E-books in Irish University Libraries: Changes and challenges in collection development and acquisitions

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Abstract: This study examines the impact of the advent of e-books on collection development and acquisition in Irish university libraries. Semi-structured interviews with informants working as acquisition librarians, sub-librarians and collection management librarians were conducted to investigate their experiences and perceptions of e-book acquisition and collection management. This study provides a look at these issues from the perspective of diffusion of innovation and change management theories. The study found that librarians face challenges in setting new collection development policies, acquiring new skills and adjusting to new workflows and extra workloads. The study also revealed that the most fundamental problems librarians face in acquiring e-books are the low availability of e-textbooks, the heavy VAT on e-books as well as a lack of “one-stop-shop” opportunities. There were also worries expressed about the future of academic libraries in the e-book acquisition process. Despite the challenges, academic librarians were very positive towards the resulting changes and innovations.

Key-words: e-books, acquisitions, collections development, collections management, innovation, academic libraries, university libraries, Ireland
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AGI – Acquisition Group of Ireland
AZW – Amazon Word
BBeB – Sony e-reader Broadband Electronic Books
CHIU – The Conference of Heads of Irish Universities
CONUL – Consortium of National and University Libraries
DCU – Dublin City University
DDA – Demand-driven acquisition
DRM – Digital rights management
EBS – Evidence-based selection
EPUB – Open Publication Structure
HTML – HyperText Markup Language
IAL – Information Automation Limited
ILL – Interlibrary loan
IREL – Irish Research eLibrary
IUA – Irish Universities Association
KF8 – Kindle Format 8
LISA – Library and Information Science Abstracts
LISTA – Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts
NUIG – Nation University of Ireland, Galway
NUIM – National University of Ireland, Maynooth
OD – Organisational development
PDA – Patron-driven acquisition
PDF – Adobe Portable Document Format
RDA – Reader-driven acquisition
RTF – Microsoft Rich Text Format
TK3 – Night Kitchen Inc. TK3 e-books
TCD – Trinity College Dublin
VAT – Value Added Tax
VBK – VitalSource Bookshelf VitalBook
VLE – Virtual Learning Environment
UCD – University College Dublin
UCC – University College Cork
UK – United Kingdom
UL – University of Limerick
USA – United States of America
1. INTRODUCTION

The first chapter of this work introduces the research problem and defines the research questions and overall aim of this study. It briefly discusses the main working concepts used in this work and indicates its limitations. There is also an outline of the thesis provided at the very end of this chapter.

1.1. FORMULATION OF THE PROBLEM

The emergence of e-books presents many challenges and generates a wide range of issues for academic libraries. One such area is the development of e-book collections and services. E-books have changed many aspects of collection development, from principles of selection, purchasing models and legal licensing issues to the circulation and promotion of library collections. These changes have not only affected the working processes of collection development, but have also had an impact on the academic librarians themselves.

Irish academic libraries have been affected by these innovations as elsewhere in the world. However, it is not yet clear how academic libraries approach these challenges and respond to change. Do Irish academic libraries choose different solutions between them or are they forced into uniform behaviour to deal with innovations and change?

I have worked in an Irish academic library for the last six and a half years, during which time I have witnessed the arrival of e-books on the library scene. I have also been a distance student and have had to rely on e-books most of the time. These factors led to my initial interest in e-books. However, it is the “behind the scenes” part in which I was more interested, rather than the quite well researched users’ perspective of e-books. It also seems that e-books in public libraries in Ireland are attracting researchers (cf. O’Malley, 2012) and online bloggers (cf. Purcell, 2011; Kouker, 2012; O’Donovan, 2012) as well as national media (RTÉ News, 2012), where the situation in Irish university libraries is quite underrepresented and thus would benefit from a research of greater extent in this area.

1.2. AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The overall aim of this study is to advance an understanding of the impact of the appearance of e-books on the collection development in Irish academic libraries. In order to achieve this aim the following research questions will be explored:

- What is the impact of the advent of e-books to collection development policies and planning in Irish academic libraries?
- What challenges do Irish academic acquisition librarians face in developing e-book collections?
- How does the implementation of e-books into library collections compare between different Irish universities’ libraries?
1.3. MAIN WORKING CONCEPTS

The definitions such as ‘e-book’, ‘collection management’ and ‘collection development’ will be used frequently in this work. How these definitions and the issues related to them are conceptualized is discussed in more detail in the previous research and literature review chapter.

In this study the term ‘e-book’ will be used mainly to refer to the electronic text, rather than the specific device used for reading the documents. It will also be used interchangeably with the term ‘electronic book’. The terms ‘print book’, ‘hard copy’ and ‘paper book’ are also used interchangeably.

In this work, ‘Collection development’ and ‘collection management’ terms are used interchangeably, as synonyms. However the historical evolution and use of these terms are discussed in greater detail in 3.3 subchapter – Implications for the collection development. In this study, ‘Collection development’ and ‘Collection management’ terms are used to refer to the processes such as planning for new collections and looking after the current ones, the creation of policies and also the cooperative decision making with other libraries. The term ‘acquisition’ is also understood as one of the collection development processes.

1.4. LIMITATIONS

The sample population chosen for this research is very small, and the number of interviews was very limited; however, the participating libraries still account for over 70% of all university libraries in the Republic of Ireland.

The intention of this study is neither to explore the attitudes towards e-book of students and academic staff, nor the impact of e-books on the reading behaviour in the academic community. Likewise, it does not examine e-book readers and their influence on e-book adoption in academic libraries. Also, it is not intended to debate the dominance of print over electronic books or vice versa in academic libraries in Ireland.

1.5. OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

The thesis consists of seven chapters. The first introduction chapter provides a brief explanation of the research problem laying out the main research questions and indicating main limitations of this work.

It is followed by a previous research and literature review chapter, which overviews the main and the most important studies related to the collection development of e-books and many aspects of e-books acquisition. It also provides a historical perspective on e-books in Irish academic libraries.

The next chapter presents and explains the theoretical framework used in this work – diffusion of innovation and change management theories. This is followed by a graphic presentation of a collection development and management model.

The thesis then continues with a descriptive section on the research design and methods employed in this study.

The results chapter presents the information received from the interviews, as well as an analysis of the documents of the participating libraries. To make it clearer to a reader, this chapter keeps a structure similar to the previous research and literature review chapter.

The discussion and analysis chapter discusses the results in comparison to the other relevant studies conducted in this area, as well as in respect to the theories chosen for the
study. This chapter builds on the structure of collection development and management model pictured in theoretical framework chapter (Figure 1).

The final chapter of conclusions and recommendations summarises the findings of this study and provides recommendations for a future research.

The paper finishes off with a list of bibliographical references and three appendixes provided at the very end of this document. There is also a list of abbreviations used provided just after the table of contents.
2. PREVIOUS RESEARCH AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter aims to review previously published literature regarding various aspects and issues in the e-book acquisition and collection development of academic libraries. It also looks into e-book conceptualisation and definition problems, as well as the history of e-books in academic libraries in Ireland.

The information for the previous research and literature review was conducted through LISTA (Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts) and LISA (Library and Information Science Abstracts), as well as Google Scholar, WorldCat and other websites and resources centres such as IAL (Information Automation Limited). Journal browsing and citation tracing led to the discovery of additional papers relevant to this research.

The aim was to review the latest publications on the subject, thus, the majority of the works cited in this thesis were published in the last five years, but some older publications were also used to get a historical perspective on certain issues.

2.1. E-BOOK AS A CONCEPT AND A DIGITAL OBJECT

Scholars have used many different ways to define what an e-book is. Armstrong and Lonsdale (2013) claim that initially there was some confusion brought in by associating an e-book itself with an e-book reader. At present most of existing definitions emphasize a book-like structure and possibility to read a text on a screen of a digital device (Armstrong & Lonsdale, 2013). Armstrong already earlier has declared that an e-book is:

Any content that is recognisably ‘book-like’, regardless of size, origin or composition, but excluding serial publications, made available electronically for reference or reading on any device (handheld or desk-bound) that includes a screen“ (Armstrong, 2008, p. 199).

An e-book is becoming more than just a PDF version of the printed book as digital texts can change and augment the nature of book-like objects in an electronic context (Nelson, 2008). Vassiliou and Rowley (2008) suggest a two-part definition where the first part summarises the reasonably stable nature of e-books and the second part will be changing with the development of new technologies:

(1) An e-book is a digital object with textual and/or other content, which arises as a result of integrating the familiar concept of a book with features that can be provided in an electronic environment.
(2) E-books, typically have in-use features such as search and cross reference functions, hypertext links, bookmarks, annotations, highlights, multimedia objects and interactive tools (p. 362).

The authors believe that this two-part definition is required in order to capture the persistent characteristics of e-books, as well as their dynamic nature, driven largely by the changing technologies through which they are delivered and read (Vassiliou & Rowley, 2008).

Talking specifically about e-textbooks in education, Nelson (2010) suggests considering e-books as a device, as “potential substitute technologies” so they can be
compared more directly “with their digital counterparts with respect to pros and cons relative to the changing environment” (p. 7).

As with print books there are many types of e-books available on the market and they are multiplying further as the technology develops. E-books range from scanned copies of print books to database-type structures (Minčić-Obradović, 2011). According to Tedd (2005) in academic libraries the general types of e-book likely to be acquired include textbooks, multimedia books, reference books and directories as well as digitised versions of “out of print” books. Similarly, Armstrong & Lonsdale (2005) in their study of UK education libraries provide a nearly identical list for type of e-books in academic libraries that the individual disciplines felt were most likely to be in demand – only scholarly monographs, grey literature¹ and free e-books could be added to the other types mentioned above.

2.1.1. E-BOOK FORMATS AND PLATFORMS

Contrary to e-journal articles, there is no standard file format for e-books. According to Walters (2013a) some sources have even up to 27 different e-book formats listed as being currently in use. Just to mention a few, one can encounter Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF), HyperText Markup Language (HTML), Open Publication Structure (EPUB), VitalSource Bookshelf VitalBook (VBK), Microsoft Rich Text Format (RTF), Sony e-reader Broadband Electronic Books (BBeB), Night Kitchen Inc. TK3 e-books (TK3), Amazon Word (AZW), and Kindle Format 8 (KF8).

The PDF file format seems to be the most popular among academic librarians (Vasileiou et al., 2012a; Walters, 2013a). However, most of the formats listed above are proprietary formats, that contain data that is ordered and stored according to a particular encoding-scheme, designed by the company or organization to be secret, such that the decoding and interpretation of this stored data is only easily accomplished with particular software or hardware that the company itself has developed (Wikipedia, 2013, para. 1).

The specification of data encoding format may be restricted by digital rights management (DRM). Either way that means that by acquiring an e-book in proprietary format the customer is locked to a certain platform or with a specific e-book reader and vice versa. Thus, it is only natural that the academic libraries would feel reluctant to invest in multiple technologies for each e-book based on publisher. However if content is only available on one specific platform, academic libraries might be obliged to purchase it anyway “and soon find themselves in the situation of having more platforms than they would have wished” (Thompson & Sharp, 2009, p. 138). Walters (2013b) also points out that “many of the e-book formats commonly used by academic libraries are actually not compatible with any e-reader” (p. 7).

There is no doubt that the differences in formats cause a range of various problems not only for e-books users but also for the acquisition librarians. Nelson (2008) talks about reduced adoption rates by students and staff as well as about learning and usage barriers that

¹ Grey literature is a documentary material which is not commercially published or publicly available, such as technical reports or internal business documents (“Grey literature,” n.d.).
the variety of e-book file formats create. Similarly Walters (2013b) claims that “the multiplicity of e-book file formats poses serious difficulties for both cross-platform compatibility and long term access” (p. 203). Emerging new formats and multiple publisher platforms are also affecting the workflow of libraries having to adjust or even create new procedures for handling e-books and forcing the staff to handle increasing complexity (Morris & Sibert, 2010; Thompson and Sharp, 2009). Old formats can and many already become incompatible with existing e-readers or even worse would be left abandoned by e-book suppliers as they merge or go out of business and cause major problems for access to and preservation of acquired resources (Walters, 2013a).

2.2. COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT AND E-BOOKS IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

Incorporating a new medium into the library can be a challenging task; however, applying well-grounded policies and plans helps to accomplish the task (Stamison, 2011). Blummer & Kenton (2012) agree that acquisition plans and strategies can enable the successful acquisition as well as integration of e-books in library collections. Thus, ideally collection management issues surrounding the selection, acquisition and promotion of e-books have to be addressed within the collection development policies of an institution (Armstrong & Lonsdale, 2005; Stamison, 2011). The recent study investigating UK academic libraries’ experiences and perceptions of e-book management shows that such policies are present in the libraries, however separate policies of e-book collection management are still non-existent – all interviewed libraries revealed that they did not have any plans of developing a separate policy for e-books, but rather saw them forming a part in their main policies. (Vasileiou et al., 2012c).

According to Tedd (2005), the development of electronic versions of printed books (or e-books) can be seen as part of the whole e-publishing phenomenon that began in the 1960s. However, the first appearance of e-books in academic libraries is only dated back to 1990s by most researchers (Armstrong & Lonsdale, 2005; Minčić-Obradović, 2011; Schell, 2010). Nevertheless, as some experts predicted, 2007-2009 marked a transition for the higher education e-book market with large growth (as expected) in both digital textbooks and digital library collections (Nelson, 2008). E-books have entered the mainstream of books acquisition for major university libraries, especially, when the increase in the variety and number of e-book reading devices raised the demand for library e-books from users and the provision of e-book content by publishers (Beisler & Kurt, 2012, p. 96).

2.2.1. ACCESS TO AND USE OF ACADEMIC TITLES AS E-BOOKS IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

One of the main issues for librarians building collections is a low availability of scholarly e-books or no availability at all. “In 2011-2012, the largest library e-book vendor, ebrary, offered just 31 percent of the print titles profiled by YBP Library Services” (Walters, 2013a, p. 190). Walters (2013b) claims that the majority of e-book publishers and vendors are focusing more on popular books rather than the academic titles. Dewan (2012) believes that the low availability of scholarly e-books is one of the biggest obstacles to e-book adoption in academic libraries.
Embargoes

In many cases there are delays in the release of academic e-books in order to protect print sales suggesting that “publishers still see print as their primary revenue driver” (Meehan, 2010, p. 9). This is observed in the market of the major textbooks where publishers are not hurrying to invest in the development of electronic study materials as noted by Bennett and Landoni (2005). Hodges, Preston and Hamilton (2010) explain how this business model works:

the longer the hardcover edition is the sole source of content, the more money the publisher makes; after the hardcover sales peak, a paperback edition often has it run; at some point the publisher releases the e-book, first for sale, and later by permission to include the e-book in leased collections (p. 198).

