

Promoting your e-books: lessons from the UK JISC National e-Book Observatory

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Abstract

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to describe the findings from the qualitative strand of the National e-Book Observatory (2007-2009) project, relating to the promotion of e-textbooks in UK universities by the library, academics and publishers. A complementary paper on the ways in which students and academics locate e-books provided by their library will appear in a future issue.

Design/methodology/approach

Following the provision by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) in the UK of collections of e-textbooks, the project used deep log analysis, benchmark surveys and focus groups to develop a rich picture of library e-collection management and use by students and academics. Focus groups were undertaken with library staff, academics and students; the dialogues were transcribed and analysed using NVivo7 software.

Findings

The qualitative studies found that libraries were using a range of promotional tools, although these were not always finding their targets. Often libraries had no formal promotion strategy for e-resources. Although little in evidence, the value of academic commitment and promotion was emphasised. Promotion by publishers and aggregators is both to libraries and directly to academic staff. Students felt that they were largely unaware of promotion beyond the presence of e-books in the catalogue, and in some cases stated explicitly that they thought more should be done to promote library e-resources to them.

Practical implications

The paper offers pragmatic guidance on promotional methodologies.

Originality/value

The project describes the first major, national usage study of e-books in higher education. The paper contributes significantly to the literature in discussing the importance of promoting e-books to students and staff.

Keywords

Electronic books

Promotional methods


Academic libraries

User studies

United Kingdom

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