

## E-BOOK MADNESS? Yet There Is Method In't.

Leslie Lee, *Assistant Director for Administration*

In the individual consumer market, e-book transactions are comparatively straightforward: the user has an e-reader, and he seeks and purchases e-books compatible with that device. For libraries, which serve many users and work with a multitude of vendors and publishers, the decision to acquire and maintain material in new and/or different formats is not as simple as identifying a title of interest and purchasing it. When considering e-books, libraries must evaluate a matrix of factors, from acquisition and implementation to maintenance and delivery.

For libraries, e-books hold appeal for a variety of reasons. They do not require physical shelf space (costly), they provide virtually instant access to content, and they increase portability of a library collection. Moreover, many platforms not only offer value-added features – the ability to copy and paste, enlarge font size, bookmark, annotate, and highlight – but also provide user-friendly

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functionality, such as citation tools, platform tutorials, and full-text searching within an individual e-book title and/or across an entire e-book collection. Users also may enjoy access to unique or enhanced publisher content by way of embedded links to related databases. In addition to the space savings, these benefits are designed to exert a direct and positive effect on user experience.

While e-books offer many compelling advantages, they also present libraries with challenges. One major challenge today is an overarching lack of standardization in the e-book market. Whereas print material is published in a rather uniform format whose physical nuances occur primarily in binding, typography, and paper quality, e-books vary in complex and myriad ways, including platforms, file formats, device compatibility, title selection methods, digital management rights systems, version/edition control, access packages, privacy policies, and pricing models. Moreover, incessant flow characterizes the publishing industry: business models change, competitors merge, content fluctuates. In the e-book environment, librarians must commit to familiarizing themselves with a universe of information, from technical to legal, in order to make informed and prudent decisions.

Patrons of the Jacob Burns Law Library have access to a diverse and robust assortment of e-book collections made available through arrangements by the Law Library and the University's other libraries. The collections range from publisher-hosted e-book collections (such as [LJP Online](#), which provides access to selected titles published exclusively by [Law Journal Press](#)) to subscription services

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from vendors that provide access to digitized books (such as [HeinOnline's Legal Classics Library](#), which contains over 3,000 historical and/or rare law-related titles, or [EEBO: Early English Books Online](#), which contains digital images of over 100,000 books published in English since 1475). The University also subscribes to several aggregated e-book packages, such as [ebrary](#), which comprises a single platform with access to multiple publishers' works in a wide range of disciplines.

Going forward, the Law Library will continue to evaluate its e-book options carefully, stay abreast of changes in

technology and electronic publishing, and adopt the resources that best support the scholarly and research needs of the Law School community. B

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