



# E-BOOK AS A PART OF E-LEARNING IN ACADEMIC LIBRARY

## *E-knjiga kot sestavni del e-učenja v visokošolskih knjižnicah*

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** The aim of this paper is to present the e-book as one of several information resources in academic libraries in the context of e-learning.

**Methodology/approach:** Theoretical and research approach through the content analysis method and evaluation of services on the web pages of academic libraries of the University of Zagreb on the basis of selection criteria.

**Results:** Findings showed that the e-book is a visible part of information resources, and as such, is an integral part of learning in academic libraries' landscape.

**Research restrictions:** No research restrictions.

**The originality:** This is the first research of this kind.

**Contribution:** The encouragement of other academic libraries to include this type of e-resources to the library website and thus contribute to increase the quality of library service.

**Keywords:** *academic libraries, e-book, e-learning, electronic information resources.*

### Izvleček

**Namen:** Namen prispevka je predstaviti elektronsko knjigo kot enega izmed informacijskih virov v visokošolskih knjižnicah v povezavi z e-učenjem.

**Metodologija/pristop:** Teoretična izhodišča in raziskovalni pristop prek metode vsebinske analize in vrednotenja storitev na spletnih straneh visokošolske knjižnice zagrebške univerze na podlagi meril za izbor.



**Rezultati:** Iz zaključkov je razvidno, da e-knjiga sodi med vidni del informacijskih virov in je kot takšna sestavni del učenja v spreminjajočem se informacijskem okolju visokošolskih knjižnic.

**Omejitve raziskave:** Omejitev ni.

**Izvirnost/uporabnost:** To je prva tovrstna raziskava.

**Prispevek:** Spodbuditi še druge visokošolske knjižničarje k vključitvi tovrstnih elektronskih virov na spletne strani njihovih knjižnic in s tem prispevati k dvigu kakovosti njihovih storitev.

*Ključne besede:* visokošolske knjižnice, e-knjiga, e-učenje, elektronski informacijski viri

## 1 Introduction

An e-book can be viewed from different points of view (cultural, economic, educational, scientific, etc.). In this context, the scientific theory provides an overview of different concepts of an e-book, which is related to the variability of information and communication technology (ICT). This paper observes an e-book through the lens of digital information source supporting e-learning in higher education and science. By accessing development strategies of numerous universities worldwide (University of Glasgow, University College London, Oxford and the University of Kent, San Diego State University, the University of Texas, etc.) available via the Web, which encompass higher education libraries, it is evident that they put an emphasis on e-learning mostly through digital information resources (research database) which they provide to their users. The support network to e-learning, in addition to higher education library and librarians, also depends on demands of teachers, publishers, booksellers, authors, financial capacities of the institutions and the general willingness of university leaders to initiate procurement and distribution, but also on the interest of students for this method of learning.

The results of the latest research on the use of e-books among the academic community show that it has become increasingly popular (Bakkalbasi & Goertzen, 2015; Phan, Hardesty & Hug, 2014; Mulholland and Bates, 2014; Lamothe, 2015; McGee, 2015; Mount, 2014; A community, 2015; Ebrary, 2014, etc.). Also, according to research done by Lamothe (2015) in Canada “results indicate that e-monograph collections that continue to grow in both size and content also continue to experience year-to-year increases in usage, whereas e-monograph collections that remain static in size and content experience a decline in usage.” Nevertheless, Martindale, Willett, and Jones (2015) consider that “the major issue is the lack of availability of e-books” at Universities.

An e-book, as one of several information sources in the context of the higher university education, can be viewed from the point of procurement and borrowing through:



- digitization of monographic library collections whose copyright has expired
- university publications in open access
- supply of global publishers / distributors through commercial databases
- supply of non-commercial publishers/ self-publishers (e.g. universities, research institutes, libraries, professional associations, etc.)
- supply of open-access (OA) publishing
- increasing supply of traditional bookstores which try to be mediators among publishers, authors, readers and libraries
- online publishers/retailers (e.g. Benchmark, Amazon, Apple iBook store, Sony ReaderStore, Epub Books, Kobo (Matrix, 2013, p.2-3), etc.)
- aggregators of free access to non-copyright restricted content (e.g. Benchmark, Digital Public Library of America (DPLA), Internet Archive/Open Library, HathiTrust, Google Books, Apple iBooks (Matrix, 2013, p. 15-16), etc.)
- institutional repositories
- web catalogues.