According to Walters (2012), embargoes annihilate a major advantage of e-book of reducing the time from manuscript acceptance to formal public distribution.

The embargo period can vary from 3 to 18 months (Hodges et al., 2010; Walters, 2013b). This causes major dilemma to acquisition librarians since not many academic libraries can afford to buy the same content twice, thus they have to make a decision on whether to delay the purchase of the title until an e-book is released or buy a paper book instead. In many cases, libraries can afford to wait for an e-book, but when a high profile item is assigned as a reading material or a course literature “such a delay is unacceptable” (Medeiros, 2011, p. 161). Furthermore, if a paperback edition of the book is chosen over an e-book very often, the building of an e-book collection could be put in jeopardy, especially for libraries that favour providing e-book versions of a title. In such libraries that could also mean leaving their users without the preferred format of the book.

Digital rights management (DRM)

DRM is “access control technology used by copyright holders to limit the use of digital content” (Stamison, 2011, p. 10). DRM might allow or deny the right to transfer content from one device to another, it also sets the maximum values for printing, copying, sharing and downloading for offline reading. Sometimes DRM restrictions are actually contrary to the license terms and “in practice this means, that DRM gives publishers the initial ability to limit use however they choose” (Walters, 2013b, p. 5). Not surprisingly, these limits frustrate and even infuriate library users. Joe Wikert – a publisher and author of Publishing 2020 blog also shares a very critical view on DRM. He argues that DRM does not eliminate piracy, but because of many restrictions not only makes e-book less attractive than paper books, but also implies a lack of trust (Wikert, 2012). Some authors also believe that restrictions encountered by DRM together with proprietary delivery systems and vendors’ inability to achieve a more mobile-friendly model of discovery of information in the library e-book arena “may be key factors in user adoption of e-books, keeping them from becoming the successor to the print collection in libraries” (Van Arnhem & Barnett, 2014, p. 65).

Limitations regarding interlibrary loan (ILL)
E-books have a lot of potential to ease the process of ILL. By using an e-book as ILL, libraries could save a lot of time and money and also avoid situations where library users would be left without a book for a period of time when it is on loan to another library. Despite these benefits, there are currently many barriers for sharing e-books that are still under copyright protection. Some e-book licenses impose an outright ban on ILL, while others allow the sharing of book chapters, but with certain limits and restrictions (Radnor & Shrauger, 2012; Walters, 2013b). Additional restrictions include the use of specific platform or a proprietary format that limits e-books use to specific devices. “As in many other instances, the limitations imposed by vendors negate the advantages that e-books might otherwise provide (Walters, 2013b, p. 6)”. Radnor and Shrauger (2012) share the same opinion by illustrating a common situation in libraries that have to deal with e-book requests as ILL: “these barriers go far beyond the realm of ILL and cause many ILL practitioners simply to respond that e-books are not available through ILL or to deflect all ILL requests for e-books automatically” (p. 156).

2.3. ACQUISITION OF E-BOOKS IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

There is a lot of research on various aspects of e-books in academic libraries in recent years in different parts of the world (e.g. Gudinavičius, 2012; Pant & Jindal, 2013; Staiger, 2012; Vasileiou & Rowley, 2011; Zimerman, 2011). Most of the researchers seem to be very interested in the use of e-book collections. There are different studies analysing the scholarly use of e-books, the use of e-books by distance students, the users’ perception of e-books as well as ways that e-books are used. Other very popular themes among researchers include the e-book readers (e-readers) and the marketing and promotion of e-books. However the librarians’ experience and their issues with e-books in academic libraries have not attracted as much attention among researchers. Even though some of the user and usage studies touch on the multitude of issues that direct e-book acquisition, there is still very little deeper analysis and research done on collections management and e-book acquisition issues in the academic libraries. Vasileiou, Rowley, & Hartley (2012c) believe that librarians face challenges and issues:

throughout the entire process of e-book management, beginning with the formation of collection development policy, which includes e-books and establishment of a budget for e-books, up to the point where decisions are made for the renewal or cancellation of e-books (p.282).

Moreover, Walters (2013a) claims that these challenges associated with academic e-books are much less known compared to the real and perceived advantages of e-books. E-books acquisition in academic libraries are affected by many factors. Some of these arise from the e-books themselves and their vendors, such as content, features, platforms, access models, and some of these reflect the needs and preferences of the users and the institutions. Demands of certain disciplines or the state of distance education can heavily affect decisions regarding e-books acquisition (Bummer & Kenton, 2012). Similar conclusions were drawn by Vasileiou, et al. research report examining the perceptions and predictions of academic librarians regarding the future role and development of e-books. A very interesting point to note is that according to them, there is a two-way process where the parties interested in e-
book acquisitions not only directly influence decisions of academic libraries about e-book collection development, but in turn are affected by those decisions (Vasileiou, et al., 2012b).

There are many important considerations and criteria for selecting and acquiring e-books in academic libraries. Based on the findings of recent studies Vasileiou, Hartley and Rowley (2012a) suggest that the most important selection criteria in academic libraries are the cost of e-books, high usage or demand by the library users, licenses, business models, platforms, interfaces and subject coverage. However, the academic librarians also have to consider the library budget and collection development policies as well as many other restrictions that various licenses entail.

By the time e-books reach academic libraries, librarians have had their confidence built in electronic resources development and management by working with electronic journals. However, as Beisler and Kurt (2012) note, e-books do not fit well into workflows that were developed for e-journals: “an e-book workflow shares facets of both monographic and electronic resource acquisition and access, with both title-level and package acquisition and management issues” (p. 96). Moreover, e-books do not fall neatly into the traditional organization of library departments responsible for acquisition either (Beisler & Kurt, 2012).

2.3.1. BUDGET AND E-BOOK PRICING

There is no doubt that the budget plays a major role in building the academic library e-books collection. “Money influences the decisions to purchase e-books for libraries, since they need to make not just ‘one off” purchases but continue to fund annual access fees” (Bennett & Landoni, 2005, p. 15). It can be a very challenging task for libraries to decide how to allocate the financial resources if the new collection has to be funded from the existing library budget. Furthermore, Tedd and Carin (2012) discovered that librarians with limited budgets are very cautious about acquiring e-books when they are unsure that e-books will actually be used. However, Burnette (2008) argues that the budget is even more than just numbers:

When applied to e-resources, the objective of the budget is more than setting a spending threshold or percentage. E-resource budgeting is an agreement on the financial support allocated for digital collections within a fiscal year. It is also a philosophical agreement to use the staff and information technology required to provide access. The budget is the starting point of a plan for successful access to and sound stewardship of digital collections (p. 4).

Recent years have seen an increase in budgetary allocations for electronic resources, with many libraries assigning more than half of their budgets to e-content (Blummer & Kenton, 2012; Minčić-Obradović, 2011; Vasileiou et al., 2012c). However Soderback (2011) provides very different statistics of budgetary spending on e-books in academic libraries in Sweden: “discussions with libraries suggest that e-books take up no more than 6% of money spent on acquisition” (p. 38). Schell (2010) suggests that the academic libraries starting an e-book collection should have at least 10% of their total collection budget working up to 25% as users demand it. Even though budgetary spending on e-books is increasing, libraries do not seem to have a separate budget for e-books acquisition. “Instead, individual e-book titles and subject specific collections are acquired through subject librarians’ funds and
multidisciplinary e-book collections through libraries’ e-resources funds” (Vasileiou et al., 2012c, p. 285).

Various studies have shown the importance of sensible charging and price regime for e-books for librarians when making decisions to acquire e-books (Blummer & Kenton, 2012; Mulvihill, 2011; Vasileiou et al., 2012a; Vasileiou et al., 2012b; Woodward, 2007). Lippincott et al. (2012) stress the importance of developing sustainable, affordable pricing models for e-books for academic libraries. The authors suggest that in order to achieve that they must critically examine costs for single institution purchases and sharing between institutions and consider how existing options – like multipliers over list price for a consortial purchase, multi-user and single-user costs, tiered pricing, and approval plan discounts – can evolve to the mutual benefit of librarians, publishers, and vendors (p. 6).

Even though many believe that digital textbooks are the solution to textbook affordability and accessibility on college campuses, digital editions can be as costly and moreover, they can also affect the accessibility for individuals with various disabilities, which in return would create some legal and educational challenges for institutions (Nelson & Hains, 2010). According to recent studies, e-books can cost even more than their print counterparts since there are additional costs involved for providing online hosting content, server and network maintenance fees, reformatting for multiple platforms of file formats, as well as provision of customer service and technical support (Vasileiou et al., 2012a; Walters, 2013b). Moreover, if the academic books are purchased individually their cost can be even 50% higher than their print equivalents (Walters, 2012). Walters (2013a) argues that even if e-books were less expensive to produce, it would not necessarily reduce the prices paid by libraries.

2.3.2. BUSINESS MODELS

There are number of business models available to academic libraries in terms of acquiring e-books for their collections. The main models currently available include: 1) perpetual ownership, i.e. one-off purchase or outright purchase; 2) subscription; 3) pay-per-view, also known as pay-per-use, rental or pay-as-you-go; 4) “bundled”, often subject based e-book package or supplier selected collections; 5) patron-driven acquisition (PDA), also known as demand-driven acquisition (DDA) or reader-driven acquisition (RDA); and 6) and evidence-based selection (EBS).

These models vary from vendor to vendor. Such a variety of different models would suggest that academic libraries are well cared for by e-book suppliers, however, according to Vasileiou et.al. (2012a), there is “a clear indication in the literature that the variety of e-book business models provided by vendors is an issue for librarians who find them complicated” (p. 23). Emerging new purchasing models might even make the situation worse, even though publishers are only trying to develop a variety of models to suit different libraries (Minčić-Obradović, 2011). Furthermore, there is not much encouragement regarding this issue in Mulvihill’s (2011) summarizing conclusion, stating that “most librarians want e-books to behave like print books, which are comparatively simple to read and buy” (p. 13). This statement in particular refers to the librarians' wish to have ownership of the acquired e-books. Thus, it is not surprising that Vasileiou et al. (2012a) report that the most popular business model among acquisition librarians is purchase with perpetual access. The perpetual
ownership model enables a library to buy an individual title or collections of e-books directly from publisher or aggregator by paying up front or over a couple of years. Despite having a perpetual access to those e-books, a platform maintenance fee for ongoing hosting of the material purchased is required (Morris & Sibert, 2010; Vasileiou et al. 2012a), and the subscription model requires payment of a fee – usually annually – for access to a collection or subject areas of a collection. According to Minčić-Obradović (2011), the choice of model – purchase or subscription – depends primarily on the content needs of the institutions.

The rental model allows for short-term access to individual titles and is sometimes used as an alternative to ILL. While the patron-driven acquisition (PDA):

Generally takes the form of a library selecting a set of titles that match criteria (subject, publisher, price, etc.), similar to the way an approval plan is created. Bibliographic records for the profiled titles are loaded into the library’s online catalogue where they can be discovered by users. Periodically, new titles matching the library’s profile are added to the corpus. As patrons discover these records, they are able to open the e-book, which depending on the service provider’s model may trigger a lease or purchase of the book (Medeiros, 2011, p. 160).

PDA seems to be one of the most discussed purchasing models in recent literature. It is even included in the article listing the 2012 top ten trends in academic libraries. PDA is identified as “an inevitable trend for libraries under pressure to prove that their expenditures are in line with their value” (ACRL Research Planning and Review Committee, 2012, p. 314). However, Fischer, Wright, Clatanoff, Barton and Shreeves (2012) raise a valid question regarding budgeting and PDA about responsible budgeting for selection decisions made by an unidentified subset of a high number of potential users. Thus, as any other business model, PDA also has its own advantages and disadvantages. One of the main concerns academic librarians have regarding PDA is a fear of building an unbalanced and lower in quality collections that will not be used (Bucknell, 2012; Fischer, et al., 2012; Walters, 2012). However, Price’s and McDonald’s (2009) study that have compared librarian-selected and patron selected EBL books at five academic libraries from 2005 through 2009, discovered that user-selected titles were actually used more than those pre-selected by librarians. This study also revealed that in terms of collection balance, there were no major discrepancies between titles of subject profiles selected by the librarians and those selected by the library users (Price & McDonald, 2009). Moreover, as with any model, PDA is evolving and bringing new and improved options for its users. For example, Downey (2014) reports a successful pilot project of a new e-book purchasing model where the PDA model was used together with some technical components available via traditional print approval services.

Evidence based selection (EBS) is one of the newer purchasing models and contrary to PDA is still rarely discussed in the literature. However, Bucknell (2012) provides a detailed explanation of how this model works:

Under this model, the library pays a relatively modest up-front fee in order to be able to access a collection for a year. Towards the end of that year, the library can evaluate its usage reports to decide which titles or collections to retain permanent access to, with a total value up to the fee already paid. At that point access to the non-retained titles is lost unless the library and vendor agree another year of EBS (p. 58).
The author argues that this model is beneficial for both libraries and vendors. For the libraries, EBS reduces the risk of purchasing a package which turns out to be little used and allows the library to evaluate its purchasing strategy. While vendors might be attracted to it because it gives a minimum guaranteed level of income and may also lead to a larger purchase that a library would not have been prepared to make without evidence of use.

