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# Libraries Turn the Page with E-Books

By Jennifer L. Ransom, M.L.S., M.S.  
Associate Professor, Gill Library

Jane, a college student and working mother of two, cannot get to the library easily, but has remote access to the library's electronic resources at home via the Internet. Her course assignment requires her to consult ten resources, including scholarly articles and books. Fortunately, her college library has a steadily growing e-book database containing tens of thousands of titles covering multiple subjects, which enrolled students can use on any computer or handheld device with Internet access.

Jane has attended a library workshop instructing her how to utilize the many features of e-books, and she can refer to a brief tutorial online. After entering the relevant search terms into the e-book program, she chooses the most appropriate publications from the results list, ranked by relevancy, and saves them to a personal "bookshelf" enabling her to take notes, highlight text, and turn the text she selects into links to the Web.

Jane can open any title included in the e-book collection, even while others are using the same title. Because the program automatically highlights her search terms, she easily locates and scans them for their context. She selects passages of interest and pastes them into her research notes, which are automatically cited, and prints only the pages she needs. The library's e-book product integrates with RefWorks, a citation management system, and 360 Search, a federated search engine, which allows her to search all of the library's resources at once. She also finds her textbook linked from the e-book database to her teacher's ERes electronic course reserves page and to ANGEL, her college's course management system.

Although Jane is grateful for all of the advantages that the e-book database offers, she doesn't always find the titles she needs included there and appreciates having the option to borrow books from her college library or from other libraries via the interlibrary loan service. The college's e-book collection is con-

trolled by digital rights management, which may prevent her from downloading or “borrowing” e-books from other libraries. Jane prefers to use printed books when she needs to read several pages or an entire chapter and finds it easier to use e-books as reference tools to find specific information.

When building e-book collections, libraries have several options depending upon the budget and needs of all their users. Libraries may purchase or subscribe to e-books to complement their print collections. They can opt to purchase a perpetual collection, which the library will own indefinitely and includes titles selected by the library. Additionally, libraries may add a subscription collection with pre-selected titles covering many subjects in a continuously updated and growing database.

E-books save libraries time and money traditionally spent on processing printed books. With simultaneous access to an e-book by multiple users, money can be saved on the purchase of multiple copies of the same printed title. E-books free up space that can be used for computer workstations, study and media rooms, and library instruction and seminar rooms. Photocopiers are used less frequently, saving on paper and toner, which contributes to a greener environment.

In 2009, Gill Library subscribed to an e-book database that offers enhanced features, such as the ability to zoom in on the text, to convert text to speech, and to employ screen readers in “accessibility mode,” features which are especially useful to those with limited vision. The subscription model offers an economical, well-rounded collection of titles that best satisfies the information needs of students in all Schools of the College. Included is excellent training for the Library faculty and staff in the form of online tutorials and Webinars, which can be customized and offered at convenient times. The ebrary Academic Complete database includes DASH!, which allows the institution’s local content collections (e.g., theses, dissertations, faculty-authored content, archives, newspapers) to be easily integrated within the database, offering the same indexing and search functions available for e-books. Gill Library will take advantage of the e-books product’s ability to generate a variety of usage statistic reports as it considers the purchase of subject-specific e-book collections for the future.

Gill Library promotes its new services and workshops to the CNR community via the CNR Intranet and the Gill Library Web site and Facebook page. Gill Library encourages faculty, staff, and students to attend its workshops and to take advantage of its many innovative services and resources including its newest offering—e-books.

Thanks to e-books, Jane is able to easily acquire the information needed to successfully complete her assignment on time. E-books provide the advantages of electronic information to library users and complement print book collections, which are still appreciated for their tactile quality and ease of use. Now, Jane has the option to curl up with a good book...or e-book!

## Second Life, Education, and Libraries

Theories abound about the future of the Internet with many contending that it will evolve into a 3D environment modeled on virtual worlds such as Second Life ([www.secondlife.com](http://www.secondlife.com)). One thing is certain, the effort and innovation of educators and librarians in Second Life will be instrumental in setting the foundation for the future of distance and virtual educational endeavors.

According to Linden Labs, the developers of Second Life, this virtual reality platform is home to approximately 12 million residents/users. Monthly traffic averages about 1.5 million with approximately 500,000 entering from the U.S.A. Second Life enables immersive, experiential learning opportunities as well as simply downright, delightful entertainment. Not exactly a computer game, Second Life embodies the best of the social networking revolution where users can chat, IM, talk, move, teleport, build communities, buy, sell, play, meet, and learn.

Educators and librarians can create, design, and occupy islands where they provide learning opportunities such as workshops, classes, exhibits, special events, and conferences. Networking, community building, and professional development opportunities abound. Participants can interact with others internationally with the simple click of a mouse and, if needed, the use of a language translation program. Course management systems and a simple scripting language enable groups to communicate and share electronic information easily.

Two library initiatives worthy of note are the Alliance Virtual Library (AVL) and the Alexandrian Free Library Consortium (AFLC). AVL consists of over 43 islands including a variety of colleges and universities, public, nonprofit and government agencies, and professional associations. AFLC is a group of open-source community-based libraries that provide services and resources to the theme-based communities they serve. To learn more, go to <http://libraryguides.cnr.edu/secondlife>

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