

# **E-BOOKS IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES: EXPERIENCES IN HAMPSHIRE**

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## SUMMARY

The purpose of the research was to investigate the provision of e-books by Hampshire Libraries and Information Service (HLIS). The research aimed to explore the attitudes and experiences of front-line staff and customers. The following objectives were set out:

- 1) Establish how e-books are provided by HLIS.
- 2) Examine the attitudes of front-line staff towards e-books in public libraries.
- 3) Find out the levels of awareness of e-books amongst current library customers.
- 4) Examine the attitudes of current library customers towards e-books in public libraries.
- 5) Explore the challenges associated with the provision of e-books in public libraries.
- 6) Consider the future of e-books in public libraries.

This research used a mixed methods approach. The researcher conducted a literature review and accessed usage statistics. The researcher carried out three sets of semi-structured interviews with:

- 1) Thirty two customers.
- 2) Thirty five front-line staff.
- 3) An in-depth interview with a member of staff who was responsible for establishing e-book provision.

The data was analysed thematically.

Amongst customers, there was a high level of awareness of e-books but a lower level of awareness of HLIS e-books. A preference for print emerged as the main reason for not using e-books amongst participants. For participants, the main advantages of e-books were portability and storage while the main disadvantages were cost and the loss of tactility. The majority of participants were positive about e-books in general and e-books provided by public libraries. Statistics show that the OverDrive service has been successful so far in Hampshire. However, a current and future problem for libraries is a lack of content.

Although the sampling methods and the size of the sample limit the value and trustworthiness of the findings, a range of attitudes and challenges in one public library authority were explored in this research.

## DECLARATION

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

**CILIP** = Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals

**DRM** = Digital Rights Management

**HCC** = Hampshire County Council

**HLIS** = Hampshire Libraries and Information Service

**LISA** = Library and Information Science Abstracts

**LISTA** = Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts

**PDA** = Personal Digital Assistant

**RNIB** = Royal National Institute of Blind People

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# **1. INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Background**

Initial interest in this topic started because the researcher works for a public library authority which provides e-books. During an initial literature review, it emerged that there is a gap concerning the situation in public libraries (Lonsdale & Armstrong, 2011, p.14). The researcher decided to investigate the provision of e-books by Hampshire Libraries and Information Service (HLIS). Hampshire County Council (HCC) was chosen for this research because it was accessible to the researcher.

HCC has 53 libraries (Hampshire County Council, 2012d) which “receive nearly 7m visits a year” (Hampshire County Council, 2012a, para.3). HLIS has had an e-book service with OverDrive since Christmas 2009 whilst provision from Public Library Online was established in early 2011 (Hampshire Libraries and Information Service, 2011). These e-book services are described in the literature review.

## **1.2 Issue**

It is important to research the provision of e-books in public libraries because e-books are changing how library materials are provided to customers. Previous research has used an online questionnaire to investigate user opinions of e-books (McKnight, Dearnley & Morris, 2008; Gunter, 2005). As participants probably had IT skills, this method could have excluded non-users of IT or those who only use the physical library. Therefore, in this study, the researcher seeks to examine the opinions of customers of physical libraries. The literature review also revealed that previous studies have included professional staff perceptions (Dearnley et al., 2004; McKnight & Dearnley, 2003). There is a gap

concerning the perceptions of front-line staff in public libraries. Therefore, the researcher decided to interview front-line staff of HLIS about their attitudes towards e-books. The reactions of front-line staff are important because these staff deliver library services to customers on a daily basis. The researcher decided to conduct an in-depth interview with a member of staff who was responsible for setting up e-book provision for HLIS. The researcher aimed to explore some of the challenges facing public libraries. By investigating the opinions of front-line staff and customers and by exploring the challenges raised in the literature, it is hoped that this research will add to the existing research on e-books.

### **1.3 Research Question**

The purpose of this research is to investigate the provision of e-books by HLIS by focusing on the experiences and reactions of front-line staff and customers.

### **1.4 Aims and Objectives**

The aim of this research is to answer the research question by investigating the provision of e-books by HLIS. This research also aims to explore front-line staff and customer attitudes towards e-books. The following objectives will help the researcher to achieve these aims:

- 1) Establish how e-books are provided by HLIS.
- 2) Examine the attitudes of front-line staff towards e-books in public libraries.
- 3) Find out the levels of awareness of e-books amongst current library customers.
- 4) Examine the attitudes of current library customers towards e-books in public libraries.
- 5) Explore the challenges associated with the provision of e-books in public libraries.
- 6) Consider the future of e-books in public libraries.

## **1.5 Scope**

The choice of this topic coincides with increasing threats to public libraries in the UK amidst a global financial crisis. However, the scope of this research is limited to two areas of Hampshire due to the limited resources of the researcher. The findings cannot be generalized but they could highlight challenges that face other public library authorities.

## **1.6 Structure**

The second chapter is the literature review which is followed by a review of the methods used in this research. The results and discussion are combined in the fourth chapter. This is followed by the conclusions.

## **1.7 Summary**

This chapter has introduced the purpose of this research which is to investigate the provision of e-books by HLIS. The researcher has explained the choice of the topic. The aims and objectives of the research have been outlined. The scope of the research and the structure of the dissertation have been described.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter aims to review the current literature on e-books in public libraries. This literature review will examine definitions of e-books, advantages and disadvantages of e-books and challenges facing public libraries. Several commentators agree that the topic of e-books is fast-moving (Poudre River Public Library District, Colorado State University & Front Range Community College, 2011, p.4; Vasileiou, Hartley & Rowley, 2009, p.189). Therefore, this review examines literature over the past ten years only. This review covers journal articles, reports, newspaper articles and blog posts. Relevant research conducted in academic libraries is mentioned as parallels can be drawn between experiences of e-book provision in public and academic libraries (Lonsdale & Armstrong, 2011, p.1; Poudre River Public Library District et al., 2011, p.4). This review also considers the methods used in e-book research.

### **2.1 Literature Search Methodology**

Books, journal articles, online and printed newspaper and magazine articles, blog posts, unpublished postgraduate dissertations and presentation slides have been consulted for this review. This review initially used the resource list provided by Armstrong (2011). Armstrong (2012) has provided an annual online bibliography of e-book resources since 2000. The researcher also used Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA), Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts (LISTA) and Web of Knowledge to search for relevant journal articles. The author used Web of Knowledge to explore the cited references of the journal articles found. Ariadne (n.d.), D-Lib Magazine (Corporation for National Research Initiatives, 2012) and First Monday (2012) were also searched. The

researcher compiled “concept maps” (Hart, 1998, p.155) of the themes that emerged during the review.

### **2.1.1 Literature Search Terms**

Search terms used included: “electronic books”, “e-books” and “ebooks”. These terms were also used in combination: “electronic books AND public libraries”. Using Web of Knowledge, “e-books AND reading” found 92 results in November 2011. Narrowing the search to “e-books AND fiction” found 5 results. Some journal articles were duplicated in results lists, for example, Landoni and Hanlon (2007) and McKnight, Dearnley and Morris (2008) were found in LISA, LISTA and Web of Knowledge by searching for “e-books AND public libraries”. LISTA included periodical articles, for example, Pharo and Learned Au (2011) which were not found through Web of Knowledge.

### **2.2 The Last Ten Years**

Armstrong and Lonsdale (2011, p.xxi) date the beginning of e-books to 1971 with Michael Hart’s Gutenberg collection. In public libraries, research into e-books has been conducted during the last ten years (Lonsdale & Armstrong, 2011; McKnight, Dearnley & Morris, 2008; Landoni & Hanlon, 2007; Dearnley, McKnight & Morris, 2004; Dearnley et al., 2004; Garrod, 2003; McKnight & Dearnley, 2003; Dearnley & McKnight, 2001). Blackburn with Darwen libraries established e-book provision in 2002 (Dearnley & McKnight, 2002, cited by Dearnley et al., 2004, p.209) followed by Richmond in 2003 (“Richmond first”, 2003, p.45). Essex public libraries followed in 2004 (Dearnley et al., 2004, p.209). In the US, an online survey revealed that e-books have been accepted by public libraries and usage is increasing (Genco, 2009, p.17) although most participating libraries “served larger populations” (Genco, 2009, p.3).



Bennett (2011) describes 2007 as “a watershed year for e-books” (p.225), partly due to the emergence of Amazon’s Kindle (Bennett, 2011, p.225). Since October 2011, Amazon has offered a Kindle for £89 (Jones, 2011, para.3). Although still costly, it could be within the range of more people. Indeed, a report claims that over one million e-readers were given as presents during Christmas 2011 (Campbell, 2012b, para.1). It seems that Amazon is leading the market as ninety two per cent were Kindles (Campbell, 2012b, para.2). Apple iPads also sold well (Campbell, 2012b, para.4) while the Kobo e-reader proved popular in December 2011 (Campbell, 2012a, para.1). In US public libraries, Kindle owners can borrow e-books through OverDrive (Kelley, 2011, para.1). There is no indication of whether this service will be extended to UK public libraries. Furthermore, Amazon has its own lending library in the US (Campbell, 2011, para.1). This competition could negatively impact on public libraries. However, it is only available to Amazon Prime members (Campbell, 2011, para.1). Whereas public libraries are open to all, Amazon’s service seems to be exclusive. Nevertheless, the rise of new e-readers signals a new and exciting future for reading.

Despite the growing enthusiasm for e-books, UK public libraries have only recently begun to fully embrace e-books. The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP, 2011b) reports “nearly 60 per cent of library authorities in England now offering e-book lending, up from just 20 per cent last year” (p.6). In the UK, South Ayrshire (Inness, 2011), Northern Ireland (Libraries NI) (Osborn, 2011) and Welsh libraries (Lee, 2011) report positive attitudes. Lonsdale and Armstrong (2011, p.36) found that e-book adoption in Welsh public libraries had been slow but attitudes were positive. Furthermore, public libraries are exploring publishing (Inness, 2011, slide 18; Bradley, 2011). South Ayrshire

Library Service published its first e-book in November 2011 (*South Ayrshire library service achieves worldwide first*, 2011).



Unfortunately, this initial success is threatened by a lack of content. In February 2011, Hadro reported that “HarperCollins has announced that new titles licensed from library ebook vendors will be able to circulate only 26 times before the license expires” (para.1). Furthermore, “two other members of the publishing “big six”—Macmillan and Simon & Schuster—still do not allow ebooks to be circulated in libraries” (Hadro, 2011, para.9). Access to content continues to be a challenge. In March 2012, Penguin withdrew their e-books from OverDrive (CILIP, 2012, p.18).

### **2.3 Suppliers**


This research focuses on two services which provide e-books to HLIS (Hampshire County Council, 2012c): OverDrive (See Figure 1) and Public Library Online (See Figure 2).

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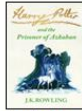
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Figure 1. Screenshot of the OverDrive service provided for HCC. Screenshot retrieved June 3, 2012 from <http://hampshirelibrary.lib.overdrive.com/53A75311-CA65-4EE3-ADDF-0ABD80D7F627/10/530/en/Default.htm>.

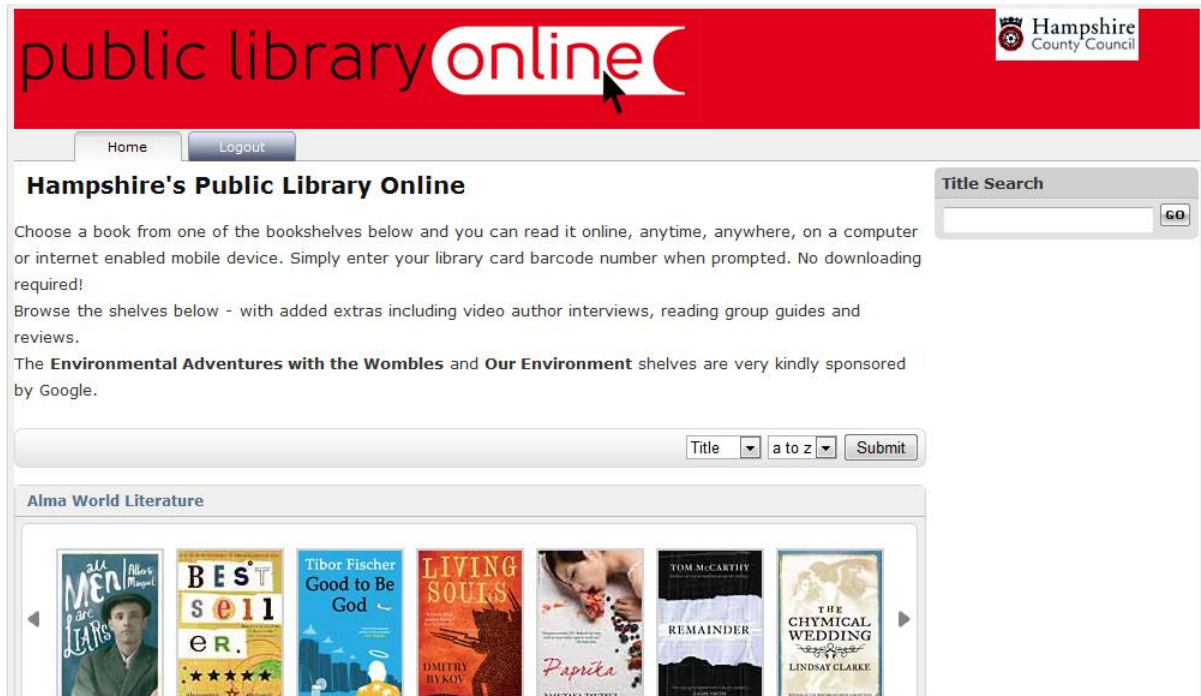


Figure 2. Screenshot of the Public Library Online service provided for HCC. Screenshot retrieved June 13, 2012 from <http://www.publiclibraryonline.com/DisplayZone.aspx>.

Access to the website requires authentication with a library card.

