E-books:
Sciences Library users?

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Introduction

Context 2012

- ≈13,000 e-books in the Life Sciences Library at the University of Liège

- (very) low e-book consultation rates
  - why?
  - is it the right time to change to e-books?
  - how can we improve usage?

Objectives

- to investigate usage and attitudes toward e-books

- to identify perceived obstacles to using e-books

- to identify how the library can facilitate e-book usage

Survey methodology

Online survey

- target population: students and faculty members in

    - educational sciences

    - medicine

    - psychology

    - veterinary medicine

- contacted via institutional e-mail (March 2012)

- anonymous and voluntary participation

- no incentive

Structure of the questionnaire

1. 13 questions to gain general information about

   - the respondent (gender, age, degree and faculty...)

   - information-seeking behavior

   - comfort level regarding computer use

2. Two sets of questions for users and non-users

   - Depending on their answer to the question:
     "When you consult scientific books, is it always, sometimes, or never in their electronic version?"

     □ designed to identify e-book users *versus* non-users

Results

Results

- Response rate: 14% (1140/8032)

- Demographic distribution

  - 75% undergradute and graduate students

  - 25% university staff members: researchers, fellows, faculty
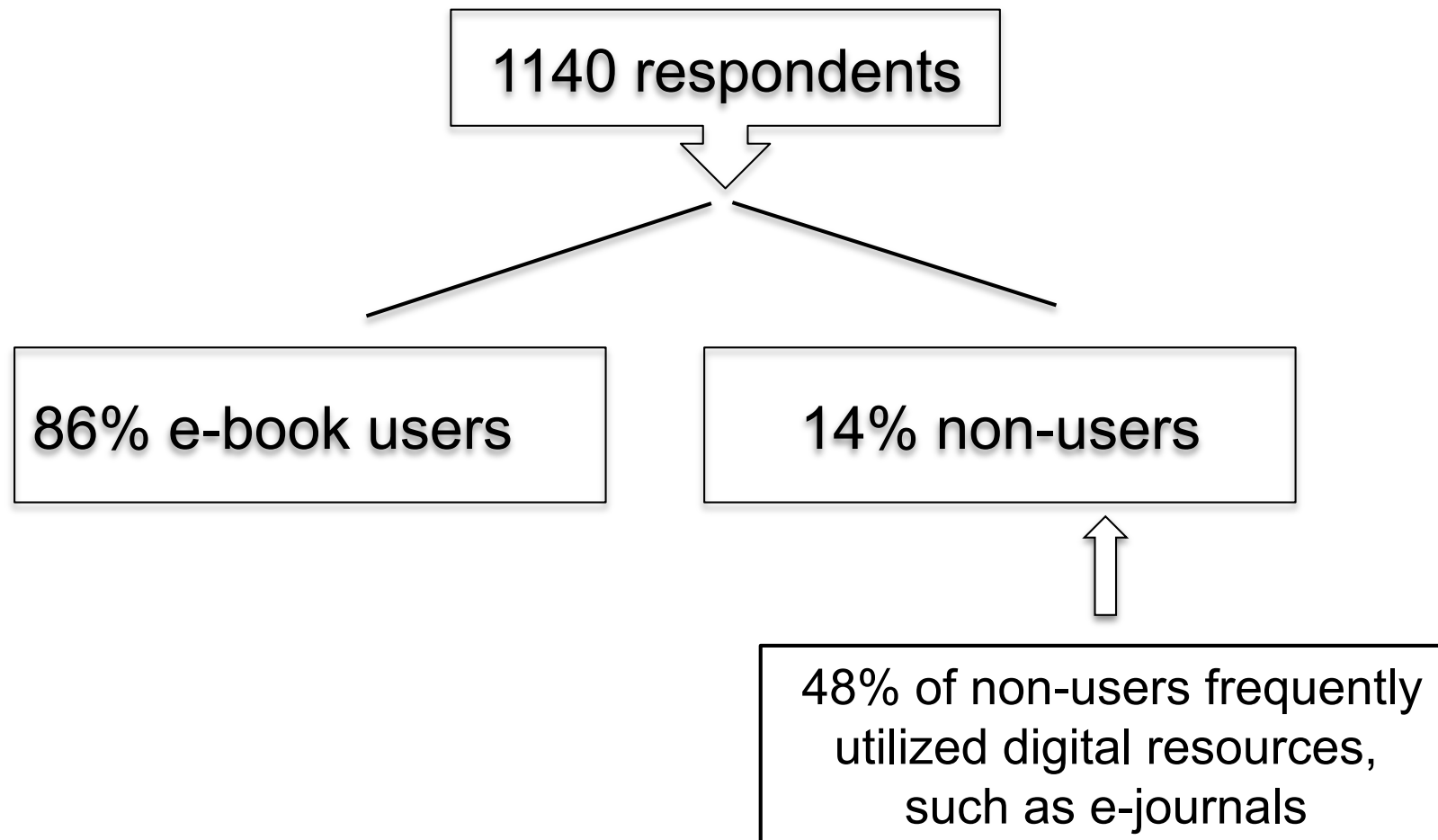
Information-seeking behavior

