$9.99
2 Fifty Shades Darker	\$10.80	\$9.41	\$9.57	\$10.04	\$47.85	\$47.85	\$9.99	\$9.99
3 Fifty Shades Freed	\$10.80	\$9.41	\$9.57	\$10.04	\$47.85	\$47.85	\$9.99	\$9.99
4 Gone Girl	\$13.85	\$13.75	\$13.94	\$14.35	\$25.00	\$25.00	\$12.99	\$12.99
5 Bared to You	\$9.00	\$8.85	\$9.00	\$9.09	*	*	\$7.99	\$7.99
6 Sweet Talk	\$14.93	\$14.82	\$15.48	\$15.79	*	*	\$12.99	\$12.99
7 Where We Belong	\$15.51	\$15.39	\$16.00	\$17.61	*	*	\$12.99	\$12.99
8 Stygian's Honor	\$4.79	\$4.71	\$7.99	\$7.99	*	*	\$7.99	\$7.99
9 Time Untime	\$14.40	\$14.29	\$15.89	\$15.89	*	*	\$12.99	\$12.99
10 Slammed	\$9.00	\$8.28	\$9.59	\$9.59	*	*	\$7.99	\$7.99
11 Black List	\$15.51	\$15.39	\$18.47	\$19.20	*	*	\$12.99	\$12.99
12 Light Between Oceans	\$13.85	\$13.75	\$15.00	\$13.44	*	*	\$11.99	\$11.99
13 Dream Lake	\$8.99	\$8.84	\$10.19	\$10.98	*	*	\$9.99	\$9.99
14 You don't want to know	\$13.85	\$13.75	\$15.29	\$15.29	\$21.99	*	\$9.46	\$9.46
15 I, Michael Bennett	\$15.51	\$15.39	\$18.47	\$19.20	*	*	\$12.99	\$12.99
Non-Fiction (NYTimes)								
1 Wild	\$14.38	\$14.27	\$14.94	\$14.94	\$25.95	\$25.95	\$12.99	\$12.99
2 Unbroken	\$14.96	\$14.85	\$16.20	\$16.36	\$81.00	\$81.00	\$12.99	\$12.99
3 The Amateur	\$15.48	\$15.37	\$16.77	\$16.93	\$27.95	*	\$18.44	\$12.99
4 Double Cross	\$14.40	\$14.30	\$15.75	\$15.75	\$78.00	\$78.00	\$12.99	\$12.99
5 Killing Lincoln	\$15.51	\$15.40	\$16.80	\$17.13	*	*	\$12.99	\$12.99
Top 25 e-book best sellers								
5 Mockingjay	\$8.39	\$9.89	\$9.92	\$10.98	*	*	\$9.99	\$9.99
7 Catching Fire	\$8.39	\$9.89	\$10.79	\$10.98	*	*	\$9.99	\$9.99
8 Hunger games	\$8.39	\$9.89	\$8.67	\$8.99	*	*	\$8.99	\$8.99
9 Fifty Shades Trilogy			\$27.74	\$27.99	\$89.97	\$89.97	\$29.99	\$29.99
11 Deep Down				\$27.99	\$5.97	\$5.99	\$1.99	\$1.99
12 Boy in the Suitcase	\$13.30	\$13.20	\$16.32	\$17.64	\$24.00	*	\$1.98	\$1.99
15 Friends Forever	\$15.51	\$15.40	\$18.48	\$19.21	\$84.00	\$84.00	\$12.99	\$12.99

8/26/12 issue NYTimes (print & ebook)

- * Not available to libraries
- 1 Discounted pricing as advertised on website
- 2 Actual

Douglas County Libraries is the public library of Douglas County, Colorado, headquartered in Castle Rock, CO. Our annual collection budget (2012) is \$3.7 million. We serve a population of just under 300,000. For more information, contact Karen Gargan, Associate Director of Finance, kgargan@dclibraries.org. www.DouglasCountyLibraries.org