

“What Challenges and Opportunities have been created  
by the Introduction of e-Books to the Irish Public  
Library?”

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## **Abstract**

Since 2010 the e-book's popularity has risen and this has led to an increase in interest among public library members also. The purpose of this dissertation is to explore how public libraries are establishing and managing their e-book services and how these services can be improved in Irish public libraries.

This study is comprised of interviews from five Irish public librarians and documents their experience with establishing their e-book service. This study provides new insights into the Irish perspective on e-book lending in public libraries. The challenges that they encountered how they overcame them and the factors that affected the uptake of the service in the library are discussed.

Key findings include identification of challenges to the library such as file format and website integration. Most of issues are beyond the public library's control, such as lack of Irish content in the e-book vendor's database. Suggestions include the formation of a group representing the Irish public librarian's interests to the publisher. Reallocation of budget from resources with declining circulation figures to deal with decreased budgets. Integration of the e-books details into the library Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) and increased marketing activities to raise awareness of the service in the community. The establishment of a nationwide library consortium could improve pricing for the library.

## **Chapter 1 Introduction**

### **1.1 Background to this dissertation**

When Amazon announced in 2010 that for the first time e-books were outselling hardback books on their website, as stated by Upex (2010, p.1), both publishers and public libraries started paying closer attention to the e-book and the role it played in the public library. Gibson and Forbes (2011, p.1) also state that there has been an increase in the e-books popularity since 2010 and Gelles and Edgecliffe-Johnson (2010, p.1) attribute this to falling e-reader prices, changing consumer habits and also a growing inventory of e-book titles. Davis (2010, p.2) states that in the US, there has been a 10% increase in e-book lending services in public libraries in the last year, and cited 'The State Of America's Libraries 2010' as having reported a growth in e-book circulation.

This dissertation will not debate whether or not e-books will eventually render the print book obsolete, but rather demonstrate the beneficial role that the e-book can have in the Irish public library. As stated by Vasileiou et al. (2009, p.1) libraries need to be ready for the e-book and must be able to provide relevant services to their users. The library should view the e-book as an opportunity to increase accessibility to the community rather than as a threat to its traditional print lending model. Therefore, it is the objective of this dissertation to create guidelines for Irish public librarians to establish and manage e-book lending service in their public library. This will be done in the form of a model for e-book lending in Irish public libraries and recommendations for Irish public librarians with regards to allocating the budget and increasing uptake of the service.

This dissertation has been written specifically for Irish public librarians who are in the process of investigating the feasibility of bringing an e-book lending service into their library. It aims to act as a guide for these librarians in setting up an e-book lending service and therefore it was necessary to gain an understanding of the Irish public librarians experience with e-book lending. Interviews were carried out with each of the public libraries in Ireland who have an e-book lending service in place, or who are in the process of establishing an e-book lending service currently. These libraries are Waterford City Libraries, Dublin City Libraries, South Dublin Libraries, Dun-

Laoghaire/Rathdown Libraries, and Fingal Libraries. Kildare Libraries also have an e-book lending service in place, but were unable to participate in an interview at that time. In speaking to these librarians, it was possible to get an in-depth understanding of the issues that confronted them when establishing and managing their e-books service. Most of the available research relates to public libraries in countries that have more experience in e-book lending. There was little research into public libraries in Ireland in this respect and as the international e-book market indicates that its popularity is growing, research into this area was warranted.

The primary research conducted with this dissertation has afforded a better understanding of how successful Irish e-book lending services have been and what factors have affected the uptake of the service in Irish libraries. This has not been examined before in Ireland and contributes to the existing body of knowledge on international e-book lending services. The literature review shows examples of the current body of work on e-book lending services. This existing research demonstrates how strategic planning has been utilised in public libraries in other countries in order to identify opportunities and ensure that the library is making the best use of their resources. There is an argument that strategic planning is not as affective with evolving new technologies such as e-books, as they are changing constantly and so are difficult to manage. However, it is by using the principles of strategic planning, such as constant scanning of the e-book environment that enables the library to remain current with advancements in the e-book market and so better manage change. These new advancements may include the development of new file formats and availability of more e-readers on the Irish market.

The literature review shows that this existing body of work does not encompass all of the complexities of Irish e-book lending. For instance, in Ireland, the publishing industry has been more reluctant to enter the e-book market than the US publishing industry. This study provides a new and relevant perspective for Irish librarians, which aims to be a guide for them in providing an e-book lending to their members.

## **1.2 Dissertation Structure**

The literature review will introduce the dissertation's research questions and provide a description of the existing literature relating to e-book lending in public libraries. This literature review will demonstrate the lack of existing research relating to e-book lending in Irish public libraries and the need for primary research to fully answer the study's research questions. The methodology chapter will describe how the research questions were formed and the objectives for this research study. A research design will also be put forward in this chapter, for conducting the primary research for this study in order to answer the research questions. The analysis and findings chapter will describe the findings from the primary research, which will be analysed using the content analysis method, with the aid of NVivo 9 software, created by QSR International (2011). The discussion chapter will be a synthesis of the findings from both the primary and secondary research, which will be discussed with the intention of answering the research question. The dissertation will conclude with suggestions for the Irish public librarians for meeting and overcoming the challenges identified in the dissertation. These suggestions will be put forward in the form of a model for e-book lending in Irish public libraries and through a description of the new observations and insights into e-book lending in Irish public libraries, gathered through the primary research. Further recommendations for research are also made in the concluding chapter.

## **1.3 Chapter summary**

This introductory chapter has provided the context for this study, describing the current change in the e-book market and how this affects the public library. The structure of the dissertation is also described. The next chapter, the literature review, will define what is meant by an e-book lending service in the context of this study. The role of the e-book within the public library will also be discussed and a description of strategic planning theory will be put forward, which is the theoretical framework upon which this dissertation is based. The literature review chapter provides an overview of the existing body of research regarding e-book lending in public libraries and reveals the new contribution that this research study can make to our understanding.

## Chapter 2 Literature Review

The aim of this literature review is to clarify the context, purpose and the need for this piece of research. Firstly a clarification of what is being asked by the research questions will be provided through an explanation of the key terms in the questions. Secondly the academic relevance of this study will be made explicit through discussion of the study's theoretical framework. Finally existing literature relating to e-book lending in public libraries will be consulted in order to determine whether the research questions can be answered using secondary research alone or whether primary research into this area is warranted due to gaps in current understanding on the subject.

This study's research questions;

**Research question:** What challenges do Irish public librarians face when establishing and maintaining an e-book service?

**Sub question:** How can they best overcome these challenges?

**Sub question:** How successful has their service been so far and what do they attribute this to?

## **2.1 Background to the research questions**

The term ‘challenges’ in the main research question “What challenges do Irish public librarians face when establishing and maintaining an e-book service?” is best defined by the Oxford English Dictionary (2011) as a task or situation that tests someone’s abilities. The librarian goes through a process of investigating, developing a plan and implementing this plan to set up the library service. Having set up an e-book service the library must then manage or maintain this service over a period of time. It is the aim of this research to identify as many aspects as possible relating to the establishment and management of an e-book service. This dissertation will set out the tasks and situations that the Irish public librarian will encounter when establishing and managing their e-book service.

### **2.1.1 The e-book service**

The e-book, according to Tedd (2005, p.3) and Vasileiou and Rowley (2008, p.1) is content which is made available digitally, through an internet connection and which may be read on a PC or transferred to a dedicated reader device. The electronic reader is defined by Gibson and Gibb (2011, p.1) as the dedicated device upon which e-books may be read. The leading e-reader brands, as stated by Buczynski (2010, p.3) include Sony Reader, Apple iPod, Amazon Kindle and android phones. It is important to make the distinction between e-book and e-reader as this study is concerned with the e-book collection rather than the e-reader.

E-book lending, as defined by Estrada (2003, p.1) involves an e-book collection, which is made available through download from the library’s website to the library members PC, to be transferred to their dedicated reader, should they so wish. Estrada (2003, p.1) states that the e-book lending model involves choosing the e-book title from the collection on the internet and downloading for a lending period. After this period is up, the e-book will disappear from the member’s device and PC. There is a one-book-one-user access model, which means that only one library member can use the e-book file at a time. Library members can place a reserve on the e-book title if it is not available at the time of searching.

### **2.1.2 e-Book lending in the public library**

This study is concerned with the establishment and maintenance of an e-book lending service in Irish public libraries. The purpose of the public library, according to the IFLA (2001), is to provide access to resources and services through a range of different media. The basis of the public library is that they provide information to their members, regardless of format, which will best meet the needs of those members. In their definition the IFLA (2001) also state that public libraries need to recognise and exploit advancements in information technology to make information more readily available to members. The public library has an obligation to make information as accessible as possible to its members. The library must therefore recognise the opportunity, which e-books provide in improve access to library resources to housebound library users. An Chomhairle Leabharlanna (2000, p. 5) state that public libraries must be flexible, innovative as well as this they must anticipate and be able to adapt to change. While there is no mention of e-book lending, with some prescience they state;

“The Internet is driving the Information Age and has changed users’ expectations of libraries and information services. With developments in information and communication technologies we can now reach wider audiences than ever before and include users who were previously excluded, particularly those in remote areas, or those with disabilities.”- An Chomhairle Leabharlanna (2000, p.13)

The provision of e-book lending in libraries fits in perfectly with this vision of accessibility for those people who are house bound or unable to use that traditional public library lending model. E-Book collections are available 24 hours a day on the library website and do not require the library member to leave their home to borrow or return books and they never have to worry about late fees. However not all library members have access to this service as it involves the use of a PC, internet connection and the optional use of an e-reader. This technology may be too expensive for some library users or may be perceived as too challenging for them to use according to Koscieljew (2010, p.1).

## **2.2 Theoretical framework**

The literature review, according to Kemoni (2008, p.2) consists of a review of both empirical studies and also a review of literature relating to concepts and theory of the subject of the research study. This section is concerned with theory relating to e-books as a disruptive technology in the library and also the theory and concepts of strategic planning for managing disruptive technologies in the library.

### **2.2.1 Disruptive technologies in the context of the library**

This study has roots in theory of strategic planning in libraries and the management of disruptive technologies. E-books are a disruptive technology in the public library and strategic planning theory has been used in libraries to manage disruptive technologies and capitalise on the opportunities they provide. Dillon (2002, p.50) provides a broad definition of disruptive technologies as innovations which alter an existing system so that stakeholders within that system or field are unable to adapt. A disruptive technology displaces the existing technology in its area and creates a new way of completing a task or operating within that field. It allows us to complete a task in a faster way, removing previous barriers for stakeholders and so providing new opportunities for operating. This is particularly true of e-books as they allow library members to locate and check out e-books themselves, without the assistance of the librarians and without having to ever enter the library. This provides opportunities for the library to reach new members and stay true to their objective of making information as accessible as possible to all their members. The e-book lending service removes barriers for library members such as having to physically enter the library building. Just as Dillon (2002, p.51) provides the example of the telephone replacing the telegraph, in the context of the written word the printing press, with the first printing of the bible in 1455, displaced the scribing of manuscripts. Zimmerman, (2011, p.1) quotes Bethune (2008) as saying that at the time the Monks who had produced the manuscripts damned the movable type printing press as a devil's engine. Today the disruptive technology is the e-book, which is may displace the dominance of the printed book in the marketplace and now in the library. As Tirziman (2009, p.24) states, society is shaped by technology, and libraries should meet the needs of

society by providing electronic resources. Miller (2007, p.1) talks about the need for librarians to keep pace with change and states that disruptive technologies must be used for the benefit of the library and its members. A good example of this has been illustrated by Van Hooland (2011, p.1) who states that the British Library have capitalised on the opportunity that digitisation has provided and positioned themselves as leaders in the implementation of new technology.