### 2.3.1 Downloads

OverDrive (OverDrive, Inc., 2012e) is a “library download service” (para.1). OverDrive (OverDrive, Inc., 2012a, para.2) supplies e-books and e-audio. OverDrive (OverDrive, Inc., 2012a) provides popular fiction and non-fiction titles, for example, “technology, travel, foreign language study” (para.2). OverDrive (OverDrive, Inc., 2012a, para.2) also provides content for children and young adults.

HLIS customers can download three titles at a time and reserve four titles (OverDrive, Inc., 2012c). Help is provided to show customers which free software they need to access e-books or e-audio (OverDrive, Inc., 2012b). A standard loan period is not specified (OverDrive, Inc., 2012c) but Figure 3 shows a two-week loan period:

The screenshot shows the OverDrive interface for Hampshire County Council. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'Hantsweb', font size controls, and links for 'Hantsweb Home', 'A-Z Services', 'Contact us', and 'Help'. A search box is also present. Below the navigation bar is a banner image of a diverse group of people reading books. The main content area features an advertisement for 'The Tenth Saint' by Laurence Leamer, with a quote: "Like *The Da Vinci Code*, *The Tenth Saint* takes you to a place you have never been..." and a quote from the *New York Times*: "—Laurence Leamer, *New York Times* best-selling author of *The Kennedy Men*". Below the advertisement is the 'My Basket' section, which displays the book 'Emma' with a lending period of 14 days and the format 'Adobe EPUB eBook'. It includes a 'Remove' button and two options: 'Continue Browsing' and 'Proceed to Checkout'. On the left side, there is a sidebar with a 'Libraries homepage' menu and a 'Book Fiction' category. On the right side, there are 'Quick Links' (My eAccount, My Basket, My eLoans, Sign in), 'Help' (Help, Supported Devices, Contact Us), 'Quick Search' (with a search box and 'Go' button), and 'Free Software'.

Figure 3: Screenshot of an example loan period on OverDrive for HCC. Screenshot retrieved June 6, 2012 from <http://hampshirelibrary.lib.overdrive.com/53A75311-CA65-4EE3-ADDF-0ABD80D7F627/10/530/en/Cart.htm>

Genco (2009, p.13) reported that OverDrive is the most popular supplier among the forty one US public libraries that responded to an online survey. Reasons given included OverDrive's user-friendliness and choice of compatible platforms (Genco, 2009, p.14). South Ayrshire (Inness, 2011, slide 4) and Northern Ireland (Libraries NI) (Osborn, 2011, slide 5) chose OverDrive and seem positive about their experiences.

A consortium of public libraries in Wales has chosen Askews and Holts as their provider (Lee, 2011, slide 4; Lonsdale & Armstrong, 2011, p.4). Like OverDrive, Askews and Holts provides downloadable e-books (Lee, 2011, slide 6). Askews and Holts provides "mainstream fiction and non-fiction – both adult and children's" (Lonsdale and Armstrong, 2011, p.77). Furthermore, Askews and Holts covers "subject areas like travel guides, cookery etc that naturally work within an e-book environment" (Lonsdale & Armstrong, 2011, p.77).

This suggests that certain areas of non-fiction are more suitable than others as e-books. Lonsdale and Armstrong (2011) reported that Askews and Holts was “just about to introduce audio books” (p.78).

### **2.3.2 Online Access**

Public Library Online (n.d) provides “concurrent online access to a range of fiction and non-fiction”. This service from Bloomsbury provides content for adults and children but does not include e-audio (Lonsdale & Armstrong, 2011, p.72). Palmer (2011b, pp.208-209) argues that this service could appeal to reading groups because more than one user can access the e-books simultaneously.

### **2.4 Definition**

This study uses the definition and spelling of e-books provided by Armstrong and Lonsdale (2011): “an e-book is any content that is recognizably ‘book-like’, regardless of size, origin or composition, but excluding serial publications, made available electronically for reference or reading on any device that includes a screen” (p.xxv). This definition builds on the one developed by Armstrong (2008) but replaces “journal” (Armstrong, 2008, p.199) with the more general “serial” (Armstrong & Lonsdale, 2011, p.xxv). The more recent definition (Armstrong & Lonsdale, 2011, p.xxv) also removes the phrase “handheld or desk-bound” (Armstrong, 2008, p.199). This emphasises the rapidly changing nature of devices on the market. This definition (Armstrong & Lonsdale, 2011, p.xxv) also recognises that e-books can consist of born-digital material unlike the definition provided by Garrod (2003, para.8) which emphasised the conversion of print into digital formats.

Armstrong and Lonsdale (2011, p.xxv) emphasise content as the core of an e-book. Poudre River Public Library District et al. (2011, p.5) in Colorado, USA also define an e-book in terms of its content and separately from an e-reader. Furthermore, Palmer (2011a) discusses “the idea of the e-book simply as content or software” (p.77). Palmer (2011a) claims that many people mistake an e-book for an e-reader (p.76). Lonsdale and Armstrong (2011), in their study of e-books in Welsh public libraries, define e-books as “books which may be read from a screen (PC, laptop or handheld reader)” (p.41). This defines e-books in terms of the hardware used to read them.

Armstrong (2008) argues that audio-books are not e-books but “an e-book may have audio-book capabilities” (p.198). Lonsdale and Armstrong (2011) clearly state that their “definition does not include **audiobooks**” (p.41). However, it can be argued that e-books are “a different form of access to print-based content” (Palmer, 2011a, p.73). This could also be said of e-audio. The Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) National Library Service reported on e-book services in public libraries for the visually impaired which covered “ebooks for download (audio and/or text)” (Gilks, 2011, para.3). Care should perhaps be taken to differentiate between e-books and e-audio to avoid confusion.

## **2.5 Advantages and Disadvantages**

Advantages and disadvantages reported in the literature cover both issues that are specific to the devices tested and more general perceptions of e-reading.

### **2.5.1 Advantages**

Chu (2003) used a questionnaire to investigate reasons for using and not using e-books. The main reasons for using e-books among twenty seven Library and Information Science

students were 24/7 access and the ability to search within the e-book (Chu, 2003, p.343). The ability to search could be more useful in a non-fiction title than a fiction title. Only one respondent mentioned portability (Chu, 2003, p.343), whereas an online questionnaire carried out in Essex public libraries found that portability was a main advantage of e-books (McKnight, Dearnley & Morris, 2008, p.35). An earlier study in Essex public libraries also found that portability was the main advantage for users (Dearnley et al., 2004, p.224) and was also important to staff (Dearnley et al., 2004, p. 227).

The 2008 study also found that remote access was an advantage (McKnight, Dearnley & Morris, 2008, p.37). As the 2008 survey was conducted online (McKnight, Dearnley & Morris, 2008), the participants probably had IT skills. The researchers also recognised that the sample consisted of “a self-selected group of library users” (McKnight, Dearnley & Morris, 2008, p.33).

Other advantages include adjusting the font size and privacy (Dearnley et al., 2004, p.230). Gibson and Gibb (2011) asked Masters students to read short stories on e-readers and found that the advantages of the devices included “large storage capacity, lightness and screen quality” (p.316).

For public library staff, e-books consume less time (Lonsdale & Armstrong, 2011, p.14) and less space (Lonsdale & Armstrong, 2011, p.15). Furthermore, “an e-book cannot be damaged” (Armstrong, Edwards & Lonsdale, 2002, p.224). E-books could also provide accessibility to out-of-print books (Armstrong, Edwards & Lonsdale, 2002, p.224). Other potential collection management advantages for public libraries include access to diverse and current collections, statistics and improving the technological skills of staff (Lonsdale & Armstrong, 2011, p.15).



E-books could also encourage a positive image of public libraries (Lonsdale & Armstrong, 2011, p.14). There are no overdue charges as the e-book disappears once the due date is reached (Palmer, 2011a, pp.78-79). Palmer (2011a, p.75) discusses how e-books in public libraries could reach new users such as the housebound, workers, commuters and the technologically deprived. Amongst Welsh public library authorities, it was felt that e-books could attract non-users and younger people (Lonsdale & Armstrong, 2011, p.15). Gilks (2011, para.62) reports that e-books could supplement existing provision for visually impaired people.

In summary, portability, 24/7 remote access, collection management processes and the potential to attract new users are the main advantages.

### **2.5.2 Disadvantages**

Chu (2003, pp.343-344) found that the main reasons for not using e-books among students included the reading experience, the need for hardware, costs and lack of content. The reading experience also emerges in other studies. Dearnley et al. (2004) discover that the main problem with one device is “a lack of *immersion* in the reading experience” (p.225). Lonsdale and Armstrong (2011, p.21) also find unease amongst library staff about how customers will react to the reading experience. Another study reported “a lack of sensory experience” (McKnight, Dearnley & Morris, 2008, p.37) amongst public library customers. This is consistent with another report of an emotional attachment to printed books (Landoni & Hanlon, 2007, p.606).

Other disadvantages include the “need for [a] power supply” (McKnight, Dearnley & Morris, 2008, p.37) and Digital Rights Management (DRM) (McKnight, Dearnley & Morris, 2008, p.37). Furthermore, Internet access is required to download e-books. As e-

books develop, the digital divide could widen and some users could feel abandoned by the new technology (McGuire, 2011). Furthermore, decreasing visits to the physical library could result in a lack of social interaction for customers (Lonsdale & Armstrong, 2011, p.18).

To summarize, the main disadvantages are the reading experience, costs and the need for hardware, electricity, an Internet connection and training.

## **2.6 Attitudes towards E-books.**

The situation in public libraries has developed from an attitude of caution and uncertainty about providing e-books (Dearnley, McKnight & Morris, 2004; Dearnley et al., 2004) to a situation where customers expect their public libraries to provide e-books (Palmer, 2011a, p.91; Palmer, 2011b, p.212; Duncan, 2010, p.54). Duncan (2010, p.45) delivered a questionnaire survey via electronic newsletter to public library members on the Sunshine Coast, Australia. Although the response rate was 0.89 per cent (Duncan, 2010, p.45), respondents showed “a high level of interest in e-books” (Duncan, 2010, p.47). Duncan (2010, p.54) concluded that public libraries should provide e-books.

Palmer (2011b, p.201) argues that there is a link between the e-book phenomenon and reader development in public libraries. The two areas have grown at the same time (Palmer, 2011b, p.207) and similar arguments are used against them (Palmer, 2011b, p.208.) With the emergence of Public Library Online, Palmer (2011b, pp.208-209) argues that virtual reading groups are a possibility. For Palmer (2011b), e-books “seem to offer much more potential to engage with readers” (p.212).

Scepticism has also been shown towards fiction e-books. Garrod (2003) claims that “ebooks are about fast and easy access to information, rather than reading an entire novel online” (para.76). An online survey found a high level of e-book awareness but a preference for reference titles as e-books (Gunter, 2005, p.521). However, the participants were Internet users who regularly completed online surveys (Gunter, 2005, p.517). Gunter (2005, p.521) was unconvinced by fiction and popular non-fiction e-books. However, Gunter (2005, p.521) considered using a computer rather than an e-reader to read e-books.

A 2011 study attempted to categorize users as Book Lovers, Technophiles, Pragmatists or Printers according to their perceptions of e-books (Shrimplin, Revelle, Hurst & Messne, 2011, p.181). However, participants in all four categories thought that printed books were more suited to reading for pleasure than e-books (Shrimplin et al., 2011, p. 186). As this study was carried out amongst university staff and students (Shrimplin et al., 2011, p.183), the same categories may not be found amongst public library customers and staff.

This uncertainty about fiction e-books seems to be refuted by rising sales of e-books (Herther, 2011, p.22) and reports in the US of self-published bestseller titles (Page, 2011, para.1). Pharo and Learned Au (2011, p.19) also report customer demand for popular fiction e-books although they do not provide evidence to support this claim.

## **2.7 Usability Studies.**

Some usability studies report that reading e-books is not a satisfactory experience (Landoni & Hanlon, 2007, p.606; Gibson & Gibb, 2011, pp.316-317). In Glasgow, two reading groups at public libraries tested Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs), completed a questionnaire and participated in face to face discussions (Landoni & Hanlon, 2007,

pp.601-602). Landoni and Hanlon (2007) concluded that “there was general dissatisfaction with reading fiction e-books on the PDAs” (p.606). However, problems with the screen were specific to the devices and thus could be solved by technological advances (Landoni & Hanlon, 2007, p.606). Gibson and Gibb (2011, pp.308-309) invited thirty three Masters students at Strathclyde University to complete a questionnaire after reading a short story in print and on an e-reader. Gibson and Gibb (2011, p.316) found that second-generation e-readers solved problems like screen quality but other problems persisted such as battery life and new issues emerged, for example, a flashing screen. Gibson and Gibb (2011) point out that “paper books were still preferred to e-books when reading the stories” (p.317). This again highlights nostalgia for the printed book.

Participants at Market Harborough public library in Leicestershire were asked to test an e-reader, complete a questionnaire and participate in a focus group (Dearnley & McKnight, 2001, p.72). The study found concerns about weight, the size of the screen, theft and the differences between an e-book and a printed book (Dearnley & McKnight, 2001, p.77). Dearnley and McKnight (2001) suggest that “reading books on a screen is not viewed as desirable, and certainly not for recreational purposes” (p.78). Despite this, the level of interest from respondents was positive (Dearnley & McKnight, 2001, p.77).

McKnight and Dearnley (2003) again explored lending e-readers in Market Harborough public library. Sixteen participants completed a questionnaire and staff concerns were considered (McKnight & Dearnley, 2003, p.237). Although only a small sample, the findings left the authors unconvinced about the potential success of e-books in public libraries (McKnight & Dearnley, 2003, p.242). Advantages for customers included storage, bookmarking and backlighting (McKnight & Dearnley, 2003, p.241). For staff, e-books

could extend library services although “maintaining the collection was time-consuming” (McKnight & Dearnley, 2003, p.241). Other staff concerns included the need to recharge batteries, complicated administrative processes, lack of UK content and lack of interest from customers and staff (McKnight & Dearnley, 2003, pp.240-241). Both studies at Market Harborough public library (McKnight & Dearnley, 2003, p.241; Dearnley & McKnight, 2001, p.77) reported nostalgia for the printed book.