Academic libraries usually have an option to either acquire e-books as individual titles or e-book packages. The discussion surrounding the issues for choosing one option or another are usually referred in the literature as “just in time” vs “just in case” acquisition. The downside of acquiring e-books as individual titles is that such a process is very time consuming as the acquisition librarian has to “establish weather a title is available as an e-book, on which platform(s), and how much it costs” (Thompson & Sharp, 2009, p. 138). But according to Vasileiou et al. (2012a) “title by title selection facilitates better use of funds and provides maximum control over the acquisition decisions by preventing acquisition of lower-quality or out-of-scope material” (p. 25). One of the downsides of acquiring e-books as packages is that academic librarians can rarely choose which titles are included in the packages. Furthermore, according to Walters (2013a) “many vendors and publishers reserve the right to add or withdraw titles from the collection during the subscription period” (p. 196). On the positive side, e-books packages are offered for a much more attractive price than individual titles and can also save time in selection, acquisition and processing (Ashcroft, 2011).

2.3.3. E-BOOK LICENSING

One of the main factors that changes the way librarians work with e-books as opposed to print books is that e-books are “not controlled by copyright law, it requires authorization from the rightsholder” (Müller, 2012, p. 154). These licenses are a huge burden for academic libraries. The problem is well summarized by the Commission of European Communities (as cited in Müller, 2012):

Libraries and universities underline the complexity and fragmentation of the current system of licensing agreements with publishers. A typical European university is required to sign a hundred or more licenses governing the use of digital research material supplied by various publishers. Examining what each of these individual licenses permit with respect to e.g. access, printing, storage and copyright is a cumbersome process (p. 153).

Since most of the e-books in academic libraries are leased and not purchased, it is a major adjustment for libraries to realize they no longer own the collection, and even more, depending on the license the libraries might still have to pay recurring payments for access to a set of titles that does not improve overtime (Walters, 2013b).

The publishers and aggregators usually have a variety of licensing models, which control how users may access e-books. Moreover, Walters (2012) argues that most e-book vendors have adopted licensing models that prevent users from taking advantage of the benefits that e-book technology might otherwise provide. Thus, there are many considerations that academic libraries have to take into account with respect to licensing e-books. The need for librarians to become familiar with licensing issues and terminology and to be able to identify limitations and restrictions inherent in license agreements are also emphasised by
Negotiating the license terms through the consortia might be an option for academic libraries. The recent study suggests that the experienced team can achieve better deals and reduced effort by negotiating separately with each publisher as well as discounts on platform hosting fees (Vasileiou et al., 2012c). Furthermore, sharing books across library consortia reduces the burden of training local staff with new skill sets and also reduces the work involved in cataloguing since all these things are done centrally by the leading facility in consortium (Schell, 2010).

Definition of an authorized user, interlibrary loan restrictions, fair use application, use for scholarly sharing, IP authentication issues, incorporation of e-book content into Virtual Learning Environments are just a few of the many other issues to consider (Stamison, 2011; Vasileiou et al., 2012a).

Since libraries acquire e-books from a number of different suppliers, meaning different licensing models with different terms, Tedd (2005) stresses the importance of making users aware of these differences. However, Thompson and Sharp's (2009) breakout session with library staff revealed that very few librarians felt that their library was achieving this successfully.

2.4. E-BOOKS IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN IRELAND

Probably the very first occasion for Irish academic libraries to explore the e-book market and get hands-on experience with e-books themselves came in 2001 when the librarians of the Conference of Heads of Irish Universities (CHIU) decided to establish a working group to assess the e-book market and examine its potential to university libraries (Cox, 2004). In order to get that experience a one year contract has been signed between all seven university libraries in Ireland and Safari Tech Books Online. The subscription was only limited to business and computing subjects and was aimed at exploring issues from user and library perspectives like access, licensing, cost-effectiveness as well as the impact of e-books on teaching and learning. The results of this project suggest that the Irish university libraries' experience with e-books has not been very unique compared to other countries, rather the findings confirm the previously identified issues that academic libraries encounter with e-books including licensing and subscription management (Cox, 2004).

Five years later, some Irish university libraries were still experimenting with e-books as a new medium, while others were approaching the complex issues in a more coordinated manner. (Pan, Byrne & Murphy, 2009). At that time most of the e-book content available to Irish university libraries was supplemented by the Irish Research eLibrary (IReL). This is a nationally funded electronic research library, which was initially started as a support for researchers in Biotechnology and Information Technology in 2004. Following the successful start, two years later the library has extended their support to research in the Humanities and Social Sciences (Irish Research Library, 2013a). Even though the provision of e-journal packages is seen as the main benefit, authors argued that e-book content available through IReL is also of significant importance (Pan et al., 2009). According to the 2013 figures, IReL is providing an access to 16 e-book collections (Irish Research Library, 2013b), which have

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2 Dublin City University, National University of Ireland, Galway, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, Trinity College Dublin, University College Cork, University College Dublin and University of Limerick.
been subjected to a heavy and constantly increasing use since 2005 (Irish Research Library, 2013a).

The time span of 2008 – 2009 not only marks the start of a heavier stream of e-books in Irish university libraries, but also the global economic downturn, adding new pressures to the academic libraries throughout the country. Libraries have not only suffered reductions in staff, but also loss in purchasing power as a result of budgetary cuts (Cox, 2010). Thus, not surprisingly, Tedd and Carin (2012) in their study of e-books acquisition in Irish institutes of technology libraries found that the librarians were concerned about the e-book budget being low. In 2009, e-books represented less than 10% of the total book expenditure in Irish university libraries (Conry, 2010). Also, the issue of low availability of scholarly books in electronic format as presented in earlier chapters is also present in academic libraries in Ireland and is briefly discussed by Hyland in his post in an Irish library’s online blog (Hyland, 2013).

Some e-book acquisition issues are quite unique to Ireland. Tedd and Carin (2012) have discovered that one of the issues that Irish academic libraries have with e-book acquisition is a lack of content related to Ireland. This can be a major issue for those academic libraries that have to support students in more country-specific courses. Another problem facing Irish libraries is presented by O’Malley (2011) in her master’s thesis about e-books in Irish public libraries. She discovers that Irish publishers are actually reluctant to provide books in electronic format. A heavy 23% VAT in the Republic of Ireland on e-book materials is yet another problem in e-book acquisition in Irish academic libraries. Not unexpectedly, Pan et al. (2009) name it as one of the factors contributing to the slow uptake of e-books in Irish universities’ libraries since there is no VAT on print books.
3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

It is very clear from the previous research that e-books as innovative digital objects not only change many aspects of collection development and management, but also bring changes into librarians’ work and change the relationship with their partners. It is likely that Irish academic libraries will react to these changes similarly, but in their own way. In order to help understand and explain these reactions, diffusion of innovations and collection management theories has been chosen. The decision to choose two theories stem from a twofold wish to inspect the impact of e-books as an innovation, as well as to explore how the change is managed by the acquisition librarians. Arguably, there are other theories that could be well applied to this research such as collection management models, strategic management, disruptive technologies theories, etc. However, the author feels that selected theories blends well, maybe not to the level of depth desired, but are still able to deliver the answers to the research questions raised. The diffusion of innovations theory helps to understand how academic libraries react and respond to innovations, such as whether or not they follow the same route of actions or fall into groups of certain behaviour, etc. The change management theory assists in finding out if libraries as institutions and librarians as professionals perceive e-books as the origin of change. It also helps to interpret their reaction to these changes as well as to discover what is stimulating or impeding them. Collection development is seen here as the centre of this study and as an object that is changing as a result of reactions to innovations.

An overview of these two theories is followed by a short discussion of the main implications of e-books appearance to the collection management in academic libraries. This chapter finishes with a graphical model which depicts the interactions between collection management and its main “players” and shows the connection of diffusion of innovation and change management theories to the management of library collections.

3.1. DIFFUSION OF INNOVATION THEORY

Everett M. Rogers was a sociologist and communication scholar, and is best known for originating the diffusion of innovations theory in late 1960s. Originally, he has developed the theory based on his research on the adoption of agricultural innovations by farmers, but later on has compared studies on diffusion of innovation from other fields such as education and marketing and found them to be with considerable similarities (Plexus Institute, n.d.). Despite of dating back more than fifty years, diffusion of innovations theory still remains popular and empirically relevant. Researchers keep applying the theory to various fields including leadership and management (cf. Kohles & Bligh, 2013), public health and nursing (cf. Steury, 2013), librarianship and communication (cf. Neo & Calvert, 2012; Relly, 2012), environmental field (cf. Smerecnik & Andersen, 2011).

Diffusion is the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system. It is a special type of
communication, in that the messages are concerned with new ideas. Communication is a process in which participants create and share information with one another in order to reach a mutual understanding (Rogers, 1983, p. 4).

This definition contains the main four elements of diffusion of innovation theory – innovation, communication channels, time and social system. Rogers (1983) also stresses that communication in this instance is rather a two-way process of interflow, rather than one-way linear act. He sees diffusion as a process of communicating new ideas, which also involves some degree of uncertainty. Moreover, new ideas can also cause social change, altering the structure and function of a social system. Talking about diffusion of new technologies, Tidd (2010) also agrees that such process is very often associated with high cost and uncertainty, however, “conversely mature technologies provide limited opportunity” (p. 31). Even though Rogers (1983) claims that “there is generally an implication that a technological innovation has at least some degree of benefit of advantage for its potential adopters” (p. 13); nonetheless, he does not think it should be assumed that diffusion and adoption of all innovations are necessarily desirable. Furthermore:

Many technologists think that advantageous innovations will sell themselves, that the obvious benefits of a new idea will be widely realized by potential adopters, and that the innovation will therefore diffuse rapidly. Unfortunately, this is very seldom the case. Most innovations, in fact, diffuse at a surprisingly slow rate (Rogers, 1983, p. 7).

Rogers’s theory (1983) proposes that regarding the adoption of innovations, organizations fall into five categories. The very first people in an organization to adopt innovations are known as innovators, followed by early adopters, early majority, late majority, and followed lastly if at all by laggards. According to Rogers (1983) innovators may not be respected by the other member of social system, but they play a very important gatekeeping role in the diffusion of innovations process by “launching the new idea in the social system by importing the innovation from outside of the system’s boundaries” (p. 248). The early adopters’ category “more than any other, has the greatest degree of opinion leadership in most social systems” (Rogers, 1983, p. 249). The third category falls into the middle between the very early and the relatively late to adopt categories and that “unique position makes them an important link in the diffusion process” – to provide interconnectedness in the networks of the system (Rogers, 1983, p. 249). The fourth category approaches innovations with caution and is hugely dependent on the pressure from peers to motivate adoption. Laggards are the last people in an organization to adopt an innovation. According to Rogers, it is their precarious economic position that forces them to be extremely cautious in adopting innovations. However, “it is a mistake to imply that laggards are somehow at fault for being relatively late to adopt; this is an illustration of individual-blame where system-blame may more accurately describe much of the reality of the laggards’ situation” (Rogers, 1983, p. 251).

Rogers goes on to outline five main characteristics of innovations that he believes help to explain the different rate of adoption:

Relative advantage is the degree to which an innovation is perceived as better than the idea it supersedes – the greater the perceived relative advantage of an innovation, the more rapid its rate of adoption is going to be. Compatibility is the
degree to which an innovation is perceived as being consistent with the existing values, past experiences, and needs of potential adopters. Complexity is the degree to which an innovation is perceived as difficult to understand and use. Trialability is the degree to which an innovation may be experimented with on a limited basis. An innovation that is trialable represents less uncertainty to the individual who is considering it for adoption, as it is possible to learn by doing. Observability is the degree to which the results of an innovation are visible to others. The easier it is for individuals to see the results of an innovation, the more likely they are to adopt (1983, p. 15).

3.2. CHANGE MANAGEMENT THEORY

There are many different change management theories and models. There are also significant differences in how changes are perceived. Penfold describes change management as:

crafting a more fluid, focused and adaptive organization so that, no matter what the next big change looks like, your people and processes will continually adjust. And your company will find new and better ways to work for its customers (p. 92).

Pugh (2000) argues that libraries do not have a strong tradition of change management. Moreover, he claims that the lack of tradition of change management is affecting library profession today as “even the ground-breaking changes do not always appear to have been very firmly based on change theory” (Pugh, 2000, p. 17).

Libraries have long been seen as organisations that have a rigid hierarchical structure and operate in a very stable environment. Thus, it is not surprising to see a library as fitting well within scientific management (cf. Taylor, 2011) or classical school theories (cf. Weber & Parsons, 1947) where the main emphasis is placed on maximising the efficiency and control of the manpower in the stable organisations operating in stable environments. However, this can no longer be taken for granted since academic libraries today face fundamental changes that impact them “from many dimensions, causing an intensity of introspection and soul searching never seen in the field’s history” (McGuigan, 2012, p. 1). Moreover, Pugh (2007) believes that change has become the norm in information services. Thus, increasingly in recent years, “academics and practitioners have come to view organizations through the lens of complexity theory, and this is beginning to have a profound impact on view of how organizations should be structured and changed” (Burness, 2004, p. 310). These views have strongly challenged Kurt Lewin’s earlier human relations approach theory. Despite the decline in interest in this theory after his death (Burness & Cooke, 2012), Lewin’s field theory is still seen as very relevant for managing the change in today’s world. Moreover, some researchers argue that the formulation and behaviour of complex systems as described by such theories as chaos and catastrophe are strikingly similar to Lewin’s conceptualization of field theory (Burness, 2012).

Kurt Lewin’s field theory (also known as forced field analysis) sees an organisation and its environment as a social field where happenings “within such a field depend upon the distribution of forces throughout the field” (Lewin, 1947, p.309). He proposed that there are two sets of forces operating in any field – driving and resisting forces:
driving forces – corresponding, for instance, to ambition, goals, needs, or fears – are “forces forward” to something or “forces away from” something. They tend to bring about locomotion or changes. A “restraining force” is not in itself equivalent to a tendency to change; it merely opposes driving forces (Lewin, 1947, p. 322).

When these forces are balanced against each other – equilibrium is reached. According to Lewin (1947), in order to change the social equilibrium, the total social field has to be considered including the groups and subgroups involved, their relations and value systems: “the constellation of the social field as a whole has to be studied and so reorganized that social events flow differently” (Lewin, 1947, p. 327). He believed that the field was in a continuous state of adaptation and that “change and constancy are relative concepts; group life is never without change, merely differences in the amount and type of change exist” (Lewin, 1947, p. 308). The changes in the field can be provoked by either internal or external forces, or both (Pugh, 2007). The action of those forces within the systems of the organisation is seen as innovation (Pugh, 2007) and calls for an understanding of the organization as a whole: “instead of picking out one or another isolated element within a situation, the importance of which cannot be judged without consideration of the situation as a whole, field theory finds it advantageous, as a rule, to start with a characterization of the situation as a whole” (Lewin, 1942, p. 214).