### **2.2.2 Strategic planning**

Brown and Blake Gonzalez (2007, p.2) define strategic planning as the scanning of the environment surrounding the library to identify changes and using the information retrieved to inform decision making in the library. Strategic planning has been used by libraries since the early 1980's according to Brown and Blake Gonzalez (2007, p.9) and has been used to deal with damaging budget cuts in libraries. Strategic planning allows the library to ensure that it is making the best use of its resources and addressing the most important needs of its members by conducting performance measurement activities, such as surveying their members.

We are in the midst of a recession, and in Ireland and public spending has been curtailed. Strategic planning will ensure that the existing budget is being put to best use. The identification of library objectives and determination of whether these objectives are being met are an integral part of the strategic planning process. The importance of strategic planning to public libraries is illustrated by Kostagiolas et al. (2009, p.1) who state that a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis of the library's environment allows library managers to use change to their advantage.

In the context of this study it is the soaring sales of e-books, as stated by Manufacturing Close-up (2010, p.1), which is providing the opportunity for change to public libraries. If indeed a public library already has an e-book service in place, strategic planning theory suggests that an environmental scan, such as a member survey, will indicate the popularity of the e-book service among library members. Resource shelf (2010, p.1) provides the example of Seattle public libraries, who conducted a member survey which indicated that 45% of their members found e-

books to be the second most popular online resource in the library. The opportunities that e-books provide for the public library, as opposed to print books, are that the library benefits from reduced costs associated with wear and tear, loss and physical storage according to Vasileiou and Rowley (2008, p.1). They provide constant access to library resources when the library is closed and they make library resources available to those members who cannot physically access the library building.

## **2.3 Empirical studies relating to e-book services in public libraries.**

Primary research will determine the challenges that public librarians in Ireland face in establishing and maintaining an e-book lending service, and how best to overcome these challenges. Firstly it was necessary to review the literature written on the subject of e-book lending in public libraries to determine whether these research questions could be answered by existing literature. It was evident from reviewing the literature on this subject that there is a paucity of studies on e-book lending in Irish public libraries and so examples were taken from other countries with higher percentages of e-book lending in their public libraries at present. Existing studies have been examined in order to try and identify the challenges outlined in the main research question “What challenges do Irish public librarians face when establishing and maintaining an e-book service?” Research on the subject of e-book lending in public libraries suggest that the challenges that public librarians are likely to encounter in setting up and managing their service can be categorised into broad areas. These areas are; the allocation of the budget in the face of funding cuts, Digital Rights Management (DRM) restrictions imposed by publishers and technology issues which affect access and use of e-books.

### **2.3.1 Budget Allocation**

To begin this section on budget on a positive note, Woods and Ireland (2008, p.1) and Vasileiou and Rowley (2008, p.1) state that e-book lending provides an opportunity for libraries to reduce costs associated with processing, replacing and storage. However, Ireland’s economy is in recession and public libraries have been subject to budget cuts and funding has been scarce. Therefore, in order to establish an e-book service it is necessary to reallocate funds from other library resources, such as print books for example. The Public Library Authorities Annual Budgets 2010, according to An Chomhairle Leabharlanna website (2010), states that budgeted spending is decreasing on both stock and operations, with stock receiving most of the cuts. Despite this they state that library authorities are still committed to providing a better service and improving infrastructure.

### **2.3.2 Digital Rights Management (DRM)**

Bradshaw (2009, p.1) defines DRM as copy protection software which controls how digital content is reused by receiving equipment. In other words creators of digital content can use DRM technology to impose legal copyright restrictions on users, preventing them from using the e-book on more than one device. In the e-books case this has resulted in the traditional library lending model being challenged. Libraries can now never own the copies of the e-books in their collections, only purchase licenses for them. Potash (2011, p.1) talks about publisher imposed usage capping on titles of 26 checkouts before the e-book will expire and libraries are asked to purchase a new title. This is an attempt to better reflect the shelf life of a hardcopy book as publishers believe that after 26 loans a hardback book will be physically worn out and will need to be replaced.

Bintliff (2010, p.1) and Zimmerman (2011, p.1) discuss the reasoning behind these publisher imposed restrictions, stating that the free lending of e-books in libraries has raised concerns among publishers who feel that this will affect sales of their e-book titles. They are also concerned with preventing piracy which affected the music and film business. Zimmerman (2011, p.1) talks about the reluctance of authors to allow their content to be published digitally for fear of piracy but does not include all authors in this stating that some view the technology as an opportunity for their work to be recognised, fearing obscurity rather than piracy. The American Library Association (ALA) has responded to DRM restrictions to library lending imposed by publishers, by creating the Presidential Task Force on Equitable Access to Electronic Content (EQUACC) in 2010. According to the EQUACC (2010, p.2) their task is to represent the interests of the libraries in the DRM debate and ensure that their members are able to operate in the e-books environment both now and in the future.

### **2.3.3 Technology**

Technology is ever evolving with regard to e-books. Porter and King (2010, p.2) talk about the range of file formats currently available for e-books; .arg, .azw, .djvu, .ePub, .html, .lbr, .lit, .mobi, .mp3, .opf, .pdb, .pdg, .pdf, .tr3, .txt, and .xeb. The new .ePub file format is being heralded among authors such as Cassell and Mercado (2010, p.1) Kilborn (2010, p.1), Zimerman (2011, p.1) as being the saviour for e-books, in that it is XML based and will allow files to be read on multiple hardware platforms. However as Ross (2010, p.1) states, not all e-readers are compatible with .ePub file format, so libraries must keep this in consideration when choosing e-book titles.

As stated by Ross (2010, p.1) the popularity of e-books grows as e-reader technology improves. e-Ink technology allows the e-reader to be as close to reading paper as possible. e-Readers are also coming down in price and are becoming more compatible with different e-book file formats.

### **2.3.4 Finding e-books**

In the context of retrieving a title from the e-book collection, Vasileiou and Rowley (2011, p.1) and McCracken (2004, p.1) agree that having e-books included in the library OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue), through MARC records will increase retrieval by library members. These MARC records are bibliographic records which hold details of the e-book such as the author and title. However at present e-book collections are held separate to the OPAC on the e-book vendor website. While this model has worked in the initial set up for e-book lending models in libraries, it is still not integrated into the library OPAC. This is an issue that e-book vendors are concerned with, according to Potash (2011, p.1). He states that OverDrive have suggested that integration with the library OPAC or one single log-on for digital and physical items, will provide better access to e-book titles.

### **2.3.5 e-Book lending best practice in public libraries**

Having identified the broad challenges facing public librarians, the two sub questions “How can they best overcome these challenges?” and “How successful has their service been so far and what do they attribute this to?” seek to present a way of overcoming these challenges and developing a model for establishing and maintaining an e-book service in the public library. An overview of the role of the e-book vendor in helping the public library to overcome some of the challenges in establishing an e-book service is provided in the following section.

#### **2.3.5.1 The e-book vendor**

The e-book vendor acts as an intermediary between the publisher and the library, they provide the platform for e-book collections. Say (2011, p.1) states that in the UK the major e-book suppliers for public libraries are Ebrary, Public Libraries Online and OverDrive. Bintloff (2010, p.1) talks about the current models for e-book lending available in public libraries at present stating that online access by Bloomsbury Public Library Online allows for simultaneous access to e-books by library member, do you need internet access to read the book, however.

For public libraries the global market leader is OverDrive according to Eveld (2011, p.1). On their website, Overdrive (2011) state that they create and host a website for accessing their database of e-books, from which the library purchases licenses for a select number. The website is integrated with the library website to create a seamless experience for the library member. They also provide integration with the library’s management system, by offering MARC records. They provide e-book service for 13000 libraries globally. The library vendor looks after DRM concerns, acting as an advocate for both libraries and publishers. They use DRM technology to ensure that the book can be downloaded to one device only and will expire after the allotted lending period according to Say (2011, p.1).

### **2.3.5.2 e-Book lending models in the UK and US**

In the US, Hazard Owen (2011) refers to an ALA (American Library Association) study from 2011 which shows that over two thirds of public libraries in the US offer an e-book lending service, an increase of 20% on 2007. This is despite decreased or flat budgets in over 60% of libraries. Libraries must find innovative ways of providing funding for their e-book lending service while the country is in recession. A good example of this can be seen by US public library Berkshire Athenaeum. At this institution in 1985, Korman (2011, p.1) states that in the face of budget cuts and shifting reading habits, the library decided to invest in lending audio cassettes and compact discs to make the institution relevant to library members again, as reading figures were down. According to Korman (2011, p.1) the library then changed from simply a source of books to an information centre. Today it is e-books, rather than CD's and cassettes that are the disruptive technology to print books in the library. In 2011 Korman, (2011, p.1) states that the Berkshire Athenaeum is changing again. Book circulation has dropped by over 40% but more people are coming into the library to use its IT resources instead. Their example shows that by being aware of shifting trends relating to information resource usage, they can identify and capitalise on new opportunities for the library. Libraries may stop investing in one declining information resource and invest in one which is emerging as more popular and which will target new library members. Strategic planning in libraries can keep the library up to date with environmental and internal changes and trends such as the ones mentioned in this example.

From a UK perspective Say (2011, p.1) quotes Phil Bradley, the vice president of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP), as saying that a quarter of library councils in the UK offer an e-book lending service. However he does speak about the negative aspects to implementing e-books in public libraries. According to him, at present there is no financial benefit to having an e-book service in the library and the lack of a standardised commercial model is also a point of concern. While there are other authors such as Woods and Ireland (2008, p.1) and Vasileiou and Rowley (2008, p.1) who may disagree with him with regards to financial benefits of having an e-book service in place, the lack of standardised

commercial model is an issue that librarians will need to be aware of and be prepared to deal with if they decide to implement an e-book lending service.

An example of an e-book lending service in operation in the UK, according to Say (2011, p.1) is the virtual library at Lincolnshire county library which was set up in response to enquiries from library members over a two year period. They are using Askews Library Services as they were their existing library vendors for print books. They have 1000 e-books in their catalogue and are adding to that each month. In order to comply with territorial rights issues members need to initially come into Lincolnshire library to obtain a library member card and pin number, then they can access the e-book catalogue virtually from any location. They are using Adobe's Digital Editions. The advantages that they state come from the provision of e-books include immediate availability after buying from the wholesaler's website and less costs incurred from wear and tear of the book. They also feel that they will be attracting people who have never used libraries before but who are downloading books from retail sites such as Amazon. The Lincolnshire library example demonstrates shows how performance measurement can identify new opportunities for the library, such as ways of reaching new members and reducing costs.

