

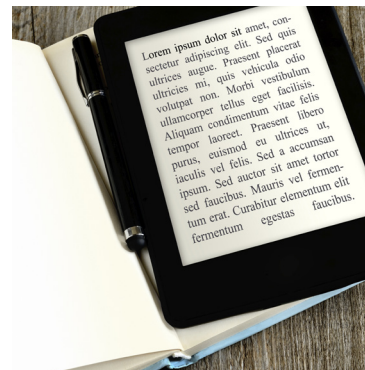
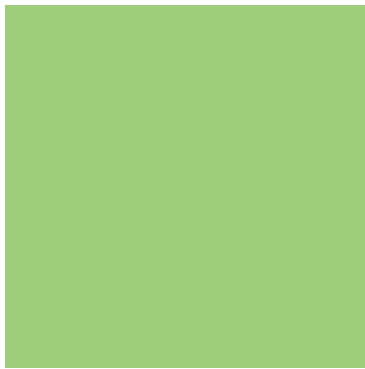
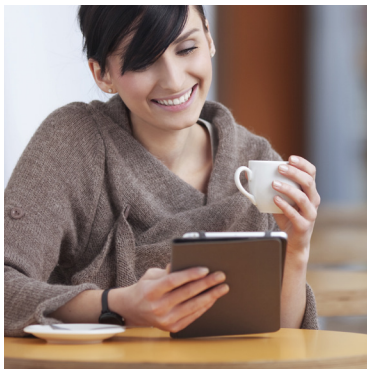
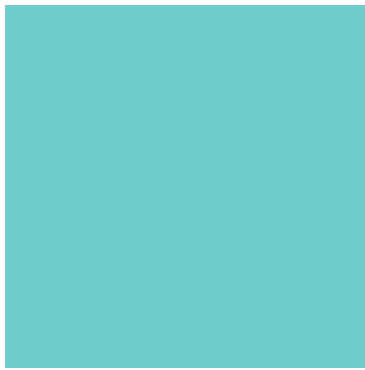


AUSTRALIAN  
PUBLIC LIBRARY  
ALLIANCE



Australian Library and  
Information Association

# COMPARISON OF EBOOKS AND ELENDING IN AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC LIBRARIES 2015





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*Comparison of ebooks and lending in Australian Public Libraries 2015*

Canberra ACT, Australian Library and Information Association, June 2015

[www.alia.org.au](http://www.alia.org.au)

## EBOOKS AND ELENDING

This is a snapshot of the situation in Australian public libraries in January 2013, May 2014 and May 2015, created by the ALIA Australian Public Library Alliance.

### ABOUT ALIA APLA

The ALIA Australian Public Library Alliance comprises representatives from the state-based public library associations, the territory libraries and LINC Tasmania. APLA advises the ALIA Board on policy for its sector and has a highly active role in shaping activities and campaigns.

[www.alia.org.au](http://www.alia.org.au)

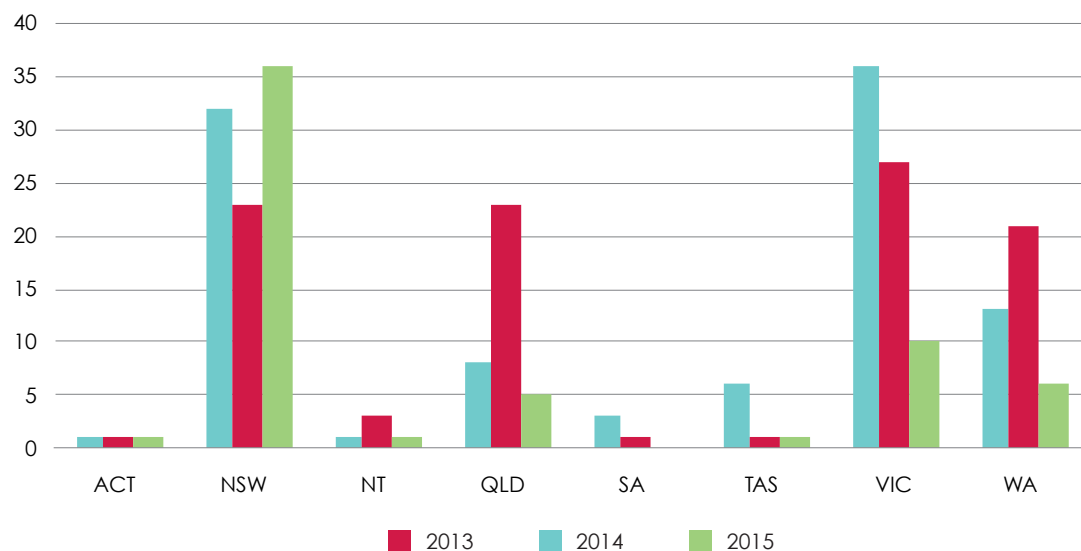
### ABOUT THE SURVEYS

In January 2013, there were 190 responses representing 788 public libraries. In May 2014, there were 72 responses representing 480 public libraries, and in May 2015, 63 responses on behalf of 417 libraries.

