This policy document is meant to clarify the values and priorities of Howard-Tilton Library regarding the rapidly changing field of e-books. It examines precedents and recommends criteria for selection.

E-book Policy

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Howard-Tilton Library

E-book Task Group:
T. Bremholm, L. DeVoe, L. Hooper, S. Krash, J. Lupkin, E. Wedig
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Executive Summary

Charge
The E-book Task Group has responded to a call to develop a set of general guidelines for selection and acquisition of e-books for the HTML general collections. Specifically, the goal is to outline how and under what conditions e-books should be acquired for our users while broadly addressing issues that include but are not limited to usability, licensing, archiving, perpetual access, and the advisable use or nonuse of purchase options such as Demand Driven Acquisition (hereafter DDA).

Rationale for a policy statement
The uncertainty in the field of academic libraries about the usefulness, interfaces, economic models and technical specifications of e-books is palpable. While the conversion of serials acquisitions from print only to mixed print and electronic formats is presented in the literature as an accomplished fact, e-books have not gained the same overwhelming adoption in academic libraries as journals and other resource types. Despite this lag in adoption practices, Tulane librarians need coherent e-book options to better serve changing user needs and expectations.

Further complicating the academic e-book landscape, e-books have different management needs than print monographs. At the root of these necessary management shifts are: different vendors supply models; ongoing maintenance requirements for dynamic digital formats; and shifts in user needs and access patterns directed by the variety of technologies.

This state-of-affairs challenges us to devise a set of local practices that will clarify the decision-making roles of selectors communally and individually and to coordinate actions of collection developers with reasonable and preferred technical services workflows.

General Interpretive Points

What is an e-book?
There has been a good deal of confusion over the very meaning of the term “e-book” by our users and within the library profession. The Oxford Companion to the Book provides a definition of the term e-book that has been adopted by a number of academic institutions. It defines the tool as a book-length publication in digital form, consisting of text, images, or both, and produced on, published through, and readable on computers or other electronic devices (Gardiner & Musto, 2010, p. 164).

What are Tulane’s specific needs and requirements?
Consortia options: Tulane, with its relative geographical isolation from institutions with similar collecting goals in print collections, currently has no viable model for such e-book collaboration at this time despite productive relationships in LOUIS. Consortia leasing models, such as Ebrary’s “Non-Linear Lending,” which allows for purchasing temporary access to a given number of uses, do not fit within Tulane’s continuing commitment to build permanent collections.
Although some institutions are using e-books and particularly DDA as a way to accommodate reduced funding streams while still offering their patrons access to current scholarly works, Tulane’s e-book strategy does not have saving money as its goal. Tulane conceives of e-books in terms of enhancing access in tandem with print acquisitions.

While inevitably the adoption of e-book practices would introduce changes to some technical services workflow, Tulane’s e-book strategy does not significantly alter to role of the subject liaison/subject bibliographer/book selector. The selection of e-books is not envisioned as a method of reducing demands on stack space.

Howard-Tilton already takes steps to make our e-books, including titles within larger packages, visible to our users through our discovery services. Librarians could extend existing programs to make users more comfortable with them. This might include more actively marketing e-books on the library’s website, blogs, and Libguides, as well as in public programs and presentations.

Envisioning other options?
The e-book task group recognizes that the universe of options currently in front of us is dynamic and constantly changing. We are not currently under pressure to expand our e-book collections, and most current vendor offerings do not meet our expectations. Therefore, we can play a part in advocating for better options (e.g., vendor models, vendor workflows, pricing models, user interfaces, preservation methods, etc.). Library consortia have started to more efficiently negotiate costs, licensing agreements, and preservation models. There may be ways to engage more productively with vendors in such arrangements (Beisler & Kurt, 2012), to cut out the middle man and maintain university-based e-book servers (Feldman, Russell & Wolven, 2013), or devise ways to promote wider access to information through open access book projects (Stachokas, 2012). One such project, proposed at the time of writing, is Knowledge Unlatched (http://www.knowledgeunlatched.org/).