Platt (2011, p.1) talks about the New York Public Library's e-book lending service, which started in 2004. The library works with OverDrive, who are US based and started with an e-book catalogue of over 5000 titles. In their first year there were over 5000 checkouts while in 2010 they have seen over 2 million per month in the autumn publishing period. They attribute the success of their e-content lending to acquiring quality content, increased adoption of e-content among library members and also improvement in e-reader compatibility.

## **2.4 The need for primary research in this study**

Referring back to the research questions, the objective of this research study is to identify the challenges that Irish public librarians face when establishing and maintaining an e-book service. Next to determine how best to overcome these challenges. Finally to ascertain how successful e-book services in Irish public libraries have been so far and what factors have affected the success of these services. This literature review has demonstrated that budget cuts, DRM and technology are the broad challenges that public librarians will face when establishing and managing their e-book service. However, it is not known how these issues affect Irish public libraries as the majority of e-book lending studies relate to the UK and US. Not only is research into e-book lending in Irish public libraries scarce, Vasileiou and Rowley (2011, p.1) state research into all aspects of e-book lending in libraries is warranted in the UK also. According to them, e-book lending is in its infancy and new research into any area relating to the management of e-book lending in libraries will be a useful addition to the existing body library and information science research.

The lack of research from an Irish perspective means that the original research questions for this study cannot be answered by secondary research alone. Ireland differs to the US and UK in that the publishing industry has been reluctant to enter the e-book market in Ireland, so there is a lack of Irish e-book titles available to library users. The New York Public library example demonstrates the importance of having a wide range of up to date titles in a library e-book collection. Therefore the question remains; how has the lack of Irish published e-book titles in e-book services affected the range of titles available in Irish e-book lending services in public libraries? .It is essential to speak with Irish public librarians to learn from their experience with e-book lending in Irish public libraries in order to ascertain what challenges they encountered, whether they differ to the existing studies on this subject from other countries and also to determine what factors they feel have influenced the success of their services.

## **2.5 Chapter summary**

This literature review has described what is meant by the e-book in the context of this study and its role in the public library. The e-book is a disruptive technology and so the library can attempt to manage it through use of strategic planning theory and this is the theoretical framework for this dissertation. The existing body of work relating to e-book lending in libraries is based on examples from countries such as the US and UK. These examples show that budget, DRM restrictions, technology and the e-book vendor are the challenges for the public library in providing an e-book service. There is a lack of standardised commercial model in place, internationally. The provision of relevant e-book titles is instrumental in providing a successful e-book lending service. The existing research lacks an Irish perspective and so there is a need for primary research in this study to answer the research questions.

The next chapter describes the research design chosen to best find answers to this study's research questions. The results of this primary data collection will build upon the existing research into e-book lending in public libraries to be of vital use to public librarians seeking to establish and manage an e-book lending service in their own libraries.

## **Chapter 3 Methodology**

This chapter describes the purpose of this study, how the research question for this study were formulated and how the research methods will assist in finding answers to the research question.

### **3.1 Formulating a research question**

#### **3.1.1 Broad area of interest**

Silverman (2010, p.81) talks about curiosity as the main reason for selecting a particular topic to research, this is true for this piece of research. Working in an independent book shop for five years, I have developed a keen interest in the area of e-books. For book sellers, the e-book is seen as an ever growing threat to sales. However, in my opinion this advancement in technology should be viewed as an exciting opportunity to be utilised rather than a threat to be feared. The topic of e-books was of interest as they were very topical and literature on the subject existed from countries which had established e-book lending services such as the US and UK.

### **3.1.2 Narrowing the focus**

This section aims to be a broad description of the process taken to arrive at the research question. Please note that the articles which informed this research process are discussed in more detail in the literature review chapter. A preliminary search of articles written on the broad subject of e-books indicated that, as of January/February 2011 e-books have been the cause of power struggles between retailers and publishers. Both parties had identified the trend in the market for an increase in e-book usage after a lacklustre demand in sales. This increase in demand was attributed to new file formats which were being developed so that e-books could be read across a variety of reader devices. The .ePub file format is XML based in order to allow for transferability.

The increase in the e-books popularity is posed a problem for publishers as when sales of e-books were low, copyright restrictions were not such an urgent issue, but now they felt that sales would be affected if e-books were to be freely available. E-books were challenging the established print sales model. If demand in the retail sector was increasing, this would lead to an increase in demand for e-book lending in public libraries. The literature suggested that public libraries in the US, Canada and UK were indeed offering e-book lending to their members. From consulting each of the 32 library council websites in Ireland, it appeared that only four of these public libraries were offering e-book loans in Ireland, however it did demonstrate that while it was still in its early day, e-book lending in Irish public libraries had begun.

What was emerging from the research process thus far was that e-books are a disruptive technology. Van Horn (2002, p.1) cites Clay Christensen as describing a disruptive technology as a new technology, for which there is little demand at first and then later evolves to become a valuable commodity which displaces the existing technology, in this case print books. Theory surrounding disruptive technologies has its roots in strategic planning, which encourages libraries to scan their environment in order to be prepared to deal with and capitalise on changes in the environment. The four libraries who were offering this e-book service in Ireland were early adopters of this new technology and had taken a chance on the slow to start e-book market in order to seize the opportunity to diversify their service and reach new members. The question of interest was how they did it. Documenting their experience with this

process would be of interest to the rest of the 28 library councils who may possibly follow their lead and establish an e-book service at their own libraries.

### **3.1.3 The research questions**

**Research question: What challenges do Irish public librarians face when establishing and maintaining an e-book service?**

**Sub question: How can they best overcome these challenges?**

**Sub question: How successful has their service been so far and what do they attribute this to?**

The identification of variables and construction of hypotheses were not a natural next step in this research process. There were no variables, strength of relationships or hypotheses to test but rather the desire to explore the issues raised in the research questions. As Kumar (2011, p.82) states, hypotheses are not essential for carrying out a study in qualitative research and this appeared to be developing into a qualitative study.

## **3.2 The purpose of this study**

### **3.2.1 Aims and objectives of this research**

At this point the study seemed to be developing into a both a descriptive and analytical piece of research. The aim was not to prove a hypothesis but rather to explore and document the experience of the librarians who had already established or were about to launch an e-book service in an Irish public library. The aim in documenting the librarians experience was to identify as many aspects as possible relating to establishing and managing an e-book lending service in an Irish public library. The next step was to analyse the issues identified in order to put forward recommendations for improving the e-book lending service in Ireland

### **3.2.2 Objectives of the research**

**Research question: What challenges do Irish public librarians face when establishing and maintaining an e-book service?**

**Sub question: How can they best overcome these challenges?**

**Sub question: How successful has their service been so far and what do they attribute this to?**

1. To examine the role of the e-book vendor in the e-book lending service. The purpose is to document the process of working with the e-book vendor to identify the challenges that they present to the library and how the library overcame these challenges. This objective relates to the main research question and first sub question; identifying challenges and how to overcome them.

2. To determine how Irish public libraries are funding their e-book lending service. The objective is to identify the challenges associated with finding and allocating the budget for the e-book service and how the libraries overcame these challenges. This objective relates to the main research question and first sub question; identifying challenges and how to overcome them.

3. To ascertain the impact that publisher imposed Digital Rights Management (DRM) restrictions have on e-book lending service in Ireland. The aim is to identify how DRM restrictions present challenges to Irish public libraries and how the libraries overcome these challenges. This objective relates again to the main research question and first sub research question.

4. To learn from the librarians how successful their e-book services have been and which factors they feel have influenced the uptake of the service. The objective in doing this is to identify how e-book services can be improved in Irish public libraries. This relates to the second sub research question.

### **3.2.3 Outcomes**

The proposed outcome for this piece of research is to produce a document which will be a guide for Irish public librarians who are investigating the feasibility of establishing an e-book lending service in their library. As well as this, the document will put forward recommendations for improving e-book lending services in Irish public libraries. According to APLIS (1995, p.1) when the State Library of Queensland facilitated a research project which was to examine the state and operating environment of public libraries in Australia, they first identified objectives, scope and outcomes of the research. Their projected outcome was similar to the proposed outcome for this piece of research however this is on a much smaller scale. Their proposed outcome was to generate a document which would set out relevant scenarios for public libraries so as to assist in the development of their respective strategic plans. With this dissertation, the aim is to gain an understanding of the librarians experience with the e-book lending service, so as to identify as many aspects as possible relating to the establishment of an e-book service.

## **3.3 Designing the research process**

In order to find answers to the research questions formulated, it was necessary first to create a research design. This will, according to both Kumar (2011, p.94) and Hart (2005, p.313) keep the research together and ensure that the answers to the research questions are valid and reliable. The concepts of validity and reliability are discussed in more detail in section 3.3.5.

### **3.3.1 Scope**

This research will be a cross-sectional study of Irish public librarians who have established and are in the process of establishing an e-book service. Cross-sectional study approach has been chosen as opposed to a case study approach as Kumar (2011, p.126) states that a case study involves treating the whole study population as one individual, whereas this research entails gaining the opinions and documenting the experience of five individual librarians separately. The study population for this research is small with four libraries having already launched their e-book service; South Dublin, Waterford, Dun-Laoghaire/ Rathdown and Kildare. Dublin City Libraries and Fingal libraries are in the process of launching their service so they are the target audience for this piece of research.

The aim in speaking to these librarians is to gain as much information as possible on the issues surrounding e-book lending and therefore it is essential to be open to new issues which may arise during an interview. Kumar (2011, p.212) states that this approach indicates that the research will be qualitative as the focus is not on a diverse and vast sampling strategy but to purposefully speak to those respondents who will have the “best information”.

### **3.3.2 Methodology**

As Silverman (2010, p.121) states, deciding to select a qualitative methodology may simply be based on what fits the research best. In this case a qualitative approach not only felt more natural, but was the best fit for answering the research questions. The objective of this research is to learn from the experience of others. The facts concerning what establishing an e-book service entails had already been gathered from the secondary research. The aim of the primary research was to examine how the librarians felt about these facts, how they had been affected by issues such as DRM restrictions, e-book vendor pricing models and range of titles available. The final deciding factor was the short time span available for collecting the data, three to four weeks. This was not sufficient time for collecting a proper sample from quantitative research, even if it had been applicable to answering the research question. Having decided that the research would be qualitative only, it was then necessary to examine ways of gathering and interpreting the information. It seemed that the approach was to be interpretivist in nature, meaning that the importance is placed on trying to gain an understanding of librarians experience in establishing an e-book service.

### **3.3.3 Approach**

The mode of enquiry in this study is to be qualitative solely and the approach to gathering data is to be semi-structured. Inductive reasoning will be employed in this study as according to Kumar (2011, p.57), inductive reasoning is in keeping with the qualitative aim of this study; to explore and gather all of the diverse information about the topic.

### **3.3.4 Reliability, validity and ethics**

In qualitative research, the best way to ensure that results are reliable and accurate, it seems is to be aware that by narrowing the gap between interviewer and interviewee and aiming more for conversation, it is very possible that the interviewer can introduce bias into the conversation. In addressing this problem in this research, the sources of the information will be verified as credible and trustworthy and data analysis will be consistent, in keeping with Kumar (2011, p.15).

