

Procuring E-Books for the Virtual Learning Environment: A New Model

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Summary

- Student use of electronic resources
- The virtual learning environments (VLEs)
- The SUPC e-book tender
- Comparison of suppliers

Student Use of E-Resources

- Surveys show drivers as:
 - Convenience – desk top, speed, save/print
 - Young users inhabit electronic world
- Health science library usage:
 - 28,000 full text downloads; 1800 uses of print
- Bournemouth University:
 - Downloads: 220k (02/03), 485k (03/04), 610k (04/05)
 - 72% of nursing students access from home

Virtual Learning Environments

- “The components in which learners and tutors participate in ‘online’ interactions of various kinds, including online learning”
 - Controlled access to curriculum
 - Tracking student activity and achievement
 - Support of on-line learning
 - Communication between the learner, the tutor and others
 - Links to other administrative systems

E-Books

- Existing heavy use of e-journals by undergraduates
- Electronic medium the norm for students' social and leisure pursuits
- VLEs become primary vehicle of instruction
- Electronic medium primary
- Need for e-books

Southern Universities Purchasing Consortium (SUPC)

- Largest of the UK regional consortia
- 47 members – small to very large
- All areas of university purchasing
- Contracts worth over £100m p.a. (€147m)
- Library contracts £31m p.a. (€46m)
- Framework agreements not central purchasing

Procurement Cycle

- Identify the need
- Prepare the specification
- Tender to find suppliers
- Award contract
- Measure and monitor performance

E-Books: Identifying the Need

- Developing market place
- Virtual Learning Environments
- Fluid business models
 - Mimic hard-copy business models
 - Trend towards bundling/Big Deal
- Avoid what happened with e-journals
 - Publishers determined business models
 - Price tied to historical hard-copy spend

Preparing the Specification 1

- Aim to provide agreements that:
 - Were innovative and flexible
 - Exploited the electronic medium fully
 - Focused on users' needs not libraries'
 - Encouraged the addition of library-defined content
 - Could be with general aggregators or specialists/ publishers
- Agreements available to all UK universities

Preparing the Specification 2

- Two distinct requirements:
 - Requirement A – a hosted e-book service from which institutions can purchase or subscribe to individual titles
 - Requirement B – a hosted e-book service of content that is specified by the institutions

Selection Criteria

- Academic nature of content
- Satisfactory authentication
- Demonstrable benefits for consortium purchase
- Customer and technical support
- Long list of 8 suppliers, including publishers and aggregators
- Reduced to 4 – 3 general and 1 specialist aggregator/publisher

List Price?

- The 3 general aggregators offer pricing based on publisher's list price
- 1190 common titles from 4 publishers were compared
- Many titles have no common list price in e-form
- Average e-book price for the common titles varied from \$99.9 to \$102.2, a spread of 2.3%

Prices: Hard Copy vs. E

- One aggregator, offering outright purchase and only 1 simultaneous user, allowing for discounts and VAT:
 - E-book: 155% of list price
 - Hard copy: 85% of list price
- E-book is 82% more expensive
- Book budget buys 45% less e-books than hard-copy books

Relative Pricing (Requirement A)

- Purchase of 1500 titles
 - Least expensive 63% of most expensive
- Subscription over 3 years to 1500 titles
 - Least expensive 15% of most expensive
- Least expensive allows unlimited multi-user access
- Other models: one concurrent user (hard copy); up to ca.320 accesses to title each year

Bespoke Subject Collections

(Requirement B)

- First subject – nursing; others to be determined
- Core lists of 200 and 600 titles prepared by 4 universities and the Royal College of Nursing
- Only general aggregators interested
- Maximum of 13% available from any one
- Aggregators have agreements with some of main publishers

E-Textbooks

- Obvious advantages for libraries: no multiple copies or SLCs, staff savings
- *BUT* 80% of publishers' textbook revenue is from individuals - not available
- One aggregator has offered e-textbooks direct to students at 50% of list price

Contract Award

- Requirement A: Ebrary and Proquest Safari
 - Offer innovative models, value for money, flexibility and academic content of interest to members
 - Exploit electronic medium in terms of granularity and multi-user access
- Requirement B: Ebrary
 - Flexibility and willingness to work openly
 - Textbooks model

First Six Months

- Impressed with both suppliers
- Gradual uptake, due to timing of budgets
- Student usage of collections much wider than anticipated; Ebrary functionality particularly liked
- Good progress towards nursing core collection
 - Nearly all top publishers signed up
 - Business models for textbooks being developed

Conclusion

- Strong message to market place
- Flexible and innovative pricing models
- Value for money
- Reject strait-jacket of hard-copy model
- Position libraries to support VLEs by:
 - Exploiting electronic medium
 - Influencing content to be provided
 - E-textbooks to move us closer to completely electronic provision

Questions?

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