Lewin (1947) believed that successful organisational change includes three steps – unfreezing (if necessary), moving and (re)freezing. His three-step model uses the organism metaphor of organizations:

Organizations are seen as sets of interrelated sub-systems designed to balance the requirements of the environment with internal needs of groups and individuals. Emphasis is placed on scanning the environment and developing a healthy adaptation to the outside world. Individual, group and organizational health and happiness are essential ingredients of this metaphor (Cameron & Green, 2012, p. 115).

The first step of Lewin’s model is concerned with unfreezing the current state of affairs: “to break open the shell of complacency and self-righteousness it is sometimes necessary to bring about deliberately an emotional stir-up” (1947, p. 330).

The second stage is about moving to a new state through participation and involves a process of change in behaviour, thoughts or feelings, or all three. “Three actions that can assist in the movement step include: persuading employees to agree that the status quo is not beneficial to them and encouraging them to view the problem from a fresh perspective, work together on a quest for new, relevant information, and connect the views of the group to well-respected, powerful leaders that also support the change” (Kritsonis, 2004-2005, p. 2).

“The third step focuses on refreezing and stabilizing the new state of affairs by setting policy, rewarding success and establishing new standards” (Cameron & Green, 2012, p. 122).

3.3. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

Undoubtedly e-books as a technological innovation have changed the process of academic library acquisition and collection development, which in turn impacts the relationship between acquisition librarians and their partners such as publishers, vendors,
users and others. As a result, several questions need to be answered, such as: “How do librarians manage e-book collections?” and perhaps more importantly “What is a collection management in the era of e-books?”

Johnson (2009) explains that collection development started to be widely used in the late 1960s and that it was understood to cover:

several activities related to the development of library collections, including selection, the determination and coordination of selection policy, assessment of the needs of users and potential users, collection use studies, collection analysis, budget management, identification of collection needs, community and user outreach and liaison, and planning for resource sharing (p. 1).

According to Johnson (2009), in the 1980s, the term collection development became a part of the umbrella term collection management, which also included decisions about weeding, cancelling serials, storage, and preservation. Holleman (2000) has expressed his concern that such change from collection development to collection management will increasingly affect librarians making them “interpreters of information, not its selectors” (p. 694). Today, however, the terms collection management and collection development are often used as synonyms. According to Jones (1999) “a primary objective of collection development is to give structure to a collection of resources by organizing them in a meaningful manner” (p. 36); however, in the current climate where “hybrid” collections are very common, collection building and management becomes more complicated. Jones (1999) believes that “electronic resources enable the library to expand the concept of the collection itself – it is no longer tied to a location on a shelf in a specific building” (p. 36). According to Covi and Cragin (2004, p. 312), academic and research libraries have been selecting materials based on collection development principles for many years and that these principles rely on a causal link between use and need. Holleman (2000, p. 694) provides a slightly different list of criteria for selection, which includes quality, library relevancy, aesthetics and technical aspects, and cost. According to him even in the electronic era of information these criteria remain the same, only their meaning and ways they are used have changed. Metz (2000) seconds his opinion by claiming that “new information technologies will never make irrelevant the traditional goals and values of collection development, but they have introduced important new elements to decisions about selection and retention” (p. 728). However, Holleman (2000) believes that the electronic age is threatening librarians over their selection principles:

There is the pressure to abandon print in order to be proactive about the future; there is the pressure to stop collecting and respond only to demand, when the significance of the demand is usually at least partly defined by the status of the demander; and there is the pressure to purchase collections of materials aggregated by vendors without regard for the needs of individual libraries (p. 709).

Covi and Cragin (2004) summarize the discussed issues by pointing out that there is actually a lack of coherent system of analysis for electronic collections measurement and evaluation and thus, “any attempts to standardize collections management processes are limited by current models of scholarly communications that change frequently and are yet to solidify” (p. 322).
According to Pugh (2000) the fundamental changes challenge libraries because “today’s changes are driven so much by technological imperatives, with all the uncertainty and volatility these bring to the process” (p. 3). Thus, there is no doubt that academic acquisition librarians face challenging working environments where change is driven by technological innovation. Rogers’s theory of diffusion of innovation (1983) provides an insight of the challenges involved in the adoption of innovation process. Romero (2011, p. 174) indicates three areas in the work processes of the management of library collections that are most affected by the appearance of e-books: purchasing service, organisation planning service, and collection circulation service. E-books are also changing the relationships in the book market and thus, the changing market forces are in turn impacting the academic libraries.

Siddiqui (2003) argues that in order to manage the change in acquisitions in academic libraries effectively, the acquisitions manager should view the change process as a logical stream divided into a sequence of events. Lewin’s proposed three step change management model (1947) would provide such guidance. However, Siddiqui (2003, p. 353) suggests a similar model of seven steps to manage the change: conceptualization, preparing the department, task force creation, planning, management of staff, implementation and evaluation.

Undoubtedly, any kind of innovation introduces many changes to the organisations demanding them to change and adjust to the new ways of working. Academic libraries are no exception.

3.4. CHANGE MANAGEMENT AND COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT MODEL

Researchers agree that e-books have brought many changes to all aspects of the life of academic libraries. Collection development and management are two heavily affected and changed areas and are therefore in need of change management.

The model below that I put together as a graphic summary of literature review and previous research, also represents my view and understanding of the “playing field” of e-books in academic libraries. This model intends to present e-books as a major innovation and the main contributor in bringing about change which challenges the collection development and management of academic libraries. To deal with these changes, change management is introduced as a possible solution. It not only alters the ways and procedures (working processes) of library work, but it also impacts the people in the organisation (acquisition librarians). As a result all these alterations in collection development and management produce new ways of working (working processes), modify the structure of library’s collections (collection structure) and alter budgeting (budget allocations). However, it is important to note, that collection development and budget allocations are in a reciprocal relationship of influence – collection development decisions not only impact the budget, but budgeting decisions also impact the collection development. The academic community and users, as well as the publishers and vendors in this model represent driving or resisting forces (depending on the academic library) that either push the innovation (e-books) forward in the organization or hold it back. This model might have a number of limitations and is only intended for a very general representation of the “playing field” of the main elements which affect collection development. The arrows in the model show the direction of influence, but the size of the arrows represents the importance of the element to the model rather than a difference in strength.
Innovation & Change

Driving / resisting forces shows direction of influence

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

Academic community/users

Publishers, vendors

Collection structure

Budget allocations

Working processes

Acquisition librarians

E-books

Decision shows direction of influence

Figure 1 Change management and collection development model
4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

This chapter describes in greater detail the approach of this research, as well as the methods used for data collection and analysis. It also aims to explain the appropriateness of these methods to the exploration of the three research questions outlined in the beginning of the thesis.

4.1. RESEARCH APPROACH

The empirical study of this work is concerned with the discovery of the impact of e-books on collection development and acquisition process, as well as on acquisition librarians themselves in Irish academic libraries. This area of research is still very new and not yet well-defined. Even though some research has already been carried out on issues related to e-books in academic libraries, the studies mostly reflect the context of libraries in different countries, thus it is not clear if the existing research and knowledge can be directly applied to academic libraries in Ireland.

Therefore, an exploratory type of research appears appropriate in order to obtain greater understanding of the impact of e-books specific to Irish academic libraries. According to Wildemuth (2009) and Yin (2003), case studies are often used in exploratory studies to describe existing phenomena and the relationships between them. Moreover, case studies also have “a strong comparative advantage with respect to the “depth” of the analysis, where depth can be understood as empirical completeness and natural wholeness or as conceptual richness and theoretical consistency” (p. 69). Since comparativeness is very important to this study, as suggested by Yin (2003), to identify common patterns as well as dissimilar situations, the decision was made to use multiple cases in this research. Zartman (2005) adds that “the only way to test and reinforce concepts’ and theories’ claims to normal regularity rather than exceptionality is to look at a number of cases, not just one” (p. 7). He believes that, a “comparative case study exhibits the advantage of in-depth analysis while overcoming the weakness of focusing on one case alone” (Zartman, 2005, p.7).

Since there are only seven universities in the Republic of Ireland, all seven universities' libraries were chosen for the study as cases. The universities are: Dublin City University (DCU), National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG), National University of Ireland, Maynooth (NUIM), Trinity College Dublin (TCD), University College Cork (UCC), University College Dublin (UCD) and University of Limerick (UL).

4.2. METHODS FOR DATA COLLECTION

Two complementary methods have been chosen to collect data for this research – semi-structured interviews and document analysis.

4.2.1. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS
Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were chosen as a principal data collection technique in order to allow the interviewees a greater degree of freedom to explain their thoughts and to highlight areas of particular interest and expertise. Also, to have the ability to question some responses in greater depth. Moreover, it was hoped that the free-flowing structure of semi-structured interviews would make the interviews feel like an informal conversation making them more informative and accurate.

**Design of the instrument**

The interview guide was initially organized based on the three research questions raised in this study. The final draft of the interview guide consisted of 12 questions.

Once the final guide was drafted, it was then reviewed by an acquisition librarian of a college library, who has an expertise on the research topic. The revision led to one question being rephrased. However, after the first interview, the decision was made to rearrange the sequence of questions in the interview guide, to give it a more logical order. The interview schedule can be found in Appendix B.

**Respondents and Target Population**

Since the primary objective of the study was to understand the changes experienced by acquisition librarians as a result of the adoption of e-books by academic libraries, acquisition librarians themselves were considered to be the most appropriate participants for the study.

In order to find relevant participants for the study, the decision was made to contact the Heads of each of the university library departments that are responsible for collection management and acquisitions and ask for suggestions as to who the most relevant person to help with the research would be. Since the interview questions not only included questions about e-book acquisition, but also some broader questions in relation to library’s collection development, the decision was made to look for two persons to interview – one person who deals with the strategic and collection development documents and policies of the library; and another person who is responsible for the day-to-day acquisition work with e-books. However, at some libraries, one person was able to answer both kind of questions, thus reducing the number of interviews conducted. Typically, the key informants in this study held the roles of sub-librarian, collection management or acquisition librarian.

**Data collection**

A semi-structured interview method was used to gather responses to the questions. The interview guide was used to ensure uniform coverage of the research themes. Rather than taking verbatim notes, which are prone to errors and bias, the interviews were recorded with a digital voice recorder and later transcribed. To protect the privacy of participants, names and other easily identifiable personal information are removed from the transcribed text used in the presentation of the results. This means that some citations have been slightly modified to accommodate these changes.

Most interviews were conducted in the participants’ offices with the hope that talking about something very much related to their work would allow them to feel comfortable. The attempt was made to accommodate the participants’ as much as possible. In order to fulfil the requests of the participants, one telephone interview and one interview with two participants at the same time were conducted. Also, three respondents asked for interview questions to be e-mailed to them and so it can be answered in writing. Because of different types of
interviews used, written responses from e-mail interviews may not have been as comprehensive as those of transcribed data from face-to-face interviews; however, the variety of librarians interviewed and the responses received provided a great deal of valuable information.

The face to face and telephone interviews, which were conducted during the months of November – December 2013, lasted for about 45 minutes on average, ranging from 29 minutes to 1 hour and 40 minutes.

In total 5 out of the 7 libraries participated, with a total of 8 participants contributing to this research. One library responded to the initial invitation and was willing to participate in the study by answering interview questions in writing; however, the questions have not been returned and no other communication has been received. Only one library did not respond at all. These two libraries have still been included in the study by means of analysing their policy documents. However, these two cases are only considered as providing supplementary evidence for the study, since the data was collected using only one method.

4.2.2. DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Document analysis has been used in this research as a secondary method for data collection. Twenty documents were reviewed, placed in context, and coded for analysis. By coding I mean here the organisation of information into categories related to my research questions. The selected documents included libraries’ collection development and management policies, annual reports, operational and strategic plans. The documents chosen for analysis were selected according to the following criteria: publication on the library’s website, relevance to acquisition of e-books, and date of publication. The complete list of documents chosen for analysis is provided in Appendix C.

4.3. METHODS FOR DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected from the interviews as well as data extracted from the documents of the libraries were chosen to be analysed by qualitative content analysis method. This is a research method that allows researcher to subjectively interpret the content of textual data through the systematic process of classification where codes and themes are identified (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Interviews

In order to prepare the data for qualitative content analysis, the interviews had to be transformed into a written text. All the questions and answers were transcribed; however, it was decided to forego the verbatim transcription of the interviews as the additional value it might provide would not justify the additional time required to create it.

Since the transcribed text has to be unitized before it can be coded (Wildemuth, 2009), individual themes as the unit of analysis have been chosen in this work. Then the categories and coding scheme was developed deriving from the previous related research and theoretical framework of this study. During the course of analysis, the preliminary interview guide was modified and supplemented by newly emerging categories.

Documents
Document analysis was used in this study as a supplementary method. The iterative process of document analysis as described by Bowen (2009), involved elements of both – content analysis as well as thematic analysis. The selected documents were skimmed for quick examination first, and then read a few times to identify themes and patterns related to this study. The documentary data were analysed together with data from interviews, so that themes would emerge from both sets of data. Predefined codes that were used in interview transcripts were also applied to the content of documents.

4.4. VALIDITY, RELIABILITY AND ETHICS

Even though there are standards for quality assurance in qualitative research, there is no one universally accepted set of standards. “One criticism which has been levelled at qualitative approaches to research is that they allegedly lack the ‘scientific’ rigour and credibility associated with traditionally accepted quantitative methods“ (Horsburgh, 2003). However, qualitative researchers themselves have failed to agree on what exactly constitutes “validity” or “quality” in their work (Garside, 2014). There are different ideas among researchers on how the qualitative research should be evaluated, and often, qualitative researchers use other principles for judging the quality of their study than quantitative researchers. For example, Guba (1985) (as cited in Wildemuth, 2009) suggested using credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as the four criteria to evaluate a qualitative research. Poortman and Schildkamp (2011) agree that “although essentially different quality criteria are not required, the nature of qualitative research often requires different procedures to achieve the same criteria” (p. 1732). However, they suggest looking into the same four basic criteria used in quantitative research evaluation: controllability, objectivity, reliability and validity, but to follow the qualitative procedure.