Another study investigated iPAQs in Essex public libraries (Dearnley et al., 2004, p.209). The authors explored user perceptions with a questionnaire (Dearnley et al., 2004, p.221) and staff perceptions with a focus group (Dearnley et al., 2004, p.227). The research found that “the emotional bonds individuals enjoy with p-books [printed books] *and* their local public libraries continue to present a barrier to potential e-book adoption” (Dearnley et al., 2004, p.236). Customers were not ready to embrace e-books. The authors therefore advised caution before setting up e-book provision (Dearnley et al., 2004, p.236). Another report of this study reiterated the cautious warning and found that it was unclear whether the benefits of e-books could outweigh the disadvantages (Dearnley, McKnight & Morris, 2004, p.181).

Although some commentators (Palmer, 2011a, p.91; Palmer, 2011b, p.212; Duncan, 2010, p.54) indicate that customers expect e-books in public libraries, it seems that experiences have not matched those expectations. However, rising sales of e-readers over Christmas 2011 (Campbell, 2012b, para.1) and in particular, rising sales of Amazon’s Kindle (Campbell, 2012b, para.2) indicate that the limitations of previous experiences are being resolved or at least accepted. Twenty Library and Information Science students in New York tested the Kindle 2 (Pattueli & Rabina, 2010). Using interviews based on diaries

completed by the participants, it was found that “the e-readers were generally accepted as normal vehicles of content delivery” (Pattueli & Rabina, 2010, p.242). Acceptance seems to be increasing.

Customer and staff perceptions have been investigated in previous research, however, the literature does not seem to cover the attitudes of front-line staff. Furthermore, studies which use online questionnaires may only attract customers who already have IT skills and access to technology.

## **2.8 Challenges for Public Libraries**

Lack of content has already been noted as a challenge for public libraries (Poudre River Public Library District et al., 2011, p.8). Palmer (2011a, pp.78-91) also reports the following issues affecting public libraries: downloads versus online access, formats, DRM, platforms, authentication, security, promotion, collection development, staffing issues and costs. Further challenges include:

- Bibliographical control (Armstrong & Lonsdale, 2011, p.xxix)
- The potential of consortia (Lonsdale & Armstrong, 2011, pp.32-35; Cherubini & Nyberg, 2009)
- Interlibrary loans (Ball, 2009, p.21)
- Lending e-readers (Armstrong & Lonsdale, 2011, p.xxxiv; Poudre River Public Library District et al., 2011, p.12)
- Preservation of e-books (Cherubini & Nyberg, 2009, p.268)

- The need to research collection development (Vasileiou, Hartley & Rowley, 2009, p.190)
- Weeding e-books (Wilson, 2004). Wilson (2004, p.159) suggests the following criteria for weeding e-books: currency of the information, use, format and functionality.
- Staff and user training (Lonsdale & Armstrong, 2011, pp.17-18; Pharo & Learned Au, 2011, pp.18-19; Poudre River Public Library District et al., 2011, p.12). In a study of US public libraries, the majority of respondents already provide customer training (Genco, 2009, p.16). For Duncan (2010), public libraries should aim to “actively educate their communities” (p.53) about e-book services.
- Marketing (Garrod, 2003, para.72). Lonsdale and Armstrong (2010) argue that promotion should “be framed within a strategic plan” (p.204). Berube (2005, p.18) argues that public libraries should approach the promotion of e-books with caution. However, Berube (2005) suggests that libraries could consider some of the techniques of Amazon, for example, “personalisation, e-mail alerts, recommended titles [and] reviews” (p.17). Pharo and Learned Au (2011, p.19) describes success in connecting with local bookshops.
- Making e-books available through the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) (Armstrong & Lonsdale, 2011, p.xxxii). However, Berube (2005) reports that in Essex public libraries, “without any major publicity, users have found their way to the e-books site” (p.18). This could depend on the level of awareness of e-books amongst customers. Furthermore, an online questionnaire survey of public library

customers found that “the vast majority of respondents discovered the e-book collection while browsing Essex’s library website” (McKnight, Dearnley & Morris, 2008, p.33).

### **2.8.1 Visually Impaired Users**

RNIB National Library Service readers were asked to test e-book provision in their local public libraries (Gilks, 2011, para.6). Gilks (2011, para.5) recognises that the sample was self-selected and had IT skills. Fifty five respondents (Gilks, 2011, para.8) found the following challenges for visually impaired people: accessibility of council websites (Gilks, 2011, para.58), searching for e-books on the catalogue (Gilks, 2011, para.59), lack of access in the physical library (Gilks, 2011, para.60) and the need for help from staff (Gilks, 2011, para.61). Nevertheless, it was felt that e-books could add to the existing provision of materials for visually impaired persons (Gilks, 2011, para.62).

Despite the challenges, Palmer (2011a, p.91) suggests that e-book provision in public libraries will continue. Palmer (2011b, pp.206-207) highlights benefits such as the iPhone helping dyslexic people. Furthermore, the creation of new genres is possible (Palmer, 2011b, p.211) whilst a lack of children’s content (Palmer, 2011b, p.204) and the provision of content in other languages (Palmer, 2011b, p.211) present further challenges and opportunities.

Many challenges are identified in the literature concerning collection development, training and promotion.



## **2.9 Summary**

This review has considered the literature covering e-books in public libraries over the last ten years. This research uses a definition of e-books which focuses on content. Advantages of e-books include 24/7 remote access, portability and the possibility of attracting new customers. Disadvantages include the reading experience, costs, and the need for hardware, a power supply, IT skills and access to the Internet. Current attitudes towards e-books in public libraries seem positive although there are doubts about the success of fiction e-books. Usability studies report negatively on experiences with e-readers and caution is urged. A range of challenges for public libraries is identified, including collection development, training and promotion. Nevertheless, some commentators (Lonsdale & Armstrong, 2011; Palmer, 2011a; Palmer, 2011b) remain optimistic about the future of e-books in public libraries.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

This chapter aims to justify the choice of research approach and describe the methods used. The limitations of the methods will be examined and alternative approaches will be considered.

#### **3.1 Justification of the Approaches Selected**

This research uses a mixed methods approach but with a greater emphasis on qualitative data. Quantitative data is collected about e-book usage and the number of public library authorities which provide e-books. Qualitative data is collected during interviews with staff and customers as the research aims to explore attitudes. Researching attitudes is useful as they can reveal “underlying reasons for use or disuse of materials in ways usage data analysis cannot” (Shrimplin, Revelle, Hurst & Messne, 2011, p.182). The qualitative data was analysed thematically. Bryman (2008) argues that mixed methods research “*may* provide a better understanding of a phenomenon than if just one method has been used” (p.624). The use of quantitative data in this research aims to enhance the findings of the qualitative data.

#### **3.2 Methods**

HLIS was chosen because it is easily accessible to the researcher. The researcher carried out a literature review and three sets of face-to-face semi-structured interviews:

1. Customer interviews
2. Front-line staff interviews
3. One in-depth interview.

The researcher also investigated the number of UK public library authorities listed on OverDrive's website in November 2011 and again in March 2012 (OverDrive, Inc., 2012f). HCC provided statistics and other documents concerning the e-book service.

### **3.2.1 Customer Interviews**

In previous research, an online questionnaire has been used to investigate user opinions of e-books (McKnight, Dearnley & Morris, 2008; Gunter, 2005). It seems likely that participants were familiar with IT. This method could exclude non-users of IT or those who only use the physical library. In this study, the researcher aimed to reach non-users of IT by interviewing customers in physical libraries. Only two of the thirty two customers interviewed had no IT experience therefore the findings based on IT experience are not generalizable.

In February and March 2012, the interviewer carried out three sets of semi-structured interviews with customers at three different public libraries in Hampshire (See Figure 4).

<b>Branch</b>	<b>Size of Branch*</b>	<b>Day and time</b>	<b>Number of customers interviewed</b>	<b>Non-response</b>
Branch A	Medium	Tuesday morning	15	5
Branch B	Medium	Wednesday morning	3	3
Branch C	Large	Saturday morning	14	5
<b>TOTAL:</b>			32	13

Figure 4: Customer interviews.

\*The size of the libraries was determined by Hampshire County Council (2012b).

Wengraf (2001, p.187) recommends carrying out pilot studies. A pilot study was carried out with a customer which was not included in the sample. This resulted in some additions to the interview guide to ensure that the data would fulfil the aims of the research.

The areas of Hampshire were selected for ease of access. At Branch A, a Tuesday morning was chosen as the researcher thought it would be busy. Furthermore, an IT class for visually impaired people was taking place. The researcher interviewed five visually impaired people. At Branch B, the researcher carried out an in-depth interview with a member of staff who was responsible for establishing the e-book service. After this interview, the researcher had limited time to interview customers. Hence, only three customers were interviewed. Branch C was chosen as it is a larger library in another area. A Saturday morning was chosen as this could allow access to customers who work or do

not visit the library during the week. Carrying out customer interviews in three different branches helped to increase the range of opinions collected although the research is limited to two areas of Hampshire.

As this was a convenience sample and the sample population is unknown, the findings cannot be generalized (Bryman, 2008, p.183). Bryman (2008) describes a convenience sample as “simply available to the researcher by virtue of its accessibility” (p.183). Furthermore, the researcher interviewed as many customers as time permitted. However, it was hoped that this method would indicate the level of awareness of e-books and some reactions to e-books from customers who use the physical library. An alternative sampling method would have been to list all the members of the library service and randomly select a sample (Pickard, 2007, pp.61-62). This was not possible due to time and cost restrictions and data protection considerations. The researcher could have interviewed some non-users of public libraries, for example, in a local town but they may have been less willing to participate. If time and resources permitted, it would have improved the findings if the researcher had interviewed customers in other areas of Hampshire.

### **3.2.2 Front-line Staff Interviews**

Previous studies have focused on customer and professional staff perceptions (Dearnley et al., 2004; McKnight & Dearnley, 2003). There is however a gap concerning the perceptions of front-line staff in public libraries. Therefore, the researcher decided to interview front-line staff of HLIS about their experiences and attitudes towards e-books. The researcher carried out five sets of interviews with front-line staff during February and March 2012 (See Figure 5).

<b>Branch</b>	<b>Size of Branch*</b>	<b>Day and time</b>	<b>Number of staff interviewed</b>	<b>Non-response</b>
Branch A	Medium	Over two weeks	13	0
Branch B	Medium	Wednesday morning	3	1
Branch C	Large	Saturday morning	7	0
Branch D	Key	Tuesday afternoon	6	0
Branch E	Medium	Friday morning	6	0
<b>TOTAL:</b>			35	1

Figure 5: Front-line staff interviews.

\*The size of the libraries was determined by Hampshire County Council (2012b).

A pilot study was carried out with a member of staff at Branch A (See Figure 5). As a result, another question was added to the interview guide. Although pilot studies are not usually included in the sample (Bryman, 2008, p.248), the researcher decided to include the staff pilot interview as useful themes emerged and only minor changes were made to the interview guide.

Branches A, B and C were chosen because the researcher was already carrying out customer interviews at these branches. Because Branch A was more easily accessible to the researcher, the interviews took place over two weeks. Branch D was chosen because of its size (See Figure 5). Branch E provided another perspective.

The sampling method was purposive in that the researcher wanted to interview a range of front-line staff at different sized branches. Bryman (2008) argues that purposive sampling occurs when “the researcher samples on the basis of wanting to interview people who are relevant to the research questions” (p.458). However, “because it is a non-probability sampling approach, purposive sampling does not allow the researcher to generalize” (Bryman, 2008, p.415). This sampling method was also combined with convenience sampling because the researcher did not know which members of staff would be available to participate. At each branch, the researcher asked all the available staff to participate.

There are approximately 500 front-line staff working for HLIS (Selby, 2012). Data was collected from thirty five members of front-line staff therefore the sample is too small to generalize the findings. The sample includes three members of staff in managerial roles who have experience of working on the front-line. The sample only included two male members of staff therefore it is not possible to draw conclusions based on gender. However, part-timers, full-timers and a range of ages were represented. An alternative sampling method would have been to list every member of front-line staff and select participants on a random basis (Pickard, 2007, pp.61-62). Limitations on time and travelling costs prevented the researcher from using this method.

### **3.2.3 In-depth Interview with a Senior Member of Staff**

For the purposes of triangulation, the researcher sought a third source of data although triangulation of methods was not achieved. Triangulation can be defined as “using more than one method or source of data” (Bryman, 2008, p.379). Triangulation can increase the credibility of findings (Pickard, 2007, p.20). The researcher decided to interview a member of staff who was responsible for establishing e-book provision for HLIS. The interview

lasted one and a half hours. Due to time constraints, this interview took place before the customer and most of the front-line staff interviews. Nevertheless, the use of an interview guide ensured that a list of topics was covered. The researcher compared the findings of this interview with the data from the customer and front-line staff interviews. During the interview, the researcher explored some of the challenges facing public libraries which emerged from the literature review, for example, collection development (Armstrong & Lonsdale, 2011, p.xxix; Vasileiou, Hartley & Rowley, 2009, p.190).

Snowball sampling occurs when the researcher seeks “to make initial contact with key informants who, in turn, point to information-rich cases” (Pickard, 2007, p.65). Snowball sampling was used to identify an individual for the in-depth interview. A trainer at an e-books training session recommended a contact for the interview. Although it is not possible to generalize the results of using snowball sampling (Bryman, 2008, p.185), Patton (2002) argues that “qualitative inquiry typically focuses in depth on relatively small samples, even single cases” (p.230). However, if time and resources permitted, comparison with a member of staff in a similar role in another public library authority would have improved the findings.

#### **3.2.4 Statistics**

The researcher was permitted to access usage statistics of OverDrive and Public Library Online. These statistics are presented in tables 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 of Chapter 4. The statistics are analysed alongside the findings of the in-depth interview.



### **3.3 Advantages and Disadvantages of Semi-structured Interviews**

#### **3.3.1 Flexibility**

Semi-structured interviews were used for all of the interviews because of their flexibility. (Bryman, 2008, p.438). Unlike a structured interview where each respondent answers the same questions in a set order (Bryman, 2008, p.193), a semi-structured interview allows the interviewer to change the order and ask improvised questions (Bryman, 2008, p.438), for example, about a participant's use of e-books. Although more structured interviews could facilitate the comparison of answers (Patton, 2002, p.349), they seem too rigid for discussing attitudes and opinions. On the other hand, unstructured interviews would provide too little structure (Bryman, 2008, p.438).