### **3.3.5 Method**

This research is concerned with learning about the challenges librarians faced when bringing in the service, as opposed to quantifying an established set of variables. This is going to be a descriptive, analytical and exploratory piece of research, aimed at gathering information about a situation, rather than the proving of a hypothesis, or the quantifying of variables relating to e-book implementation. Therefore semi-structured interviews will be used to speak to these librarians as suggested by Kumar (2011, p.138) and Silverman (2010, p.9). An interview schedule will be used, which will be divided into three key areas. The interviewee will, however be encouraged also to move off course if they feel there is an issue relevant to the topic. The interview schedule will act as a guide to the interviewer.

Vasileiou and Rowley (2011, p.1) also adopt an interpretivist, inductive approach to their qualitative study into the promotion of e-books in academic libraries. They used semi-structured interviews to gather data and they state that these choices in methodology allow for learning about librarians opinions rather than just the mere gathering of facts.

### **3.3.6 Timeframe**

The allotted timeframe for collecting the data was from July 4<sup>th</sup> to August 8<sup>th</sup>. Five interviews were conducted within that time with South Dublin, Waterford City, Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown, Fingal and Dublin City Libraries. Data Analysis and presentation of findings were completed by August 28<sup>th</sup> so as to leave time week for re-writing and binding in order to meet the final deadline of 5<sup>th</sup> September.

## **3.4 Doing the research**

### **3.4.1 Data collection**

An interview schedule has been created to act as a guide during the semi-structured interview. This will ensure that the research questions set out at the beginning of the research process are answered. The interview schedule is broken down into three areas each of which correspond with the main research question and the two sub questions. This can be found in appendix A.

#### **3.4.1.1 Justification for questions**

##### **The library:**

1. Size of the library? (Number of members)
2. When did you launch the e-book service?

Each library is being treated as a separate entity rather than grouping them all together and treating them as one case study. Therefore it is important to explain the background to establishing the e-book service such as the size of each library and how long they have the service in place.

3. Budget:
  - a. What percentage of the budget has been spent on e-books and has this been reallocated from other areas?
  - b. How has the e-book budget been allocated? (e-book vendor/staff and library member training etc)

This question is asked in order to try and ascertain the cost of establishing an e-book service, where the library found the funds and what that budget would be spent on. This relates to the main research question in trying to identify the challenges that librarians will face in establishing an e-book service, as certainly finding funding for this new service will be difficult during the recession. By ascertaining how these

librarians have dealt with the issue of cost, which would act as a guide for librarians who had thought that lack of funds to be a barrier for establishing an e-book service.

4. e-Book vendor:

- a. Which e-book vendor are you using?
- b. Briefly, what were the main deciding factors when choosing this company? (Price/availability of titles)
- c. What pricing model have you agreed with the e-book vendor? (How is content priced? Is there a yearly subscription for all titles?)
- d. Does the e-book vendor deal with Irish Publishers?
- e. Integration with website: Does the e-book vendor take care of the initial development and maintenance of the website?
- f. Integration with library catalogue: Are e-books part of the library's OPAC?
- g. Technology: Have library patrons experienced problems with using the file formats made available by the e-book vendor?
- h. Briefly, how has your overall experience been with (e-book vendor)?  
And would you consider an alternative to (e-book vendor)?

By asking questions b and c the aim is to determine the purchasing model that the e-book vendor uses.

Question d is to identify whether the format which has worked for other countries can be simply slotted into the Irish system, as e-book vendor tend towards a very American orientation for e-book acquisition.

The objective of question e, f and g is to describe what the e-book vendor does and the practical steps that the library would have to take to establish their e-book service. The e-book vendor is a sort of one stop for all when establishing and maintaining the service; they provide the platform and integrate their e-book database with the library's webpage so that library members feel that they are still using the library's website.

Of particular interest to this study is how the librarian feels about the purchasing model and whether they feel the publishers are justified in imposing such tight restrictions on e-book lending and are therefore happy to comply with these restrictions

Question h is an open ended question which, in line with the semi-structured, qualitative approach to data collection seeks to explore any issues related to e-vendors that the respondent feels are important and that have not been included in the interview schedule. Likewise, each of the questions is designed to be a starting off point for conversation in order to capture as many concepts about the issue as possible. It is understood that striking a balance between the depth of the answer and the range of diverse subjects is important. The focus is tending towards listing the issues rather than delving into these issues in depth.

#### 5. Digital Rights Management:

- a. **Copyright Restrictions:** How has usage capping, proposed by publishers such as HarperCollins at 26 loans, affected your library?
- b. **Copyright Restrictions:** Have the library been affected by the issue of territorial rights? If so how has the library dealt with this? (Publishers would like library members to come into the library to download e-books in order to prove they are residents of the local area and not residing on the other side of the world and using the service.)

- c. **Range of titles:** Have you found the range of titles available in e-book format to be restrictive?
  
- d. In your opinion, what would be an acceptable model for your library with regards to copyright and fair use? (Usage capping and proof of residence issues).

The objective for this question is to place the research in an Irish context mainly. Digital rights management impact has not been discussed much in Irish public libraries and I would like to capture Irish librarian's experiences with dealing with publisher imposed restrictions on titles. Whether this has had a negative effect on uptake of the service, promoted confusion among members and increased budget spend on e-book titles.

In asking the question: **Have these issues raised in questions 4 and 5 been addressed by the e-book vendor or by your library?** the aim is to establish whether the e-book vendor covers all aspects of establishing and maintaining the e-book service or if there are additional activities and costs that the library needs to be aware of when creating a plan and budget for the service.

6. Evaluation:

- a. What are the usage statistics for the service since it has gone live?
  
- b. What feedback have you received from your members?
  
- c. If you were starting the process again what would you have changed/like to have known?

The last question on the interview schedule has two purposes, questions a and b are to gather information about how successful the service has been and what, in their opinion has effected this. In this respect it is expected that the answers received will relate to the lack of readers being available and the necessity of marketing the service to members.

Secondly question c is to be an opportunity to get recommendations from the librarian as to the best practice on capitalising on opportunities associated with e-book provision in the future.

#### **3.4.1.2 Carrying out the research**

Face to face interviews were scheduled with Waterford, South Dublin, Dun-Laoghaire/Rathdown and Fingal Libraries and a telephone interview with Dublin City Libraries. Interviews were organised by contacting them through email to ask them if they would like to participate in the research. Kildare Libraries were unable to participate in the study during the data collection time. Interviews were about 45 minutes in length and participants were given a list of the questions beforehand in order to prepare, but it was stressed that respondents were encouraged to discuss and topics relevant to the subject.

## **3.5 Data analysis and delivering the findings**

### **3.5.1 Content analysis**

Using Yu et al. (2011, p.3) and Kumar (2011, p.276) as guides, the data will be analysed according to qualitative methods. The data will be interpreted and categorised. The themes that emerge from the transcripts of the interviews will be described at this stage. Codes will be assigned to each theme for identification and to ensure reliability and validity. NVivo 9 software has been chosen as the software tool to aid analysis as this is specifically tailored to qualitative research. It is particularly effective at helping to organise the findings of the interview into themes and managing these themes by assigning nodes or codes to them.

### **3.5.2 Presenting the findings**

In chapter 5 the findings of the interviews will be placed within the context of the literature search conducted in formulating the research questions. Firstly, a model will be put forward demonstrating the practical steps a public library needs to take in order to establish an e-book service and maintain that service. This model will consist of the themes identified in the transcripts of the interviews conducted and will answer the main research question; “What challenges do Irish public librarians face when establishing and maintaining an e-book service?” Secondly, the recommendations of the librarians spoken to, as well as authors consulted, will be put forward in order to improve the model for e-book lending in Ireland. This model will be tailored to the Irish public library. This will consist of both the recommendations of the librarians interviewed and also the examples of best practice in establishing an e-book service in other countries. This will answer the two sub research questions; “How can they best overcome these challenges?” and “How successful has their service been so far and what do they attribute this to?”

Chapter 6 will be a reflection of the learning process, which will link back to the objective for carrying out a master’s dissertation.

## 3.6 Chapter Summary

This methodology chapter has outlined how the research questions have been formulated. The broad area of interest concerning e-books was narrowed down to the objective of creating a guide for librarians. This document would describe the process, challenges and opportunities that Irish public librarians face when establishing and maintaining an e-book lending service in an Irish public library. This subject relates to theory grounded in disruptive technologies and strategic planning.

In order to create this document it is necessary to form a research plan that will provide the tools and models necessary to answer the initial main research question: “What challenges do Irish public librarians face when establishing and maintaining an e-book service?”

This piece of research will be a cross-sectional study of Irish public libraries that have already, or are in the process of launching an e-book lending service. The research will be qualitative only, as this is the best approach to finding answers to this study’s research questions. An interpretivist methodological standpoint will be adopted when collecting and analysing the data, so that the emphasis is placed with understanding the interviewee’s experience.

Data will be collected using a semi-structured interview, with the aid of an interview schedule to act as a guide only; this can be found in appendix A. Data collected will be analysed using content analysis, in keeping with the qualitative nature of the research. The findings of this analysis are outlined in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 4 Data Analysis and Findings**

This chapter describes the observations from the findings of semi-structured interviews conducted with Waterford City, South Dublin, Dun-Laoghaire/Rathdown, Fingal and Dublin City public libraries. Interpretation of these results is given in the next chapter on the discussion of the findings. Content analysis is the best method for analysing the findings of qualitative research studies, according to Kumar (2011, p.240) and White and Marsh (2006, p.13) as it picks out the main themes in the findings. NVivo 9 software was used as an analysis tool to organise the responses into themes. Many of the themes which emerged reflect the questions in the interview schedule, with some unforeseen themes emerging relating to e-book lending in Irish public libraries.

## 4.1 Answering the research questions

The interview transcripts were analysed with the study's research questions and research objectives in mind. To reiterate, the research questions are:

- “What challenges do Irish public librarians face when establishing and maintaining an e-book service?”
- “How can they best overcome these challenges?”
- “How successful has their service been so far and what do they attribute this to?”

The objectives in asking these research questions are:

1. To identify and investigate the challenges presented by the e-book vendor while providing the e-book lending service.
2. To determine how Irish public libraries fund their e-book service and how they deal with the challenge of finding and allocating budget to this new service.
3. To ascertain how the e-book service has been affected by the challenge of publisher imposed Digital Rights Management restrictions and how they have dealt with this challenge in the library.
4. To find out how successful e-book services have been in public libraries and what factors have affected this service.

The four main themes that have emerged from the findings of the research are: the budget, the e-book vendor, digital rights management and factors affecting the success of the e-book service.

## 4.2 The budget

This section relates to the challenge of budget that the public library faces and examines how each of the libraries questioned have overcome the challenge of providing a budget during a recession. Therefore it answers in part the main research question “What challenges do Irish public librarians face when establishing and maintaining an e-book service?” And the sub research question: “How can they best overcome these challenges?”

- South Dublin Libraries have 250,000 members with 7 branches. They established their e-book service in 2007; they were the first Irish public library to trial an e-book service in an Irish public library.
- Dun-Laoghaire/Rathdown libraries have 55,000 members with 8 branches and established their e-book service in August 2009.
- Waterford City Libraries have 11,876 members with 3 branches and established their e-book service in May 2011.
- Fingal Libraries have 129,000 members with 10 branches and they hope to launch their e-book service in September 2011.
- Dublin City Libraries currently have 85,000 members with 22 branches and hope to launch their e-book service in 2011.