Controllability

As suggested by Poortman and Schildkamp (2011), citations of raw data from the interviews are provided in the Presentation of results chapter to show the relations between the analysis and conclusions. In addition, every effort was made to present the problem statement, theoretical framework, elaboration of methods and data collection as well as analysis strategy and related conclusions in a clear and detailed manner.

Objectivity

Since objective data can be retrieved from documents, library documents are used here to support the data received from the interviews with librarians. Even though it is not completely possible to avoid a research bias, every effort was made to describe the research processes in detail and to operate in an as unbiased way as possible.

Validity

The researchers of qualitative studies are expected to use multiple sources of evidence (Bowen, 2009). According to him that is important in seeking “convergence and corroboration through the use of different data sources and methods” (Bowen, 2009 p. 28). Thus, document analysis is used here in combination with a semi-structured interview method.
providing a means of triangulation and thus “reducing the impact of potential biases that can exist in a single study” (Bowen, 2009 p. 28).

Even though the decision was made to forego the verbatim transcription of the interviews, they were still transcribed in a detailed way in order to give as much additional information as possible. The digital recordings of the interviews were also retained.

Also, the findings of this research have been connected to the previous research in the Presentation of results chapter.

Reliability

Poortman and Schildkam (2011) claim that “reliability is advanced by using a systematized approach to data collection that is consistent with the research questions” (p. 1732). Thus, before the interviews were conducted, the research questions, data collection methods and instruments were planned. Also an interview guide was developed to make sure that all respondents are approached in the same way in relation to particular questions. Moreover, interviews were recorded in order to avoid errors and subjectivity.

Ethical considerations

The good research practice guide published by The Swedish Research Council (2006) as well as two other resources by Oliver (2010) and Iphofen (2009) were used to establish what ethical issues might be involved in the research process so that these could be dealt with properly.

Every effort was made to protect the anonymity of the research participants. However as Iphofen (2009) notes “a determined enquirer could, usually by a process of elimination, guess at or even discover the identity of research subjects if enough geographical and/or biographical information is available in the published research report” (p. 92). Taking all this into consideration, it was therefore decided to not only conceal the names of the participants, but also to remove all the information that might lead to identifying the particular institution, as far as it was possible. The list of library documents chosen for the analysis was also coded. Each document on the list was marked with a letter D followed by a number from 1 to 20 (D1 – D20) assigned in no particular order.
5. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

This chapter will present and discuss the findings of the interviews conducted with academic librarians regarding e-book acquisition in their libraries. The findings of the document analysis will supplement the main results and will be presented, where relevant, alongside the interview results. As mentioned earlier, this chapter follows a similar structure to the previous research and literature review chapter to help a reader to better orientate and have a sense of familiarity.

5.1. E-BOOK AS A CONCEPT AND A DIGITAL OBJECT

Some of the library documents state that “the information environment for all universities and libraries is increasingly electronic”, and the majority of the interviewed librarians agree that e-book collections are becoming an essential part of their libraries:

“E-books are growing in importance year by year. Our mission as an academic library is to develop and deliver resources in response to the learning and research need of the university, and e-books help us in fulfilling this mission.”

“I think they’re [e-books] of growing importance. I think, traditionally, it hasn’t been that important, but it’s becoming more and more important, particularly for high demand material.”

However, the interview revealed that e-books have not reached the same level of importance as print books in some of the participating libraries.

“E-books are undoubtedly kind of a good thing, but at the moment we see it as a supplement to the actual traditional hard copy book.”

Moreover, one participant doubted if e-books can ever become as important as hard copies of a book:

“I don't see e-books ever fulfilling the same importance in the collection [as monographs], I think e-books kind of formed into a more disposable category, and that they too... have a shelf life – they come, they are purchased, they will go out of date and will be weeded.”

Yet, print books are not the only category of library resources competing for a favourable position in libraries’ collections:

“And if we do have money, which you don’t often have spare money, if we were to be offered an e-book bundle or journal, we would go for journal content rather than e-book, our focus isn’t on e-books at the moment.”
Despite that, e-books “provide a very good option for users”. They were praised by librarians for their ability to be viewed anywhere anytime by multiple users, as well as for saving shelf and storage space, binding and replacements outlay, also, for being easy to search and navigate through.

Even though participants were not specifically asked what they think an e-book is, it very soon became apparent that there are some issues regarding the definition of e-book and e-book collections as well. There is no clear line between the definition of e-book packages and databases:

“EEBO…these things are massive collections of what we would classify as e-books even though, technically speaking they are databases, but they are e-books as well”.

“Now there are other IReL things that are called e-books that we haven’t actually categorized as e-books”.

Also, there were very interesting issues raised on how certain e-book collections can be understood in an academic context. Is an e-book collection an electronic resource, or can it be regarded as a part of a special collection or a university archive?

“We bought a few virtual archives there a few years ago like the Sasal Papers…it looks like a nice trophy, but it's not actually being regarded as being part of an archive, you know, the university archive. It's regarded as being an electronic resource. And, I think, the exact same situation goes with EEBO as well, and all these kind of huge things that digitize ancient books, they’re not regarded as being a part of special collections – they regarded as an electronic resource”.

5.1.1. FORMAT PREFERENCES

Apart from one library that has formally declared having an e-preferred policy, there is no one preferred format in other libraries for the purchasing of books. However, decreasing budgets force libraries to make a decision to acquire books in only one chosen format.

The particular format preferences are determined by various conditions. According to the interviewed librarians and the information located in the library documents, an e-format is nearly always preferred for high demand and urgently required materials. This format is also the preference for reference materials and when multiple copies of a text are needed, as well as where large cohorts of students are studying at a distance.

However, books in print are still in high demand in some libraries:

“There would still be academics that might say: “I know your preference is to get this in electronic form, but I really need it in print”.”

“So, particularly as budgets get tighter, some of the subject librarians would want to keep the emphasis on print and that they want priority to be given to print.”

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3 Refers to bookbinding of paper books
“Because we do recognize... non-traditional learners, some people come in and they’re very much from a print-based world, and they do like the book. So, you have to respect that as well. It can’t be just driven by the technology.”

There are also instances where print format is preferred due to specific requirements of certain materials that an electronic format is not able to fulfil:

“Some schools don’t like e, mainly, it’s the visual disciplines ... a lot of their students rely on the images, and sometimes there’s problems with third party copyright, for paintings, and stuff like that, and often, for the architecture ones, on the e, the quality of the drawings and stuff like that isn’t as good, so they prefer print.”

However, most libraries agree that the most important factors determining the choice of format appears to be the users’ needs and the content of the actual text itself.

“Because yes we supply e-books, right, but it’s fundamentally about the content, and making the content available to the students in the best way possible.”

“The Library aims to acquire all materials for the support of taught undergraduate and postgraduate courses in whatever format is most appropriate.”

5.2. COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT OF E-BOOKS

The intensifying complexity of building collections due to the co-existence of print and electronic information has been acknowledged by many documented policies of the different university libraries in Ireland. The definition of collections continues to change as libraries migrate from print to electronic resources.

According to the interviewed librarians, the start of e-book acquisition was seen in different libraries between 2002 and 2008. Most of them have described it as a slow and gradual process, starting with subscriptions for e-book packages on a trial basis, with the acquisition of individual e-books only starting a few years later.

Starting to acquire e-books has been described as an “inevitable”, but at the same time “desirable” development. For some libraries, the impetus was the initiative of their own staff, while for others, the change was based on the articulated need of the university community.

The question about what proportion of entire library collection is made up of e-books proved to be very difficult to answer:

“It is growing a lot. And then, some of those collections like EBBO and ECCO are massive. They are absolutely massive...we have hit the tipping point partly as well because we’ve done some de-selection on print.”

“The packages are really flattering our purchases [making e-book purchases look bigger] ... In terms of outright purchases, the percentage is minuscule, you know, in terms of kind of stuff we bought as individual books to match a monograph... it would be pretty small percentage.”

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4 “e” is used by the librarians here as an abbreviation for “electronic”.

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“This is difficult to say... In order to establish a valid figure for the proportion of e-book to print book titles, we would need to establish a figure for the total number of academic titles in our collection which is not feasible for us to do. What we can say is that we have not yet reached the point where the majority of academic books are being provided electronically.”

This last quotation is actually a good description for all of the interviewed libraries. Two libraries have guessed that e-books would make up around 25% of the entire library collection and one librarian said it could mount to 45%.

It appears that librarians see their e-book collections growing further in the future:

“In the future I see... we would probably be buying one monograph and multiple e's, really.”

“Everything we can, we buy journal-wise in e, and I can see the book market going that way as well.”

However, the popularity and expansion of e-resources also makes librarians worried about the future of physical library:

“The first worry is that library will become completely virtual and a backend service rather than a kind of front desk service that issues books and meets people on a day-to-day basis rather it is a website and everybody works away behind the ticketing system.”

5.2.1. POLICIES AND PLANNING

The document analysis of collection development policies in Irish university libraries shows that the formal policies where all published between 2003 and 2011, thus they are three to ten years old. Half of the participating librarians acknowledged the fact that their libraries’ policies are “quite old” and “out of date” and in need of “revision” and “redrafting”.

The majority of the formal collection development policies clearly state that “the policy covers all aspects of collection development and all formats.” Thus, not surprisingly, none of the libraries have either a separate policy or a dedicated chapter concerning e-book acquisition in their policy documents. In most of them, e-books are regarded as a part of the electronic resources collection and are not distinguished in the policy text in any way. When asked if libraries would consider having a separate policy for e-books acquisition, all of the interviewed librarians agreed that they would rather have one policy covering all formats and all issues, with perhaps a dedicated section for e-books:

“The collection management document itself would have to be completely stripped apart and reviewed, and e-books will be included in that, so it will be a review of everything to do with a collection management, but e-books will be a specific part of that, not unique or separate from it.”

While the formal collection development policies are not up-to-date with information about e-books acquisition, librarians have been using their “casual” e-book acquisition policies. However since these policies are not officially formalized, they can cause some tension between the librarians themselves:
“So while we have a casual policy internal to here in place at the moment, it can be easy enough for the subject librarian to circumvent, to kind of get around the informal policies that we have here.”

The “unofficial” policies are used in the libraries mostly for ordering e-books when there is a multiple copies order received, or when a book is a core textbook, or a book is on high demand.

“We kind of have a private collection management policy that if it’s a core text book we would buy an e-book, if there is a request for more than two copies we buy an e-book, if there is a request for three copies we buy an e-book.”

“If you put in a multiple copy order, a high demand order, we’ll always go and get an e-book first, if possible.”

Thus, the common trend in e-books acquisition seems to be one of duplication, where e-books are acquired to supplement, but not to replace the print version of a book. However, “recognising the pervasiveness and popularity of online information provision”, one library had changed its policy to e-preferred, thus moving from “dual print and online availability of information towards electronic-only provision”.

Participants

Library collection development policies unanimously state that the main participants in selecting and developing information resources (including e-books) are the library and academic staff.

The faculty of subject librarians are often seen as a middle link connecting acquisition librarians and the academic staff in the collection development process. However, as one participant pointed out, “the current workflow means there is less involvement of the subject librarians in the ordering process.”

Students were not directly involved in collection development process, although in theory they can suggest or request an e-book purchase. Moreover, some librarians believe that they actually “don’t have a clear alignment [an expertise] for collection development”.

Collaboration

At the moment, university libraries in Ireland act independently when acquiring e-books for their collections. Nevertheless, interviews with the librarians revealed that there is a lot of collaboration between acquisition librarians and academic libraries in general.

“We ... what’s the posh way of saying, we take cognizance of what they’re doing. We have a look at their policies before making changes to our own. One of the things that happens and one of the things that is great in Ireland is that there is a lot of collaboration...there is an awful lot of collaboration. It’s a wonderful environment in that sense. There’s a lot of a competition between universities but the libraries work very well together.”
Acquisition Group of Ireland (AGI) seems to be an important common meeting point for discussion and information sharing between acquisition librarians in Ireland.

“Even a couple of people who regularly go to the Acquisitions Group of Ireland, they would go to those meetings, and they would report back what other colleges are doing, so we would ... if somebody said, 'This university is doing something particularly interesting', we might think about doing it.”

“We have an acquisitions group, where all the acquisitions librarians meet very regularly about three, four times a year. We would know what they are all doing, we share information about suppliers, and we would share information about e-books as well.”

The document analysis also confirms that libraries are keen to collaborate and pursue partnership deals relating to acquisition, collection management and collaborative storage of e-collections “where practical and cost effective”.

IUA, CONUL and IReL were the institutions most often mentioned in the context of collaboration by consortial, tendering or procurement agreements. However librarians are quite uncertain about the practicality and viability of such developments. Furthermore, some of these developments makes librarians very worried:

“It was one of those things where sometimes there's an assumption that procurement would always result in savings, whereas for book procurement, it arguably doesn't, so far as one university has different needs to another one and so on. So there will be some areas where it might make a saving. One of them could be for argument's sake e-book procurement, because lots of libraries would have The Making of Modern Law as a package. But even then, you don't know for certain that it would have resulted in a saving.”

“Once the tender situation goes ahead, there is no doubt in my mind, that what is happened in UK will happen in Ireland. And that the smaller book sellers are going to vanish ... so you now have a duopoly in the UK. It has risen, I think, mainly because of tender arrangements... “

IReL is known and immensely valued by universities’ libraries for its provision of access to e-journals. It also provides libraries with access to a number of e-book collections, but they do not get much attention:

“IReL does offer you e-book packages, but we don't pay much attention to that kind of stuff. They are bundles and we get bundles, bundles... you are not worried too much about bundles you just load them into your catalogue ...you don't worry about that because it's not costing you any money.”

“We don't go out deliberately looking for e-books in IReL, we never have.”