#### **3.3.2 Interview Guides**

The semi-structured interview uses an interview guide to provide a checklist of the areas to be discussed (Kvale, 1996, p.27). A different interview guide was prepared for customers, front-line staff and the in-depth interview. The interview guides combined closed and open questions to meet the aims and objectives of the research. Closed questions concerned demographic information and e-book usage. Fixed responses were used to aid comparison (Bryman, 2008, p.235). The front-line staff and customer interview guides (See Appendices I and II) were similar but customers were asked about their IT experience and their awareness of e-books. These questions were not relevant for front-line staff. The researcher followed the advice of Patton (2002, p.350) to compose questions exploring opinions (See Appendices I and II). Only staff were asked about the future because the

customer interviews were designed to take less time to complete. The researcher also used probes (Patton, 2002, pp.372-374) during the interviews.

### **3.3.3 Alternative Method – Questionnaire**

An alternative method would have been a questionnaire. Questionnaires take less time to conduct (Bryman, 2008, p.217) and bias caused by the interviewer may be reduced (Bryman, 2008, p.218). The researcher could have handed out questionnaires in branches which is a technique discussed by Pickard (2007, pp.198-199). However, Bryman (2008) argues that “respondents frequently do not want to write a lot” (p.218). Interviews can provide more detailed data (Pickard, 2007, p.172) including “visual and oral clues” (Pickard, 2007, p.175). The interviewer can clarify questions for participants (Bryman, 2008, p.218). For some customers, the researcher defined an e-book and described current provision of e-books and then gauged reactions from participants.

### **3.3.4 Alternative Method – Focus Group**

The researcher considered a focus group as an alternative method. They can be a rich source of data (Pickard, 2007, p.224). However, “the researcher probably has less control over proceedings than with the individual interview” (Bryman, 2008, p.488). As this research is interested in individual opinions, interviews seemed more suitable. Indeed, Pickard (2007) argues that “interviews are usually used when we are seeking qualitative, descriptive, in-depth data that is specific to the individual” (p.172).

## **3.4 Ethical considerations**

The data collected in this research has been used in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

This research also follows:

- Aberystwyth University's Department of Information Studies Ethics Policy for Research (Department of Information Studies, Aberystwyth University, 2010)
- The British Sociological Association (2002) Statement of Ethical Practice
- CILIP's Code of Professional Practice for Library and Information Professionals (CILIP, 2011c) and Ethical Principles for Library and Information Professionals (CILIP, 2011d).

### **3.4.1 Informed Consent**

Permission was granted by the Head of Library Operations to carry out research in HLIS. The Assistant Library Manager of each branch approached gave their permission via email or telephone for the research to be conducted. Each member of staff was given an information sheet (See Appendix III) which explained the purpose of the research, what the research would involve and provided contact details for the researcher. Participants were assured that as far as possible, they would be unidentifiable in the dissertation and any direct quotes would be cited anonymously (See Appendices III, IV and V). In each branch, the researcher approached customers as they were using the library. For customers, the researcher verbally explained the contents of an information sheet which was then handed to customers after the interviews as a debriefing (See Appendix IV). Staff were also given a debriefing letter after their interviews. Kvale (1996, p.128) discusses the importance of debriefing participants. Potential participants were invited to complete an informed consent form (See example in Appendix V).

### **3.4.2 Recording**

The majority of interviews were recorded with an Olympus Digital Voice Recorder VN-8700PC. Participants were asked for their permission to be recorded. Staff were informed that recordings and transcripts would be destroyed six months after confirmation of the final Master's degree result (See Appendix III). Six members of staff and three customers asked not to be recorded. Instead, the researcher took detailed notes. Pickard (2007) warns that recording can "have a negative impact on the interview" (p.177). However, recording means that the researcher does not rely on incomplete notes (Gorman & Clayton, 2005, p.137) and is free to react to responses during the interview (Bryman, 2008, p.451). Copies of the recordings were kept securely on a laptop and a USB memory stick.

### **3.4.3 Screenshots**

Permission was granted by OverDrive (OverDrive, Inc., 2012d) to include screenshots of the public website (See Figures 1 and 2). Public Library Online (O'Brien, 2012) also allowed screenshots to be included (See Figure 3).

## **3.5 Methods of Data Analysis**

Analysis started whilst data was being collected. Making brief, summarizing notes after each interview is recommended in the literature (Wengraf, 2001, p.142; Kvale, 1996, p.129). The researcher used printed interview guides to make notes on emerging themes during the interviews.

### **3.5.1 Thematic Analysis**

The researcher transcribed the recorded interviews. During the transcription stage, the researcher made notes on emerging themes as recommended by Wengraf (2001, pp.209-

210). The researcher used Microsoft Excel to collate data and create charts. Each interview was assigned a code. The researcher used thematic analysis (Bryman, 2008, pp.554-556) to examine the data (See Appendix VI). The researcher identified themes from the interviews, listed the themes and analysed how many participants commented on each theme. Bryman (2008) argues that thematic analysis can involve an “implicit quantification ... that influences the identification of themes and the elevation of some themes over others” (p.598). Quantifying how many times themes occurred in this research produced an overview of the range of themes and the themes which tended to be popular. This also allowed comparisons to be made between customers and front-line staff alongside a response from the in-depth interview.

### **3.6 Limitations**

#### **3.6.1 Sample**

The following sampling methods were employed in this research:

- Customer interviews – convenience sample
- Front-line staff interviews – purposive and convenience sample
- In-depth interview – purposive – snowball sampling

Purposive sampling is appropriate for qualitative research (Bryman, 2008, p.414; Pickard, 2007, p.59). However, the findings cannot be generalized (Bryman, 2008, p.415). Furthermore, the sample population of customers was unknown so these findings also cannot be generalized (Bryman, 2008, p.183). Nevertheless, Pickard (2007) argues that “in qualitative research, the goal is to allow for transferability of the findings” (p.20). This is facilitated by providing details of the research for readers (Pickard, 2007, p.20).

The size of the sample for the customers and front-line staff interviews was not known before the data collection started. Kvale (1996) recommends that researchers “interview as many subjects as necessary to find out what you need to know” (p.101). The researcher interviewed as many participants as time allowed. The sample size allowed for a range of attitudes to be explored although few experiences of using e-books were identified. However, the size of the sample is too small to be representative of the rest of Hampshire.

### **3.6.2 Bias**

Bias also limited this research. Participants may change their responses in reaction to the interviewer (Bryman, 2008, p.210). Some front-line staff and customers knew the researcher on a professional level. To minimise this bias, the researcher also interviewed staff and customers at branches where the researcher was unknown. However, some participants may have felt more comfortable talking to someone they knew. The research included one branch in another area of Hampshire but it would have improved the study if the researcher had visited more areas of Hampshire. The presence of other customers or staff in the library could also have affected the responses of participants.

### **3.6.3 Trustworthiness**

Qualitative research has been criticised for its “lack of transparency” (Bryman, 2008, p.392) while Pickard (2007, p.20) discusses the need for dependability. The researcher recorded details of the research process in a diary and kept detailed records of the collected data, as discussed by Bryman (2008, p.378). This may improve the dependability of the findings (Bryman, 2008, p.378; Pickard, 2007, p.20). Pickard (2007, p.20) discusses the use of triangulation, debriefing and member checks to improve the credibility of findings.

Due to time constraints, participants were not asked to check their transcripts or the researcher's interpretation. However, participants were debriefed. Three different interview sources were studied but credibility could have been improved if another method had been used such as a questionnaire. Confirmability involves the objectivity of the researcher (Bryman, 2008, p.379; Pickard, 2007, p.21). This means that "any investigator would come up with the same or similar data under equivalent conditions" (Gorman & Clayton, 2005, p.26). This research only represents one way of viewing the data and findings. Using another interviewer could have helped to reduce interviewer bias and increase confidence in the findings. Another criticism of qualitative research is that it cannot be easily repeated (Bryman, 2008, p.391). In this research, the literature search could be repeated. The interview guides could be adapted for use in other libraries.

### **3.7 Summary**

This research uses a mixed methods approach. Semi-structured interviews are used to explore the attitudes and experiences of customers and front-line staff in two areas of Hampshire. An in-depth semi-structured interview was carried out with a member of staff who established e-book provision for HLIS. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the collected data. The sampling methods, the small size of the sample and potential bias limit the value of the findings. Although the findings cannot be generalized, a range of attitudes and challenges concerning e-books were identified from the data.

## **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter includes the results and a discussion which relates the results to the findings from the literature review.

### **4.1 Interviews with Front-line Staff and Customers**

#### **4.1.1 Front-line Staff Participants**

Thirty five members of staff agreed to participate. Only one member of staff decided not to participate. Participants included thirty three female members of staff plus two male members of staff. Due to the small size of the sample, the findings related to male members of staff cannot be significant or transferable. Three of the female members of staff have managerial roles although they have experience of working on the front-line in a public library. Eleven participants work full-time and twenty four participants work part-time. Staff are referred to with the code "S" followed by a number.

The majority of respondents were over forty years of age with most respondents in the 51-60 age band (See Figure 6).



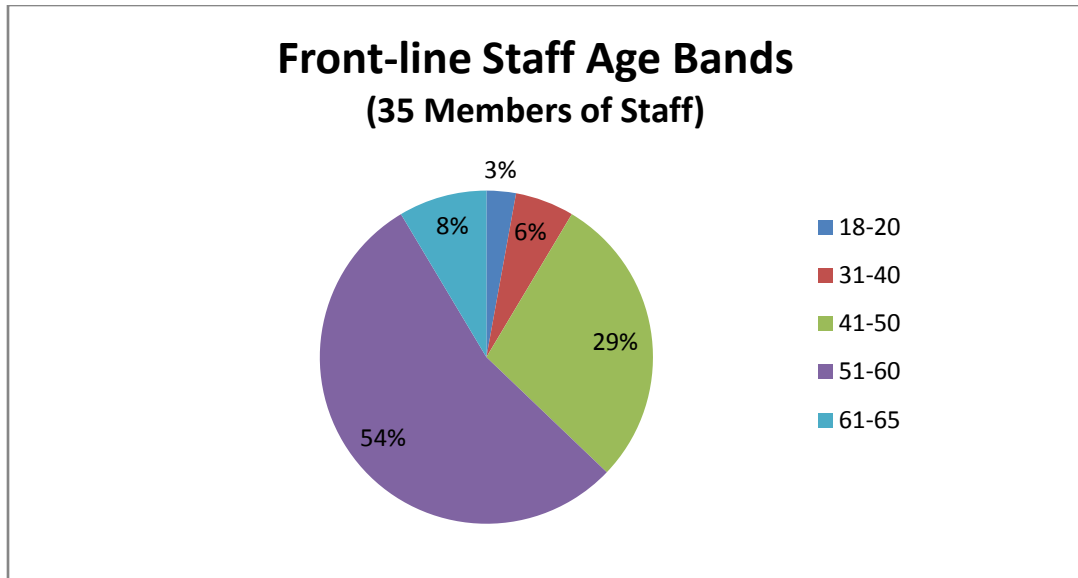


Figure 6. Percentages of front-line staff in each age band.

The 51-60 and 61-65 age bands each included one male member of staff.

The in-depth interview with the member of staff who was responsible for establishing e-book provision is referred to with the code R. The findings from this interview are examined alongside the findings from the other interviews.

#### 4.1.2 Customer Participants

Thirty two customers agreed to participate. The researcher asked a further thirteen customers who decided not to participate. The response rate of 71 per cent is high although the sample is too small to generalize the findings.

Fourteen of the customers interviewed were male and eighteen were female. Customers are referred to with the code “C” followed by a number.

There was a broader range of ages for customers than for staff although no customers in the 18-20 age band participated (See Figure 7). One customer preferred not to divulge their age. The 61-70 age band was well represented. This could have included retired people.

Other customers included mothers with pre-school children and workers visiting the library at the weekend. Five customers had attended an IT class for the visually impaired on the day of the interviews.

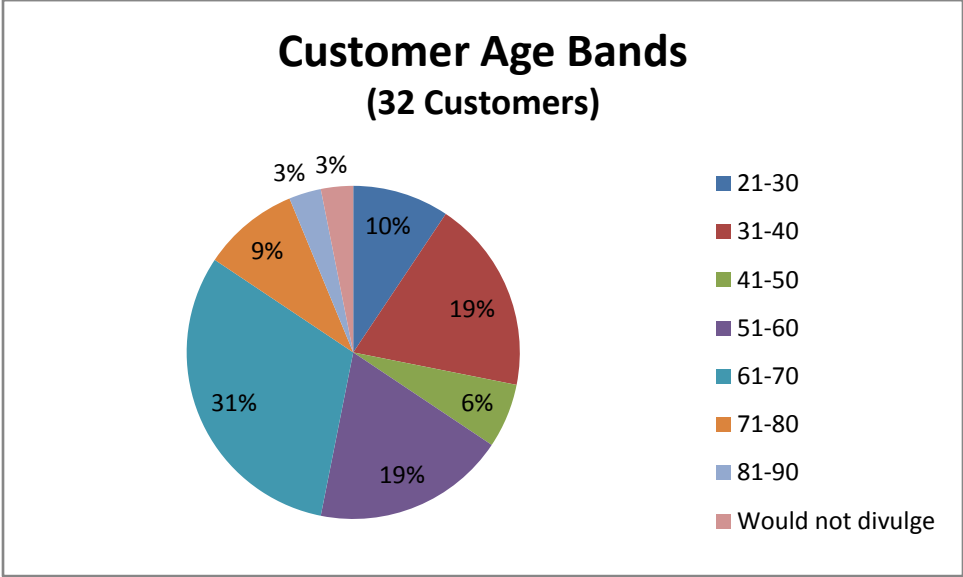


Figure 7. Percentages of customers in each age band.