Literature Review
In late 2013, our task group surveyed recent literature on the usage and perception of e-books. Surveys of academic library users indicate they have not yet fully embraced the format, while librarian frustration with the evolving e-book market was impeding the wider adoption of e-books in academic libraries. Tulane’s policy statement also benefited from wider reviews of literature by policy study initiatives at other institutions including Columbia and Yale, which can be consulted online.

User perspectives
A 2004 survey of undergraduates at a small liberal arts college found that only 39% had used e-books, 89% would use an e-book if that were the only format available, and 66% preferred print over electronic books (Gregory 2008). Although much has changed since 2004, a 2011 survey of graduate students and faculty found that just 38% had used e-books (Cassidy, et al. 2012). Those who had used them were nearly equally divided between those who preferred printed books, those who preferred e-books, and those who had no preference or whose preference depended on the book. Among all respondents, only
11% had both used e-books and preferred them over printed books. Those users were more likely to own an e-reader device than other respondents. The authors concluded that users who disliked e-books were either responding to legitimate shortcomings of the products or were uninformed of the features available, and that many users preferred print, but used e-books for convenience.

A 2009 survey of faculty, staff, and students found that 57% of respondents had used e-books, but comments suggested that many users had used them without being aware that they had used an e-book, or conflated e-books and e-journals (Shelburne 2009). Several respondents were unsure how to find or access e-books from the library. There seemed to be confusion as to whether librarians and the academic community defined e-books in the same way.

**Librarian perspectives**

A study by JISC (2012) found that e-books are not currently replacing the demand for print books despite the fact that e-journals have replaced back copies of printed journals (JISC, 2012). The same study also cautioned, however, that as more materials appear only in digital format there may not be a viable print equivalent. Another study conducted by the E-Books Strategic Plan Task Force at Yale University Library (2013) found instances that the adoption of e-books across library systems is uneven, particularly as they sometimes appear significantly later than their print counterparts.

The 2012 annual survey of academic libraries found that 95% of libraries offered e-books (Anonymous 2012). Those that did not cited the lack of demand and the instability of the market. The number of e-books offered by libraries increased by 41% over the 2011 survey, and by 200% over the previous two years. Over two thirds of libraries that offered e-books had seen an increase in demand over the previous year, although the rate of growth may be slowing compared to previous years. Overall, academic libraries in the survey spent an average of 10% of their acquisitions budgets on e-books. User-driven acquisition of e-books was up from 16% of libraries two years before, to 31% reporting patron-driven acquisitions in 2012. Overall, the survey found that the high cost of e-books was the primary issue of concern to librarians.

A 2009 survey of librarians found that many academic librarians were frustrated in their attempts to acquire and manage e-books the way they had with printed books (Anson & Connell 2009). While they were adapting collection development policies and workflows to deal with e-books, the evolving market required greater scrutiny and consideration of licensing, archiving, and pricing models. The survey found that, often, the decision to acquire an e-book was determined by those factors more than by the content of the book.

After a review of the history of e-books, and remarks about the relatively slow pace of e-books acquisitions, Connaway & Wicht (2007) identified several barriers to the adoption of e-books by librarians. Those included lack of standards and a lack of hardware in the era before Nook and Kindle e-book readers, multiple platforms, access problems caused by digital rights management, and unrealistic models for pricing and access.

Interviews with librarians indicated that most libraries incorporated e-books within their overall collection development policies rather than writing separate e-book policies (Vasileiou 2012). They also...
tended to budget for e-books within existing allocations rather than creating a separate e-books fund. Most also indicated that spending on e-books was increasing and was expected to continue growing, although budget cuts and limited selection of e-books reigned in their spending. The lack of availability of titles in the e-book format was compounded by the lack of centralized tools, comparable to those available for printed books, adding poor discoverability to the list of issues hampering e-book acquisition. Content was often secondary to the sales models, licensing, and costs in determining acquisition. All of the libraries incorporated e-book records into the OPAC, but noted problems with the delivery and quality of MARC records supplied by the vendors, leading to inconsistent or unreliable access. While many respondents recognized the importance of marketing and promoting e-books, they varied in their own level of participation, in some cases noting the need for word-of-mouth to make users aware.

Courant & Nelson (2010) found that the costs to store a printed book are higher than the cost to store an e-book. That is particularly true given the value of real estate on campus. Costs to store print are higher when access is provided, meaning it may be cheaper to keep the print books in secure storage and use a digital copy for access.

