

IDATE report on e-book lending in libraries

The transition from printed books to e-books fosters numerous questions regarding the future of the various players and sectors of the book industry. In that context, the French Ministry of Culture and Communication (General Direction for Media and Cultural industries, Books and Reading Service) has sought to promote dialogue concerning the dissemination of e-books in libraries, as well as obtain scenarios forecasting future direction and trends. To that end, the Ministry has procured analytical data about the situation in France and several other countries (United States, Canada, Germany, Spain, United Kingdom, Sweden, and the Netherlands) and ultimately commissioned a report on the topic to consulting company, IDATE.

The IDATE report was based on document analysis and nearly forty interviews with experts and professionals from the selected countries conducted between June 2012 and February 2013. The steering committee comprised librarians and publishers, along with representatives from the French Ministry's Books and Reading Service.

The international panorama established in the first part of the report allows for several observations:

- E-book lending is available in relatively few French libraries. However, France's late start is balanced by relative volume, with total offered titles greater than most European countries. For example, about 200 public libraries (out of 7,000) provide e-books to their patrons from a catalogue consisting of around 80,000 titles (compared with the 644,610 printed books available in 2012).
- E-book lending is much more developed in Anglo-Saxon countries, especially in the United States where the availability of recent publications for download, in a context of high e-reader ownership, has fostered a high demand among library users.
- Up to now, no single model for e-book lending in libraries has emerged. In Sweden, where e-book lending developed in the early 2000s, or in the United States where a large number of digital documents are currently available for libraries, economic models are still being discussed as the various players' positions continue to evolve as the market expands.
- In all of the countries studied by IDATE, negotiations are currently underway between publishers and libraries regarding the transposition of traditional book lending into e-book lending. While online streaming is available in many countries, discussions between publishers and libraries focus on the creation of services facilitating downloads of chrono-degradable e-books by library users. A compromise is being sought regarding the limitations to be set to e-book lending as compared to traditional book lending. Within these negotiations, some variables may be adjusted:
 - the number of loans, which may be limited either through a temporary license or a fixed number of loans
 - the price of purchase of e-books by libraries
 - the date of availability of e-books in libraries, which may be later than the official date of release on the market
- The relationship between e-books and aggregators has become a crucial question. The very definition of these aggregator services must be clarified. Are they a mere technical interface with no control over the catalogue? Or are they lending services whose licenses do not go beyond the contract concluded with the library? This confusion between access

service and e-book procurement raises question as to the preservation of previously acquired e-books when changing provider. It also leaves no room for outside commercial actors and partly explains why bookstores are absent from e-book dissemination in libraries.

Conditions to be met in order to establish a balanced framework, according to IDATE:

- As long as DRM systems are not too constraining, DRM-protected e-books available for download may represent — especially for fiction works — a middle road between mere online viewing (which can be unsatisfying for the user), and the complete absence of DRM, which beyond any speculation about piracy, would create a huge disparity between market offer and library offer.
- The publishing sector must provide a coherent offer of e-books, which should be easy to comprehend for both librarians and the public at large, and must include recently-published material.
- As the market is still in an early stage of development, economic models should not be standardised while uses are still emerging. However, publishers should give greater coherence to these models. It seems logical that, in view of the life duration of electronic files, either licenses be limited (e.g., via chrono-degradability or specified number of loans) or made more expensive than the printed books' equivalent. In any event, it would be advisable that for each e-book available for libraries, these options be open in order to allow libraries to decide according to their specific acquisition policies.
- The acquisition of group licences for several libraries should be allowed, especially for smaller libraries (e.g., through the bibliothèques départementales de prêt, as several such libraries have already developed this type of services) and for metropolitan libraries.
- In France, bookstores — especially traditional local retailers — retain a central role in the sale of printed books. They should therefore systematically have the ability to distribute, without exclusivity, the publishers' offers geared towards libraries.
- The perennial aspect of perpetual licenses should not be called into question by a change of aggregator. In that respect, any contract between an e-book provider and a library should make a distinction between technical access to e-books on the one hand, and acquisition of licenses on the other.
- Statistical data regarding the use of e-books in libraries should be shared between publishers and librarians in order to develop a joint analysis of reader experiences.

Lastly, IDATE provides several options likely to lower obstacles for the various players in the French e-book market.

The full report (in French) can be downloaded at: <http://bit.ly/ZMIVLE>

More information on the French Ministry of Culture and Communication website:



<http://www.culturecommunication.gouv.fr>