The 2013 survey was attached to the Internet Access in Public Libraries recurring study, while the 2014 and 2015 surveys were standalone.

With 1,500 public libraries across Australia, the 2013 response rate was approximately 50%, the 2014 response rate approximately a third of the total and the 2015 response rate 28%. We put this decline in the number of responses down to the fact that books have gone from being a very new and somewhat troublesome element of the collection to being 'business as usual' for most public library services.

FIG 1 WHERE RESPONDENTS WERE LOCATED



## KEY FINDINGS

1. Nearly all Australian public libraries now lend ebooks; up from 69% in 2013 and 97% in 2014 to 99% in 2015.
2. In 2015, on average ebooks made up 3.5% of a public library's collection.
3. In 76% of public libraries, ebooks accounted for between 1% and 5% of loans; in 20% they accounted for less than 1% and in 4%, more than 5% of loans.
4. 60% of libraries used two or more ebook providers, up from 33% in 2013.
5. While the availability of Australian content had improved between 2013 and 2015, the majority of libraries were still less than satisfied or not satisfied with the choice of bestsellers, popular authors and overall content.
6. 88% of libraries had ebooks in their catalogue but only 44% were able to offer ebooks direct from their catalogue.
7. The number of libraries loaning ereading devices remained relatively static at 24%.
8. Skills in public libraries had increased, with 62% of libraries saying most or all of their staff were conversant with ebooks and ereaders.
9. In addition to ebooks, emagazines were available in 95% of libraries, emusic in 69%, movie downloads in 37% and eaudio books in 26%.

## EBOOKS HAVE ARRIVED

In January 2013, 69% of public libraries loaned ebooks. Of the other 31%, almost all (95%) planned to do so within the next two years, and the 2015 survey results suggested almost all had achieved this, with 99% of respondents in May 2015 saying that their libraries loaned ebooks.

In the May 2015 survey, ebooks accounted for approximately 3.5% of the total for public library book collections.



## WHY WERE THEY DELAYED?

	<b>2013</b>
Budget constraints	76%
Technology issues	54%
Licensing restrictions	39%
Content inadequacies	32%

In 2014, budget constraints and content inadequacies were still issues for the 3% of libraries not offering ebooks for loan. By 2015, budget constraints remained the number one reason why 1% of libraries did not offer ebooks for loan.

## LOANS ARE INCREASING

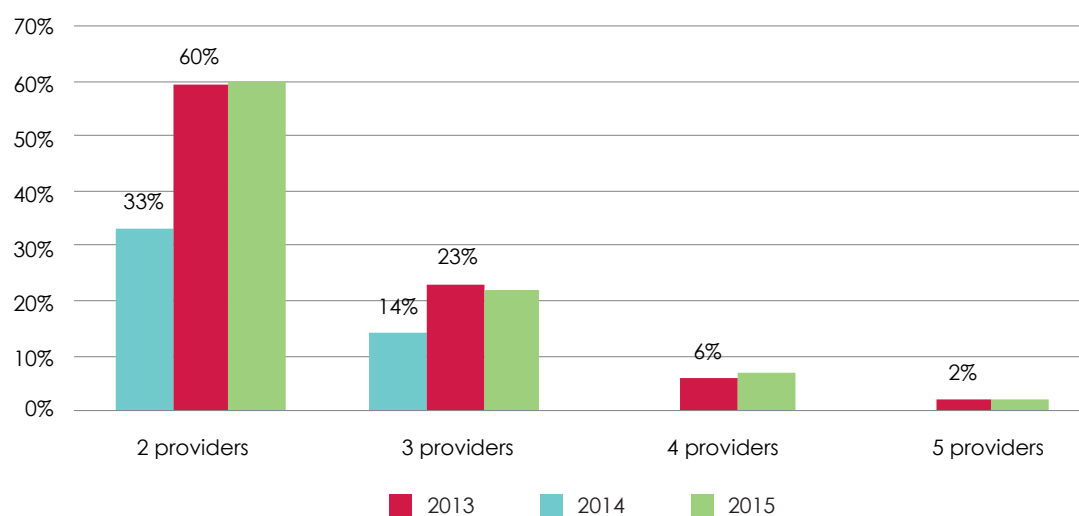
Ebook loans have risen, but they remain a small percentage of the total.

	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>
More than 5% of loans	1%	4%	4%
Less than 5% of loans	99%	96%	96%
Less than 1% of loans	72%	53%	20%

## HOW MANY PROVIDERS?

More libraries are buying content from more than one ebook platform.

