

EBOOKS AND ELENDING – IS IT FAIR?



It is only obvious to state that ebooks and elending are becoming a mainstay of the publishing industry not only in Australia, but globally. ALIA has made this a core issue for 2013 and has set the ball rolling with think tanks held at ALIA Information Online in February and Perth and Melbourne in March – Sydney and Adelaide will follow. These meetings had a prime goal of enabling our members to share their views about the supply, use and lending of ebooks in Australian libraries.

Background

Libraries have always been about equity of access to information and stories, whatever the format – print, audio, digital. It is essential that libraries establish their role and position in this new digital environment, so that library users can continue to enjoy access to a wide range of content.

One of the principal roles of a library is to provide equitable access to books and other materials. Many library users are exploring the potential of ebooks and want to be able to borrow them, just as they would borrow printed titles. Libraries need to be able to offer their members access to a range of contemporary fiction and non-fiction in ebook formats.

However, publishers are struggling with an economic model for elending and they are worried about digital rights management. On a broader scale, they are nervous about the potential for piracy, whether ebooks are bought or borrowed. Publishers are concerned about the protection of the work and potential piracy and use this to restrict or prohibit libraries from

providing ebook solutions. This unfortunately leaves libraries with limited options for supply.

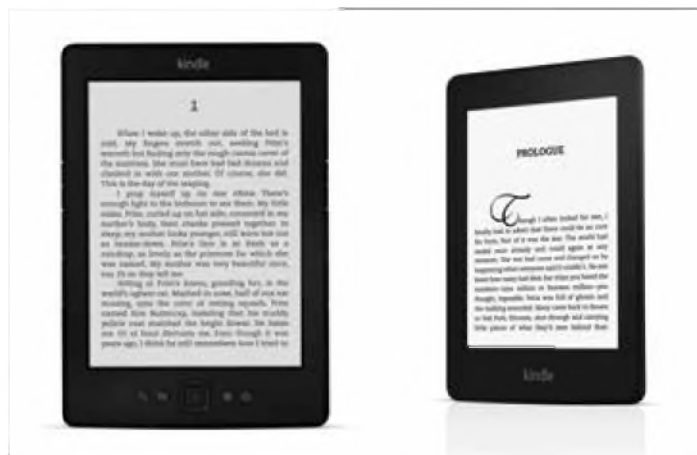
Publishers, and to some extent authors, see book/ebook loans through libraries as lost sales, but this is a very narrow view of the role of libraries in supporting the book industry.

Australian libraries are book purchasers. They purchase approximately 12% of books.¹ For popular books, libraries buy multiple copies.

Australian libraries are a marketing and promotional vehicle for creators and publishers, connecting readers and writers. According to an American study, 20% of library users bought a book after they had borrowed it, and 47% bought a book by the same author after they'd borrowed one of their books from the library.² The average library patron in the US was found to buy nine books a year.

Australian libraries help create new audiences, through early literacy, family literacy and adult literacy programs. They also help people discover and rediscover the joy of reading, through campaigns such as the National Year of Reading, through book clubs and other community activities.

Australian libraries contribute to income generation for authors and publishers in other ways. Author/illustrator tours and visits to public libraries/schools are an important source of fee income for creators, provide direct sales (books are available for attendees to purchase) and promote future sales (increased awareness of an author and their work). The Public Lending Right and Education Lending Right (undergoing a modernisation review, which could recommend their extension to cover ebooks) generate revenue for authors long after their retail life span has ended.



Australian libraries support the creative process

with writers and illustrators using library collections as the source for their stories and drawings.

We believe the solution for ebook lending in libraries lies in a whole-of-sector approach. This requires a strong, neutral and effective central forum for discussion and action, as well as

many side conversations with different elements of the supply chain.

We call on all stakeholders, especially publishers, to adopt a consultative approach, working with library leaders to achieve the optimal solution for all parties.

Our overall goal is to help our members make ebooks readily available to library users, while ensuring there is a generally accepted, fair balance between the interests of libraries, creators, publishers and aggregators.

We are currently formulating our position paper, which will follow in a future issue of INCITE. If you have any questions or comments, please let us know by emailing ebooks and elending project manager Brenda Currie, brenda.currie@alia.org.au.

1 <http://www.auslib.com.au/pdfs/Marketing%20to%20libraries.pdf>

2 http://idpf.org/sites/idpf.org/files/digital-book-conference/presentations/db2012/DB2012_lan_Singer.pdf

SOMERS – ACCESS FOR ALL USERS

When we launched the Australia's Favourite Librarian competition, we expected to be awed and we expected to be inspired, but we didn't expect animals! But Vision Australia proved that thinking outside the box and pushing boundaries can have amazing results. We'd like to share their nomination with our readers:

Somers trained at Vision Australia as a Guide Dog due to the kind sponsorship of Darryl Somers. He graduated and came to work in the Vision Australia Library in February 2007 to support Jamie Kelly. As he is due to retire this year, the VA Library team would like to nominate Somers in recognition of all the great things he has done (as you can appreciate this will be a great loss to Jamie and the rest of the library team).

Nominated for his ability to boost team morale, Somers has proven to be a great listener who is always willing to get involved. During the GFC, Somers positioned himself 'guard of the stationery cupboard' in an effort to help reduce costs. Always first to volunteer, Somers is a strong promoter of library

services, and has been a terrific advocate of reading, always keen to participate in children's story times. Keen to be at the forefront of technology, Somers has appeared in Daisy training videos and entered social media competitions. He has the uncanny knack of being able to connect with people of all ages and in particular those in high places.