Most customers had substantial IT experience with twelve customers with 11-20 years of experience and ten customers with over twenty years of experience (See Figure 8). Only two customers had no experience.

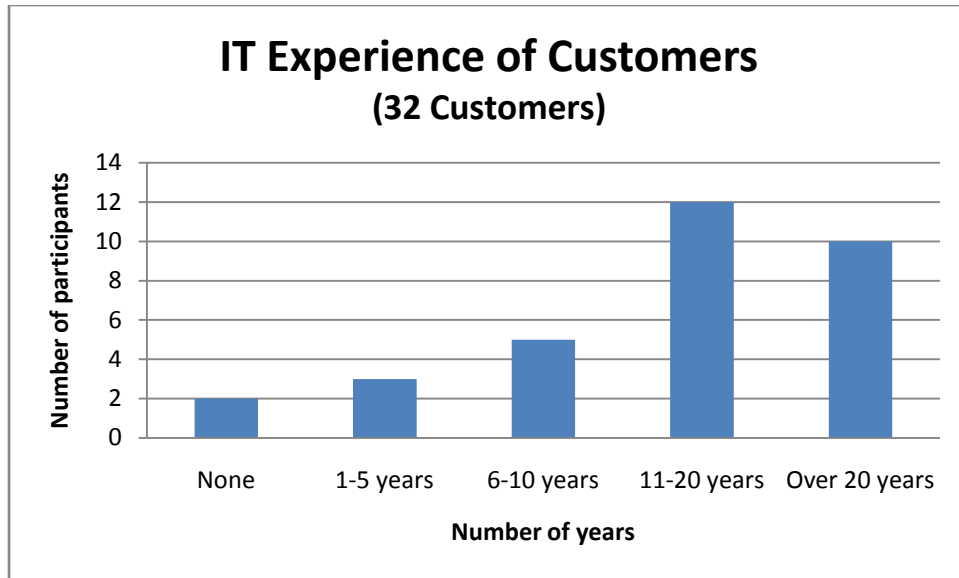


Figure 8. IT experience of customers.

#### 4.2 Awareness of E-books Amongst Customers

To fulfil the third objective of this research, thirty two customers were asked if they had heard of e-books before. The researcher was able to assume that all staff were already aware of e-books. Twenty seven customers (84.3 per cent) had heard of e-books which signifies a high level of awareness. A similarly high level of awareness had been found amongst a larger sample of online participants (Gunter, 2005, p.518).

One customer was unaware of e-books (C7) and four customers were confused about the definition of an e-book. Four customers said that they were unaware of e-books but they had heard of Amazon's Kindle, for example:

“I've heard of Kindle but not actually e-books” (C8).

This highlights the success of Amazon's marketing campaign. The researcher defined an e-book for these customers and asked them for their reactions.

#### **4.2.1 Awareness of HLIS E-books**

The researcher could assume that all front-line staff were aware of HLIS e-books. Of the twenty seven customers who were aware of e-books, twelve (44.4 per cent) were aware that HLIS provides e-books. Awareness of HLIS provision was not high in comparison with the general awareness of e-books. This suggests that promotion is required which is discussed in the literature (Ashcroft, 2011, p.405). Of these twelve customers, only one participant (C4) had used HLIS's e-books although another customer (C29) had joined the library on the day of the interview in order to access e-books. The researcher conducted these interviews in libraries with current library customers. It is possible that users of HLIS e-books, which are accessed remotely, do not use physical libraries.

#### **4.3 Use of HLIS e-books.**

Five female members of staff have used HLIS e-books. Two of them had also used e-books from other sources. Four of these five participants were in the 51-60 age band and one participant (S4) was in the 41-50 age band. Four participants had used OverDrive since 2010/2011 and between them, they had accessed fourteen e-books from OverDrive which averages at 3.5 per person. A fifth member of staff (S16) was not sure which service they had used.

Three members of staff experienced technical problems with OverDrive. Two of them remained positive about their experience, for example, S4 commented that it worked well on other occasions. The third participant (S13) also buys downloadable e-books from Waterstones. Waterstones (2012) provides a commercial e-book service online. S13 concluded that the Waterstones service was more user-friendly than OverDrive but it was easier to find titles by genre using OverDrive. S13 did not enjoy using OverDrive due to

downloading problems, short holding periods for reserved items and limited content. However, the Waterstones service similarly has limited content (S13). It seems that content is a problem across providers. A fourth member of staff (S10) experienced no challenges using an iPad to access OverDrive e-books. S10 described how easy it was to browse and download older titles in comparison with accessing older titles through a physical library:

Only one customer had used OverDrive and had accessed one title (C4). Although the range of content was acceptable, there were not enough copies of titles and the long waiting lists were discouraging (C4). Another problem with content is that more recent titles of a series were available in e-audio but not the earlier titles (C4). C4 who was visually impaired and had 11-20 years of IT experience also thought that OverDrive was not user-friendly for visually impaired customers due to problems with setting up the necessary software. C4 suggested that downloading stations should be set up in libraries where staff could help customers. The experiences of this customer (C4) support the findings of an RNIB report which found that the accessibility of council websites, the lack of access to e-books in the physical library and the need for help from staff were all challenges for visually impaired people (Gilks, 2011, para.58-61).

No customers had used Public Library Online. One member of staff (S35) had searched Public Library Online and concluded that it would be useful if there was no other access to a title. Another member of staff (S16) would only use Public Library Online as a last resort.

#### **4.3.1 E-books From Other Sources**

Three female members of staff in the 51-60 age band and five customers over forty had only used an e-book on Amazon's Kindle.

All three members of staff enjoyed using Amazon's Kindle and experienced no challenges. Customers also tended to be positive about using the Kindle and the titles available but one customer was dissatisfied with the illustrations (C27). Another customer (C28) had read free titles that they would not normally read. This suggests that e-books can change reading habits. One member of staff found that the Kindle was user-friendly despite usually lacking confidence with technology (S30). Another customer (C15) who had no IT experience enjoyed using a Kindle at first (C15). This suggests that lack of IT experience is not always a barrier to using a Kindle however another customer (C7) with no IT experience had no interest at all in e-books.

Three members of staff and one customer (C31) who had used a Kindle did not explain why they had not used HLIS e-books. However, S1 and S30 had limited experience of e-books. A lack of time was the reason for one customer (C27). The other three customers were unaware of HLIS's e-book provision.

Overall, four members of staff and one customer (C4) had used the OverDrive service. The main challenges experienced were downloading problems and a lack of content. Two studies reported dissatisfaction amongst public library customers who tested specific devices (Landoni & Hanlon, 2007, p.606; Dearnley & McKnight, 2001, pp.77-78). Other studies reported concerns about the success of e-books in public libraries (Dearnley et al., 2004, pp.230-232; Dearnley, McKnight & Morris, 2004, p.181; McKnight & Dearnley, 2003, p.242). In this research, conclusions cannot be drawn from such a small sample but three of the five members of staff who had used OverDrive remained positive about their experiences. However, participants who had used Amazon's Kindle seemed more positive about their experiences.

#### **4.4 Reasons for Non-Use of E-books**

Participants who had never used e-books were asked to provide reasons. These reasons were not pre-defined by the researcher (See Appendix I – Question 3). Customers were asked why they had not used HLIS e-books (See Appendix II – Question 5) but their reasons explained their non-use of any e-books. The number of reasons that participants could provide was unlimited.

Eight out of thirty five members of staff had used e-books. The remaining twenty seven members of staff including both male participants had never used an e-book and explained why not. Six out of thirty two customers had used e-books before. Of the remaining twenty six customers, only sixteen customers explained why they had not used e-books before. Ten customers did not provide a reason. The staff response included members of staff in each age band. The customer response included every age band and both male and female participants.

In other studies, the reading experience emerged as a problem (Dearnley et al., 2004, p.225; Lonsdale & Armstrong, 2011, p.21) and a reason not to use e-books (Chu, 2003, p.343). In this research, the main reason for not using e-books for both staff and customers is a preference for printed books. Participants mentioned the tactile feel of a printed book and the smell:

“I love books. I like opening books and looking at them. It sounds really daft but I like the smell of books.” (C30).

Staff mentioned the ability to flick the pages easily. Lack of tactility is also reported in the literature (Gibson & Gibb, 2011, p.310; Dearnley & McKnight, 2001, p.77). The literature also highlights a sense of nostalgia (McKnight & Dearnley, 2003, p.241) and an emotional

attachment to printed books (McKnight, Dearnley & Morris, 2008, p.37; Landoni & Hanlon, 2007, p.606).

<b>Reasons for not using e-books amongst front-line staff (27 members of staff)</b>		
<b>Reasons</b>	<b>Number of responses</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Preference for printed books	19	70.3%
Lack of hardware	11	40.7%
Lack of interest	8	29.6%
Lack of time	4	14.8%
Concern about potential eye strain	3	11.1%
Lack of knowledge	3	11.1%
Prefer not to read on screen after using computer screens at work	2	7.4%
Easy access to printed books	2	7.4%
Lack of IT access at home	2	7.4%
E-readers are unattractive	1	3.7%
Cost	1	3.7%

Table 1. Reasons for not using e-books amongst front-line staff. (Participants could mention as many reasons as they wished).



A lack of interest was identified by participants. Easy access to printed books (two staff participants) could contribute to this lack of interest. McKnight and Dearnley (2003, p.240) also found apathy amongst customers and staff of Market Harborough public library.

<b>Reasons for not using e-books amongst customers (16 customers)</b>		
<b>Reasons</b>	<b>Number of responses</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Preference for printed books	14	87.5%
Prefer not to read on screen after using computer screens at work	3	18.8%
Problems with IT skills	2	12.5%
Lack of interest	2	12.5%
Lack of hardware	2	12.5%
Lack of knowledge	1	6.3%
No IT access at home	1	6.3%

Table 2. Reasons for not using e-books amongst customers. (Participants could mention as many reasons as they wished).

Other reasons identified by both customers and staff included a lack of hardware, a lack of equipment and a lack of IT access. Only customers mentioned IT skills. Staff were concerned about eye strain although both customers and staff were concerned about reading e-books after working with computer screens all day. Cost was only identified by one

member of staff (S6) although it later emerges as a disadvantage. Lack of time was a concern for staff.

To summarize, staff and customers identified three main barriers towards using e-books:

- 1) Preference for printed books
- 2) Apathy
- 3) Technological barrier.

Twenty five customers discussed their interest in using e-books. This includes customers who had already tried an e-book. These categories were not pre-defined by the researcher. Twelve customers (48 per cent) showed a positive interest in trying an e-book including five customers who would like to try a HLIS e-book. After the interviews, a few customers said they would visit the e-book website. Six of these twelve interested customers had not been aware of HLIS e-book provision before the interview. Four customers showed no interest in trying an e-book including one customer (C7) with no IT experience. Of the twenty seven members of staff who had not used an e-book before, twelve (44.4 per cent) showed interest in trying one.

Eleven of the twenty five customers (44 per cent) were not interested in reading an e-book on a computer screen. Online services like Public Library Online would not appeal to these participants. Three customers would use a computer screen.

To summarize, nearly half of participants were interested in using an e-book. However, customers showed less interest in using a computer screen. This illustrates that public library provision of downloadable e-books responds to customer needs. However, online access services like Public Library Online may not be as popular.

## **4.5 Advantages and Disadvantages of E-books**

Participants were asked about the advantages and disadvantages of e-books. Advantages and disadvantages were not pre-defined by the researcher. Participants could mention as many advantages and disadvantages as they wished.

### **4.5.1 Advantages of E-books**

The most popular advantage for both customers and staff was portability. Portability was also a main advantage amongst public library customers (McKnight, Dearnley & Morris, 2008, p.37; Dearnley et al., 2004, p.224) and professional staff in Essex (Dearnley et al., 2004, p.227). Storage was also an important advantage for public library customers in Market Harborough (McKnight & Dearnley, 2003, p.241). In this research, storage and convenience were in the top five advantages for both customers and staff. The lightness of devices was important to staff however only one customer (C20) mentioned this advantage. Both staff and customers thought that saving physical space was important.

Both staff and customers thought that e-books would benefit those who cannot use printed books such as visually impaired people and people who suffer with arthritis. An RNIB report concluded that e-books could add to the existing provision of material for visually impaired people (Gilks, 2011, para.62). Furthermore, one member of staff (S34) suggested that e-books would benefit those who cannot or prefer not to visit their library. The ability to increase the font size was identified by both staff and customers. This was also mentioned by public library customers in Essex (Dearnley et al., 2004, p.230). However, one visually impaired customer (C12) pointed out that increasing the font size could reduce the amount of text on the screen. The customer would subsequently need to turn the pages of the e-book more frequently which was seen as a disadvantage (C12).

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Advantages of e-books for front-line staff</b> <b>(35 members of staff)</b></p>		
<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Number of responses</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Portability	30	85.7%
Storage	20	57.1%
Lightweight	13	37.1%
Increase font size	9	25.7%
Convenience	5	14.3%
Helps those who cannot use printed books	4	11.4%
Save physical space	4	11.4%
Speed – instant access	3	8.6%
More choice	3	8.6%
Environmentally friendly	2	5.7%
24/7 access	2	5.7%
Can read in any light	1	2.9%
For those who cannot or prefer not to visit the physical library	1	2.9%

Table 3. Advantages of e-books for front-line staff. (Participants could mention as many advantages as they wished).

R identified 24/7 remote access as a main advantage for customers but only two members of staff and no customers mentioned this benefit. However, two customers mentioned instant access to e-books anywhere and three members of staff mentioned the speed of accessing e-books. Another study found that remote access was important to public library customers in Essex (McKnight, Dearnley & Morris, 2008, p.37). As customers participated online (McKnight, Dearnley & Morris, 2008, p.32), perhaps they were more aware of online access.

