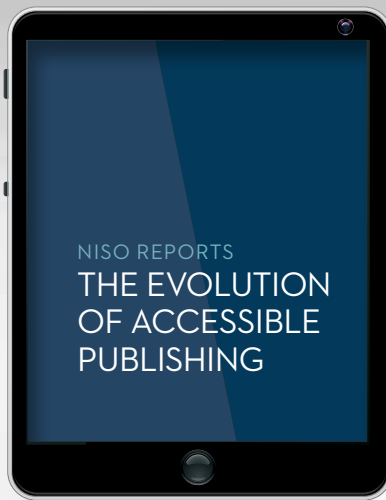
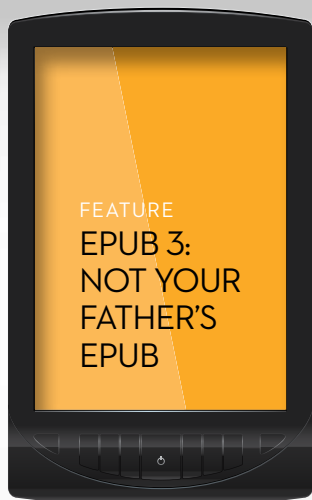


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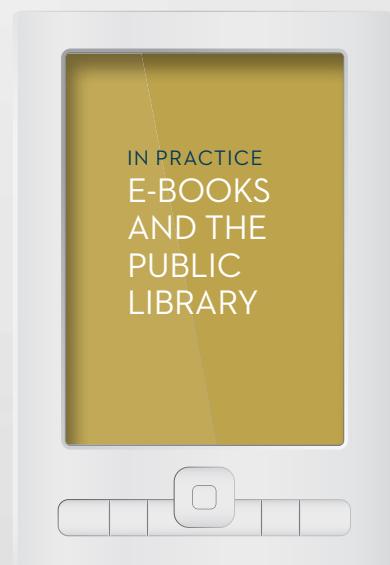
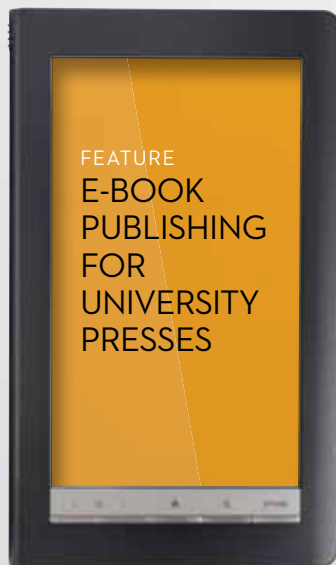


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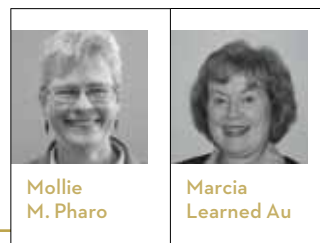
## INFORMATION STANDARDS QUARTERLY

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SPECIAL EDITION: VIEWS OF THE E-BOOK RENAISSANCE



**NISO**  
How the information world  
CONNECTS



Mollie  
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# E-books and the Public Library: the Evansville Vanderburgh Public Library Experience

MOLLIE M. PHARO AND MARCIA LEARNED AU

The Evansville Vanderburgh Public Library (EVPL) is a county-wide library district in Indiana serving nearly 180,000 residents (2010 US Census) from eight locations: a Central Library and seven branch libraries located throughout the community. The libraries are community gathering places with comfortable, inviting spaces for people to learn, meet others, explore the world, and connect to information, resources, and technology. The Library's mission is to promote and support: reading, lifelong learning, economic vitality, and cultural initiatives.

EVPL has been recognized nationally for its quality, fiscal responsibility, and exceptional service to the community. In addition to providing physical buildings and resources, EVPL provides electronic resources and services through its internet presence as well as via social networking sites.

## History of e-books at EVPL

When Stephen King's *Riding the Bullet* was published in March, 2000, in e-book-only format, the Library downloaded free e-book reading software and copies of *Riding the Bullet* to several public computers on which customers could read the title. At the time we were not able to collect statistics on the number of people who actually read it sitting in front of one of those clunky terminals but to the best of our collective memory it was very few, if any. Staff opined and we agreed that it was not a format that people were ready to embrace.

Despite the lack of interest in the King title and still believing that e-books were ever nearer on the horizon, the Library purchased a RocketBook Reader later in 2000. The Reader was then used for demonstrations and also circulated among the staff so that they would become familiar with what we were sure would kickstart the run on e-books. Some staff members also downloaded e-book reading software such as Glassbooks Reader (now Adobe Reader) and Microsoft's e-book reader to their computers and became familiar with them. Unfortunately neither of these formats nor the RocketBook Reader ever took off—pun intended.

