



WHERE WE ARE NOW

In November 2013, ebooks were, metaphorically speaking, flying out of the door and we made a bold statement that 'library print and ebook collections will establish a 50:50 equilibrium by 2020 and that this balance will be maintained through to 2040, when the last print-only generation hits 50'. In less than two years, the initial ebook sales boom has settled and the book industry is predicting the ebook phenomenon will plateau at around 20–30% of books sales, with print books remaining the dominant format.

WHY PRINT BOOKS REMAIN FAVOURITES

Those born in 1990 grew up with print, studied with print, and are the last print-only generation. This final print-only generation will be 80 in 2070. For the next 50 years a significant proportion of the population will have lived with print books, and while they may embrace the opportunities of ereaders, there is no sign that they will convert to a fully digital reading experience.

From the Pew Research report *A Snapshot of Reading in America 2013*: 'Few readers have abandoned print for e-books. Though e-books are rising in popularity, print remains the foundation of Americans' reading habits: Among adults who read at least one book in the past year, just 5% said they read an e-book in the last year without also reading a print book.'¹

¹ www.pewinternet.org/2014/01/16/a-snapshot-of-reading-in-america-in-2013

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR LIBRARIES AND LIBRARY MANAGEMENT

Collection budgets will need to increase, as library users will want titles in both print and ebook formats, as well as large print and audio.

Some shelf space will be freed up to allow more space for study, relaxation, events, meetings and creative uses.

There could be fewer library users coming into the library to borrow books, but it is as likely that the overall membership of libraries will increase marginally, as people who have been unable to be active library members in the past discover the benefits of being able to borrow books online.

New skills will be needed for purchasing and contract management of ebook licences. RFID will continue to be a worthwhile investment and the print infrastructure (return chutes, carts, etc) will continue to feature in libraries.