<b>Advantages of e-books for customers</b>		
<b>(28 customers – 4 customers did not discuss advantages)</b>		
<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Number of responses</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Portability	15	53.6%
Convenience	8	28.6%
Storage	8	28.6%
Save physical space	4	14.3%
Increase font size	4	14.3%
Helps those who cannot use printed books	3	10.7%
Novelty	3	10.7%
More choice	3	10.7%
Modern	2	7.1%

Permanent	2	7.1%
Cheaper	2	7.1%
Environmentally-friendly	2	7.1%
Instant access anywhere	2	7.1%
Cannot damage an e-book	1	3.6%
E-books are cleaner than printed books	1	3.6%
Lightweight	1	3.6%
Small size of device	1	3.6%
No need to visit physical library	1	3.6%
User-friendly	1	3.6%
Can read in any light	1	3.6%

Table 4. Advantages of e-books for customers. (Participants could mention as many advantages as they wished).

Customers mentioned a wider range of advantages than staff. One customer (C15) said that e-books would be cleaner. Another customer (C14) noted that you cannot damage an e-book which was also reported in the literature (Armstrong, Edwards & Lonsdale, 2002, p.224).

R commented that e-books do not incur overdue charges which is also discussed by Palmer (2011a, p.79) however this was not identified by the small sample of participants in this research.

To summarize, portability and storage were the main advantages for staff and customers. Providing access to those who cannot use printed books was also important.

#### 4.5.2 Disadvantages of E-books

Cost is a main disadvantage for both staff and customers. A minority seem to have accepted e-books as one member of staff (S9) and three customers could not identify any disadvantages.

<b>Disadvantages of e-books for front-line staff (35 members of staff)</b>		
<b>Disadvantages</b>	<b>Number of responses</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Cost	10	28.6%
Loss of tactility and physical experience of printed books	9	25.7%
Easier to flick pages of printed book	7	20%
Risk of theft	6	17.1%
Uncomfortable	6	17.1%
Incompatibility of Kindle with Library e-books	5	14.3%
Requires electricity	5	14.3%
Risk of damage	4	11.4%
Potential eye strain	4	11.4%

Loss of browsing experience in library / bookshop	4	11.4%
Concerns about losing device and its contents	4	11.4%
Disappointing illustrations	4	11.4%
Loss of social experience	3	8.6%
Limited content	3	8.6%
Need hardware	3	8.6%
Over-complicates reading	2	5.7%
Technical problems occur	2	5.7%
Need IT skills	2	5.7%
Range of different formats is confusing	1	2.9%
Need IT access	1	2.9%
Difficulty of sharing e-books	1	2.9%
Need Internet access	1	2.9%
None	1	2.9%

Table 5. Disadvantages of e-books for front-line staff. (Participants could mention as many disadvantages as they wished).

The reading experience emerged as a disadvantage in other studies due to the “lack of *immersion*” (Dearnley et al., 2004, p.225) in e-books, an emotional attachment to printed books (McKnight, Dearnley & Morris, 2008, p.37; Landoni & Hanlon, 2007, p.606) and a



lack of comfort (Chu, 2003, 343). The reading experience is also raised by participants in this research. For both staff and customers, the loss of tactility of printed books was a main disadvantage of e-books. Staff mentioned the perceived difficulty of flicking through an e-book although no customers raised this issue. Illustrations in e-books were a concern for both staff and customers. Other disadvantages included the difficulty of sharing or lending e-books and the over-complication of reading. One customer (C21) mentioned the pleasure of receiving a printed book as a gift. Eye strain had already been given as a reason by three members of staff for not using e-books. A further four members of staff mentioned eye strain as a disadvantage. Eye strain has been noted in the literature (Gibson & Gibb, 2011, p.315). The lack of comfort was important to staff but only one customer (C16) mentioned this disadvantage.

<b>Disadvantages of e-books for customers</b> (22 customers – 10 customers did not discuss disadvantages)		
<b>Disadvantages</b>	<b>Number of responses</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Loss of tactility and physical experience of printed books	11	50%
Cost	6	27.2%
None	3	13.6%
Requires electricity	3	13.6%
Need for further IT skills	2	9.1%
Risk of damage	2	9.1%

Disappointing illustrations	2	9.1%
IT access required	1	4.5%
Easier to share a printed book with a child	1	4.5%
Uncomfortable	1	4.5%
Over-complicates reading	1	4.5%
Miss receiving a printed book as a gift	1	4.5%
Risk of theft	1	4.5%
Required to carry equipment with you	1	4.5%
Restrictions on lending e-books	1	4.5%
Impersonal e-book versus cosy printed book	1	4.5%

Table 6. Disadvantages of e-books for customers. (Participants could mention as many disadvantages as they wished).

Staff mentioned the loss of the browsing experience and the social experience of using a library. Lonsdale and Armstrong (2011, p.18) also reported this concern about the social experience. A member of staff commented:

“I think you can become very screen-orientated and lose social skills” (S34).

Only staff mentioned the incompatibility of Amazon's Kindle with library e-books and the lack of content. Awareness of these problems may not be as widespread amongst customers.

Staff seem to associate e-books with taking risks. Six members of staff identified the risk of theft compared to only one customer (C22). Staff and customers mentioned damaging a device but only staff mentioned losing a device. Other studies have identified theft (Dearnley & McKnight, 2001, p.77) and damage (Gibson & Gibb, 2011, p.315) as disadvantages.

Participants were aware of issues involving the digital divide. R commented that the disadvantages for customers include the need for IT skills and the need for hardware. Both staff and customers mentioned the need for electricity which was also identified by public library customers in Essex (McKnight, Dearnley & Morris, 2008, p.37). Both staff and customers discussed the need for IT skills. Only staff mentioned the need for hardware although one customer mentioned the inconvenience of having to carry the equipment with you:

“It's another piece of software to carry around” (C22).

The need for Internet access was raised by one member of staff (S17) whilst one customer mentioned the need for IT access:

“I haven't got a computer at home so it wouldn't be any good, would it?”

(C11).

McGuire (2011) discusses the potential widening of the digital divide and R agreed that this could happen. However, R commented that HLIS provides free Internet access which could help minimise the impact. Furthermore, the possible idea of lending devices in the future could also reduce the negative impact of e-books on the digital divide (R).

To summarize, cost and the loss of the tactility of printed books are the main disadvantages of e-books for both customers and staff.

#### **4.6 Attitudes towards E-books in General**

During the interviews, 65.7 per cent of staff (twenty three out of thirty five) and 65.6 per cent of customers (twenty one out of thirty two) mentioned Amazon's Kindle. This illustrates the success of Amazon's marketing campaign as it is the most frequently mentioned e-reader. It also indicates a challenge for public libraries as Amazon's Kindle is not compatible with e-books on offer in UK public libraries.

Participants were asked an open question about their opinions of e-books in general (See Appendices I and II). The majority of participants responded positively to e-books. Eighteen members of staff (51.4 per cent) reacted positively, ranging from:

- “I think it's a good idea” (S35) to
- “I think they're brilliant” (S16).

Other staff were unsure but no member of staff was negative. Twenty one customers (65.6 per cent) were also positive, ranging from:

- “Yeah, I think they're a good idea” (C24) to
- “I think they're marvellous” (C4).

However, one customer (C12) was confused by the range of devices available. Other customers either showed no interest, not much enthusiasm or uncertainty. Two customers were negative about e-books.

Ten members of staff seemed to view e-books as a supplementary format which could co-exist alongside printed books. Staff commented:

“They have their place” (S8, S9, S11, S30).

Gilks (2011, para.62) also concludes that e-books could add to the provision of material for visually impaired people.

Overall, a positive attitude towards e-books was found amongst participants as well as a high awareness of Amazon’s Kindle.

#### **4.6.1 Attitudes towards E-book Provision in Public Libraries**

To achieve the second and fourth objectives of this research, participants were asked about their attitudes towards e-books in public libraries. The majority of participants were positive about e-books being provided by public libraries. Twenty three members of staff (65.7 per cent) and twenty five customers (78.1 per cent) supported the idea. This echoes positive attitudes towards e-books in public library authorities in Wales (Lonsdale & Armstrong, 2011, p.36) and amongst public library customers on the Sunshine Coast, Australia (Duncan, 2010, p.52). A minority of participants (three members of staff and two customers) were negative about e-book provision in public libraries. One customer (C10) was concerned about costs and another customer (C20) was concerned that IT access is not available to all at home.

Like Berube (2005, p.18), three members of staff viewed e-books as a natural extension of library provision:

“It’s just another form of book and we do books” (S13).

Participants identified benefits for the library service:

- To remain relevant (seventeen members of staff and three customers).
- To save money (two customers)

R argued that the advantages for the library service are modernisation and to remain relevant:

“If we don’t have an e-book service, we become irrelevant” (R).

Eight members of staff thought that providing e-books responds to customer needs. This supports the argument that customers will expect public libraries to provide e-books (Palmer, 2011a, p.91; Palmer, 2011b, p.212; Duncan, 2010, p.54).

Participants raised concerns:

- Decreasing footfall in public libraries (six members of staff). This was also raised by Welsh public library authorities (Lonsdale & Armstrong, 2011, p.18).
- Employment concerns (four members of staff)
- Diversity of stock (S25)
- The impact on authors, publishers and printers (two customers)
- Copyright (C29).

Four customers explained that they prefer to visit a bookshop or a library to browse for books. This echoes the four members of staff who saw the loss of the browsing experience as a disadvantage of e-books.

Three members of staff discussed charging for e-book access. S20 suggested an annual subscription whilst S28 suggested charging per e-book. For customers, opinion was divided. One customer (C30) assumed that there were charges while C31 would pay a small charge. R explained that HLIS had decided not to charge customers because of the continuing problems of obtaining content. Moreover, Lonsdale and Armstrong (2011) reported that during an online forum debate, “a consensus emerged that e-books should be made freely available in public libraries” (p.21).

Two members of staff suggested that e-books are a supplementary service and printed books should still be provided by libraries. One customer also identified a need for both e-books and printed books in public libraries (C18).

To summarize, most participants were in favour of public libraries providing e-books although some concerns were identified. Staff emphasised the impact on public libraries. Customers also explored the impact on other book-related businesses. Concerns about charging a fee were raised by both customers and staff. It also emerged that e-books can be viewed as a supplementary format.

#### **4.6.2 Type of Book**

Nine female members of staff in the 51-60 age band thought that the benefits of e-books are dependent on the type of book. Participants included users and non-users of e-books. Opinion was divided into two main attitudes:

1) E-books are best suited to fiction (four participants) and popular non-fiction (S13). These are books that tend to be read from cover to cover. Pharo and Learned Au (2011, p.19) claim that there is customer demand for fiction e-books. Printed books are more

appropriate for non-fiction (five participants) because it is easier to browse and look at illustrations:

“Certainly for something like a cookbook, I would always want the actual book. There’s just having the nice book” (S1).

2) E-books are best suited to non-fiction and reference titles (four participants). Printed books are most appropriate for fiction because they are more enjoyable to read (two participants). Other commentators have shown scepticism towards fiction e-books (Gunter, 2005, p.521; Garrod, 2003, para.76). Landoni and Hanlon (2007, p.606) also reported negative experiences reading fiction e-books although they suggest that some of the problems could be resolved by improving the devices.

S14 also suggested that the choice of format could depend on the task. One male customer in the 41-50 age band described positive experiences of using non-fiction titles on Amazon’s Kindle (C28). It was easy to find the required page and there was no need to prop the e-book open (C28):

“The ability to switch to a page, not have to prop the page open ... and you’ve got a nice, flat, view of that particular page” (C28).

However, C28 commented that the illustrations are better in a printed book.

S21 commented that children’s books are more suitable in print because of the illustrations. However, S10 found that illustrations on the iPad are better than in print. This suggests that the quality of the illustrations depends on the device used. One customer (C16) commented that printed books are more appropriate for children although another customer



(C13) thought that e-books could encourage children to read. R commented that children's content has been unsuccessful with customers although teenage fiction has been popular.

R explained that current customers of the OverDrive service tend to borrow popular fiction such as crime and popular adult non-fiction such as biographies and popular history. R suggests a reason why romance is popular:

“There is anecdotal evidence ... to suggest that people are downloading this sort of thing to their computer because nobody can see what it is they're reading”.

For this reason, Palmer (2011a, p.85) also expected sensitive subject areas of non-fiction to issue as e-books. However, R confirmed that areas such as health and self-help have not issued well. Other genres which have been unsuccessful include Manga, travel guides, IT, business and some language learning materials (R).

These comments suggest that there is a role for both e-books and printed books but this depends on the type of book, the task and personal preference. Despite doubts amongst participants and other commentators, fiction seems to be popular with HLIS customers.

#### **4.6.3 Potential Users**

Twenty members of staff mentioned potential e-book users (See table 7). The categories were not pre-defined by the researcher.

<b>Front-line staff comments on types of e-book user.</b>		
<b>(20 members of staff)</b>		
<b>Types of e-book user</b>	<b>Number of responses</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Younger people	8	40%
Those who have problems with printed books, for example, visually impaired people.	7	35%
Students	4	20%
Non-users of the physical library	4	20%
Train commuters	3	15%
People who work	2	10%
Men who enjoy using gadgets	2	10%
Researchers	2	10%
Older people	2	10%
Housebound	1	5%

Table 7. Front-line staff comments on types of e-book user. (Participants could mention as many types of user as they wished).

Table 7 shows that there is a high expectation among staff that young people will use e-books more than older people. In a study of public library authorities in Wales, it was also felt that e-books would attract younger people (Lonsdale & Armstrong, 2011, p.15). According to R, there is no data available about the customers who are using OverDrive

and their location. However, R suggested that current customers are over forty and affluent. All the participants who had used e-books in this research were over forty. R also suggested that current e-book users have the necessary hardware but they lack time. Four members of staff identified a lack of time as a reason for not using e-books whereas R suggests that customers might use e-books because they lack the time to visit a library.

Like Palmer (2011a, p.75), R believes that e-books could attract the housebound. Although seven members of staff think that people who cannot access printed books will use e-books, only S25 mentioned the housebound. R also thinks that e-books appeal to both men and women. However, like two members of staff, R suggests that the gadgetry of e-books may appeal to men more. R agrees with staff who believe that e-books will attract non-users. Public library authorities in Wales also thought that e-books could attract non-users (Lonsdale & Armstrong, 2011, p.15). Indeed, one customer (C29) had become a library member in order to access e-books.