In 2001, the Library joined netLibrary via the INCOLSA network. This network included several other Indiana public libraries but because of the number of libraries participating, the ability to access the material became problematic. Bibliographic records for the 378 e-books in that collection were loaded into EVPL's catalog in June 2001. Beginning July

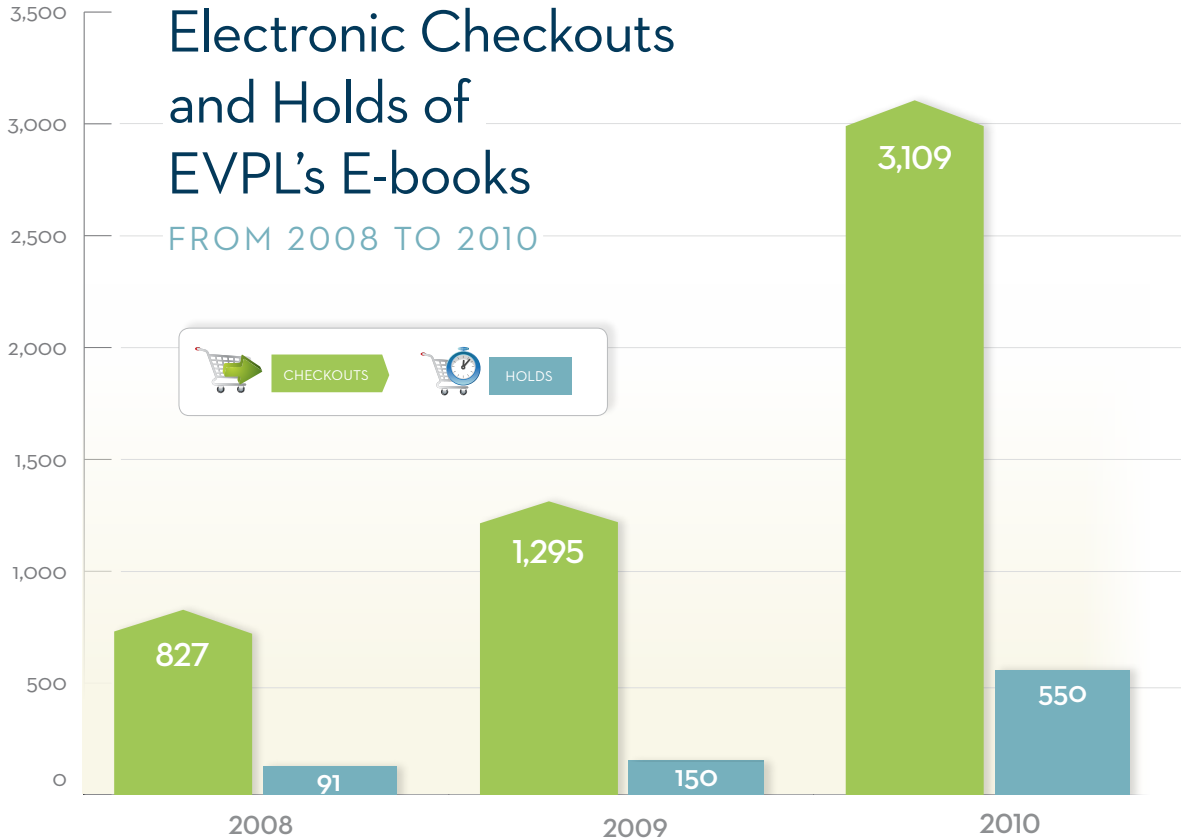


Figure 1: Electronic checkouts and holds

2001, EVPL customers were able to access netLibrary books held in the EVPL collection along with public domain e-books in netLibrary's collection. Problems arose when it became obvious that the demand created by multiple libraries sharing access to 378 e-books could not possibly be met nor were holds (reserves) available. Although Indiana's INSPIRE project now provides a statewide collection of NetLibrary e-books, EVPL is not currently adding netLibrary titles to our collection.