In providing a budget for the service, the reallocation of funds from other resources is the main method of sustaining the service in the face of budget cuts. Some of the libraries received funding in 2007 and 2009 from schemes such as the National Disability Strategy; however more recently funding has been reallocated from resources with declining circulation numbers. One librarian talked about reallocating budget saying; “We did not receive any extra funding. We are looking to take it off periodicals initially and eventually we expect DVD’s to become irrelevant and will have funding from there and audio books in the future”.

## 4.3 The e-book vendor

This section relates to the main research question “What challenges do Irish public librarians face when establishing and maintaining an e-book service?” and the sub research question “How can they best overcome these challenges. The e-book vendor is vital to the e-book service as they provide Information Technology and Digital Rights Management solutions for the library. In providing these solutions, however, the e-book vendor also presents their own set of challenges to the public library when setting up and managing the service. These challenges include;

- Challenge for the library: Website integration
- Challenge for the library: File format and accessing e-book titles
- Challenge for the library: Purchasing a license rather than owning the e-book
- Challenge for the library: One-book-one-user access model
- Challenge for the library: Developing e-book collections

This section discusses these challenges and how each of the libraries have overcome them. All of the libraries have chosen US based OverDrive as their e-book vendor. They were chosen because they are the market leader and have a wealth of experience in e-book lending to draw from regarding technology, integration and training. They are seen to be dynamic in the marketplace, capable of identifying and capitalising on new file formats, readers and e-book technology. However they are expensive and some libraries had trouble integrating their log-in systems with the external OverDrive website. They also stated that OverDrive have an overly US biased stock of e-book titles. Most of the libraries would consider a cheaper, Irish or British alternative, if there was one available. This was discussed by one librarian who stated “We probably would consider changing at the end of the year, as there are issues such as the stock being overly American, It is not easy to search for Irish titles and there are not enough in the database.”

Their purchasing model involves a €15000 fee per year which comprised of an average of €3000 to €7000 spent annually on purchasing e-book titles and the rest covering the fee for hosting the e-book platform. This was the total spend for most of the libraries in setting up the service, however half of the libraries mentioned IT

problems which required extra spend and would need to be covered by a contingency fund.

#### **4.3.1 Challenge for the library: Website integration**

The research found that in order to integrate the e-book lending website, a mainframe, with a description of the headings, layout and design of the website is sent to OverDrive. They then build and host the website for the library. Library members log into the library management system from the external OverDrive website and download the title from there. Some of the libraries found this integration problematic with regards to getting past security issues with the local authority's firewall. This was discussed by one librarian during their interview who stated "It proved problematic to set up the user card number and log in, the external site had to link in to our database so that was the main problem"

#### **4.3.2 Challenge for the library: File format and accessing e-book titles**

The process of finding and downloading e-book titles, as described by the libraries questioned involves choosing a file format of the e-book to download which is compatible with their PC and reader. First-time users need to download OverDrive's software onto their PC, from where they can transfer the e-book file to their reader if they want. Most libraries stated that the instructions on the website are helpful, while one stated that the array of file formats made the process overly technical for the library user. The librarian stated "The main queries would relate to, how do I save a file locally or how do I transfer it to my reader. There are pretty good instructions on the site but people still ring up". Another librarian stated "Overdrive will have all .ePub by the end of the year which will work across all devices- except Kindle, which is the most popular reader". They had been advised to use the .ePub standard by OverDrive, while another library talked about receiving complaints from users who were unable open .ePub books in the .pdf (Adobe Digital Editions) software or Kindle reader. However most librarians state that this is due to ongoing licensing issues with publishers and as a result a more streamlined process is not possible at present.

### **4.3.3 Challenge for the library: Purchasing a license rather than owning the e-book**

The research found that libraries usually purchase titles on a monthly basis and they appear in their collection almost immediately after they are purchased from the vendor website. This was talked about by one librarians who stated “It’s all automatically done, when you buy e-books, you buy online from their website called marketplace and I think its nearly two hours after you’ve bought online, the material is integrated into your system”. Another librarian talked about building e-book collections saying “Ownership is a big issue when purchasing e-book titles as we will lose all of our content if we move to another vendor so we feel that we are locked in with them and will be losing money if we change” .While collections can be built up over the years, the library is buying a license and will never own the book. If the library changes e-book vendor, they lose their collection so libraries feel they are tied to the e-book vendor.

### **4.3.4 Challenge for the library: One-book-one-user access model**

The finding show that there is a one-book-one-user access model, so if one library member has downloaded the e-book it will appear as “checked out” in the e-book database and they have the option of reserving it if they want. Digital Rights Management restrictions are encoded in the e-book file so that it cannot be used on more than one device. If a book is popular the library has to buy further copies of that e-book title. One librarian commented on this access model saying that it restricts the ability of the technology that is being provided with the e-book service and that it would be “too expensive to change the model”.

#### **4.3.5 Challenge for the library: Developing e-book collections**

The libraries stated that travel and business titles are popular but OverDrive's e-book database is excessively US based, with one librarian saying "It is very American based and we have expressed concerns to Overdrive to increase the UK and Irish presence". The libraries have been assured by OverDrive that they will be providing Irish and UK titles. Most of the libraries state that it is the Irish publishers who are reluctant to provide titles in e-book format, as one librarian stated "The Irish publishers have been very slow to come on board; they've been waiting to see how the market evolved". Others have issues with territorial rights, with books being available in one country and not another. One opportunity that e-book lending has provided to some of the libraries is that they can provide local interest books on their website, which can be looked at by libraries on other countries with OverDrive's community reserve.

## 4.4 Digital Rights Management

This section answers the main research question “What challenges do Irish public librarians face when establishing and maintaining an e-book service?” and first sub question “How can they best overcome these challenges?” The two DRM restrictions identified in the literature review as affecting the public library are usage capping and territorial rights issues.

It became evident, when gathering the primary data, that none of the libraries who participated in this study have been affected by usage capping yet. Digital rights management restrictions do not pose much of a challenge for Irish public libraries at present. They did state that they would be reluctant to buy from a publisher imposing a usage cap, unless it was a popular title. Most libraries were sympathetic with the publishers and stated that they would not usually get 26 loans from a hardback book without having to replace it. One librarian stated “I don’t know that we would have anything that would get towards 26 loans, I mean I’ve had a close look at stuff and you’d be ticking over maybe 15 or 16 loans, but the more popular stuff that becomes available the more that will impact.” Another librarian stated “(e-books) are the ultimate sustainable product; they can’t be lost or chewed by the dog. So you can buy the hardcopy book and you own it, but you have a much higher chance of losing it and having to replace it”

With regard to territorial rights issues, the research found that the library member is required to physically enter the library building to sign up to the library once. After that they can use the service from anywhere. One librarian stated that this was part of the OverDrive contract, saying “When you enter into the contract with overdrive, you are contracting with OverDrive only to supply material to the people who live work or go to school in your catchment area”. All of the libraries were fairly happy asking people to come in, rather than registering online seeing it as a compromise with publishers who originally wanted library members to download all e-books in the library.

## **4.5 Factors affecting the uptake of the service**

This section answers the second sub research question “How successful has their service been so far and what do they attribute this to?” Firstly, the objective for the librarians in setting up this service was to meet demand from their library members who were impressed by the audio book service the libraries had in place and also to increase accessibility to information resources among members of the community who could not or did not usually avail of the library.

Upon examination of the usage statistics, use of the service started off slow but is steadily increasing and is popular with teachers, book clubs and older users who are house bound. In this respect they are meeting the objectives of the e-book service. The librarians state that usage spikes occur during holiday times when people “When people can’t get into the physical building” as one librarians state. Usage spikes also occur when people download e-books for travelling and at Christmas when users receive e-readers as presents and also on days when the library is closed.

### **4.5.1 Usage Statistics**

- Dun-Laoghaire/Rathdown stated that 2011 figures are set to beat 2010, with total downloads for 2010 being 7,968 and the download figures up to July 2011 being 5,804.
- South Dublin Libraries started off slow in 2009, with about 80 downloads a month, and in 2011 has reached spikes of 1,500 a month, with an average of 900 a month.
- Waterford libraries, at the time of the interview had statistics for the first two months of the service, with May 2011 being 82 issues and June 2011 being 70.
- Neither Dublin City Libraries nor Fingal Libraries have launched their service yet so usage statistics were unavailable for these libraries.

#### **4.5.2 Factors which limit uptake of e-book services in Irish public libraries**

None of the libraries had integrated their e-book titles with their library OPAC, which is the Online Public Access Catalogue of the libraries information resources, available for public access on the website. The reasons for not adding the e-books details to the OPAC were that they were unable to allocate funds, staff or time. Some libraries stated that having e-books on the external OverDrive website has had a negative effect on uptake of the service. One librarians stated that “People don’t see the e-book service” as library members would have to look for the download section on the website to find the e-books, rather than coming across them on the OPAC. According to the research, the lack of Irish content available to users has a negative effect on usage. Lack of e-readers was also a stated as a reason which might affect uptake of the service as current users are early adopters and some libraries are investigating the possibility of providing e-reader for lending to library users. Most libraries carry out little advertising or promotion of the service, relying instead on people finding the download section of the website themselves. This approach to promoting the service may have a negative affect on usage and is an issue which should be addressed in the library. However some libraries did talk about the importance of staff commitment to the e-book service and promotion of the service within the library.

## 4.6 Chapter summary

Content analysis of the findings of the primary research data collection has identified the following themes for Irish libraries. Firstly budget; reallocation of funds was the main method of funding the e-book service in Irish public libraries. The e-book vendor provides DRM solutions and an IT platform for providing the e-book service but creates the following challenges for the library. Website integration, file format and accessing e-book titles, purchasing a license rather than owning the e-book, one-book-one-user access model and developing e-book collections. While DRM restrictions have not had much affect on Irish public libraries it is necessary to be aware of international development which have the potential to affect Irish libraries. Uptake of the service is slow but steadily increasing in Ireland. Usage spikes occur around Christmas, holiday time and when the library is closed. e-Books are not integrated with the library OPAC and there is a lack of Irish titles in the e-book collections. Irish libraries do not carry out much marketing or promotion of the service. The next chapter will look at the issues raised in the chapter and discuss them in the context of the findings of the literature review, in order to find answers to the research questions.

## **Chapter 5 Discussion of findings**

This chapter is a synthesis of the findings from both the literature review and the primary research data collection. A comparison of the findings from these two forms of research shows that both common elements and also marked differences exist between the international and Irish perspectives on e-book lending services in public libraries. The primary research provided detailed insight into the process of setting up the service in relation to collection development, the purchasing model and the process of integrating the library management systems with the e-book website. As stated in the literature review, the aim in carrying out this study is to identify as many aspects as possible relating to the establishment and maintenance of an e-book lending service. The aim is to provide a model for e-book lending for Irish public librarians. This discussion chapter has been divided into the challenges and solutions for setting up and managing an e-book service in Irish public libraries and the factors that are likely to affect the uptake of their e-book service.