### 1.1 E-book = e-textbook!?

According to Klarin Zadavec, Buzina & Seiter-Šverko (2014, p. 2): “the meanings of the term “e-book” are constantly evolving, and they gain new interpretations parallel with the technical enhancement of the digital content.” It can be said that the authors have offered a comprehensive and in detail elaborated explanation of the concept of an e-book in the literature based on different aspects which have been researched and analysed. According to them, the concept of an e-book can be observed through the lens: „dependence on the analogue; mode of production; mode of issuance; medium of production/publication; content; usage/technical devices; usage/access/DRM; publication type and file format; identifiers” (Klarin Zadavec, Buzina & Seiter-Šverko, 2014, p. 3).

In recent literature, there is another synonym for an e-book – an enhanced e-book, and mostly, it comes from the publishers. According to Klarin Zadavec, Buzina & Seiter-Šverko (2014, p. 3) in relation to the content-related context, enhanced e-books are “e-books enhanced with interactive and multimedia capabilities”. According to Florjanič & Možina (2015, p. 129) “some publishers are more inclined to, instead of the term e-book, use the term interactive storybooks, interactive e-books, books in app, etc. for referring to a medium of e-book containing some sort of enhancement.”

If we consider terminological and conceptual point of view of an e-book and the software-technological point of view, the difference in the use of the term “e-book” and other terms used in literature (e.g. enhanced e-book, interactive storybooks, interactive



e-books, books in app, audio books, digital interactive books and e-books) is in different software solutions (formats and applications supported by different software).

In the context of education and e-learning, as well as lifelong learning at universities, the term “*e-textbooks*” is used, too. In the traditional, printed form, a textbook differs from a monograph, as it is focused solely on teaching and students’ needs, it is representative and of quality, it includes pedagogical-psychological, didactic, professional and scientific aspect, and its publication depends on reviewers. According to clarification of Croatian Academic and Research Network – CARNet (Izrada, 2015): “textbook is a teaching tool (deed) that displays the teaching material determined by curriculum. If we talk about a university textbook, it is required that the textbook provides a comprehensive view of the subject, including the theoretical assumptions, and to have a more permanent character. University textbook is approved by university Committee for scientific and educational literature on the basis of the opinion of three reviewers.” It is mostly published by universities in cooperation with faculty and faculty teachers as authors. An e-textbook is also an e-book that includes all of the above mentioned characteristics. As such, it is a part of higher education library collection.

In principle, an e-book is a monograph, a digital audio version of a text workbook, a literacy book, a children storybook, and a textbook available on CD; DVD; CD-ROM and through websites of different institutions; institutional repositories, commercial and non-commercial databases. Its content is readable using a variety of hardware devices (e.g. according to Zubac & Tominac (2014): “personal computers, tablets, e-book readers, smartphones” etc.), and for its download to a portable device and reading, the Internet access is required.

## 1.2 Review of background

“Determining how e-books are used for scholarly purposes is a complex issue. The e-book landscape is evolving at a rapid pace and a wide range of factors impact how user communities discover and access e-books for research, teaching and learning activities. It is more important than ever for librarians to understand when, how and why clients use e-books in order to design services that meet existing needs” (Bakkalbasi & Goertzen, 2015, p. 253).

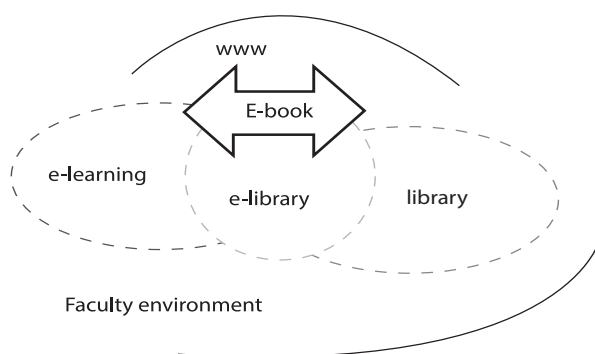
In line with the visions and missions of the university development strategies, library business is also changing, i.e. it adapts to the modern student and his or her needs. Library information services on the web, which are a part of information service (Internet Manifesto, 2014) are also changing. The role of a library in securing free access to the information is major. In the context of the stated, IFLA supports Lyon



Declaration on Access to Information and Development (Lyon, 2014) which believes that increasing access to information and knowledge across society, assisted by the availability of information and communications technologies (ICTs), supports sustainable development and improves people's lives. IFLA has accepted the UN's General Declaration of Human Rights (UNESCO, 1995), in which libraries' obligation is pointed out, and it refers to the warranty and ease of access, procurement, preservation and availability of various materials to all users on equal terms. In accordance with the above mentioned, universities have begun numerous projects of information content digitization in order to build digital scientific collections (e.g. Columbia University Libraries (Information, 2015), Duke University Libraries (Duke, 2015), San Diego State University, (Collection, 2015), University of Texas at Dallas Libraries, (Collection, 2015), Boston University Law Library, (Collection, 2013), etc.), and it is also visible through the library collection development policy. "Although digital materials are becoming more popular with university library users, university libraries are not yet ready to abandon print library materials altogether for a wide variety of reasons" (Thomas, 2015, p. 533).

