

Prioritising e-acquisitions for reading lists

policy for selectors

Electronic access to material on reading lists provides enhanced service for students as:

- Material is available anytime, anywhere (except for electronic Legal Deposit {eLD} which must be consulted in Bodleian Libraries during opening hours on devices owned by the Libraries).
- Most material can be manipulated to enhance accessibility for readers with particular visual requirements.
- Material is accessible immediately and directly from online reading lists.
- Multiple access can be provided effectively and normally cost-effectively (through purchase of fewer copies, although there is likely to be a slightly higher unit cost - mainly because VAT is currently charged on electronic material).
- Ebooks do not get lost and students don't have to pay fines for late return.
- Material can normally be acquired more rapidly.

Against these advantages should be set some service disadvantages:

- Many readers prefer to read long texts in print rather than on screen and/or prefer not to work on screen for long periods.
- Provision of reading devices is not sufficiently ubiquitous to support universal use of electronic copies.
- Simultaneous use for comparison of multiple texts and/or images is currently awkward when they are all electronic.

When selecting new acquisitions for reading list provision, Subject Librarians will use their judgement to apply the following considerations:

- *Where available*, online/electronic copies of reading list resources will normally be acquired (or created through digitisation); where a printed copy is not already in the collections one or more may be acquired, as a supplement to the electronic version, where appropriate and where budgets allow*.
- A number of variations/exceptions are acknowledged and these will be played (singly or in combination) according to the judgement of the Subject Librarian or by staff processing reading lists:
 - The electronic version will not be preferred if there is a demonstrable lack of functionality compared with the printed version**.
 - Consideration should be given to the relative cost of an electronic version and a printed version (bearing in mind the advantages of remote and round-the-clock

access to electronic versions and the additional overhead costs of acquiring, cataloguing, classifying, storing, lending, replacing printed).

- Digitisation is a useful option for material which is not available electronically but such material is subject to the constraints of copyright legislation; purchase of an electronic copy must be preferred where more than one chapter or article has been set (or is likely to be set) from a particular work.
- Consideration should be given to the type of licence acquired, in particular the appropriate number of simultaneous users; normally perpetual access should be acquired if the copy is unique in the Bodleian Libraries/University but time-limited access to multiple copies may be more cost-effective if there is another copy with perpetual access (which may be print) already in the collection.
 - DRM-free¹ copies or adequate download periods should be preferred for courses where students are likely to spend time on field trips in locations without adequate internet access.
 - Single-user licences should be used in limited circumstances (special options with small cohorts - probably only in Humanities).
 - Esoteric platforms and apps and unreliable providers should be avoided for single-copy/unique provision.
- Format:
 - Monographs and literary texts which are expected to be read from cover to cover are not universally accepted as readable in electronic form and ideally a print copy should be acquired if not already available in the collections.
 - Large page format textbooks and (heavily) illustrated (images, tables, charts) works can be problematic in electronic versions and ideally an assessment (by individual title or by publisher as appropriate) should be made before acquiring an electronic copy only.
- *This will normally be in cases of core options and/or large cohorts where the provision of multiple copies would have been made in the past and where it is still deemed cost-effective to provide multiple versions (though budgets are less likely to cover such an expense).
- **eLD copies (in ePub form, ie without page numbers) will not normally be deemed functional for reading lists but may be considered adequate for some 'further readings' and/or special options with small cohorts where budgets are tight. Consideration should

¹ Digital Rights Management free

be given to the proportion of eLD copies on any given list to avoid over-reliance on single-user access. (NB - eLD copies are not available anytime, anywhere.)

- To note that the policy does not in itself take account of differing limitations of the collections budgets or the range of reading lists from short 'core readings' to extensive bibliographies.

This policy was adopted following agreement by the Curators of the University Libraries at their meeting on Monday 17 June 2019, after approval by the Divisional Committees on Library Provision and Strategy in the Hilary term and Trinity term.

The policy arises from the Bodleian Libraries strategic implementation plan objective 1.2: 'We will provide extensive resources for learning, including increased online content delivery and enhanced reading-list services. We will invest in additional e-resources for student use.' This objective also covers the Oxford Readings List Online system which will facilitate the discovery and use of electronic material (as well as of printed material).

AE/JL 14/5/19, rev.15/12/20, rev. 03/11/23