Other potential customers mentioned by staff are workers who possibly commute by train. Palmer (2011a, p.75) also argues that e-books will attract workers and commuters.

To summarize, front-line staff think that younger people, non-users, those who cannot use printed books and workers will use e-books while anecdotal evidence suggests that current customers are over forty and affluent.

#### **4.7 Front-line Staff Perceptions of the Future of E-books**

The future was considered in order to fulfil the sixth objective of this research. Only staff were asked an open question about the future of e-books (See Appendix I – Question 7).

However, some customers also discussed the future. The staff responses can be divided into three themes:

#### **4.7.1 The Future of Public Libraries**

For three members of staff, the future of e-books is linked to the future of public libraries. Two members of staff were concerned for the future of public libraries whilst S5 predicted the end of public libraries. The following are other suggestions raised by participants alongside a response from R:

- Lending e-readers (three staff and C22). HLIS may consider this idea in the future (R).
- The need for promotion (five staff). Promotion emerged as an important challenge for public libraries (Lonsdale & Armstrong, 2011, pp.28-29). HLIS e-books have been promoted via email and vouchers (R). Word-of-mouth promotion via social media has also contributed and the e-book service is included in Google search results (R). R suggests that promotion of the OverDrive service cannot develop due to the problems of acquiring content. Accessing e-books from the main library catalogue is a problem as implementation would require staff time (R).
- Staff training needs (five staff). The need for training was also recognised by Welsh public library authorities (Lonsdale & Armstrong, 2011, p.17-18). R explained that staff training has been provided to those branches that have requested it. R also commented that OverDrive provides online guidance for customers. HLIS has a specially trained member of staff who deals with any enquiries (R). However, if another e-book service is established, R recognises that staff training needs will need to be re-assessed.

- A terminal to download e-books in the library (S9 and C4). R commented that downloading e-books from the physical library is not currently possible but there may be downloading stations in the future.

#### **4.7.2. The Future of Books**

Opinions were mixed:

- Uncertainty about whether e-books would replace printed books (seven members of staff). Four of these staff and four customers hoped that printed books would survive.
- E-books will not replace printed books (four members of staff). C28 also expressed this opinion which is supported by Ball (2009, p.22).
- E-books will not be used by everybody (nine members of staff and three customers). These first three opinions suggest a coexistence of printed and e-books.
- E-books are already replacing printed books (two members of staff).
- E-books will replace printed fiction (S5).

A popular idea was that the success of e-books will be influenced by generational changes (ten members of staff and three customers), for example, younger generations will accept e-books more easily (S5). Eight members of staff predicted that e-books will become more popular and acceptable. Palmer (2011a, p.91) agrees that e-books will become more acceptable in public libraries.

### **4.7.3 Technology**

Responses were mixed. Two members of staff and one customer (C22) perceived e-books to be simply the latest trend. Another two members of staff warned that a new technology could replace e-books. However, three members of staff believed that e-books are the future. S2 predicted that e-readers will become as common as mobile phones. This sounds similar to Pharo and Learned Au (2011) who predict that there will be “one device that will be an e-reader, a telecommunications device, a wallet” (p.20).

Participants discussed a range of ideas about the future of e-books. Opinion was divided about the continued existence of public libraries, the survival of printed books and the future of e-books.

## **4.8 Further Insights from the Interview with R.**

### **4.8.1 Current Success**

In previous studies, authors have doubted the success of e-books in public libraries (Dearnley et al., 2004, p.236; Dearnley, McKnight & Morris, 2004, p.181; McKnight & Dearnley, 2003, p.242). However, HLIS statistics reveal that the OverDrive service has been successful (See Tables 8, 9 and 10). Furthermore, R commented:

“Our site is one of the busiest in the country”.

According to R, the number of OverDrive downloads are equivalent to a small branch library. R commented that 7591 individual customers have used OverDrive since the service was established in Christmas 2009. The service was established partly in response to user demand. R commented:

“We had people logging in on Christmas Day”.

OverDrive was selected as it was available at the time (R).

HLIS has 3793 OverDrive e-book titles (Allen, 2012a). Tables 8, 9 and 10 show how e-book downloads have increased during the 2011/2012 period in comparison with the 2010/2011 period. A download “involves transferring a file (title) to the customer’s computer or mobile device that will automatically expire after a set period” (Allen, 2012b). Tables 8, 9 and 10 demonstrate that the number of e-book downloads has increased with some fluctuations. The highest levels of downloading took place in 2012, following a Christmas period where one million e-readers were bought in the UK (Campbell, 2012b, para.1).

Public Library Online was established because it offered a different way of accessing e-books online (R). Tables 11 and 12 show relatively low levels of accesses of Public Library Online compared to OverDrive. An access is defined as viewing a title online (Allen, 2012c). 149 individual titles have been accessed by customers (Allen, 2012c). R commented:

“The use is underwhelming so the public don’t seem to like it as a model”.

Palmer (2011a, p.91) suggests that the number of public libraries providing e-books is increasing. The researcher counted the number of public library authorities listed on OverDrive’s website in November 2011 and again in March 2012 (OverDrive, Inc., 2012f). In November 2011, forty nine public library authorities were listed (OverDrive, Inc., 2012f). By March 2012, this number had increased to sixty (OverDrive, Inc., 2012f). According to Askews and Holts, at least thirty authorities have signed up for their service (Askews and Holts Library Services Ltd, n.d.). This demonstrates that more public libraries are investing in e-book provision.

	<b>April</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>June</b>	<b>July</b>	<b>August</b>	<b>September</b>
<b>Total downloads 2011</b>	2153	2325	2376	2438	2825	2534
<b>Total downloads 2010</b>	833	866	881	963	1221	1284
<b>% difference</b>	158.46%	168.48%	169.69%	153.17%	131.37%	97.35%

Table 8. Total downloads of e-books from OverDrive in Hampshire from April 2010 / 2011 to September 2010 / 2011 (Hampshire Libraries and Information Service, 2012).

	<b>October</b>	<b>November</b>	<b>December</b>	<b>January</b>	<b>February</b>	<b>March</b>
<b>Total downloads 2011-2012</b>	2771	2699	3042	3727	3676	3828
<b>Total downloads 2010-2011</b>	1253	1323	1550	2083	2022	2117
<b>% difference</b>	121.15%	104.01%	96.26%	78.92%	81.80%	80.82%

Table 9. Total downloads of e-books from OverDrive in Hampshire from October 2010 / 2011 to March 2011 / 2012 (Hampshire Libraries and Information Service, 2012).



<b>Total downloads 2011-2012</b>	34394
<b>Total downloads 2010-2011</b>	16396
<b>% difference</b>	110%

Table 10. Total downloads of e-books from OverDrive in Hampshire from April 2010 to March 2012 (Hampshire Libraries and Information Service, 2012).

	<b>April</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>June</b>	<b>July</b>	<b>August</b>	<b>September</b>
<b>Total number of accesses 2011</b>	121	140	154	125	98	108
<b>Total number of accesses 2010</b>	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data

Table 11. Total number of accesses to Public Library Online in Hampshire from April 2010 / 2011 to September 2010 / 2011 (Hampshire Libraries and Information Service, 2012).

	<b>October</b>	<b>November</b>	<b>December</b>	<b>January</b>	<b>February</b>	<b>March</b>
<b>Total number of accesses 2011-2012</b>	93	160	149	140	104	126
<b>Total number of accesses 2010-2011</b>	No data	No data	38	193	183	172
<b>% difference</b>	N/A	N/A	292.1%	-27.5%	-43.2%	-26.7%

Table 12. Total number of accesses to Public Library Online in Hampshire from October 2010 / 2011 to March 2011 / 2012 (Hampshire Libraries and Information Service, 2012).

#### 4.8.2 Challenges

To fulfil the fifth objective of this research, a range of challenges was explored during the interview with R. Lack of content emerged as a challenge for public libraries in the literature (Hadro, 2011; Poudre River Public Library District et al., 2011, p.8). R also discussed the lack of content and the high costs of certain e-books. The researcher was shown a report listing reserved titles of popular fiction which are no longer available to buy from publishers through OverDrive. Pharo and Learned Au (2011, p.20) discuss buying e-books direct from authors but R believes that this process would be complicated due to copyright and licensing. Although some publishers have withdrawn their content from OverDrive, HLIS has retained access to the content that had already been purchased (R). R showed a positive response to the possibility of HLIS publishing their own e-books but R commented that this task would require staff time.

When asked about DRM, R commented that publishers are alarmed about public libraries lending e-books for free. Public library authorities in Wales also reported concerns about the apparent unwillingness of some publishers to cooperate with libraries (Lonsdale & Armstrong, 2011, p.12). However, it was clear from the interview with R that public libraries would like to work with publishers and explore different ways of accessing content. R discussed paying for a specified number of downloads or years of access although R added that twenty six issues as proposed by HarperCollins is not sufficient.

The interview explored other collection development issues. R explained that there is no formal collection development policy for e-books. E-book acquisition is driven by customer usage and therefore responds to a customer need for reading for pleasure (R). New content is added to the OverDrive website every month and a standing order is used to buy extra copies of reserved titles (R). R finds out about new titles through monthly newsletters from OverDrive but also by searching catalogues.

A further challenge is evaluation. R uses usage reports and statistics to facilitate evaluation although they could be improved. Access to the postcodes of customers could help to discover where downloads are taking place (R). Customers can provide feedback and stock suggestions via the website (R). According to R, the majority of user feedback has been positive.

Other challenges include weeding (Wilson, 2004) and preservation (Cherubini & Nyberg, 2009, p.268). E-book weeding does not currently take place in HLIS but R agrees that it will need to be addressed in the future. Content is hosted on OverDrive's servers so digital space is not currently a challenge (R). Preservation is also not currently a problem but it may become a challenge in the future (R).

Palmer (2011b, pp.208-209) discusses the potential of e-book reading groups. R believes that e-book reading groups could be a possibility for the future. However, facilitating online discussions involves other challenges such as authentication and mediating the discussion (R).

#### **4.8.3 Future Provision**

To fulfil the sixth objective of this research, the future of e-books was considered during the interview with R. For R, the disadvantage of e-books for the library service is that there is a need to redefine the role and purpose of physical libraries. For R, the future role of public libraries will be more involved with the community, culture and learning. R believes that e-books will be part of the future of public libraries and could take on a greater role as the lending service of public libraries:

“[E-books will] be a way of reaching people who can’t get in or don’t want to come in for other activity”.

In the future, e-audio could replace spoken word on CD and cassette (R).

In the future, HLIS could set up another e-book service with Askews and Holts (R). Like OverDrive, one title is downloaded by one customer at a time but this new service has no links with Amazon (R). It is hoped therefore that UK publishers will be more willing to work with Askews and Holts (R). HLIS could then have US content provided by OverDrive and UK content provided by Askews and Holts (R). However, R warns:

“It’s a changing market and it may look totally different in a year’s time”.

Marketing the digital side of public libraries will be necessary in the future especially as commercial e-book lending services are being established on the Internet (R). A further

challenge is the failure by the government to recognise the role played by public libraries in minimising the digital divide:

“Unless we get our role entrenched in the marketplace, I think it’s the beginning of the end for libraries” (R).

To summarize, the main problems for public libraries which emerged during the interview with R are the lack of content and the need to promote the role of public libraries. Furthermore, the e-book phenomenon is still at an experimental stage. There are many challenges and public libraries are keen to enter into a dialogue with publishers to find solutions.

#### **4.9 Summary**

This research found a high level of awareness of e-books amongst customers but a lower level of awareness of HLIS e-books. Problems with using OverDrive were identified but participants were mostly positive about their experiences. The main reason for not using e-books amongst participants was a preference for print. However, almost half of the participants were interested in trying an e-book. The main advantages of e-books were portability and storage while the main disadvantages were cost and the loss of tactility. The majority of participants were positive about e-books in general and e-books provided by public libraries. Opinion was divided about which types of book are best suited to the e-book format although there is evidence that fiction e-books have been popular. A range of potential users was identified by staff. Views on the future of e-books were also mixed. The main challenge for R was the lack of content available to public libraries and the need to promote the role of public libraries.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

This chapter will examine how far the aims and objectives of this research were met.

### **5.1 Purpose**

The purpose of this research was to investigate the provision of HLIS e-books by focusing on the attitudes of staff and customers. To achieve this aim, the researcher identified the following objectives:

- 1) Establish how e-books are provided by HLIS.
- 2) Examine the attitudes of front-line staff towards e-books in public libraries.
- 3) Find out the levels of awareness of e-books amongst current library customers.
- 4) Examine the attitudes of current library customers towards e-books in public libraries.
- 5) Explore the challenges associated with the provision of e-books in public libraries.
- 6) Consider the future of e-books in public libraries.

### **5.2 Literature Review**

The literature review explored the literature covering e-books in public libraries over the last ten years. This research uses a definition of e-books which emphasises content. The literature reported the following main advantages of e-books: 24/7 remote access, portability and the potential for attracting customers. Disadvantages included the reading experience, costs and the need for hardware, electricity, an Internet connection and IT skills. Attitudes of caution and uncertainty have developed into an expectation that public libraries should provide e-books. E-books are increasingly being provided by public

libraries however, the lack of content is a challenge. A range of challenges was identified for public libraries.

### **5.3 Methods**

This research uses a mixed methods approach although the data collected is mainly qualitative. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with thirty two customers and thirty five front-line staff. An in-depth semi-structured interview was conducted with a member of staff who was responsible for establishing the provision of e-books. The sampling methods included convenience samples and purposive sampling. In the customer and staff interviews, not all age bands were represented and there were more female participants. The samples are not representative and the findings cannot be generalized. The data was analysed thematically.

### **5.4 Findings**

To fulfil the first objective, this research explored the provision of e-books by HLIS. This research focused predominantly on the OverDrive service with some coverage of Public Library Online.