Digital information sources, as a part of the library services, are also available through academic / higher education library catalogues and websites. Nevertheless, academic libraries are still mostly hybrid. "On the way to changes towards the digital age, libraries in the world do not build completely digital collections, for objective reasons, which are followed by variability of technologies applicable in library operations and in the preservation of collections, rather, they build their own funds in accordance with the concept of hybrid library" (Zubac & Tominac, 2012, p. 70). The reason for that are also high financial expenditures.

The author of this paper provides a schematic overview of e-books in the context of e-learning in universities which can look like Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Schematic overview of e-books in the context of e-learning



Unlike Thomas (2015), Stachokas' (2009) opinion is that there is no future for the traditional, print-based or even hybrid library. Further, Stachokas (2014) claims that the academic library of the 21st century is the first and foremost provider of electronic information services. The future information provision will be almost entirely in digital form with the exception of special/rare archives and off-site print repositories for those parts of library collections which are not, or cannot be available electronically.

## 2 Method

The objective of this research was to analyze the websites of higher education libraries of the University of Zagreb and to find out if the libraries provide, through their e-services, the access to e-books and the possibility of borrowing e-books according to the selection criteria in order to determine the current state and their response to the needs of modern users. Selection criteria are: a) catalogue, b) links to e-books on the library website, c) access to commercial databases, d) web pages with open-access publications.

University of Zagreb comprises 29 faculties. Since there are three academic libraries operating as a part of the University, for the purpose of this analysis, they will be counted as one. The research was conducted on a sample of 27 academic libraries. The research has been conducted in the period from December 6 to 11, 2015.

H: Since CARNet provides quality technical support in Croatia, academic libraries adapted their information services to the needs of the modern user.

The research started with the following hypotheses:

- H1** The content of an e-book is integrated into the academic library catalogue.
- H2** Libraries have established collections of e-books in accordance with the publishing activities of the faculties through the open-access (OA) publishing model.
- H3** All academic libraries provide information on possible access to digital packages of commercial databases collections, that are available through the national consortium, and through which the user has the access to the e-book.
- H4** Most academic libraries provide links to access e-books in the open-access (OA) publishing model of different institutions.



### 3 Results

The given findings have confirmed all the hypotheses (H1, H2, H3, H4).

In relation to the first hypothesis, findings showed that in 77.778% (21 out of 27) of academic libraries, the content of an e-book was integrated into the catalogue of an academic library. This is backed by the fact that the vast majority of libraries function through the integrated library system Aleph, and the smaller number of them function through the integrated system Metelwin and Kohu.

In relation to the second hypothesis, findings showed that 37.037 % (10 out of 27) academic libraries established collections of e-books of their own editions, in accordance with the publishing activities of the faculty through an open-access (OA) publishing model. On the web pages of the library or faculty, it is evident that faculties publish books, but they are mostly available in print editions and are sold as such. Only book cover is digitalized and available through the electronic storefront on the page. "While print is currently the dominant format in the textbook marketplace, the emerging environment is supporting a shift toward electronic textbooks (e-textbooks). The current state of technology, the publishing industry and student technological aptitude is threatening to move the print textbook into obsolescence" (Johnston et al, 2015, p. 65).

In relation to the third hypothesis, findings showed that 88.889 % (24 out of 27) academic libraries provide information on possible access to digital packages of commercial databases collections through which the user has access to the e-book. Concerning e-book formats available through commercial databases at the University of Zagreb, but also in Croatia, they are all in PDF. Therefore, the software Adobe Acrobat Reader is needed to download them. Since 2015, the National and University Library in Zagreb has taken over the role of the Centre for online databases in Croatia and has become a large consortium. In addition, it can be seen on the web sites, that certain libraries in cooperation with the faculty they are a part of, provide access to the commercial databases through their own subscriptions. Today, the University of Zagreb and the National and University Library in Zagreb provide access to 32 collections of commercial databases with full text (Pregled, 2016), which is a very small number. Some universities and academic libraries decided wholly independently to subscribe to particular collections of commercial databases for the needs of their users, but unfortunately, there are very few of them.

