A Follow-Up Report on E-book Readers: A Pilot Project

at the CSU Stanislaus University Library

The E-book Reader Project was a pilot program designed to explore how these devices may contribute to study and scholarship on the CSU Stanislaus campus.

This project was initially tested during the period of February 2010-June 2010. Library users who checked out the e-readers were given an optional survey to fill out regarding their experience and opinions about using the e-readers. Circulation was tracked from June 2010-June 2012, and titles downloaded to the e-readers were analyzed and categorized based on the CSU Stanislaus University Library's collection development guidelines. The initial report on this project, A Report on E-book Readers: A Pilot Project at the CSU Stanislaus University Library can be accessed online.

E-Reader Content

This follow-up report provides updated numbers for content purchased and e-reader circulation statistics from June 2012-November 2014. An additional category "Other," has been added for type of material purchased, which includes downloaded content such as games and reference texts. Table 1 shows the total number of titles purchased utilizing the e-readers.

	2011	**2014**
Literary Fiction	62	100
Literary Non-fiction	24	30
Popular Fiction	36	82
Popular Non-fiction	18	19
Literary Biography	4	14
Popular Biography	1	4
U.S. History	2	5
World History	1	8
Other	N/A	14
Total	**148**	**276**

Table 1: Total number of titles loaded on e-readers

The most frequently downloaded content to the e-readers has been literary fiction. Literary fiction downloads are followed closely in numbers by popular fiction. Further analysis of the titles shows that:

- 48 titles are available on two or more devices
- 13 of the e-reader titles are available in another e-book format through the library website (such as Ebrary or Safari books).
- 83 of the titles purchased on the e-readers are available in print format in the library.

Many of the titles in the literary fiction category are already available in the University Library in print or via an academic e-book collection. It could be assumed that users prefer the convenience of the e-reader for these types of titles and/or are unaware that the materials already exist in the library. In contrast, most downloaded popular fiction titles are not available at the University Library because they do not fall in line with the library's collection development criteria.

Circulation of E-readers

Circulation statistics show check-outs of these devices has dropped significantly for the 2013/2014 academic year (Table 2). One possible factor contributing to low circulation is that the majority of the population the library serves now owns or has access to an e-reader, smart phone, or tablet by which they can access e-books. Additionally, the Stanislaus Country Library and the Merced County Library allow patrons to download a wide variety of e-books directly to many different devices through the 3-M Cloud Library Service. The San Joaquin County Library utilizes Overdrive to make e-books accessible to patrons.

Academic Year	Total checkouts
2010-2011	169
2011-2012	117
2012-2013	172
2013-2014	80

Table 2: Circulation Statistics for eBook Readers

Conclusions and recommendations

The mission of the University Library is to provide materials to our students that will further their academic study. At the inception of this project, e-reader technology was still fairly new. The project did provide our users with a means to experiment with downloading and reading e-books on electronic devices. In that regard the project can be viewed as success.

One benefit of having minimal constraints on content downloads is that it allows for demand-driven, on-time acquisitions by patrons. A drawback of loaning out e-readers loaded with multiple titles is that when a reader is checked out, all the titles on that device are unavailable to others.

Anecdotally, circulation staff report that two patrons repeatedly check out the readers and are primarily responsible for almost the entire title list of popular fiction titles with vampires, witches and other supernatural themes. At least eight titles in this category were purchased after these statistics were compiled. These titles account for over 20 of the total popular fiction titles added to the e-readers from 2012-1014. Most of the popular fiction titles purchased for the e-readers are available through the Link+ service.

Currently, [books in printed format still outsell e-books](). The future of how people will read books, both for personal pleasure and academic study is not yet decided.

The current readers are old and starting to fail. At this time, a new Amazon Kindle is priced at $79.00. In order to continue this service the library would need to consider updating the e-reader devices.

In conclusion, the reviewers recommended that the readers be withdrawn from circulation and not be replaced. Collection development of e-books should be focused on exploring other means of access, such as a model similar to 3M Cloud Library, in order to provide e-book content for both academic study and leisure reading, accessible on students' personal devices, be they smart phones, tablets, computers or e-readers.

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