

COMMUNICATION & COUNSEL

Subject: E-Books Update

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Prepared for: Ottawa Public Library Board

Meeting of: June 11, 2012

Date of preparation: June 3, 2012

Purpose

- E-books are an important issue for libraries. The purpose of this report is to provide an update for Ottawa Public Library Board trustees on this issue and provide information on recent developments.

Background

- In 2006 the Ottawa Public Library introduced its first downloadable electronic content.
- Library content is provided through Overdrive – an e-book distributor who sells e-book content and then provides the mechanism to manage customer access through a customized e-book portal.
- OPL is currently testing two French-language e-Book solutions, Archambault and Numilog.
- When a library customer wants to access and download e-books from OPL, they are currently re-directed from OPL's catalogue to the OPL e-book portal housed by Overdrive.

- Library customers have two online accounts to manage for OPL, account information on physical items is housed in our library catalogue and account information on e-books is housed on this e-book portal site.
- Content downloaded from the library is subject to copyright provisions such that one copy can only be checked out by one person at a time¹. This is enforced by the application of digital rights management provisions to the e-book electronic file by Overdrive.
- Downloading content from the Overdrive site is a complicated process which varies depending on the end user device a customer is using to download electronic content.
- The e-book content available for purchase for libraries from Overdrive (or any single vendor) is not sufficient to meet the needs of our customers.
- The publishing industry has limited content available for purchase by libraries, with some publishers completely denying access for libraries, while others impose strict regulations on downloads or have dramatically increased pricing for libraries. Others do not provide access to their latest publications but do provide access to older publications.
- Introducing a second e-book service to increase the content available for OPL patrons would require us to introduce another website and segregated account for customers to manage, as current distributors do not allow libraries to purchase content only.
- OPL customers are heavy adopters of e-books – with an increased use of 169% year over year from 2010 to 2011. The proliferation of devices and complexity of the process has led to strain on library staff as customers have struggled to set up their devices for access correctly when purchased.

Latest Developments

In order to improve this service the Ottawa Public Library has:

- Trained customers on the download process, allowed them to try out devices and troubleshoot customer specific e-book issues at a series of programs.

- Implemented single sign-on in June 2010, to allow customers to sign into all accounts at once.
- Provided a link to their e-book account (named their eaccount) from the account summary screen on the library's website.
- Outsourced online support directly to Overdrive to improve troubleshooting response times.
- Created a staff training program to increase comfort level and knowledge of front line staff with end user devices and the download process to provide them with the ability to provide troubleshooting support in the branch.

Given that this is a large problem that requires joint solutions, OPL has worked with other libraries to detail the issues and develop strategies to improve customer access to e-books. The OPL is a member of the Canadian Urban Libraries Council E-Book Taskforce and Jennifer Stirling, A/Division Manager, is the OPL representative on the Taskforce.

- In Autumn of 2010, the group passed a *Vision Statement for Public Access to Downloadable and Portable E-Content* advocates for public libraries to be able to purchase content directly from publishers and access this content directly through existing library catalogues.
- Advocacy: Since the passing of the vision statement they have been working on three streams of advocating for change for Canadian Public Libraries
 - Meeting with Publishers: Meetings with Canadian Publishers Council (CPC) and the Association of Canadian Publishers (ACP) have been held to advocate for direct content purchasing by libraries. These meetings have been positive.
 - Advocating with Change For Distributors: CULC has sent a letter to Overdrive asking them to provide options to allow libraries to display and download electronic content from existing library catalogues.
 - Developing an RFI for new shared access platform for Canadian libraries: Recognizing that libraries will need a shared hosting site

for Canadian libraries to store the content they are purchasing directly through Canadian publishers, CULC has developed draft technical requirements for a shared hosted site.

- CULC is also partnering with over 100 libraries in North America to send a clear message about the expectations to library econtent distributors – to help ensure that they understand what libraries need changed in order to serve clients better. This letter has been simultaneously sent to the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal and large Canadian newspapers to get the message out during the National Book Expo Convention.
- For more information on CULC e-book taskforce access the CULC website at <http://www.culc.ca/knowledge/ebooks>

Next Steps

- The negotiations with the Canadian publishing associations will continue.
- OPL is negotiating the access to its Overdrive content through its existing BiblioCommons catalogue. After initial discussions with Overdrive, at least partial integration should be possible by the end of 2012.
- Continue testing of the French-Language solution with a possible launch date of September 2012. Develop a technical support solution for this platform.
- CULC will release the Request For Information detailing specifications for companies interested in developing the shared hosting service for Canadian Libraries. From these responses, CULC members will have an idea of the scope and cost of this development. They have a pilot planned for shared hosting by the beginning of 2013. The exact participants in the e-book hosting trial have not been defined, nor has the financial implications for involvement in this new model. The OPL will be involved and assess this as more information is available.

ⁱ There are a small percentage of OPL items that are past copyright dates and do not have the download restrictions attached to them.