In 2005, the Library joined OverDrive along with three other libraries (via the INCOLSA network) using the shared collection model. In October 2006, EVPL left the shared collection when once again the number of titles could not meet demand and there seemed to be some confusion about collection development, i.e., which organization was responsible for selecting which titles. The realization that a shared collection was not working particularly well drove the Library to negotiate an independent contract with OverDrive. During the next four years, usage was predominantly of e-audiobooks rather than textual e-books. In an effort to push staff familiarity with technology mid-management personnel

were provided with Palm PDAs and, because of the format recommended for those and other hand-held devices and cell phones, e-books in the Mobi-Pocket format were purchased. The external interest in e-books, however, was still minimal and because of the relatively low collection use we seriously considered ending our relationship with OverDrive several times over those years. It was also during this time that reality struck; we realized how limited our options were—the content we'd considered as purchased from OverDrive could not be kept if we left them. Their e-content really was and is more of a leased product than a purchased one.

We made the decision to remain with OverDrive and that was advantageous for us as we built the e-book collection during those lean-use years. The greatest advantage was that we achieved a comparatively large selection of titles. When the tipping point came at the end of 2010 when e-book readers were the "de rigueur" gift for the holidays, the Library was able to supply more than just a basic collection and we had staff who were familiar enough

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with e-books to do some hands-on assistance and provide e-reader advisory as well.

### E-books today at EVPL

What did all those 2010 holiday e-reader gifts mean to the Library? Much as the publishing industry saw e-book sales jump 164.4% last year, EVPL e-book use (downloads from OverDrive) increased over 500% from January 2010 to January 2011, with EPUB format e-book downloads increasing over 800% from EVPL's OverDrive site in the last quarter of the year alone (see Figure 1).

To help keep staff abreast of the technology and developments with e-reader technology, EVPL continues to make investments in e-reader hardware. Currently the Library owns a Kindle, 2 Nooks, several Sony eReaders, a Kobo, two iPads, and a Pandigital eReader as part of our Tech Toolbox. Toolbox items are available for staff to check

out as well as use in programs for both staff and customers. The Library has been designated as one of 30 libraries accepted for the second round of Sony's Library Program. Since December 2010, a total of 15 e-reader and OverDrive download workshops for staff, customers, and other area librarians have been conducted. Staff continue to add more sessions on a regular basis. To date over 400 people have attended the workshops. Additionally Help Screens and handouts specific to the different e-reader devices have been created and widely distributed. E-books and audiobooks are featured on the front page of the Library's website. Customer comments indicate that they view library staff as unbiased experts on e-readers and staff have been inundated with questions about using OverDrive as well as how to operate the various e-reader devices. While staff do not promote specific e-reader products in workshops, they are able to talk about the differences in devices and which formats work