## **5.1 The challenges and solutions for setting up and managing an e-book service in an Irish public library**

This section aims to answer the main research question “What challenges do Irish public librarians face when establishing and maintaining an e-book service?” and first sub research question “How can they best overcome these challenges?”

### **5.1.1 The challenges associated with the budget**

#### **5.1.1.1 Where to find the funds**

The findings of the primary research are significant as they provide an insight into how Irish public libraries are coping with budget cuts, as discussed by An Chomhairle Leabharlanna (2010) in the literature review. Irish public libraries are using strategic planning, discussed by Brown and Blake Gonzalez (2007, p.9) and Kostagiolas et al. (2009, p.1) in the literature review. Libraries are scanning their environment and also examining their own resources to ensure that they are meeting the needs of their members and making best use of the budget. Some of the reasons given by the Irish public libraries for providing an e-book service were that they wanted to increase accessibility to information resources for library members and also had received requests for the service from their library members. The Irish public libraries had looked at their information resources and reallocated funds from those with declining circulation figures to a new e-book service. Reallocation was necessary as they were not likely to receive grants for the service as they once would have, due to the lack of public funding available during the recession. As Korman (2011, p.1) stated in the literature review, the reallocation of funds from information resources with declining circulation figures to a service such as an e-book lending service allows the library to remain a relevant information resource for the community. This way it is possible for Ireland to reflect the US, where they have seen an increase of 20% in providing e-book services since 2007 in the US, despite decreased budgets in libraries.

### **5.1.1.2 How to allocate the funds**

The fee for using an e-book vendor is about on average €15000 per year, which includes the website hosting fee and the fund for purchasing e-book titles on which libraries spend on average €3000 to €7000 per year. The primary research found that in planning the budget for the e-book lending service, Irish public libraries should allow for the e-book vendors fee and also a contingency fund for purchasing e-books should they go over the allotted fee by the vendor. Funds should be allocated, if possible for marketing the service to the community and making people aware of its existence. Importantly, some libraries experienced IT difficulties that needed to be resolved by IT experts, for which funding had to be allocated also.

### **5.1.2 The challenges for the library in using an e-book vendor**

The primary research confirms the findings of the literature review which state that the e-Book vendor's role is to act as an intermediary between the library and the publisher, representing the rights of both parties. They assist the library in meeting the challenges associated with conforming to DRM restrictions such as file format and they provide a platform for providing the e-books. The process of using an e-book vendor, according to the findings of the primary research involves integrating the e-book vendors website with the library's so that the library members can access the collection of e-books from the library webpage and never realise they are using an external website. The library builds up a collection of e-book titles by purchasing e-book licenses from the e-book vendor or wholesaler. The library user accesses the e-book collection, logs in and chooses the book to download. This disappears from their PC or device after the lending period is over. While the e-book vendor has a wealth of knowledge and experience which is invaluable for the library in setting up and managing an e-book service, the primary research and literature review have identified three main challenges for the library and library user in working with the e-book vendor.

### **5.1.2.1 The challenge for the library in integrating the e-book vendor website and the library management system**

The findings of the primary research indicated that integrating the website was simple for some of the libraries and the e-book vendor looked after the building and hosting of the website, they just needed to send a mainframe of the layout and design of the site. However the findings of the primary research also identified another issue for Irish libraries which was not discovered in the literature review, that being the problems associated with integrating the library management system and e-book vendor website so that library members could log in from the external site and download e-books. Some of the libraries stated that these were security issues with the local authority firewall and this is an issue for each library to rectify with the local authority before they start the integration process, as they will be advised by OverDrive that it is the library's issue to resolve.

### **5.1.2.2 The challenges for the library in building an e-book collection**

The primary research identified two issues with the development of an e-book collection that were not found in the literature review. Firstly the library is tied into the e-book vendor as they will never own the e-book collection. They can only buy licences for the e-books, and so will lose the e-book collection if they move to another e-book vendor. This is something for the library to be aware of when entering into a contract with an e-book vendor such as OverDrive, who has the monopoly in the Ireland at present.

The second issue that was identified by the primary research was that OverDrives e-book database lacks Irish and UK titles. The libraries have all been assured that this issue will be rectified and that they are working with Irish and UK publishers to bring them on board. However the libraries realise that the issue is not with the e-book vendor, but with the Irish publishers who were more reluctant than the US publishers in entering the e-book market. Literature relating to this subject is scarce; however a cursory look at some of the main Irish publisher's websites indicated that Collins press and Mercier press are the only ones currently offering e-books. This is therefore an issue for Irish publishers rather than for OverDrive.

### **5.1.2.3 The challenge for the library user in accessing and downloading the e-books**

The findings of the primary research confirm the findings of the literature review relating to file formats and downloading e-books. In the literature review Porter and King (2010, p.2) talk about the vast amount of file formats available for downloading e-books and some of the libraries in the primary research had received complaints from their members about the downloading process for this reason. As a solution to this problem OverDrive have advised some of the Irish public libraries to use the .ePub standard, which according to Cassell and Mercado (2010, p.1) Kilborn (2010, p.1) and Zimmerman (2011, p.1) in the literature review, is the most compatible file format. But, as some libraries pointed out even this is not compatible with all platforms, and this issue will only be rectified when the publishers can agree on a completely standard file format.

### **5.1.3 The challenges associated with DRM restrictions and their impact on the Irish public library**

When reviewing the literature regarding e-book lending in public libraries, the majority of it was from the UK or US and there was a recurring theme of DRM restrictions such as usage capping and territorial rights having a negative affect on public libraries as described by Bintliff (2010, p.1) and Zimmerman (2011, p.1). However, what was very interesting from the primary research is that usage capping and territorial right have had very little impact on Irish public libraries. Irish public libraries had a more pragmatic approach to these restrictions. They can see the publisher's perspective in wanting to reflect the shelf life of the print book, as they are a business and need to make money. They feel that usage capping at 26 loans is fair and reflective of the current model, which they are happy with. In having the library member come in to the library to sign up, they can see the logic in this also, saying that this would be beneficial to their library also, as it proves that they are living in the area that their local authority is funding.

While the literature review suggested that this would be issue which would apply to Irish public libraries, this primary research suggests that DRM restrictions may have more of an impact on e-book lending services in countries that have more experience in providing e-book services. e-Book lending services in Irish public libraries are in their infancy however, it is essential to be aware of these issues, on an international scale and their potential to affect the Irish library. Which is one the reasons given for using an e-book vendor by Irish public libraries as they manage DRM restrictions for the library.

## **5.2 Factors affecting the success of the service**

This section aims to answer the second sub research question “How successful has their service been so far and what do they attribute this to?” The uptake of e-book services in Irish public libraries, according to the findings of the primary research, has been slow to start but is growing steadily. Some libraries reported seeing spikes in usage during holiday times like Christmas and summer months when people are travelling and need books for their readers, and some reported seeing spikes on days when the library was shut.

### **5.2.1 The affect of the lack of Irish and UK content on uptake of the service**

One of the issues identified in the literature review by Platt (2011, p.1) is that the range of content that the library has in their e-book collection has a huge affect on how successful the e-book service is with library members. Library members expect the e-book collection to reflect the print collection. This raised the question in the literature review of how the present lack of e-book offering from Irish publishers affected the e-book lending services in Irish public libraries. The primary research revealed that all of the libraries questioned had issues with the lack of Irish and UK titles in OverDrives e-book database, and some stated that this has had a negative affect on the uptake of the service in their library. OverDrive does not seem to be the problem though, as they have assured the libraries that that they are committed to working with Irish and UK publishers. As one librarian stated they are very interested to do business with the Irish libraries. It seems, as another librarian remarked, that it is the Irish publishers who are dragging their feet and are waiting to see how the market turns out. When dealing with a disruptive technology, as discussed by Dillon (2002, p.50) in the literature review, stakeholders are often reluctant to act until they are sure of the value of this new technology and that it is worth investing in. This is the case with the Irish publishing industry and e-books. Until the Irish publishers are willing to take the plunge, Irish library members will not have access to the same range of titles as they do with the print lending model.

### **5.2.2 The affect of not integrating with the library OPAC on the uptake of the service**

According to the primary research, none of the Irish public libraries providing an e-book service have their details of their e-book, or the e-books “metadata” integrated with their OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue). This is affecting use of the service as library members do not realise that the books are available in e-book format, which had already been suggested by Vasileiou and Rowley (2011, p.1) and McCracken (2004, p.1) in the literature review. The OPAC holds descriptive records of every book in the library, so that library members can access the catalogue online themselves and search for the availability of a book using details such as title or author. Information retrieval rates are high in OPACs as the bibliographic records have been organised in such a way that search terms entered by the library members are cross referenced with all possible search terms for that book, so as to cover all the possibilities for finding that title. In the e-books case, library member must be already aware that the library are providing an e-book lending service, and must be able to see that the service is available on the website as there is no record of the e-book on the OPAC. If e-book metadata was available in the OPAC, library members could locate the title and see that it is available in e-book or print formats. According to some of the Irish librarians interviewed, this would increase use of the service.

### **5.2.3 The affect of the one-book-one-user access model on the uptake of the service**

The primary research found that the one-book-one-user access model, covered by Estrada (2003, p.1) in the literature review, is confusing for library members, as it is not in keeping with the downloading model in place for films, music or other files on the internet. The e-book file has DRM restrictions encoded into it to show it as being “checked out” when it is being used by somebody else. Files on the internet do not usually have these kinds of restrictions. The primary research has indicated that this may prevent people from using the e-book service, if they see it as too complicated or not offering enough range of titles.

#### **5.2.4 The affect of expensive e-readers on the uptake of the e-book service**

The primary research confirmed that findings of the literature review in that the e-readers may be too expensive or the technology off-putting to some members, as stated by Koscieljew (2010, p.1). As a solution, one library has been looking into lending out e-readers to library users, and also one library has also stated that e-books can be downloaded in their library if the library member lacks the IT infrastructure at home. As the literature review found, in accordance with Ross (2010, p.1) and Platt (2011, p.1) as e-reader technology develops and they become cheaper and more compatible with different file formats, e-book lending services will also grow in popularity, this has been confirmed by the findings of the primary research, as people receiving presents of e-readers at Christmas time resulted in spikes of usage for the service.

## **5.3 Summary of the findings**

The challenges identified by the research for setting up and managing an e-book service in Irish public libraries, broadly relate to budget and the e-book vendor. With regard to budget, libraries are using strategic planning theory to reallocate funds from information resources with declining circulation figures to new services which have been requested by library members. Libraries need to allocate €15000 for the service plus a contingency fee if possible for IT issues, marketing and purchasing extra stock. The e-book vendor acts as an intermediary between the library and the publisher and provides IT and digital rights management solutions for the library. The e-book vendor creates its own set of challenges for the library in integrating the e-book vendor website with the library management system, lack of ownership of the titles, an overly US bias in the content of the e-book database and an overly technical downloading process.

With regard to the factors that are likely to affect the uptake of their e-book service the findings show that the uptake has been slow but steadily increasing. The factors which have a negative affect on use are the lack of Irish and UK titles available to library users, not having the e-book titles on the library OPAC, the one-book-one-user model of access and expensive e-readers.

The next chapter will look at the model for e-book lending in more detail and provide recommendations for improving uptake of the service in the library.