In relation to the fourth hypothesis, findings showed that 62.963 % (17 out of 27) academic libraries provide links to e-books in the open-access (OA) publishing model of various institutions, and which can contribute to e-learning.



This kind of e-book is available through various reading devices with Internet access. Open access books at the University of Zagreb are available in different formats, but the most commonly used formats are still PDF and ePub format that are free and universal. This is due to limitations for the use of learning materials and textbooks in e-format because of fairly expensive technology. In the classrooms desktop computers and laptops are commonly used, and some faculties have bought tablets for students in order to implement e-education and e-learning in particular courses.

## 4 Discussion

The e-book is one of many types of information sources that are available in academic libraries. “The library is the support to e-learning through e-resources and services” (Zubac & Tominac, 2012, p. 123). This statement is confirmed also through findings of research conducted at the University of Zagreb. Since e-learning at the universities is largely related to journals and conference proceedings, an e-book comprises a smaller percentage of the academic e-resources, which is partly due to the e-book price.

On the other hand, more and more e-books become available to everyone because their copyrights have expired in some countries through various e-projects: Project Gutenberg, Europeana Collections, Digital Public Library of America – DPLA, The Open Academics textbook catalogue, Internet Archive,<sup>1</sup> Open Library, Feed books, Manybooks,<sup>2</sup> World Public Library, etc. Within the e-projects, e-books and e-textbooks are available through different media and in various e-formats, and as such can be used for teaching and learning depending on students’ needs and interests. According to Project Gutenberg: “Readers outside of the United States must check the copyright laws of their countries before downloading or redistributing our e-books. We also have a number of copyrighted titles, for which the copyright holder has given permission for unlimited non-commercial worldwide use.” (Free, 2016). Also, through Project Gutenberg, e-books are available in various e-formats, such as HTML, ePub with images, and the images, Kindle formats, Plain Text UTF-8, txt format, etc.

In the Europeana Collections, e-books from various European countries and in different languages are available to the readers through a variety of media: “image, text, sound, video and 3D” (Europeana, 2016).

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<sup>1</sup> Internet Archive. Retrieved 20. 11. 2015 from: <https://archive.org/index.php>

<sup>2</sup> The Best Free eBooks! *Manybooks*. Retrieved 20. 11. 2015 from: <http://manybooks.net/>



Digital Public Library of America – DPLA has twenty-eight partners, and through this catalogue, e-books are available in a variety of media (DPLA, 2016). Furthermore, according to DPLA *Strategic plan 2015 through 2017* (2016, p. 5): “Top Priorities: Complete the service hub network across the United States so that every collection that wishes to be a part of DPLA can become so. Diversify our holdings so that all kinds of institutions, item types, geographical regions, and topics are adequately represented. Supplemental Priorities: Continue to add content hubs as our capacity permits. Pursue special initiatives for item types that do not currently fit into our framework, such as e-books, audio-visual material, and research. Enhance metadata through an improved metadata schema, linked data, and better, more streamlined rights statements.”

Also, College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) which is a part of University of Minnesota has/owns Open e-textbooks which are published under a license that enables students to get free or low-cost versions of their textbooks online. The Open Academics catalogue is the first of its kind hosted at a major research institution. “The catalog is the latest of several noteworthy educational technology programs at the University of Minnesota. All incoming freshmen in CEHD receive iPads, which will enable students to use the less expensive and free digital formats of open textbooks. The U of M is also participating in a multi-university e-textbook pilot program, which, in selected courses, offers e-books at a significantly lower cost.” (U creates, 2015).

Through the Open Library project, over 1 million classics are available in e-form in different e –formats: PDF, Plain text, DAISY, ePub, DJVu, MOBI, Send to Kindle. “Open Library is a project of the non-profit Internet Archive, and has been funded in part by a grant from the California State Library and the Kahle/Austin Foundation. Open Library is an open project: the software is open, the data are open, the documentation is open, and we welcome your contribution. Whether you fix a typo, add a book, or write a widget – it’s all welcome. We have a small team of fantastic programmers who have accomplished a lot, but we can’t do it alone!” (About, 2016).

