

This work has been submitted to **NECTAR**, the **Northampton Electronic Collection of Theses and Research**.

**Conference or Workshop Item**

**Title:** The student experience of patron-driven ebooks at the University of Northampton

**Creators:** Farmer, J. and Heppell, C.

**Example citation:** Farmer, J. and Heppell, C. (2012) The student experience of patron-driven ebooks at the University of Northampton. Workshop presented to: *Sixth Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals Colleges of Further and Higher Education and University College & Research Groups (CILIP CoFHE and UC&R) Joint Conference: Great Expectations: What Do Students Want and How Do We Deliver?*, Newcastle University, 25 - 27 June 2012.

**Version:** Presented version

<http://nectar.northampton.ac.uk/6581/>





# **The student experience of patron-driven ebooks at the University of Northampton**

Joanne Farmer and Charlotte Heppell



# Session outline

- Ebooks at the University of Northampton
- The patron-driven service
- Research objectives & methods
- Usage data
- Discussion
- Research findings: student experience
- Summary



# Ebooks at UON

- Different models: NetLibrary, Safari, **Dawsonera**
- Patron-driven service
  - Opportunity to extend our offering
  - NSS
  - Funds available
- Implement now, evaluate later...



# The patron-driven service

- Opportunity to rent 'non-owned' titles (over 150,000)
- 2 rentals = purchase
- Authorisation required over £5 rental & £100 purchase
- Cost to library: £75,000 (based on a 4-month trial)
- Initial feedback





# Our research

## Objectives:

- To investigate how many, and in what ways, students have engaged with the ebook service
- To explore the student experience of using patron-driven ebooks
- To realise the impact of the patron-driven service
- To make recommendations to enhance the service


## Methodology:

Analysis of usage data, online survey, semi-structured interviews



## Usage data: activity

	4 month period (Pre patron- driven) 01/08/10- 25/11/10	4 month patron-driven trial period 01/12/10 – 31/03/11	4 month patron- driven live period 01/08/11 25/11/11
<b>Successful access requests</b>	3,282	9,673	16,388 (59% increase from trial)

- 
- 1,482 downloads
  - 2,619 viewed less than 1 page for 1 minute
  - 3,164 viewed between 2-10 pages
  - 9,123 viewed 11 pages or more





## Users (indicated by survey)

- 64% of students have not used the patron-driven ebooks  
11% of these have not used ebooks at all
- Of the 36% of patron-driven users, a majority have already used the 'owned' ebooks



**Marketing/sustainability??**





## Discussion points

- *From the user perspective, what are the benefits of having a patron-driven ebook service?*
- *What do you like/dislike about the Dawsonera model? How intuitive is it?*
- *How can we tell students about the service and slow down the rate of spending at the same time*



# The patron-driven concept

- *Choice*  
*Reading decisions*  
*Wider range of titles*
- Reading lists important for guidance
- Students not confident about making decisions
- A recognition that independent research is expected
- Practical benefits of having wider choice



## Interview responses

“too many as much of a problem as not enough”

“it is knowing which ones to go to first, which ones are the most popular in the subject field”

“I would prefer to have books smaller, not thousands of books  
Because thousands of books would, you know, waste my time”

“it’s nice to have the reading list, so you know where to start and which ones are crucial, but then obviously you know everyone’s gonna read them and you want to find something a bit more unique for your assignment”



# Ebooks vs hard copy

## Ebook preferences

Distance learning – remote access  
Limited access to physical books  
No fines  
No carrying of books  
Keyword searching  
Easier to read online  
Can't find items on shelves  
Time saving  
More up to date than printed books  
Convenient – can access any time

## Hard copy preferences

Can browse books on shelves  
Easier to understand  
Easier to read than on screen  
No functional/technical issues  
e.g. Short rental periods,  
inability to copy/print



# Impact on learning

Most students felt that ebooks had made a positive contribution to their learning, citing that they were *important* or *very important*

In terms of the patron-driven service, students found it difficult to say whether they had noticed improved access to books

Interest expressed in using it in the future

Monitor NSS feedback



# Student experience: owned books

Download (2.68 MB)

Read online

Add to Favourites

- Majority recognised these options and **felt confident** they understood them, however..

What we found was that both 'Download' and 'Read online' functions were often misunderstood. Nobody appeared to use 'Add to favourites'.





# Student experience: patron driven

5 Min Preview

Request rental

Add to Favourites

- Less than half of the students were able to say they had seen these options before

Rental option a clear source of confusion, many thinking that you had to pay for the service. Few people mentioned that they had used '5-minute preview'.



## Other issues

Approximately **a third** of the students that had used the patron-driven service expressed frustration with:

- Technical problems
- Short loan lengths (or perceptions of this)
- Reading books online



# Marketing/sustainability

- Profiling the collection
- Encourage wider use of 5 minute preview
- Improve the interface for users
- Provide more guidance
- Feedback from users
- Market the service
- Primo



# Summary

- Since the patron-driven service was introduced, ebook usage has soared
- It is difficult to budget for this kind of service
- Significant number of students are still not aware of it
- The student experience of using patron-driven ebooks needs to be improved
- More guidance/information is needed
- Patron-driven has potential to impact on student learning
- Need to monitor the service and listen to students



# Any questions?