Even though librarians agree that “IReL doesn't play as much of a role in e-books as it does in e-journals”, it nevertheless has a significant impact on collection development strategy in universities’ libraries in Ireland.
“In terms of IReL changes to collection development, it has been completely massive, I would say, potentially it could bankrupt us, because we have removed all our duplications [of print journals]...so this saved us a lot of money...to give you an example, we used to have 80 journals subscriptions in the School of Education, now we've got 7, and all that money was freed up, and this is kind of relevant to books, because all of that money was freed up. “

“If IReL wasn’t there, we wouldn’t be able to afford to buy them, so things like EEBO and ECCO are hugely expensive resources, and I don’t think we would have had the money to invest in them, but they’re essential, really, to some of the schools we have here.”

One of the arising issues discussed by libraries is the storage and management of electronic resources:

“And in the Irish environment, government publications, they have to be made available in e, and a publication where suppliers may just provide a PDF copy, and we’ll have to look at managing. At the moment e is primarily access rather than holdings, I think as we move on e would become holdings as well for us, and I guess we’d have to revisit how we manage e in a local way rather than just accessing it from a particular platform.”

Documents D1 and D20 also look at long term preservation, stating that it is taken “as seriously by the library as the preservation of the physical stock”. The libraries also seek to negotiate perpetual access to all online resources that they are subscribed to. There is also an anticipation of electronic legal deposit regulations coming into force that would also bring along a lot of other changes for all the libraries involved.

“I suppose one of the ways that we see changes is in relation to legal deposit and e for legal deposit. That will be one of the things down the line.”

“So it doesn't happen as much as with the electronic, but there might be something that might come our way especially under electronic legal deposit when that happens.”

5.2.2. ACCESS TO AND USE OF ACADEMIC TITLES AS E-BOOKS

Usually there are extra criteria when selecting an e-material compared to print, most of them of the technical kind. The quality of interface, licensing, authentication, access and archiving arrangements, ease of use, compliance with various standards and reliability of service are most often found in collection development policies of different libraries. However there are some issues with acquisition of e-books that restricts the options available to librarians. Other considerations derive from the libraries internally. Low availability of core textbooks in e-format due to the embargo period has been named as one of the biggest issue in Irish academic libraries.

“What we’re finding is that that’s not always as easy as we would hope, particularly for reading list items where, maybe, a latest edition of a textbook, or something like that, it’s often very difficult to get the e-book copy, so, I’d say, probably about, maybe 30 per cent of what we want to get electronically, we can actually get, but we do try to.”
“But really what the issue is for any library at the moment is, textbooks aren’t readily available to libraries in e format.”

However, having to wait through the embargo period is not the only barrier acquisition librarians face in order to get a required textbook in electronic format. One librarian describes a common situation with books on high demand:

“And what we’ve noticed as well is when publishers have put their e-content on an aggregator platform like Dawson or MyiLibrary, then if the book has been used a lot, certainly the book has become in the publisher’s eyes a core textbook, so e usage has changed its criteria and its place in the publisher’s profile. And then they may say, well, we won’t give you as many credits or you can’t buy as many licenses, so they make it more, they make it harder for us to actually buy the book then. And that happened I think last year when Cambridge took all of the titles off the Dawsonera platform, which they had described as textbooks, and then only put them back in with 100 credits where normally they have 400 credits.”

5.3. ACQUISITION OF E-BOOKS

“The e-book market is still quite complex, and it’s changing all the time. I think, certainly from talking to other people, in libraries, as well as, I think, everybody will be pleased when this whole thing settles down.”

Acquisition librarians unanimously claim that the shift from print to e-book acquisition has presented them with additional, remarkably complex and time-consuming work that is not a part of the traditional print workflow.

“And a lot of times it's a good bit more work as well, you know... You have your licenses, your posting fees, your question of perpetual access, question about how many viewers there can be...”

“But unlike the print where there are no global books in print, there is no “one-stop shop”, so our policy is that we go for one publisher initially, one aggregator, and if it's not there, we start other aggregators as well. So it’s very time-consuming in that way that you have to look in multiple places to see if there is an e copy available.”

On the positive side, despite adding an extra workload to certain areas, acquiring and e-book instead of a print copy saves time in other areas of acquisition processes.

“I suppose, there is that extra pressure to keep these things up to date in the catalogue. Obviously, at one end, it saves cataloguing, because, generally, we don’t. When we get the record from our supplier, we’ll accept it, and add it to the catalogue, we don’t change it in any way, but you have to make sure you keep up to date with the packages, and that can be an extra workload.”

5. “Ebooks are purchased with a number of credits and each use (download or online) deducts a set amount of these credits. Once the credits run down to zero the library has to purchase another copy” (Cilip, n.d., p. 5)
“But there are other things, you don't have to process an e-book, you save that time...it's saving the cataloguing team a lot of time because you are not processing an e-book. Whereas it's adding time to acquisitions team. So in kind of the collection management division as a whole, for some it's an advantage, for others it is big kind of squeeze.”

What has been also noticed from interviews with librarians is that the appearance of e-books has affected a wide range of librarians, merging the boundaries of their departments that used to function separately.

“Almost I could say, probably all the staff in my department in the whole acquisition cataloguing and periodicals, we all deal with e in some shape or form. So e for all of us has become just an integral part to the way we work.”

“I think what you find, when you’re buying e-books, those boundaries start to blur, because you have somebody who’s traditionally done book acquisition, investigating things like licenses, and models, which is more similar to what a periodical librarian would have done for journal packages, so there’s been a little more blurring that way.”

The transition from print to e-format presented acquisition librarians with a whole new list of skills required to be able to do the job properly.

“Library staff involved in acquisition of e-books requires skills in pricing and licensing negotiation, digital rights management, as well as understanding of different formats and platforms, and vendor relationship building.”

“Understanding of authentication and access rights for, and actually getting the book itself, and then communicating continually with everybody. Basically, the process of communication with your own departments, with the staff and librarians or the academic staff and then outside with the publishers and with your providers.”

For most of the interviewed librarians, their method for getting the knowledge and skills required was one of trial and error. Independent research, colleagues from other libraries, and presentations from suppliers also played a part in learning process. Also, the experience and expertise of libraries in the UK seems to be important as well.

“We did have some training from the various suppliers on how to use their platforms. We did a lot of that research, but a lot of it was just really trying out a particular supplier, or a particular model, with a small amount of material and seeing how it goes, and changing accordingly.”

“Mainly research, I suppose, looking into what other institutions where doing into the UK.”

“It was a self-study, fiddling around mainly, you know, just experimenting.”

Despite having to learn new ways of doing things, which meant challenges and extra work, the librarians responded very positively to these changes:
“I think staff found it interesting. I knew they found it challenging as well, but I think there’s a genuine interest within the library in e-books. I think people see it, generally, as a positive development...and they’ve enjoyed learning about it. It’s an extra skill to have.”

“I guess since it came from us and we wanted to try it, and it came from our department and we were kind of keen...and we wanted to see where it would take us.”

However, it has not been an easy process for all the librarians involved:

“From the management side, it is very hard to get people, who were doing the same work in some cases thirty-five years, and ask them to suddenly deal with these kind of things...it’s been hard for them, it was a very slow learning process, frustrating for me, I think the pace in which they’ve been slow to actually get there, but they are there now, but it's frustrating for them as well cause it is an extra thing to do.”

“So it was very... it was a torturous process in some way, and then we’re just kind of laying the ground, we were getting a feel for how things were.”

Despite the tough and frustrating experience in many cases, librarians came out of this process even better equipped with skills and knowledge, and some encouraging thoughts for the future:

“So yeah, it's utterly transformed the acquisitions process, and you can only become more transformative.”

“I think the one thing that's really important for any acquisition’s department in rolling out the e-books, it's probably too late to say this, because it's so long since e-books are out there, but the only way you can introduce these changes really, I think, is to actually tell your staff what you are doing and ask them to come along with you, training them and holding their hand and be patient in trying to get there.”

5.3.1. BUDGET AND E-BOOK PRICE

Participants agreed that one of the major downsides to e-books is their impact on library’ budgets.

“There is a lot of concern about the cost, because they are, at times, exorbitantly expensive, particularly if you’re buying a multi-user license.”

“The other side is that it does eat into budgets, because obviously, even if they’re priced the same, you have to pay VAT on e, you don’t on print. The VAT went up a few years ago, so it’s 23 per cent now, so it’s quite a big chunk, and generally, the e-books are a lot more expensive, even when you take out the VAT, so it is a bigger chunk in the budget.”

Thus, with most libraries experiencing the reduction in their budgets in recent years, decisions to acquire e-books become even more difficult to make. It is not only having an impact on future decisions, but it also forces libraries to make some adjustments to their current acquisition practices, such as changing suppliers in search of a better deal:
“We would have used some of the same suppliers for print books when our budget was able to accommodate that, but at the moment our print primarily is through Irish suppliers and they don’t have any facility [to sell e-books].”

5.3.1.1. BUSINESS MODELS

Regarding the acquisition of individual titles, 2 libraries have reported their preferences in their policy documents for perpetual and multiple simultaneous access rather than subscription, unless when subscription means continuing updating of texts.

Patron Driven Acquisition seems to be gaining pace in Irish academic libraries with 3 out of 5 libraries currently involved at different stages of the pilot.

“The PDA pilot for Nursing & Midwifery titles to commence in Jan 2014.”

“We had a PDA pilot here just recently for e-books...what will we be doing now is evaluating that over the next while."

“In the last year, we’ve tried Patron Driven Acquisition...there’s been some difficulties in terms of the implementation, in terms of managing the records and stuff like that, but it has been hugely popular."

One library is considering PDA as a possibility for the future, and one library is quite reluctant to give the control of e-book acquisitions to users and would rather try evidence based selection (EBS). This kind of acquisition is being piloted in another library as well.

“We have never done the PDA...our preference will be not for the students who actually make this decision themselves by... in that kind of traditional MyiLibrary or Dawson model but the more kind of Elsevier model is much more attractive where you know the library still has the control based over statistical analysis, you know, so that's where we see it going from a patron-driven direction."

Suppliers and packages

There are no great discrepancies in which e-books suppliers are used in the different university libraries. MyiLibrary (from Coutts Ingram) and Dawsonera (from Dawson) are the major ones, followed by NetLibrary, EBL and eBrary. Most of the libraries use their hard copy book suppliers for e-books as well. However, campus bookshops and Irish book suppliers in general are more often used for print, and print only. Dawson and Coutts are the most popular suppliers of both print and e-books.

“MyiLibrary and Dawson became the kind of the dominant species in the market and they had the great advantage in that they could supply you both a hard copy and an e-book."

There are naturally more differences between e-book packages in different academic libraries due to different profiles of universities and thus different user needs. In spite of that, there are few e-book packages that can be found in most libraries such as ECCO, EEBO,
The relationship between academic libraries and e-book aggregators has not been without challenges.

“The relationship with suppliers has become more complex due to the proliferation of different pricing, licensing and access models. Digital rights management and license terms and conditions also add to the complexity.”

A few libraries have stopped using some of the aggregators due to unacceptable restrictions:

“I'm not even sure if NetLibrary is still going, but we don’t use them anyway, because, they were very restrictive in terms of the … what you could do with the books, in terms of printing, and…”

“We run into enormous troubles with MyiLibrary, we found that critical stuff that we bought from them, that if people are in a rush and using the book and turning too many pages, you are locked out of the book for 24 hours...the publishers really began to lose confidence in MyiLibrary as well, as an actual vendor, and they really slipped, so what we did was, because the service we were getting from them was very poor, because they had a poor relationship with publishers, we bumped up Dawson as our number one…”

At the moment Irish suppliers are mainly used for the supply of hard copy books to libraries. It seems that libraries would welcome the move towards supplying e-books; however, there are doubts about their abilities to provide that kind of service:

“I can't see any Irish vendor being competitive because they haven't embraced the electronic era. I've been trying to push them in that direction and trying to get them to do things like e and vendor-load, trying to get them to enter into relationship with the suppliers. The progress is all too slow and the government is breathing down their necks to go into a tender arrangement... it's too late for them to adapt to the times and the book supply market it is changed.”

Some of the restrictions imposed on libraries might not be enough to cause librarians to change suppliers, but the limits definitely affect opinion in a negative way.

“The other thing that’s more and more an issue is downloading. How many students here have hand-held devices or tablets and they want to download the e-books, and in terms of the academic platforms, it’s very limited what you can do. You have to pay an extra fee to Coutts to allow the books to be downloaded, and then if you have let’s say a multi-user license, and one person downloads the book, then your three user license goes down to two, so if you have three people downloading the book, you become, basically, inaccessible to anyone else.”

Dissatisfaction with the services provided forces libraries into an even more intense relationship with e-book suppliers. It seems that libraries are getting more confident in
communicating feedback to suppliers, and in turn, suppliers are becoming more involved and interested in the particular needs of different libraries.

“We have no problem communicating that back to the suppliers, and we’ve done that continually...everything is changing, so we are trying to feed into that change where we can, and we’ve had the opportunity even the last year to speak to some of the publishers who normally wouldn’t have dealt with libraries, and that’s been very useful.”

“I think that libraries will vote with their feet, so when a lot of libraries move towards a particular model, or ask for a particular thing, eventually it builds up a head of steam, and the publishers do change things. You can make the publisher be a bit more flexible, but... or the bookseller, rather, but, publishers themselves still seem quite resistant to doing quite a lot of things that libraries want.”

One librarian also predicted that in the future, publishers will be selling books directly to customers, meaning no future for aggregators. Moreover, there is another worry attached to this prediction – libraries might lose their mediator role in acquiring e-books for the academic community:

“I don't see personally any future for the aggregators, I think the aggregators are a passing trend, I think eventually publishers are going to say 'eh why are we selling to you, we'll just sell direct to the institutions'. “

“We also found out just by pure accident that the publishers had actually approached a lot of academic departments and had asked them to purchase...offered them a deal where they would license the core text books to them, but only for students on that course to see it on the VLE...a little bit like VitalSource, except is not an aggregator who is doing it, it's publishers who is doing it themselves, and we found that two schools have been doing that...the great danger though with that is, that libraries can actually be completely circumvented...cut out of the process altogether, that publishers would seek to sell not to institutions, but to sell to individuals, and if that's the case, it's a very bleak future for the library.”
6. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter provides an analysis of the results presented in the previous chapter. The results are discussed in relation to previous research and literature as well as through the lens of the two chosen theories – diffusion of innovation and change management. The change management and collection development model presented in the theoretical framework chapter (Figure 1) is reconsidered and redrawn according the findings from the interviews and the analysis of library documents (see Figure 2).