## **Chapter 6 Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **6.1 Answering the research questions**

To reiterate, the research questions being asked in this dissertation are:

- “What challenges do Irish public librarians face when establishing and maintaining an e-book service?”
- “How can they best overcome these challenges?”
- “How successful has their service been so far and what do they attribute this to?”

The findings of the research have shown that there are two aspects to this research study. Practical advice to librarians on the process of establishing and maintaining an e-book lending service and also new observations and insights into how this service can be improved upon for Irish public librarians.

## **6.2 Practical advice for Irish public librarians: A model for e-book lending services in Irish public libraries**

This dissertation provides a model for Irish public librarians in setting up and managing their e-book lending service, which prior to this research, did not exist. This will be of interest to the remaining library authorities in Ireland who do not have an e-book service in place and would like to investigate the possibility of setting one up in their library.

### **Step 1: Examine the surrounding environment.**

In line with strategic planning theory the library must listen to the requests of the library members to determine if the service is needed. The importance of using strategic planning in this way was outlined by Say (2011, p.1) in the literature review, with the example of Lincolnshire county library. This library listened to the requests of their library members and provided a service that was needed in the community. This was also the reason given by some of the libraries who participated in the interview, who stated that they were responding to requests for the service from their library members. By using a SWOT analysis the library can examine the surrounding environment to see if this service is popular, relevant and applicable to their library and community. The process of setting up the e-book service should take about 3 to 4 months unless they have problems with IT integration.

## **Step 2: Planning the budget**

Using strategic planning methods such as performance measurement is essential to managing the library in times of reduced budgets. The library should examine information resources circulation figures to identify which resources are relevant and which are not. Therefore funding may be reallocated to new services such as the e-book service. This was the approach taken by the libraries who currently implementing their e-book lending service. They did not have access to grants which have been cut during the recession as stated in The Public Library Authorities Annual Budgets 2010, cited on An Chomhairle Leabharlanna website (2010). In planning the budget the library should include the e-book vendor's fee of €15,000 plus a contingency fee to take care of possible IT integration problems and marketing activities as well purchasing extra e-books should the need arise.

## **Step 3: Using an e-book vendor**

At present the choice of e-book vendor for Irish public libraries is OverDrive. This is likely to remain the case until a competitor arrives on the market. The first step for Irish libraries is to contact "Interleaf"; their Irish representatives. The library will be assigned an account manager from OverDrive to oversee the establishment of their service. They will ensure that the library is conforming to DRM restrictions and provide the platform for the e-book service and are essential to the process. OverDrive will provide a seamless integration of the library's website and their e-book database, so that the library user should not be aware that they have been directed to another website. However this integration needs to be organised with the local authority in order to integrate with their security measures.

#### **Step 4: Collection development**

The library can purchase licences for the e-books through the wholesaler “Marketshare”. This is usually done every month and is a simple process with e-book appearing immediately on the library collection. With OverDrive, this collection will be lost if the library moves to a competitor when they arrive on the market. Libraries should be aware that at present, there is a lack of Irish and UK titles available to Irish public libraries, which is sure to have a negative affect on the uptake of the service. However OverDrive is interested in working with Irish libraries and so they are in talks with Irish and UK publishers to bring them on board. This is still an issue which is reliant on Irish publisher involvement in the e-book market.

#### **Step 5: Going live**

Libraries should have some technical understanding of file formats available to users and the downloading process for the library user. OverDrive will provide training to librarians so that they are experts in the downloading process. The lack of standardised file formats has resulted in an overly technical service for library members which is off-putting to users. The training given by OverDrive will prepare librarians for queries regarding this downloading process from library members. This issue is not likely to be fully resolved until the publishers can agree to standard file format for downloading and using e-books. Library members will have to come in to register, just as they would have when registering for the print lending service. They will receive a card number and pin so that they can access the service remotely from then on. This satisfies the publishers that they live or work in the catchment area. In terms of improving access to library services, having to come in only once to register is ideal for those members of the community that are housebound.

## **6.3 Contribution made by this research study**

### **6.3.1 Irish perspective on e-book lending in public libraries**

This section looks at the suggestions for improving the e-book lending model in Irish public libraries. The literature review identified examples from the US and UK. While using e-book lending services in these larger countries as a paradigm for Ireland may be unrealistic lessons can be learnt from these countries who are more experienced in providing e-book lending services. As well as this invaluable insights from Irish librarians, gathered during the research process have also been put forward as suggestions for improving the service for Irish public libraries.

#### **6.3.1.1 Representing Irish public librarians rights**

In the US the ALA set up the EQUACC in 2010 with the objective of representing the needs of the library in the struggle for an equitable arrangement for e-book lending between the library and the publishers. In Ireland, during their interview one librarian mentioned that the LAI are also looking into setting up a representative group for the same purpose. While the findings of the primary research for this study have shown that DRM restrictions, imposed by publishers have not had the same amount of impact here as in the US, this is not to say that as the service grows in popularity that DRM restriction will have more of a negative affect on e-book lending services in Irish public libraries as they have done in the US and UK.

#### **6.3.1.2 Consortium suggestion**

Ireland can also learn lessons from the consortium buying model in place in the US at present. While in the US consortiums would operate from state to state, Ireland is smaller and a nationwide purchasing consortium could be implemented. This was an important suggestions put forward by one librarian during the research process, which was met with enthusiasm by some of the other librarians interviewed. The research has shown that Irish public libraries do not have many options when implementing this service at present as there is a monopoly of the e-book vendor market. The

purchasing power is in the hands of the supplier, OverDrive, and the library needs an e-book vendor, not only for the platform for providing e-books but also for the technical expertise they provide. This is a major concern for librarian starting out on the process of establishing an e-book service. So for the present, the Irish public library must use this e-book vendor, but look at ways of reducing costs for the library. By combining forces with other Irish public libraries, through consortium buying, the library can address some of the issues identified by this piece of research. The first issue is that libraries have stated that the one-book-one-user model is too expensive for libraries to change to simultaneous, multiple access to e-books. A consortium will provide the library with more access to shared titles and increased budget for buying titles. The second issue is that Irish public libraries have stated that they find the e-book vendor fee expensive. By sharing one maintenance fee between all the libraries, the budget would be more attainable.

### **6.3.1.3 Increasing uptake of the service**

In Ireland the research has also found that the popularity of e-book services in Ireland, while consistently growing is still slow. Public libraries feel that uptake of the service is hindered by expensive e-readers, which are not compatible with all e-book file formats. They have received complaints about the less than streamlined downloading process with the e-book vendor and the lack of Irish and UK content in the e-book database. Relevant content was shown to be a major contributing factor to the success of the New York Public Libraries e-book service by Platt (2011, p.1) in the literature review. These are however issues which are reliant on the publishing industry in Ireland. Until all of the Irish publishers enter the e-book market and a standard e-book file format is agreed upon by international publishers, the e-book lending process will not be smooth for the library or the library member. The service is definitely still in the process of development, and is reliant on factors external to the Irish public library.

The slow uptake of the service, identified by the primary research, could also be attributed to the fact that Irish public libraries do not carry out marketing activities for the service and they feel that having it on the website is enough. This research study has also found that Irish public libraries have not integrated their e-books into the libraries Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), so it is not located with the records of the print books. Library members may simply not be aware of the e-books existence. However in Ireland at present, it is simply not possible for public libraries to fund the integration of the metadata and the OPAC or marketing activities. Innovative promotion of the service such as a champion at each library, suggested by one librarian can be the temporary solution for Irish public libraries. As Vasileiou and Rowley (2011,p.1) state libraries can no longer rely on library members simply coming to them, as there is now competition for libraries in the form of information providers such as Google. There are promotional tools which would cost the Irish public library very little, in comparison to devising a marketing plan or integrating e-books into the OPAC. These tools are providing library instruction within the library to existing members and sending e-mail. Methods for reaching new members include sending library reps out to speak to potential library members, such as to schools and groups and starting a library blog for promoting the e-book service. All of these promotional activities can be done for free and by existing library staff.

## **6.4 How e-book lending has affected the role of the public library**

The following statement was made by an Irish librarian talking about how proud she was of their e-book service during the interview process;

“We won the Irish e-government award, and we went to represent Ireland in the European e-government award...so we have gotten a lot of recognition from it... Is about open access to everybody about anything, so it's great”

The librarians who participated in the interviews were dynamic and innovative people, who in the face of budget cuts and recruitment moratoriums still seek to make the public library service as relevant and innovative as possible to the community. This was identified in the literature review in the statement made by An Chomhairle Leabharlanna (2000, p.13) regarding the inclusion of all members of the community in the library service. The primary research found that libraries were receiving emails of thanks from house bound library users who were given back some independence with this accessible service. Also the British Library example discussed by Van Hooland (2011, p.1) in the literature review has been reflected in Ireland by libraries who are winning awards for technological innovation with this service. This service helps Irish public libraries to remain a relevant information resource to members of the community. As stated in the literature review by the IFLA (2001) and An Chomhairle Leabharlanna (2000, p.5) the Irish public library must use advancements in Information technology and be innovative, flexible and adaptive to change to as to make information more readily available to library members. The research has shown however that while this new service meets the needs of the library member who is housebound, and provides an alternative method for accessing information, it is not yet a perfect system. Some issues are out of the libraries controls, such as Irish publisher involvement in the e-book market and the lack of a standardised e-book file format for downloading. However, there are things that the library can do such as carry out more marketing of the service and ensure that the e-book title is present on the library OPAC.

## **6.5 Recommendation for further research**

This research study has provided insights into how the Irish public library can utilise disruptive technologies, such as e-books, to position themselves as a relevant information source for the community. This dissertation was written for the benefit of Irish public librarians who are investigating the possibility of establishing their own e-book service. As such it provides both practical advice to these librarians in the form of the e-book lending model outlined above and insights into the Irish perspective on e-book lending services. This dissertation also examines this new technology within the framework of strategic planning theory, which states that in dealing with dynamic technologies such as e-books, it is beneficial for the library to constantly scan the environment in order to identify changes which concern the library. The Irish public library should look for changes such as new file formats and availability of e-readers to Irish library members and Irish publisher's involvement in the market. Strategic planning will enable the Irish public library to manage this new technology, while the e-book lending model, as outlined at the start of the chapter is still evolving. The e-book lending model in the Irish public library is in its infancy and is constantly changing. Irish public libraries need to remain true to their objective of adapting to change and providing access to information through new and relevant media. This dissertation has shown through examples for libraries in Ireland and internationally, how strategic planning theory can guide the library through turbulent environments. The information they gain through environmental scans provides the library with the ability to respond swiftly to change when it arrives.

Further research into the area of e-book lending in Irish public libraries is warranted. Insight into the area of Irish publisher's reluctance to enter into the e-book market would certainly be beneficial to Irish librarians as would an investigation into the practical viability of setting up a nationwide e-book consortium in Irish public libraries. The consortium was suggested by one of the librarians who participated in the interview process and would reduce costs for the library by having one central server for the e-book database for all Irish public libraries and therefore one annual fee shared by all of these libraries.