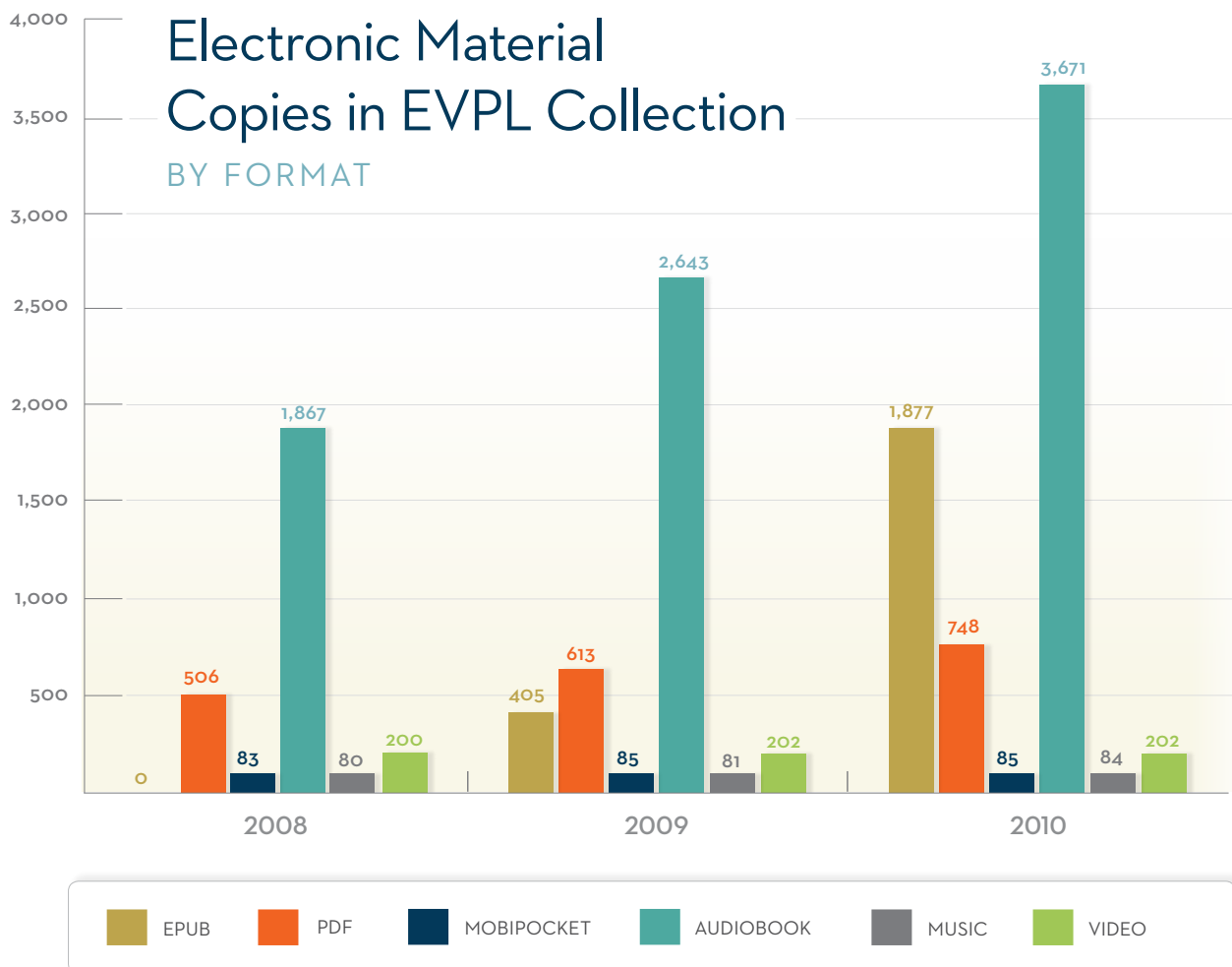


Figure 2: Electronic material copies in collection by format

with which e-reader. They also provide some basic education about what e-books are and realistic expectations about what customers will be able to download/borrow from the Library and what that experience will be like. We want customers to have a positive experience using the library's e-books, a challenge given some of the difficulties using the OverDrive platform and the fact that the Kindle is currently not compatible with content available to public libraries. EVPL also makes an effort to build working partnerships with our local book vendors, notably our local Barnes and Noble store. Barnes and Noble invites EVPL staff to the workshops they offer publicly that feature their e-reader (the Nook) and their e-book selections. In turn, Barnes & Noble staff participate in some of EVPL's e-reader workshops to talk about their product and how it works with library e-books. It is a win for both organizations, but an even bigger win for our customers.

EVPL has invested heavily in providing electronic content to the citizens of Vanderburgh County. We are convinced that if libraries can provide the electronic content that our customers want, when they want it, where they want it, and directly to the devices they want it on, the Library stands a much better chance of continuing to provide equitable access to these new resources and to play an important part in how individuals and businesses in our community are empowered and become successful.

### What about standards?

One of the issues of ongoing concern is, "In what format should we purchase/lease e-books?" For some time we were purchasing/leasing mostly PDF and Mobi-Pocket format e-books. Our customers and staff did not use the Mobi-Pocket format, so we ceased acquiring those. Now we purchase/lease mostly EPUB format (see Figure 2). We are building collections for the majority of our customers who want to download e-books to their personal e-reader or tablet or cell phone, and who want the popular fiction titles. The e-reader devices our customers are using seem to handle the EPUB format most easily. We also switched to EPUB because it was touted as the new "standard" format, and standards can be very helpful and make things more accessible over the long-term. That said however, academic libraries seem to be leaning more toward the PDF format of e-books and so we ponder from time to time if we should also be adding titles in that format, or in this brave new e-world if some new format will supersede both. EBSCO has indicated that they are working to acquire or convert the e-books they will offer on their EBSCOhost/NetLibrary product to the EPUB format and, since we are subscribers, our decision is to stay with EPUB for now.

On a related note we recently stopped archiving copies of the e-books we purchase for our Gale Virtual Reference Library

collection, largely because we have no idea how we could ever use those outside of the Gale platform because of their formatting.