FIG. 2 NUMBER OF PROVIDERS USED BY RESPONDENTS



## WHAT WE ARE MISSING

While the figures suggest that the amount of Australian content has improved over the last three years, the majority of libraries are still less than satisfied or not satisfied with the choice of:

	2013	2014	2015
Bestsellers	79%	66%	75%
Books by Australians	65%	52%	41%
Overall content	59%	52%	61%
Popular authors	57%	58%	65%

## FITTING OUR SYSTEMS

In 2015, more libraries could incorporate ebook titles in their catalogues and offer ebook downloads direct from the catalogue.

	2013	2014	2015
Ebooks in the catalogue	55%	71%	88%
Ebook downloads direct from the catalogue	30%	23%	44%

## LOANING HARDWARE

Ebook loans have increased over three years but the percentage of libraries offering ereading devices for loan has remained fairly static.

	2013	2014	2015
Ereaders available for loan	19%	23%	24%

## DO WE HAVE THE SKILLS?

The survey results suggested that library staff's confidence with ebooks and lending technology has grown significantly.

	2013	2014	2015
Most or all of the library team are conversant with ebooks and ereaders	39%	41%	62%
Some or a couple of members of the library team are conversant with ebooks and ereaders	58%	59%	38%

## OTHER FORMS OF ELENDING

For the first time in 2015, we asked about other forms of e lending. Of the libraries responding, 5% did not lend other electronic resources; 95% provided emagazines, 69% emusic, 37% movie downloads and 26% eaudio books (although this latter percentage may be higher, as some libraries could consider these ebooks). A few libraries also offered ecomics, online language learning and enewspapers. Budget constraints were cited as the main reason for not offering more eresources.

## OTHER COMMENTS

### INTERNET ACCESS

“The lack of a reasonable speed internet service for some of our customers makes it difficult for them to access the ecollection from home.”

### DIGITAL RIGHTS MANAGEMENT

“Publishers could be a lot more creative with DRM. The multiple concurrent model allows libraries to spread their money over more titles, which is surely good for authors and therefore publishers. Libraries only need to buy duplicates if the customers demand it. The pot of money doesn't get any bigger or smaller just because we are forced to buy duplicates in other models — it just means our collections are less diverse.”

“Digital publications where multiple readers can be using the item at the same time offer libraries a new model for connecting books and readers that those that replicate the one/item one reader model do not — start to see how collection management and service delivery can really be different in the future rather than an electronic version of what we have been doing in the past.”

“We would like to see the process of borrowing and downloading become more streamlined and less prone to errors through authentication.”

### PLATFORMS

“Having different platforms to navigate still confusing for patrons.”

“It would be great to have a simple platform for all ebooks to filter through allowing libraries to simplify the process for customers, as the customer generally doesn't care who the vendor is — only the ease of access to content they want.”

“The licensing of titles to specific suppliers makes it difficult to provide a very wide range of titles without using more than one supplier. The costs associated with the set up of an ebook collection and ongoing maintenance with each supplier is prohibitive to the development of a large ebook collection for smaller libraries.”

“We are about to implement a discovery layer over our catalogue which will include seamless borrowing and downloading of ebooks for our customers. I am hoping this makes a difference to our usage. Currently customers need to have different apps and go to different websites to browse ebooks (as opposed to searching titles directly on the catalogue) and this is tiresome for them.”

“Technical support by providers for libraries is generally inadequate, especially as most helpdesks are located overseas.”

## LENDING

“The biggest problem seems to be with loans. People read books faster than the allowed time but can’t return when wanted holding up the next loan.”

“Deep integration of ebooks in catalogue and digital collection visualisation technology are key.”

“We are no longer seeing exponential growth in our ebook lending — it has definitely flattened in the last 12 months. There is though a small and very steady usership of our ebook platforms.”

## SOFTWARE AND DEVICES

“Staff are reluctant to promote ebooks because the sign in and use of Adobe digital editions is not straightforward and hard to explain to customers.”

“The technology is improving and access is becoming easier but the majority of the patrons do not own devices to download content. It might be a good idea to explore lending of electronic devices especially in low socioeconomic areas to improve access to digital literacy.”

## TITLES

“There are still too few quality ebooks for libraries to purchase.”

“We need more frontlist titles and less midlist and backlist titles. It would be great to offer more great Australian high school texts and curriculum support titles in ebook format.”

“Obviously we would like better access to best sellers. In terms of access we would be happy to pay for a fixed number of loans if these were concurrent. It seems strangely obtuse on the part of those publishers that limit a purchase to 26 loans that they would not offer this as simultaneous downloads. It could only mean more purchases of popular titles.”

“Content has improved but not in the areas that are critical — latest bestsellers and the really top flight authors. I am worried that even if this happened now it may be too late. We find ourselves needing to do marketing campaigns at least every six months to boost usage.”

“Ebook loans are continuing to increase steadily, although publisher restrictions continue to be onerous (annual repurchase, enormous minimum size pack purchases, limited access to bestsellers etc). During ebook info sessions we explain these restrictions to our patrons and they’re universally supportive of the library.”