In conclusion, this dissertation has demonstrated that these are the early years for e-book lending services in Ireland. How receptive Irish public libraries are to this new service will be somewhat indicative of how relevant Irish public libraries will be to society in the information age. As discussed in the literature review by An Chomhairle Leabharlanna (2000, p.13), the information age is being driven by the internet and this has changed Irish library users expectations of what the Irish public library should be providing. As stated in the introduction, it is not the intention of this dissertation to debate the dominance of digital over print books, but to simply to state that the e-book can reinforce the value of the library to the community, rather than undermine it. While there will be a lot of work involved in establishing and maintaining e-book services in Irish libraries, the result will be worth the effort. Not only this, but this effort is essential in order for the Irish public library to compete with information providers such as Google in the information age.

In the words of the UK culture minister Margaret Hodge, as cited by Upex (2010, p.1);

"Libraries are a much-loved part of public life with more branches in the country than either McDonald's or Boots...But sweeping advances in technology, increasing standards of living and higher expectations of service mean that they must move with the times to stay part of the times. Sleepwalking into the era of the iPhone, the e-book and the Xbox without a strategy runs the risk of turning the library service into a curiosity of history like Telex machines or typewriters."

This sums up the current feeling surrounding e-book lending services in public libraries and this is the sentiment which has formed the basis for this dissertation.

## **Chapter 7 Reflection on Learning**

A persons learning style, according to Deital and Deital (2007, p. 36) is the way they take in, process, remember and express information. In defining what is meant by learning, Mullins and Christy (2010, p.172) state that it is a relatively permanent change in behaviour that results from experience. In this case the process of writing this dissertation has been the experience which has changed my behaviour. In this chapter I examine the process of writing this dissertation in order to determine how my learning style has developed from this experience. Finally I examine how my present learning style could be applied to a work situation. I analyse which aspects of my learning style will be an attribute to me in a work environment and which aspects will need to be improved upon. This chapter is a very personal examination of my learning styles and so I have written this account of my experience in the first person to emphasise this.

## **7.1 The dissertation as a learning experience**

I have broken down the process of writing the dissertation into a series of events. I have critically analysed my approach to dealing with each of these events, so as to determine my learning style at that time.

### **7.1.1 The event: Formulating a research question for this dissertation**

My approach to formulating the research questions was to read everything I could on the subject and form an opinion from there, and also to speak with librarians who could help inform my decision. I was aware at all times of whom I would be writing this dissertation for and who would benefit from a piece of research such as this. I was very comfortable conducting this type of research as it involved working on my own and informal conversations with experts in the area. I tried to gather all of the facts surrounding e-book and reflected on where the gap in the research lay, making an informed decision to conduct research into the area of establishing e-book lending services in Irish public libraries. I set out mini deadlines for the following events and this worked very well for me, motivating me to have the dissertation finished before the final deadline. I was working within a short time-line, and was committed to submitting the dissertation in September.

### **7.1.2 The event: Finding out what had already been written on the subject**

I enjoyed the literature review stage as again, it involved working to a deadline, with clear objectives and working on my own. I did not have to rely on other people replying to my e-mails or calls and I had remote access to library e-resources, 24 hours a day. I find learning as much as I can about a given subject very gratifying and empowering so this stage suited me perfectly. I was aware however that at this point it was essential to be critical of the information received as I tend towards taking information at face value. This was a weakness in my learning approach and something I had to constantly remind myself to do.

### **7.1.3 The event: Carrying out the primary research**

This was the part of the dissertation that I enjoyed the least. Firstly, I had to work to other people's schedules and was not able to progress any further without the participation of other people. I am aware that this impatience is an area of weakness in my learning style. As well as this, I am inherently a shy person, and approaching people for an interview does not come naturally to me. However, I have been in the workplace for a few years and my work experience involved solving customer problems and dealing with people. It is with this experience that I have come to develop skills in dealing with people. Not many people would notice my reluctance to ask people for help, but it is not something that comes naturally to me. In contrast, I have no problem in dealing with customer queries as I enjoy helping other people. I am also constantly aware of how other people may feel about having to give up their time and participate in an interview. In those interviews where the interviewee was less reluctant to participate, I was reluctant to push them further and so did not gain as much from the interview. While some may see this approach as restrictive to information gathering, this is not an aspect of my personality that I would be willing to change.

### **7.1.4 The event: Synthesising the findings and putting forward conclusions**

At this stage I was in my comfort zone again. I had all the findings from the primary and secondary research together and was able to work to my own deadlines, without having to rely on the participation of others. In analysing the primary data collected, I was faced again with the constant struggle to remain analytical and not to cherry pick answers to suit how I thought the research should go. I enjoy organising information so the content analysis seemed natural to me; however I had problems in narrowing down what was useful to the research and what was not. I took a few attempts to come to the final themes. I was also aware, in putting forward my conclusions that I was leaning towards being too practical in my approach to this dissertation. I wanted to create something useful to Irish librarians and so it was starting to become a business report. I had to remind myself to bring the academic and theoretical framework perspective back into the dissertation.

### **7.1.5 My personal learning style**

After analysing my approach to each of these events, I have determined that I enjoy working alone, with clear, organised goals. Deadlines motivate, rather than restrict me and I am able to visualise the end product when working. I have also found that I am impatient when dealing with other people with regards to waiting for responses. I do not find it natural to ask people for help but enjoy helping others. While I tend towards working alone, I have also learned from years of work experience that it is the people you work with that make a job enjoyable, as well as the work. In this respect I value the input of other people with knowledge and expertise in the area.

## **7.2 Changes to my personal learning style**

With my learning style in mind, I looked to experts in the field of learning styles to further categorise my approach to learning and see how this can be developed. Deital and Deital (2007, p.36) put forward various theorist's views of learning styles. Firstly I would fit into the "ISFJ" meaning introverted, sensing, feeling and judging, category of the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory (MBTI). I am introverted, I like clear facts and am sensitive to others feelings, improvise solutions based on past experience, focus on the task in hand and keep ahead of deadlines. I like to plan in detail and live to deadlines. I like stability and dislike conflict. I am decisive, take on responsibility and am cautious. This affects my learning style as I learn best by reflecting on my own and reading by myself. I would need to work on my involvement in group discussions also.

Deital and Deital (2007, p. 43) also put forward the Kolb learning styles, by Honey and Mumford (1982). According to this I am a reflector; look at issues from all angles, like to collect all data before I reach a conclusion. This is certainly reflective of my inductive, interpretivist approach to this dissertation. According to the VARK learning preferences put forward by Fleming (2001) as cited in Deital and Deital (2007, p. 43), my learning preference is to reading-writing. This relates to being a reflector and an introvert and I would say this is accurate.

In conclusion this experience has made me aware of the weaknesses that I need to improve on. I need to be critical in my approach to using data for problem solving, rather than taking all data at face value. With regards to asking for information or help, I realise that in the workplace it is seen as a strength rather than a weakness. In this respect, I need to work on my reluctance to involve other people in my learning process. I also need to work on my flexibility with regards to waiting for responses from other people.

On the positive side, in the work environment, I can work well to deadlines, enjoy responsibility enjoy solving problems and seeing projects and tasks through to their conclusions. I enjoy a harmonious working environment and value the input of others. As well as this I enjoy helping other people and have experience in dealing with customer queries.

This experience has changed my style, as I am now aware of these strengths and weaknesses which have actually improved my confidence that I am a good problem solver and have the ability to complete tasks well.

## **7.3 My learning style in a work setting**

After completing this dissertation I now know that I am naturally an introvert, and need to develop my patience and flexibility with regards to waiting for responses from other people. I value and respect others input but do not like having to ask other for help. I enjoy helping people and solving problems. I also enjoy gathering data, while I need to be aware of being critical of the information I find, rather than taking it at face value. In a work environment, I realise from this learning experience, as well as from my years of work experience, that I have well developed people skills and that a mixture of working alone and with people is important to my work satisfaction.

It is my goal to work as a clinical librarian. Clinical librarians need to be able to analyse requests and ascertain which information is required to answer a clinical query. It is essential to critically analyse the information found, so this is something that I will always have to keep in mind. It is also a job which involves conversing with library members in order to gain as much detail about the request for information as possible. It is, therefore, important to develop some flexibility in my approach to dealing with library members and co-workers, with regards to waiting for responses from people. I am confident in my ability to deal with people, however and have developed skills in this area. The other aspect of this job is to be able to work alone, gathering and analysing data to answer the clinical query. I will enjoy this aspect of the job quite a lot.

This dissertation process has given me more confidence in approaching people and in my own ability to solve problems. These are the two most important lessons learned that I can bring to the medical library. I have reflected on my experiences in carrying out this dissertation and consulted theory on the subject of learning styles. From this research I have found that although I am naturally introverted, I have a lot of work experience in dealing with people and this will work to my advantage in a work setting. The positive aspects to my learning style, in a work setting, is that I am very focused on tasks and strive to have them completed ahead of the deadline. I prefer to resolve issues without conflict and prefer a harmonious atmosphere to work within, and I am sensitive to my workmates feelings.

To conclude, I am inherently a shy person. I have worked however to overcome this shyness and experience has taught me to master this. This is not to say that I do not enjoy working with people, as they are integral to a happy working life, however I will always be happiest when I have a task, a deadline and am not reliant on others schedules to complete this task. I have found, during this process that I am impatient when it comes to waiting for replies and that I expect others to work to my own standards, in that queries should be answered with swiftness and courtesy. This is an issue that I will have to work on in a work setting, as it is not always the case that others will work to the same standards.

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# Appendix A

## Interview Schedule

### The library:

1. Size of the library? (Number of members)
2. When did you launch the e-book service?

### Model for e-book provision:

3. Budget:
  - a. What percentage of the budget has been spent on e-books and has this been reallocated from other areas?
  - b. How has the e-book budget been allocated? (e-book vendor/ staff and patron training etc)
4. e-Book vendor:
  - a. Which e-book vendor are you using?
  - b. Briefly, what were the main deciding factors when choosing this company? (Price/ availability of titles)
  - c. What pricing model have you agreed with the e-book vendor? (How is content priced? Is there a yearly subscription for all titles?)
  - d. Does the e-book vendor deal with Irish Publishers?
  - e. Integration with website: Does the e-book vendor take care of the initial development and maintenance of the website?

- f. Integration with library catalogue: Are e-books part of the library's OPAC?
- g. Technology: Have library patrons experienced problems with using the file formats made available by the e-book vendor?
- h. Briefly, how has your overall experience been with (e-book vendor)? And would you consider an alternative to (e-book vendor)?

5. Digital Rights Management:

- a. **Copyright Restrictions:** How has usage capping, proposed by publishers such as HarperCollins at 26 loans, affected your library?
- b. **Copyright Restrictions:** Have the library been affected by the issue of territorial rights? If so how has the library dealt with this? (Publishers would like library members to come into the library to download e-books in order to prove they are residents of the local area and not residing on the other side of the world and using the service.)
- c. **Range of titles:** Have you found the range of titles available in e-book format to be restrictive?
- d. In your opinion, what would be an acceptable model for your library with regards to copyright and fair use? (usage capping and proof of residence)

Have these issues raised in questions 4 and 5 been addressed by the e-book vendor or by your library?

6. Evaluation:

- a. What are the usage statistics for the service since it has gone live?
- b. What feedback have you received from your members?
- c. If you were starting the process again what would you have changed/  
like to have known?