The results in this chapter are analysed keeping the research questions in mind. The first two questions are presented more individually in the two separate subchapters, where the coverage of the third question is spread between both subchapters since the themes related to the third research question emerge while discussing issues related to the first two research questions.

6.1. IMPACT ON COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT

As seen in a previous research and literature review chapter, the issues regarding the definition of an e-book have been already raised and discussed by many researchers (cf. Armstrong & Lonsdale, 2013; Minčić-Obradović, 2011, Nelson 2008; Tedd, 2005; Vasileiou & Rowley, 2008). However this study reveals that even a few years on, the attempt to define exactly what an e-book is still not a straightforward task. Moreover, the constantly changing e-book definition further complicates the definition of e-book collections in Irish academic libraries. This is important, because the way e-book collection is understood by librarians or users directly influences their perception of the importance of those collections.

The results showed that there were mixed opinions expressed about the importance of e-books and their collections in Irish university libraries. Most of the interviewed librarians deemed these to be of growing importance, but still not on the level of print books. Similar results were reported in a recent study by Vasileiou et al. (2012b) where “the majority of interviewees predicted that in five years’ time e-books will remain as supplementary to print books” (p. 220).

Revised model of collection development and management

The diagram below (Figure 2) shows a revised collection development and management model, modified according to the findings from the interviews with academic librarians in Irish academic libraries. Thus, it is important to note that this model does not necessarily reflect the collection development and management processes in other countries or even other types of libraries in Ireland. As it can be seen from the picture below, the model has not changed much compared to the original model drawn according to the information discovered through a revision of previous research and literature in Figure 1. However, it has obviously got “busier” with more dual influence arrows pointing to different elements of the diagram. There are also new and newly separated elements in the picture that will be discussed in the following chapters.
E-books as an innovation

Rogers’s theory (1983) sees diffusion as a process of communicating a new idea, which often involves some degree of uncertainty. The lack of reassurance and certainty among librarians can be felt through their comments about the acquisition and integration of e-books:

“It’s very difficult to know if you’re getting it right.”

Results show that e-books are generally seen as an unavoidable technological innovation among academic librarians, but one that has some great potential and many benefits to its users. According to Rogers (1983), even though innovations are often seen as beneficial, they are not necessarily desirable. In this study, the interviewed librarians unanimously claim that the appearance of e-books was a very desirable development despite challenges. At the same time, e-books as an innovation within Irish academic libraries has occurred at a rather slow speed. This finding supports Rogers’s (1983) claim that even the most beneficial technological innovations can still spread at a very slow pace.

Figure 2 Collection development and management model in Irish University Libraries

showing the direction of influence
As noted earlier, Irish academic libraries began to acquire e-books between 2002 and 2008. Yet, it is important to note that these dates do not indicate the very beginning of e-books acquisition, but rather “the real” start marked by the acquisition of individual e-books. In any case, there is a five year gap between the first and the last library to start e-book acquisition and thus, the libraries could be quite easily divided into the five categories of adoption as defined in Rogers's theory (1983). The five categories of innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority and laggards can not only be seen in the overall approach to e-books, but also in some more specific acquisition related areas of e-books like decisions to try out a new acquisition model. The situation in different academic libraries regarding the patron-driven acquisition as seen in the presentation of results is a good example of different rate of adoption.

Rogers (1983) has also developed five characteristics that might help to explain the different rate of adoption of e-books in academic libraries in Ireland. He believed that a new development will be adopted faster if it is seen as advantageous and compatible with the existing values and needs of its potential users. Adoption rate among organisations can also be increased if there is the possibility of having a trial run and the results can be easily seen. Likewise, if an innovation is seen as a very complex and difficult to use and understand, diffusion will be hindered. It seems from the analysis of results, that most of participating libraries had all four characteristics that supposedly help with diffusion. E-books are perceived by libraries of this study as an innovative and desirable development that will help to fulfill their goals as academic libraries. Moreover, all the participating libraries have taken part in a pilot of subscription model with Safari (Cox, 2004). At the same time, the results clearly show that the level of complexity for the acquisition of e-books was and still is a huge issue for all academic libraries. That might not be the only issue slowing down the diffusion of e-books as an innovation, but it seems to be a major one.

Academic libraries are not the only ones having difficulties with certain aspects of technological innovations. Beisler and Kurt (2012) claimed that the recent popularity of e-book readers, mobile devices, and tablets among students made the publishers rush to provide content for all those devices, however Van Arnhem and Barnett (2014) believe that vendors were not able to achieve a more mobile-friendly model of discovery of information in the library e-book arena. In line with these studies, the interviewed librarians found e-book suppliers to be quite restrictive in terms of access, printing and downloading e-books onto different devices. As one of the librarians summarized:

“I think the publishers are quite far behind where the technology is.”

Developing e-book collections

Collection structure in Irish academic libraries has seen major changes since the advent of e-books. Some of the librarians reported that nearly half of their entire collection is in e-books and the percentage is growing.

Collection development policies play an important role in academic libraries. Many authors (cf. Armstrong & Lonsdale, 2005; Blummer & Kenton, 2012; Stamison, 2011) refer to it as a corner-stone in the successful acquisition and incorporation of e-books into existing collections. The results of this study, however, reveal that the collection development policies have not been up-to-date in most participating libraries. Moreover, the study results showed that separate policies of e-book collection management are non-existent and that libraries prefer to have them included in their main policies. The same situation has been found in
neighbourhood UK academic libraries by Vasileiou (2012c), who investigated libraries in terms of their e-book management. However, the out-of-date official policies of the libraries did not affect the development of e-book collections. As seen in the results, librarians already have working policies in place for e-book acquisition and collection management.

Because both e-books and e-journals are electronic resources, it seems natural to compare them in terms of their adoption and integration into academic libraries. Nonetheless, it is apparent that the strategy and the whole process of developing e-book collections was and is much slower than and not as smooth as with e-journals:

“When we were moving towards e for journals content, we did make a very explicit statement and policy as we were going e, so that we were reducing the number of print subscriptions in order to go electronic. We are not doing that with books, for precisely those reasons [low availability of e-textbooks].”

This echoes the findings from Vasileiou’s study (2012b) where “several interviewees compared the adoption of e-books with that of e-journals and concluded that the adoption of e-books is not as extensive or speedy as was e-journal adoption” (p. 220). Moreover, a consortial approach which has been very successful for the acquisition of e-journals does not seem to play any role at the moment in the acquisition of e-books in Irish academic libraries. While the experience gained from acquiring e-journals through consortia is very valuable, e-books require some unique solutions to cope with the challenges they present” (Lippincott, 2012). Arguably, these solutions have not yet been found to suit the needs of Irish academic libraries. This might be just a matter of time, since the recent literature (cf. Vasileiou, et al., 2012c; Schell, 2010) as well as a few of the interviewed librarians note the benefits of acquiring e-books through consortia.

As shown in Figure 1, there are many elements that influence the collection management and development in an academic library. One of these elements is the academic community and its users. The results, however, revealed that students do not have a lot of influence on how the collections are developed in their libraries. It is important to note, that students do have the option to suggest / recommend a book for acquisition; however, according to the librarians, this option is rarely used. Since the results showed a huge interest of patron-driven acquisition among the interviewed librarians, it is safe to assume that the role of students in e-books acquisition is going to change dramatically. Therefore, in Figure 2, the students appear in the diagram as a separate group. At the moment, what books have to be ordered for a particular course or module is most often decided by the academic staff. Interestingly, a few years back, Tedd and Carin (2012) were conducting a study of the acquisition of e-books in libraries in institutes of technology (ITs) in Ireland in 2009 and reported that even though the academic staff had a lot of influence on what print books to order, they had “little, if any, involvement in the selection and management of e-books in the ITs libraries” (p. 285). Even though the academic staff interviewed for this thesis plays a major role in book acquisition, it appears that the acquisition librarians themselves often have the final word in deciding what format the requested titles will be ordered in. The acquisition librarians’ decisions are normally dictated by their working collection development policies. Thus, as shown in the Figure 2, there is actually a two-way influence between the academic community and the collection development elements in the diagram – collection development of e-books appears to be a compromise between the academic community requests and collection development policies as set by the acquisition librarians. The analysis showed that acquisition librarians are very much involved in a collaborative process of developing the
collection management policies. It is also interesting to note that academic libraries in Ireland seem to be using a “soft” approach, i.e., a gradual tactic for introducing e-books to their users. In most participating libraries, e-books are only ordered if the person ordering the book specifically asks for it to be ordered in an electronic format, and if there is a multiple copies order placed. When this is the case, an e-book is purchased, and part of the order will still be ordered in print. Moreover, libraries seem to be more concerned with getting good quality content rather than procuring a specific format. So far, acquisition librarians have played a central role in e-book acquisition. At the same time, some librarians are not very optimistic about the future of the library in this process. For example, one of the librarians interviewed reported a case where publishers had already gone directly to the academic community in order to sell their e-books. Similar worries were also expressed in a post online by another academic librarian in Ireland:

“Here’s what I think – in five years, libraries will have no role in handling the Big Undergrad Textbook – venerable beasts like Sociology by Giddens. If publishers don’t adapt and start selling online very widely and very cheaply, someone else will. The Big Textbooks are easy kill for ambitious start-ups, people like Flatworld Knowledge and OpenStax, who provide very readable access to more generic undergrad content across all platforms for free or close-to-free. Students will soon access this content direct – there’s no need for libraries here” (Hyland, 2013).

The results also revealed that there is another group of librarians that has an important role in the collection development of Irish academic libraries, namely subject librarians. Their role differs slightly from library to library, but in general, they act as mediators between the academic staff and acquisition librarians. What is more evident is that the confidence of subject librarians in advising academic staff on ordering material for students varies:

“Largely most of the subject librarians would feel they don't have the expertise to be able to figure out what the student body actually needs. Now, [there is one librarian], for instance, who is completely the opposite in that she selects all her own books – she doesn't go to the academic community so she does her own literature selecting.”

Thus, the findings show that the development and growth of e-book collections in Irish academic libraries is mainly driven by the e-book suppliers, the academic staff and the academic libraries themselves. This is in agreement with the findings of a study by Vasileiou et al. (2012b).

There were other issues raised and thoughts shared about these problems in some of the participating libraries.

Storage and preservation of e-book collections were mentioned by a few of the interviewed librarians as well as in some collection development policies, thus the issues of managing the holdings of e-books rather than just providing an access to them is becoming more relevant to academic libraries in Irish Universities.

As seen in a previous chapter, there was a worry expressed by one librarian was about tendering laws for print and electronic books that might create a monopoly situation in Ireland regarding book suppliers:
“So essentially you’re now living in a situation in the UK where there are very few academic books suppliers… next to none Dawson are nearly complete monopolist, and the way I see it, is the exact same thing is going to happen here”.

According to the interviewed librarian the reason for this is that Dawson is investing a lot in technology, going out and talking to libraries, has excellent sale platforms and website that can be integrated with library’s management system, and what is more important, it is able to supply both hard copy and electronic books, and thus, it is becoming irresistible – “Dawson seems to win every tender they go for”. Similarly, another librarian expressed a worry that having a national book tender would negatively affect university’s bookshops that at the moment have an important role in books supply to universities’ libraries. That might explain why even though universities’ libraries have been talking about possibilities and benefits of having a national book tender for a few years now, no specific actions were taken towards starting one.

6.2. CHALLENGES FOR ACQUISITION LIBRARIANS

As mentioned previously and as shown in Figure 2, the other very influential element in the collection development and management model is the e-book suppliers, i.e., vendors, aggregators and the publishers themselves. The e-book market has a very direct impact on the collection development of e-books in Irish academic libraries. While there is a high demand of academic e-books in academic libraries in Ireland, e-book suppliers are not able to meet the needs of these libraries. Even though the results show that the relationship between suppliers and acquisition librarians is improving in terms of easier communication and quicker feedback, there is still an ongoing issue that heavily affects the collection development of e-books. The librarians interviewed unanimously claim that the low availability of textbooks in an electronic format makes their work in acquiring the best form of materials for their users very complicated:

“…your core textbooks are always the last things to actually appear in electronic format for purchase by institutions.”

The low availability of academic titles in e-book format as caused by embargo is not merely a problem in Ireland. The exact same issues have been reported in other countries around the world like Canada, UK and USA (cf. Bennett and Landoni, 2005; Dewan, 2012; Hodges et al., 2010; Medeiros, 2011; Walters, 2013b). However, the delay in release of electronic textbook titles is not the only obstacle. Publishers are “either refusing to sell e-versions to libraries or hiking the prices and restricting the access terms to make them less attractive” (Hyland, 2013). These claims were confirmed by the librarians of this study as well. In aggravating acquisition librarians’ efforts to acquire the needed material in electronic format, an embargo puts the e-book collection development in jeopardy. This is especially true for the libraries that have e-book preferred policies or have declared to “purchase and retain an item in only one format”, because these kinds of policies will most likely delay the acquisition of important titles. Irish academic library budgets have already seen cuts in recent years due to the global economic crisis, and thus, libraries cannot afford to buy the same content twice. E-book suppliers have been named as one of the most influential groups for e-book collection development; however, as shown by the results, one of the interviewed librarians believed there might be no future for aggregators in this process.
Irish publishers are also struggling to embrace the era of e-books, according to the interviewed librarians. Thus, it is not unexpected that Irish publishers are not currently being used to supply e-books to academic libraries. O’Malley’s (2011) study on e-book acquisition in public libraries in Ireland provides some insight on the situation with Irish publishers. The author found out that the publishers themselves are reluctant to provide titles in e-book format: “the Irish publishers have been very slow to come on board; they’ve been waiting to see how the market evolved” (O’Malley, 2011, p. 47). The author also reports finding only two Irish publishers that were offering e-books at that time (O’Malley, 2011, p. 55). However, one interviewed librarian revealed that “in time [Irish suppliers] might be able to sell us e-books through EBL, that’s in progress”.