### What about the future of e-books and other electronic content at EVPL?

"May you live in interesting times" is the adage that springs to mind when contemplating the forces driving technology today, resource access issues, and the mission of the public library. This is indeed a very interesting time in the evolution of electronic content, with e-books recently becoming more popular and in demand, and with publishers and authors moving to protect their streams of revenue as the interest in and use of e-books grows. We in public libraries find ourselves in a difficult position—apparently not seen as an important part of the revenue stream but instead often seen as siphoning off revenue by providing free loans to customers. As a result, or perhaps just as a result of not considering libraries, most models for electronic content delivery have been direct-to-consumer models. Two major publishers currently do not allow their e-book product to be purchased/leased to libraries and another has begun leasing their e-books with a total download/loan limit. Libraries are starting to work together, and with publishers and vendors, to provide "library-friendly" models to meet our customers' needs. The Library Renewal project, the Urban Library Council, the Chief Officers of State Libraries COSLA: *ebook Feasibility Study Final Report*, the Internet Archive's In-Library Lending Program, and the ALA's Presidential Taskforce on Equitable Access to Electronic Content (EQUACC), are all examples of this very important work. Vendors are also working on these issues, and it looks as though OverDrive will soon have some real competition in providing e-books and e-audiobooks to public libraries and library customers.

While demand for e-book titles continues to ramp up, expenditures on e-collections are growing more slowly. One reason for this is the economic concern that looms before us as a publicly funded entity. Do we own this electronic content or have we only leased the right to access it on the vendor's platform? What happens if we choose to leave that platform, migrate to another vendor, or develop an infrastructure that supports working with authors directly?

Digital rights management (DRM) requirements imposed by publishers complicate what vendors and libraries can provide. Customers would like to see DRM go away. Some authors are doing this, making their titles available for DRM-free download from their websites. Many authors are self-publishing their e-books, bypassing traditional publishers. Smashwords assists independent authors and small

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amazon.com

## KINDLE LIBRARY LENDING PROGRAM

Since submitting this article, Amazon and OverDrive have announced the Kindle Library Lending program, expected to enable e-book content in library OverDrive collections to be downloadable to Kindles later this year. Who knows what other game-changing announcements will be made before publication?

publishers with this effort. Small, independent presses and authors themselves seem more receptive to providing DRM-free content to libraries. At present, we view EPUB as our preferred e-book format, anticipating that DRM will not go away anytime soon for the library lending market.

Some libraries are now developing their own infrastructure and negotiating directly with publishers and authors for electronic content. Of note is the partnership being developed by the Colorado Independent Publishers Association (CIPA), the Red Rocks Community College, and the Douglas County Libraries. According to reports, by June 2011 the two libraries will offer e-books from CIPA's authors for checkout through their catalogs but will also allow click-through purchase of these titles. While not as formally developed as the Colorado model, EVPL is also investigating options for providing content from local authors through our Library catalog.

EVPL continues to monitor e-book related developments very closely. In many respects e-book development is still in its infancy. In the short term, technophiles anticipate that there will be significant changes in the hardware and some of us believe firmly in convergence theory, that in the very near future there will not be a plethora of e-book devices but one device that will be an e-reader, a telecommunications device, a wallet, etc.— but that is another topic for another article. In the meantime, we are determined to stay relevant, to continue the Library's mission, to address the legal and ethical issues of copyright, and most importantly provide access to resources for all people. We are staying tuned as they say and looking forward to the next round of developments in the brave new e-world.

IP | doi: 10.3789/isqv23n2.2011.04

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**ALA Presidential Taskforce. Equitable Access to Electronic Content (EQUACC).**

[www.equacc.ala.org](http://www.equacc.ala.org)

**Chief Officers of State Libraries (COSLA). eBook Feasibility Study Final Report.**

[www.cosla.org/documents/COSLA2270\\_Report\\_Final1.pdf](http://www.cosla.org/documents/COSLA2270_Report_Final1.pdf)

**Colorado Independent Publishers Association e-Book Partnerships**

[www.cipacatalog.com/pages/Library-eBook-Partnerships.html](http://www.cipacatalog.com/pages/Library-eBook-Partnerships.html)

**Evansville Vanderburgh Public Library**

[www.evpl.org](http://www.evpl.org)

**INSPIRE (Indiana's Virtual Library)**

[www.in.gov/library/inspire/faq.html](http://www.in.gov/library/inspire/faq.html)

**Internet Archive's In-Library Lending Program**

[blog.archive.org/2011/02/22/in-library-ebook-lending-program-launched](http://blog.archive.org/2011/02/22/in-library-ebook-lending-program-launched)

**Library Renewal project**

[libraryrenewal.org](http://libraryrenewal.org)

**netLibrary**

[www.netlibrary.com](http://www.netlibrary.com)

**OverDrive**

[www.overdrive.com](http://www.overdrive.com)

**Sony Library Program**

[ebookstore.sony.com/library-program/](http://ebookstore.sony.com/library-program/)

**Smashwords**

[www.smashwords.com](http://www.smashwords.com)

**Urban Library Council**

[www.urbanlibraries.org](http://www.urbanlibraries.org)



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