Schell (2011) offered enthusiastic praise for e-books, calling them, “an unstoppable force.” The author suggested that emphasizing the value of just-in-time collecting, rather than a just-in-case collecting, could be helpful in generating support for e-books.

The library directors and deans interviewed in the Ithaka 2013 S&R Report was moderate in its assessment of rapid escalation of e-book adoption, pointing to relatively small projected increases in e-book spending. (Figure 25, p. 44). Some faculty enthusiasm for format change in books, according to the survey, surpassed that of library directors.

Walters (2013b) concludes that publisher-initiated limitations on usage and sharing of e-books were preventing librarians from enthusiastically embracing the technology. Those limitations took the form of digital rights management and overly restrictive licensing, and through more subtle features of interface design intended to frustrate or intimidate users into self-regulating their use. The author advises librarians to exert their power through purchase decisions, lest their compliant acceptance of unreasonable restrictions be seen by publishers, and users, as consent.

**Survey Review**

**Introduction**

During the months of September and October, 2013, the E-Book Task Group developed and distributed a survey to Tulane University affiliates. The survey was made available on the Library’s homepage and was distributed to faculty via email communications by Library Liaisons.

The survey had only 27 respondents that included freshman/sophomore (1), junior/senior (6), graduate students (6), faculty members (4), staff/administrators (3), librarians/library staff (6), and postdocs (1).
Respondents associated themselves with the School of Continuing Studies and Summer School (1), School of Law (1), School of Liberal Arts (7), School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine (3), School of Science & Engineering (5), School of Medicine (3), and other (3). Four respondents did not associate themselves with a school.

Although the number of responses is too small to produce meaningful quantitative data, the survey did yield qualitative information that may inform further investigations for policy setting. The survey also suggested that for purposes of future outreach, it would be necessary to very clearly define the difference between academic e-books as provided by the library and those they might encounter in other settings (e.g., Nook, Kindle, GooglePlay).

**Barriers & Gateways to Use**

**Accessibility**
Qualitative information gathered through this survey suggests that accessibility may be a major barrier to use for some Tulane affiliates. The survey prompt “I would use e-books if...” produced fairly consistent responses, best represented by the response “I would use e-books if I knew more about their availability/existence and how to access them.” Advocacy for improved interfaces may have some future benefit. A more immediate solution, however, may take the form of tutorials made available at the point of need.

**Promotion**
Responses to this prompt also indicate that e-book collection use may benefit from stronger promotion to increase awareness. Soft-selling the e-book collection through posters in the entryway and appropriate locations coupled with social media pushes and reminders made by Library Liaisons may go some way to increasing awareness of the e-book collection.

**Features**
Certain features of the e-book platform also influence the user experience and users’ decision to access additional e-books. We asked our respondents to make multiple selections from a list of e-book features they like and a list of features they do not like. Notably, the selections are likely influenced by the academic role of the respondents (e.g. undergraduate or faculty) and our data therefore cannot be considered conclusive. At best, it may be indicative of a few key features that should be expected of e-book platforms and others that warrant further investigation.
Features that appear to contribute to a *positive* user experience included: ability to search within the text (selected by 18 respondents); portability (18); convenience of accessing any time and any place (15); e-books save paper (9); ability to annotate, bookmark, or make notes (8); ability to read on a mobile device, e.g. iPhone, Blackberry (8); ability to read on a dedicated e-book reader, e.g. Kindle, Sony Reader (8). Additional features that seem less important to a positive e-book experience included: ability to adjust screen for visibility (6); ability to download chapters or portions of the e-book to computer or laptop for later use (6); ability to copy and paste into other documents (5); ability to print (3); ability to link to a particular chapter (3).

Features that may to contribute to a *negative* user experience included: limits on simultaneous users (8); doesn’t permit downloading to a device, which means it requires an internet connection and loads each page one at a time (8); method of annotating is clunky or unsuited to my needs (7).