As pictured in the collection development and management model in Figure 2, budget and collection development have a two-way influence and thus, are dependent on each other. Collection development decisions to acquire e-books put a lot of pressure on library budgets since e-books are known to be more expensive than their print counterparts. However, the interviewed librarians unanimously claim the 23% of VAT on e-books to be the biggest burden on libraries’ budgets. The VAT on electronic titles has gone up from 20 to 23% in the last few years, but even then Pan et al. (2009) explained this as one of the main contributing factors for the slow uptake of e-books in Irish university libraries.

Managing the change

There is no doubt that the appearance of e-books in Irish academic libraries has challenged the established work practice of acquisition librarians. The results revealed a range of changes that libraries had to accommodate accordingly. As Lewin’s field theory (1947) suggests, an organisation is always in a continuous state of adaptation, and that is certainly true for academic libraries in the 21st century. Lewin (1947) believed that the changes within an organisation depend upon the distribution of forces. The results show that acquisition librarians themselves, as well as the academic staff and students, have encouraged the development of e-book collections in Irish academic libraries. In other words, the positive attitude and curiosity of acquisition librarians have been the real “driving force” of these changes. According to Lewin (1947), a successful organisation change often starts with an emotional stir-up. In this particularly evolving and turbulent environment, the feeling of disarray was common among interviewed librarians at the beginning of e-books acquisition. Separate Irish academic libraries are in slightly different stages regarding the adoption of e-books. Judging from the results, all the libraries could be either placed in the second or third stages of Lewin’s organisational change theory. Some libraries are still in the “moving” stage, in which there is still some work required to completely convince all the library staff groups to go along with new changes. But the majority of participating libraries would most likely fall into the third and final category, where according to Cameron and Green (2012), the organisation focuses on securing the new position by setting new policies and establishing adequate standards.

The interviewed librarians agreed that “the format makes changes to the acquisition process inevitable”. However, the results showed that these changes have not created new workflows, but rather the old ones (used for print books) were readjusted. The same has to be said about the acquisition teams in libraries, i.e., instead of having separate team members working on e-books, the whole team is normally involved in different aspects of e-book acquisition. This integration process has nonetheless caused some “blurring” between
responsibilities of different team members in acquisitions. Beisler and Kurt (2012) have reported a similar situation form University of Nevada, Reno where the start of e-books acquisition brought a lot of confusion to acquisition librarians’ work: “as department responsibilities overlapped, no one was quite sure who was and should be responsible for different parts of the workflow, but it was clear that collaboration and communication needed to increase and improve” (p. 96). The importance of communication and collaboration for managing change was mentioned by many of the interviewed librarians. One of the things that acquisition librarians seem to miss the most with regards to acquisition of print titles is a “one-stop shop”:

“With an e-book service, no union catalogue, there is no one supplier. There is no one purchasing model, there is no one access, there is no one set of discounts, it’s all depending on the individual aggregator or sometimes if the aggregator doesn’t have it, we have to go direct to the publisher, so there is an extra layer in the workflow that is stripped out in the print workflow”.

Even though new models such as patron-driven acquisition seems to be becoming increasingly popular among the interviewed librarians, purchases of e-books with perpetual access is still a desired model of acquisition. This has been seen not only from the comments of interviewed librarians, but also from the documented collection development policies of different libraries. The exact same findings are also reported by Vasileiou et al. (2012a).

It is evident that the advent of e-books in Irish universities’ libraries has impacted many aspects of collection development and management as well as presented acquisition librarians with a number of challenges. The next chapter will provide the summarised findings of this study.
7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the beginning of this study, there were three research questions raised in order to help gain an understanding of the impact of the advent of e-books on the collection development and acquisitions in Irish academic libraries. The previous research and literature review together with the insight gained from the interviewed academic librarians helped to reach the goal of deeper understanding. The following paragraphs will provide summarised answers to the three questions raised at the beginning of this research.

The first research question aimed at finding out what was the impact of the advent of e-books on collection development policies and planning in Irish academic libraries?

Firstly, it is evident that the advent of e-books has had a turbulent effect on the collection development and planning in academic libraries in Ireland. The constantly changing environment of the e-book market as well as e-books themselves makes it harder for libraries to plan and set long-term collection development goals. Even though e-books have been around for quite some time now, there are still many different interpretations of what an e-book and an e-book collection is. The way an e-book is perceived might affect librarians’ understanding of the importance of e-book collections in an academic library. If an e-book can be owned or perceived as part of library’s archive instead of just being a temporary electronic resource, it might be seen as having more value to the library. However, if this is the case, a traditional way of thinking of a library as a place of books is still very much present.

Secondly, it becomes obvious that the old collection development and management policies that were originally set for acquisition of print items in the academic libraries cannot be used for acquiring e-books since they differ from print books in many aspects. Despite the need for new policies, only a few libraries have them updated with details relevant to e-book acquisition. There are no plans or intentions among Irish academic libraries to have separate collection development and acquisition policies specifically for e-books.

Thirdly, e-books heavily affect the collection development and planning of libraries through their budgets. Besides being more expensive than their print counterparts, e-books also incur a heavy 23% VAT in Ireland. This is undoubtedly a huge burden for academic library whose budgets have already seen many cuts in recent years due to the economic downturn.

Fourthly, a patron-driven acquisition is increasingly gaining more interest among Irish academic libraries. Thus, students who have traditionally had very little influence on collection development are set to experience major changes and to become directly involved in the selection of e-books for their library’s collections.

Last but not least, with the appearance of e-books, issues like storage and preservation require academic libraries to find new solutions since the normal practice used for hard copy books cannot be applied to e-books. Even if e-journals and e-books are both electronic resources, they often require different solutions for the same problems.

The second research question was concerned with Irish academic acquisition librarians and challenges they face in developing e-book collections.

This study has revealed that academic librarians who are responsible for the acquisition of e-books are faced with many challenges due to the advent of e-books. First of
all, they have had to change existing workflows, or at least adjust them; however, in most cases, librarians were faced with dual workflows because of the many differences between acquiring print and electronic books. At the same time, the low availability of textbooks in electronic format seems to be the biggest obstacle to the work of acquisition librarians. Despite the slowly improving communication with suppliers, there are still many things that the two sides are struggling to agree on. As a result of this struggle, the acquisition of e-books in academic libraries has been limited. Moreover, Irish publishers present acquisition librarians with additional problems. Publishers are obviously struggling with the provision of e-books which is frustrating for librarians, who would like to see them playing a role in e-books’ supply to academic libraries in Ireland.

Despite all these challenges that libraries have had to face because of the appearance of e-books, librarians have embraced the change with an overwhelmingly positive attitude: “I think being a librarian is always about responding to change.”

The third and last research question was set to compare the implementation of e-books into library collections between different Irish universities’ libraries.

Irish academic libraries have started e-book acquisition at different times, and thus they are all currently at different stages of the adaptation process. The rate of adaptation is also affected by the different collection development strategies displayed by the different libraries, e.g., some libraries are more cautious than others about plunging into new waters. The same tendency can be seen in e-book acquisition itself, some libraries are keener than others to experiment with new models and loosen up the control of acquisition librarians. However, despite different collection management strategies, most of the interviewed libraries seem to have very similar working policies on e-book acquisition, such as acquiring e-books when multiple copies are required.

There do not seem to be any projects that the different university libraries would collaborate on regarding e-book acquisition; however, both the interviews with librarians and the library documents show a huge interest and willingness to collaborate in similar projects. Moreover, the study showed that all librarians keep in touch with each other by following news about other libraries and attending meetings and events where they share their knowledge and exchange their experiences with others.

7.1. FURTHER RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has attempted to provide an insight into what changes librarians are experiencing due to the advent of e-books when dealing with acquisition and collection management in Irish university libraries. Despite mostly concentrating on the collection development and management of e-book collections, as well as e-book acquisitions, this study has also identified some other areas where further research would be beneficial.

Even though the acquisition of e-books was a primary object of this research, some more technical areas of acquisition processes like issues of uploading e-books onto the library catalogue or using discovery tools for finding e-books were only barely touched on and would require additional research.

Also, despite the growing popularity of patron-driven acquisition, there are only a few university libraries that have tried or are currently using this model. Thus, it would be very interesting to see how the situation will change in a few years’ time.
The results of this study showed that Irish book suppliers have not managed to take an advantage of the rising market of e-books and have not set themselves as suppliers of e-books for academic libraries in Ireland. Thus, it would be interesting to watch the situation unfold further and to investigate the reasons behind the struggle of Irish book suppliers to provide e-books.

There were also issues mentioned by the interviewed librarians that are likely to occur in the near future and thus would benefit from more detailed research and discussion. These issues are: the national book tender, the consortial buying of e-books and the Irish electronic legal deposit. This last issue further raises questions about the storage and preservation of electronic materials including e-books. Also, it would be interesting to examine if the concerns about a book tender could possibly cause a monopoly situation in Ireland regarding the acquisition of e-books (as well as print books). Lastly, it would be interesting to find out what is the stance of European law on this issue.


Burnette, E. S. (2008). Budgeting and acquisitions. In M. D. D. Collins, & P. L. Carr (Eds.), *Managing the transition from print to electronic journals and resources* (pp. 3-28). Routledge Ltd.


APPENDIX A – A LETTER OF INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH

Dear Librarian,

My name is Ramune Kuzminiene. I work in Dublin City University Library and I am also a postgraduate student at Swedish School of Library and Information Science in the University of Boras. I would like to invite you to take part in a research study, which is being conducted to fulfil my master’s degree requirements, and which is concerned with acquisition and collection development of e-books in Irish academic libraries.

If you agree to participate in my research study I will conduct an interview with you at a mutually agreed time and location of your choice. The interview will involve questions about collection development policies in your library, also about possible changes that e-books bring into library’s collection structure, collection management processes as well as into acquisition librarians’ work and their relationship with producers, vendors and users. The interview should last about 40 minutes. With your permission I will audiotape and take notes during the interview. The recording is to accurately record the information you provide, and will be used for transcription purposes only.

Your study data will be handled as confidentially as possible. If results of this study is published or presented, individual names and other personally identifiable information will not be used.

There is no compensation for participating in this study. However, your participation will be a valuable addition to my research and findings could lead to a better understanding of the impact of the appearance of e-books on the collection development in Irish academic libraries.

You are free to decline to take part in this study. You can decline to answer any questions and are free to stop taking part in the research at any time.

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me. I can be reached at 085 7670119 or ramune.kuzminiene@gmail.com.
APENDIX B – AN INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. E-books appear to be making an impact in academic libraries. How are they affecting collection development policies in this library?
   a. Has the collection development policy changed in your library with the appearance of e-books?
   b. No – Do you see it changing any time in the future?
   c. Yes – Have you considered having a separate collection development policy for e-books?

2. Who influences the development of e-book collection in this library?
   a. What is the role of academic staff, library staff, students, others?

3. Can you tell me more about your e-book collection(s)?
   a. How many books (titles) are there?
   b. What proportion of e-books are there in the whole library’s collection?
   c. How would you describe the importance of e-books collection in comparison to the overall holdings of the library?
   d. Would you say that the e-books helps your library to fulfil your goals and values as an academic library or rather impede them?

4. When did the library first begin to acquire e-books?
   a. Who or what has sparked the idea of starting to build e-books collection in your library?
   b. Did you have any kind of trial run with e-books before deciding to acquire them?
      i. If yes, what kind of trial did you have?
      ii. What books have you tried?
      iii. Can you name the publishers/suppliers?
      iv. If not, was your decision based on the experience with e-books of others.
         C. Whose experience was it?
   b. Would you say that starting to acquire e-books was a desirable change or rather unavoidable necessity?
      v. Of what kind?
   c. How did your e-book collection grow since the start of acquisitions?

5. How can you describe the situation with integration of e-books to your library holdings at present in your own words?
   a. What is your opinion of this situation?
   b. How do you feel yourself in this situation?

6. What role does Irish Research eLibrary (IReL) play in your e-book collection development policy / strategy?
   a. Are there any other organisations nationwide that would have any impact on collection development and acquisitions in this library?
7. What influence do other Irish universities’ libraries have to your e-book collection development?
   a. Does your library follow other university libraries’ news and developments regarding their e-book collections?
   b. Are there any joint initiatives between Irish universities’ libraries regarding e-book collection development that your library is participating in?

8. Can you describe the procedure of acquiring e-books for your library’s collection?
   a. What aspects of e-book acquisition are different compared to acquiring print books?
   b. Who is your main supplier of e-books? Is that supplier the main one for print books as well?
   c. Has the relationship with suppliers changed since the start of e-books acquisition?

9. As an acquisition librarian, did you need to gain any new skills or knowledge in order to work with e-books acquisition?
   a. If yes, how did you acquire these new skills and knowledge?
   b. How did you feel about having to learn new ways of working?

10. Since you started to acquire e-books, has your perception of your profession as an acquisition librarian changed in any way?
    a. How do you feel about these changes?

11. Do you see the adjustments that you have to make regarding e-book acquisition as a positive or rather negative change?
    a. What are the positive things about it?
    b. What is the negative side of these changes?
    c. Do you feel like you have any influence on how the acquisition process is changing?
    d. Would you like to change anything if you could?
       vi. What would you change?

12. What other changes due to appearance of e-books have you experienced in your work as an acquisition librarian that wasn’t already mentioned?
APENDIX C – A LIST OF DOCUMENTS CHOSEN FOR DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

**DCU:**
Library Policy on e-books (2009)
Library Operational Plan 2008 - 2009

**NUIG:**
Collection Management Policy (2009)
Library Annual Plan 2010
Operational Plan, academic year 2012

**NUIM:**
Collection Development Policy (2010)
Librarian’s Annual Report 2011/2013
Disposition Policy (2010)
Strategic Plan 2009 - 2011

**TCD:**

**UCC:**
Collections Development Policy (2007)
Report of the Library Policy Committee for 2009 - 2010

**UCD:**
General Information Resources Policy (2011)
Collection Review Policy (2013)
Library Annual Plan 2013 - 2014
Library Strategic Plan 2010 - 2014

**UL:**
Collection Development and Management Policy (2011)
Library Development Plan 2007 - 2011
Annual Report 2011 - 2012