- frequency of information needs
  - every day (32%) – at least once a week (49%)
- perceived competence in finding relevant information
  - 6.5 /10
- where?
  - Google (87%)
  - bibliographic databases (68%)
  - personal library (57%)
  - academic library (41%)
- preference for electronic journals (78%)

Comfort level regarding computer use

- electronic resources at their disposal

  - computer (100%)

  - smart phone (31%)

  - tablets (14%) and e-readers (1.7%)

- time spent per day

  - more than 2.5 hours

E-book awareness and usage

1140 respondents

86% e-book users

14% non-users

48% of non-users frequently
utilized digital resources,
such as e-journals

Non-users' opinions (1)

- Barriers to e-book use

  - 82% discomfort of reading on screen

  - 59% preference for paper

  - 40% ignorance of e-book availability

    - 51% poor advertising by library of e-book availability

    - 47% difficulties in using library catalog

Non-users' opinions (2)

- Possible incitements to use e-books

  - better description of e-book content (44%)

  - information about value-added options (56%)

  - more comfortable reading (tablet or e-reader) (42%)

- Awareness of e-book advantages

  - "anytime, anywhere" (60%)

  - full-text search (58%)

E-book usage

- average consultation: once or twice a month

- preference for electronic version if available (77%)
  - however, the choice of a book depends on content, and not on format (73%)

- Mitigated satisfaction: 5.8/10
  - restricted consultation (64%)
  - eyestrain (61%)
  - difficulty of finding an e-book corresponding to needs (46%)

What future for books in academic libraries?

- Anticipated timing

Coexistence of print + electronic forms	60%
Disappearance of paper	
within 5 years	8%
within 10 years	22%
> 15 years	10%

- Users' feelings

Totally positive	9%
Clearly against	27%

Discussion

Initial findings of the survey

- no obstacle to accessing e-books
  - 100% had a computer and the internet at their disposal
  - tablets, smart phones and e-readers: still infrequent
    but not for long

- e-book qualities appreciated by users
  - "anytime anywhere"
  - ability to search full text content

- mitigated satisfaction

↗ E-book awareness

- user education and training
- improving e-book indexation

Optimizing usage

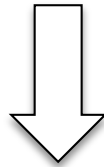- value-added options: annotation, highlighting, hyperlinks, bookmarks, etc.

Key roles for librarians

↘ User frustration due to prohibited access

Changing purchase criteria

Recommendations

- coexistence of print version and e-books

- time needed for perfect integration

- acquisitions matching exact needs of all categories of end user

Perspectives

- to find ways of improving the coexistence of print books & e-books

  creating flashcodes (QR codes) that would query the catalog to find e-books available

- to preserve the physical identity of the library in a virtual world

Thank you for your attention

References

In particular

- Dewan P. Are books becoming extinct in academic libraries? N Libr World. 2012; 113: 27-37.

- Fold BL, Wessel CB, Czechowski LJ. Clinical and academic use of electronic and print books: the Health Sciences Library system e-book study at the University of Pittsburgh. J Med Libr Assoc. 2011; 99:218-28.

and many other interesting surveys ...