Several additional features that appear less influential but *may nonetheless contribute to a negative experience* for some users include: technical problems (6); hard to make a copy (6); can’t read offline (6); don’t like extended reading on a computer screen (6); ability to highlight or take notes on the printed page (5); too many distractions when working online (5); being tied to a computer or device battery lifetime (4); hard to browse (3); too many file formats (2); reading comprehension is difficult (2); the user interface (2).

**Recommendations:**

**General Recommendations**

HTML emphasizes acquisitions of collections that are stable, archivable, and accessible. Cross-departmental expertise should be utilized in identifying packages that best meet our goals, while allowing for the discretion of selectors in identifying individual e-books for acquisition as firm orders.

E-book purchases should emphasize content for subject areas where faculty and students are known users of e-books and where programs have been relocated to alternate campuses, whose long-term ownership and preservation is not believed to be crucial.

E-book purchases should be limited to an accessible format that can be read on a relatively wide variety of devices. E-book standards and recommended practices are evolving and we suggest close monitoring going forward. Please see Appendix A for further discussion of the current landscape.

E-book purchases may be licensed for single or multiple use. The ultimate decision will be made by individual selectors. Factors to consider may include: anticipated use, departmental needs/preferences, financial feasibility, platforms, and usability.
At this time, there is no prohibition, other than cost, against purchasing either an e-book that is a duplicate of a purchased print title or a print title that is a duplicate of a purchased e-book.

Accessibility: Content for HTML’s collection must be accessible to all users. Publishers must make allowance for assistive technology to keep Tulane compliant with ADA and other legislation. Platforms should be compatible with HTML’s technical infrastructure, including our proxy service, link resolver and discovery platform. Full-text searchable e-books are preferred to those only with MARC records.

Vendors should be expected to provide meaningful usage statistics.

**DDA Option**

The e-book task group has researched the possibility of a limited DDA program that would include titles within select subject areas, to be determined by the Collections Management Group with the input of individual bibliographers. Additionally, the program may allow selectors to identify individual slips with an e-book option and convert them to DDA. The program should include titles published by academic presses within the last 5 years. Further parameters may be established prior to implementation of the program. Use of DDA should emphasize titles that are considered ancillary to HTML collections, yet of conceivable appropriate use for areas of known curricular or research relevance, as well as programs requiring remote access.

**Scope**

Initially, select approval slips would be converted to DDA according to predefined parameters, while selectors would later be able to convert individual titles to DDA as needed. Additionally, selectors would be able to remove titles from the DDA program in order to purchase them for the collection with the selector’s book funds. Technical processing would bring titles into Tulane’s discovery systems, but titles would not be purchased until users initiate a specified number of “trigger” events, as specified by the platform and approval vendors. It is possible that non-subject parameter settings, such as cost limits, could be used to exclude books on slip from the DDA option.

**Rationale**

This investment of a fixed and modest amount of money would allow selectors the option of providing access to a more diverse selection of materials for local and remote users.

**Selection guidelines**

Candidates for DDA would be restricted to books whose ultimate absence from the collection would not damage the collection. If a title is vital to the collection but requires more consideration by the selector, deferral of the question to DDA is not the best practice.

**Billing/Spending**

Although allowing some decisions to occur at the level of individual selectors, DDA would require communal discipline. Ideally, a DDA fund would be created from other available funds rather than be pulled from individual book funds. This would encourage buy-in from selectors as it would not diminish their book funds, and would simplify workflows in the event that the program ended. Money for
whichever titles were used/purchased would come from this deposit. Tulane would attempt to negotiate the highest possible “trigger” of interactions for DDA purchases.

**Record retention**

While it is common for libraries to inaugurate DDA plans without any plans to remove records of titles not purchased, the E-book task group recommends a general policy of limited retention for at least 5-10 years with a defined exit strategy.

**Workflow projections**

Please see Appendix B, below.

**Timetable:**

Given ongoing changes in e-book publishing platforms, the E-book Task Group recommends that this policy document be revisited within 3 years.

**Literature Cited**


http://www.clir.org/pubs/abstract/reports/pub147


**Appendix A: Standards**
http://ebookshtml.pbworks.com/w/page/68486117/Standards%20Review

**Appendix B: Workflows**
http://ebookshtml.pbworks.com/w/page/73069907/Workflow%20Overview