World Public Library e-collection contains 3,858,328 books (Academic, 2016). It contains also an extensive collection of academic e-books, intended for all scientific disciplines, available in PDF format. Through their website and IP address it provides the ability to view the most popular e-books which are currently read in the country and whose IP address is used to access the site in Croatia. It is evident that the most widely read academic e-book *The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism: Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why* by Rex A Hudson is available through this portal in Croatia (Academic, 2016).



According to IFLA (IFLA E-Lending, 2012, p.1): “Scholarly and trade publishing have fundamentally different business models and take very different approaches for digital sales to libraries”.

Therefore, one approach may be related to global publishers / distributors through commercial databases of books that make it difficult to obtain books due to high prices. IFLA (IFLA E-Lending, 2012, p. 1) concluded: “databases that assume a willing information provider and where the focus is usually on negotiated access”. Today, the vast majority of commercial databases mostly offer e-magazines and articles to users, but monographs, book chapters, conference proceedings / anthologies and other types of material can also be found as a part of their offer. An academic library, after the expiration of one-year subscription package, may, under certain conditions, borrow and download an e-book on some of hardware devices and readers which are not submitted to property rights. Subscription can be at the level of one institution or smaller or larger consortium, or may relate to purchasing a particular content or a one month free trial access often offered by commercial publishers. “The benefits of such a model for libraries are many: it is less expensive than purchasing e-book titles individually, it includes a broad range of titles by many different publishers covering many different subjects, it allows for simultaneous access by multiple users, it eliminates the need to purchase print copies of a book, and it allows for remote access to content” (Georgas, 2015, p. 1; as cited in Walters, 2013). In spite of subscription package, prices are still extremely high and publishers take the right to remove collections that are included in the subscription package without any notice (Walters, 2013).

The second approach can be in relation to online publishers/retailers who set different conditions. According to IFLA (IFLA E-Lending Background Paper) the terms under which an e-book is lent may be dictated by the purchase agreement, license agreement or by the library itself, including the number of simultaneous users, length of loan etc. The digital version of an e-book handheld device (e.g. Amazon and Kindle) seeks to implement into local networks and systems and to be a support to e-learning, but also to e-reading through finding the common language on favourable business models in lending and devices on which the loading and lending depends. The problem is in the different business models.

According to the University of Minnesota (Supporting, 2015), factors that limit the number of books purchased are:

- a) proprietary platforms – publishers have proprietary platforms with different formats and search capabilities
- b) downloading/printing – they also have different policies on how many pages may be downloaded or printed



- c) apps – some vendors provide apps for mobile device
- d) single/multiple users – some e-books allow for single or multiple simultaneous users.

Concerning the devices on which the books are read, “it varies depending on the publisher of the book. Some have only web-based options (good for the iPad and other devices with Web access), while others offer either apps or multiple versions with some optimized for various e-readers” (Supporting, 2015).

According to Walters (2013, p. 1): “sustainable access to e-books is hindered by impermanent physical media, proprietary file formats and software, and restrictive license provisions. Although the goals of e-book providers are sometimes inconsistent with those of universities, librarians are well-positioned to guide vendors in the development of e-book licenses and platforms.” On Croatian universities, for the time being, it is impossible to talk about this approach.

The third approach concerns the problem with open access of e-books published by the faculty. Because of the lack of financial resources, faculties sell e-textbooks and e-books, in order to cover royalties and processing of books, and at the same time, to earn some money.

## 5 Conclusion

Academic libraries around the world increasingly seek to introduce e-books in their business and thus keep track of the needs of the modern user in e-education. It is also an indicator of the quality of the library work, through contents and services which they are providing to the user through the website. The library, in providing such web services, faces numerous problems. On the one hand, the implementation of an e-book in the library collection is expensive because it depends on book publishers and hand handle devices. On the other hand, commercial suppliers are mostly focused on magazines and journals, not on e-books. Besides that, there are numerous open access book servers available on the market at present. Due to the fact that science is constantly changing, and therefore e-learning is changing too, the advantage of an e-book is manifold. E-formats available through the Web are even more appropriate in relation to this question, because they can be restored / updated remotely.

The findings of the research which is significant to this work showed and confirmed the set of hypotheses. An e-book is a visible part of information sources in academ-



ic libraries of the University of Zagreb, and as such, an integral part of learning in the academic libraries' landscape. The number of e-books in an academic library is still very inconsiderable. Concerning e-book formats available through commercial databases at the University of Zagreb and in Croatia, they are all in PDF. Books, available through open access at the University of Zagreb are in different formats, but the most commonly used formats are still PDF and ePub format that are free and universal.

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