Objectives two and four set out to examine the attitudes of front-line staff and customers. The majority of participants were positive about e-books in general and the provision of e-books by public libraries. A preference for print emerged as the main reason for the non-use of e-books for participants. The main advantages of e-books were portability and storage whilst the main disadvantages were cost and the loss of tactility. The literature review found uncertainty about the success of fiction e-books. Staff opinion was also divided about which types of book are best suited to the e-book format although fiction e-

books seem to have been popular in Hampshire. Staff also mentioned a range of potential users.

A high level of awareness of e-books was found amongst customers. However, there was a lower level of awareness of HLIS e-books. Although this fulfilled the third objective, the findings cannot be generalized due to the small size of the convenience sample.

The researcher interviewed a member of staff (R) who was responsible for establishing the provision of e-books to achieve the fifth objective. A range of challenges was explored. It emerged that the main challenge is a lack of content.

To complete the sixth objective, staff were asked about the future. Amongst staff, there was uncertainty about the future of e-books. It emerged from the interview with R that there is a need to promote the role of public libraries in the future.

### **5.5 Trustworthiness and Value**

Although a range of attitudes and challenges concerning e-books was explored, the sampling methods, the small size of the sample and potential bias prevent generalizations from being made. The findings of the interviews with front-line staff and customers cannot be generalized to the rest of Hampshire. If this research were to be replicated, a priori criteria sampling (Pickard, 2007, pp.64-65) could improve the samples.

This research achieved triangulation of data sources. However, the trustworthiness and value could have been improved by using another method such as a questionnaire.

### **5.6 Further Research**

There is scope for further research into customer and staff attitudes and experiences with a larger sample in Hampshire and other authorities. Semi-structured interviews could be



conducted in other authorities in order to compare the findings. Other e-book suppliers could also be explored. The staff and customer responses in this research could be used to compose a questionnaire. Other areas for research include analysing e-book websites from a customer's point of view and the role of e-audio.

## **5.7 Summary**

This research achieved its aim of exploring the provision of e-books by HLIS. However, the sampling methods and the size of the sample limit the value and trustworthiness of the findings. Nevertheless, some of the attitudes and challenges explored might be experienced in other public library authorities. Despite the challenges identified, evidence suggests that the introduction of e-books by HLIS has been a success so far.

Approximately 14983 words.

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## 7. APPENDICES

### APPENDIX I

#### INTERVIEW GUIDE (FRONT-LINE STAFF)

Make sure participants have read information sheet and completed consent forms.

**Introduction:** I am sure you are aware that Hampshire Libraries and Information Service provides e-books. I would like to ask you a few questions about your opinions of e-books.

1) **Firstly, may I make a note of your gender and age? M / F**

**Which age band are you in?**

18-20

21-30

31-40

41-50

51-60

61-65

2) **Do you work full-time or part-time? F-T / P-T**

3) **Have you ever used an e-book before?**

NO – **Why not?** Move on to question 5.

YES – **How many e-books have you read? 1-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-20 (Circle)**

**When did you start using e-books?**

**Where do you get your e-books from?**

**Which device(s) do you use to read e-books? Laptop, PC, Phone, Tablet, E-reader (Which e-reader?)**

**How often do you use e-books? How many times a week / month?**

**What do you think of the titles available?**

**How do you find titles you would like to read?**

**Did you enjoy the experience? What did you enjoy about the experience?**

**Have you experienced any challenges using an e-book?**

**If YES, what were those challenges?**

**4) Have you ever used an e-book from Hampshire's Library Service?**

**NO – Why not? Do you think that you might in the future?**

**YES – How many e-books have you read? 1-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-20 (Circle)**

**When did you start to use Hampshire's e-book service?**

**Have you used OverDrive / Public Library Online / ebrary / NetLibrary?**

**Advantages / disadvantages?**

**Which device(s) do you use to read e-books? Laptop, PC, Phone, Tablet, E-reader (Which e-reader?)**

**How often do you use e-books? How many times a week / month?**

**What do you think of the titles available?**

**How do you find titles you would like to read? Browse / Search?**

**Did you enjoy the experience? What did you enjoy about the experience?**

**Have you experienced any challenges?**

**If YES, what were those challenges?**

**5) What do you think about e-books in general?**

**Prompt: - A good idea?**

**Advantages / Disadvantages?**

**6) What do you think about e-books being provided by public libraries?**

**7) Any thoughts on the future of e-books in public libraries?**

**8) Is there anything else that you would like to add?**

**Thank respondents for their participation and time.**

**Hand out debriefing letter.**

## APPENDIX II

### INTERVIEW GUIDE (CUSTOMER)

**Explain purpose of research, the respondent's role and what will happen to the data and offer consent form.**

**1) May I make a note of your gender and age? M/F**

**Could you indicate which age band you are in?**

**18-20**

**21-30**

**31-40**

**41-50**

**51-60**

**61-70**

**71-80**

**81-90**

**91-100**

**2) Approximately how many years have you been using IT/computers?**

**None**

**1-5**

**6-10**

**11-20**

**Over 20 years**

**3) Have you heard of e-books before?**

**NO** – End. Thank the respondent for their participation.

**YES** – Move on to question 4.

**4) Are you aware that Hampshire Libraries and Information Service provides e-books?**

NO – Move on to question 6.

YES – Move on to question 5.

**5) Have you used Hampshire's e-book service?**

NO – **Why not? Do you think that you might in the future?**

YES – **How many e-books have you read? 1-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-20 (Circle)**

**When did you start to use Hampshire's e-book service?**

**Have you used OverDrive / Public Library Online / ebrary / NetLibrary?**

**Advantages / disadvantages?**

**Which device(s) do you use to read e-books? Laptop, PC, Phone, Tablet, E-reader (Which e-reader?)**

**How often do you use e-books? How many times a week / month?**

**What do you think of the titles available?**

**How do you find titles you would like to read? Browse / Search?**

**Have you experienced any challenges?**

**If YES, what were those challenges?**

**6) What do you think about e-books in general?**

**Prompt: Do you think that they are a good idea?**

**7) What do you think about e-books being provided by public libraries?**

**Prompt: Should libraries provide them?**

**Thank the respondent for their participation.**

**Debriefing: Make sure the respondent has a copy of the information sheet.**



## APPENDIX III

### INFORMATION SHEET FOR FRONT-LINE STAFF

#### E-books in Public Libraries: Experiences in Hampshire.

My name is Mary Anne Hockey and I am a Master's student at Aberystwyth University, studying an MSc Econ in Information and Library Studies. For the Master's Dissertation, I am undertaking a research project under the supervision of Lucy Tedd.

Before you decide whether to participate or not, please read the following information carefully. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me. My contact details are listed below.

#### **Purpose of the study**

This research is investigating the provision of e-books in public libraries.

This research aims to provide a snapshot of current provision in Hampshire. This research also aims to explore the attitudes of front-line staff towards e-books in public libraries. This could help readers to understand some of the issues facing public libraries.

#### **Your involvement in the study**

I would be very grateful if I could ask you a few questions about what you think about e-books. This should take about 5-10 minutes.

Participation is voluntary. If you are willing to be interviewed, please complete the accompanying informed consent form. You may decide to withdraw your consent at any time and without giving a reason.

With your permission, I would like to record the interview with a digital voice recorder. You may ask for the recorder to be switched off at any time during the interview.

### **Data Protection**

The interview will be transcribed. The recording and transcript will be stored securely. The findings will be written up in the Master's dissertation. Data will be used in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

This study also follows:

- Aberystwyth University's Department of Information Studies Ethics Policy for Research
- The British Sociological Association Statement of Ethical Practice
- The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) Code of Professional Practice for Library and Information Professionals and Ethical Principles for Library and Information Professionals.

All recordings and transcripts will be destroyed 6 months after the final Master's degree result has been confirmed.

### **Confidentiality**

All the information you provide will be treated confidentially. Both the interview and the information you provide will be completely confidential and treated confidentially by the researcher.

### **Anonymity**

The interview will be anonymous. Personal data will be removed at the transcription stage. As far as possible, individuals will be unidentifiable in the write-up of the dissertation. Individual branches will not be named. Any direct quotes will be used selectively and anonymously. Please be aware that your organisation

might be named and an indication of your job role might be given in the dissertation.

## **Contact**

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me in the following ways:

Email: [REDACTED]

Work phone: [REDACTED]

Thank you for taking the time to read this information letter

February 2012

## **APPENDIX IV**

### **CUSTOMER INFORMATION / DEBRIEFING SHEET**

Dear Library User,

My name is Mary Anne Hockey and I am a Master's student at Aberystwyth University, studying an MSc Econ in Information and Library Studies. As part of my course, I am undertaking a research project under the supervision of Lucy Tedd. This project is investigating the provision of e-books in public libraries.

I would be very grateful if I could ask you a few questions about what you think about e-books. This should take about 5-10 minutes.

All interviews will be anonymous. No individuals will be identified in the dissertation. Any direct quotes will be used anonymously. With your permission, I would like to audio-record the interview. You may request that the recording is stopped at any time. Participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

If you have any questions about this research, please contact me at the Library on



If you would be willing to participate in this research, please read the following statements.

**Thank you for your participation.**

**APPENDIX V**

**CONSENT FORM FOR IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW**

<b>Consent Form</b>
---------------------

**Title of project:** Master’s Dissertation: E-books in Public Libraries: Experiences in Hampshire

**Name of researcher:** Mary Anne Hockey

**Project Authority:** This research project is being undertaken as part of a MSc Econ in Information and Library Studies from Aberystwyth University

- |                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>Please tick</b>       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. I have read and understood the information letter for participants.                                                                                                        | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study and they have been answered for me.                                                                            | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I have received enough information about what my role involves.                                                                                                            | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason and without my legal rights being affected. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I agree to take part in the above study.                                                                                                                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. I agree to the interview being audio-recorded.                                                                                                                             | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. I agree to the use of any anonymised direct quotes in the dissertation.                                                                                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> |

8. I agree that my organisation may be named in the dissertation  
and an indication of my job role may be given.

<b>Name of participant</b>	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Name of researcher</b>	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>

## APPENDIX VI

### EXAMPLE TRANSCRIPT WITH THEME ANALYSIS

Interview with a member of front-line staff – S14.

Square brackets indicate the researcher's analysis.

Duration: 5 minutes 41 seconds

Researcher (R): So you've read your information sheet, got your consent form and I'm sure you are aware that Hampshire Libraries and Information Service provides e-books.

Participant (P): Yes.

R: So I'd just like to ask you a few questions about your opinions of e-books. Firstly, are you happy for me to make a note of your gender and age?

P: Yes (Participant is female).

R: Could you indicate an age band for me please? (Hands participant sheet of paper printed with age bands. Participant indicates the 51-60 age band).

R: And do you work full-time or part-time?

P: Part-time

R: Have you ever used an e-book before?

P: No, I haven't.

R: Is there any particular reason why you haven't tried one?

P: I haven't yet embraced the technology using them but I'm thinking about it [lack of hardware but shows interest]. Only though for probably fiction [e-books more suited to fiction] because if I'm using a textbook and most of the books I take out of the library are computer reference books. Anything that I need to consult in that manner, I would sooner have as a hard book than an e-book. [Preference for printed books for non-fiction textbook / reference. E-books dependent on type of book and use/task].

R: And why do you think that?

P: Because I think they're a lot easier for looking at diagrams, skipping through and finding what you want [printed books suitable for illustrations / images and browsing]. It's much easier to flick through the pages, I find than skim through on a machine [printed books suitable for browsing through pages].

R: So what do you think about e-books in general?

P: I think they're a good idea [positive response to e-books in general]. Save trees [advantage of e-books: environmentally friendly] for one thing.

R: That's an advantage.



P: An advantage. And you can store hundreds in a very small space [advantage of e-books: storage], that's got to be an advantage if you've seen my bookshelves at home [advantage of e-books: saves physical space], got to be an advantage. So yeah, I think they're a good idea [positive response]. I just haven't got round to and I probably will [shows interest in e-books]. I have friends who have Kindles [awareness of Kindle] and even my mother is thinking of buying one. So I can't be left behind and let her get ahead of me. I probably will [repeats interest].

R: Do you think that there are any disadvantages?

P: I, as I said before, I don't think that for looking at diagrams and that sort of thing that they're probably as good [disadvantage of e-books: illustrations]. I can't say with any certainty because I've not looked at any reference books [no experience of e-books]. When you see adverts for these Kindles and what have you, it's always just text. I've not seen any with diagrams. [awareness of e-book advertising]. So they may be very good but I, it's in my, I think maybe it's ingrained but I like big pictures, big colour pictures and I think they're better in books. [preference for larger size and colour illustrations in printed books]. But for text, for novels and so on, I think the readers are probably a good idea [e-books suitable for fiction].

R: So what do you think about e-books being provided by public libraries?

P: I don't see why not. I think it's the next step [no objection to e-books being provided by public libraries]. I know that it's not serving my interests as a member of staff [concern for employment] but I think that's the way it's gonna go and you've got to keep up with the times [recognises need to remain relevant]. If we don't provide them, people will just go elsewhere and get them [alternative is losing customers to competition].

R: Any thoughts on the future of e-books in public libraries?

P: You mean, how they'll take off?

R: Yeah, where do you see it going?

P: I think libraries will have to follow wherever the technology goes [need to remain relevant]. I don't think you have a choice really. There are people of a certain age who will always prefer books and why not? [e-books not for everybody] I mean that's what and that's what we've always provided and I can't see that we're gonna stop providing them [there will be a role for printed books] and well, maybe when the people of a certain age have passed on then maybe books won't be so popular [generational change].

R: So it's like a generational thing, you think?

P: I think it probably will be. Libraries are after all only repositories of information, aren't they? So how it's held goes with technology [e-books continue traditional role of libraries].

R: Well, that covers everything I wanted to ask you today. Is there anything else that you would like to add that you feel I haven't covered or anything else you would like to say about e-books?

P: Not really, to be honest, I haven't really given them a lot of thought.

R: Just because you haven't come across them really

P: Because, yes, I haven't got round to steering my mind in that direction. It will come but at the moment [shows interest in e-books]

R: Yes, you do have an interest there

P: Yes, that's it.

The researcher thanks the participant and hands out a debriefing sheet.