



Nursing Students' Learning Experience With E-books



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INTRODUCTION

As many nursing programs are offered online in colleges and universities, student populations are likely to be working nurses who have no time to come in, or have no physical access to the library building or its print book collections to complete their course work. This has been one of the biggest obstacles for libraries in supporting off-campus faculty and students. In addition to offering document delivery services, such as shipping print books and sending articles in digital format to eligible patrons, more and more academic libraries purchase or license e-books and e-journals to replace or augment their print collections. In recent years, electronic book and journal collections have grown rapidly in academic libraries because of their ease of access and convenience (Briddon et al., 2009; Cassidy, Martinez and Shen, 2012; Walters, 2013). The emergence of e-books creates a variety of issues involving acquisition, management, workflows, and usage statistics (ALCTS, 2013).

The purpose of this study was to examine nursing students' views on e-books and whether the use of electronic books will affect their learning engagement and experience. Findings will help librarians to determine whether students will benefit from the growth of e-book collections, as well as why and how students access e-books. The following research questions guided this study:

1. Does student engagement increase with e-book usage?
2. Do students' perceived learning outcomes improve with e-book usage?
3. Why or why not will students use e-books?
4. What device(s) do students use for reading e-books?
5. How do students read e-books?
6. What e-book features are important to students?

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LITERATURE REVIEW

E-books are a digital version of a printed book that can be read on electronic devices such as a computer or handheld device (Oxford Dictionaries). Both e-book reading devices and e-book usage has increased rapidly in recent years. Rainie and Duggan (2012) interviewed 2,252 Americans who were 16 years and older. They found that ownership of either a tablet computer or e-book reading device leapt from 18% to 33% from 2011 to 2012. Meanwhile, the number of e-book readers increased from 16% to 23%, while print book readers dropped from 72% to 67%. E-books have become increasingly popular for leisure reading.

Moreover, scholarly e-book collections have also experienced dramatic growth. In Rebecca Miller's (2011) review of 2010 and 2011 *Library Journal's* Annual E-book Survey, she noted that 95% of the libraries in the United States purchased/subscribed to e-books in 2011. Average e-book titles in academic libraries were 33,830 in 2010, reaching 65,208 in 2011, a 93% increment. The American Library Association (ALA) advocates that digital content and e-books are the future of libraries. ALA continues its push for expanded e-book access with more aggressive strategies that facilitate libraries and their users to obtain e-books under reasonable terms and costs (Stripling, Visser, Wolven, and Feldman, 2013).

Several studies explore how users accessed and used scholarly e-books. JISC (2009) reported that barriers hindering readers included the discomfort of reading on screen, non-user-friendly design of delivery platforms, and lack of awareness of e-book availability. Other studies backed up these findings. Cassidy, Martinez and Shen (2012) examined usage of e-books among graduate students and faculty. They echoed previous findings that users value the convenience and ease of access that e-books provide. However, users did not necessarily like e-books more than print books. Brahme and Gabriel (2012) concluded from their survey of distance learning students that keeping up with evolving e-book features and platforms was difficult for students and often for librarians as well. They wrote that the task was made harder by the wide range of vendors and platforms available to libraries, with many differences among e-book services. They found that some e-book features made users happy, but there were also a number of features of which users were not aware. Physical discomfort, such as eye strain due to long hours reading from a screen, was also reported by various demographics (Nariani, 2009; Briddon et al., 2009).

Innovative web technology has changed our lives and made communication much easier. Ugaz and Resnick (2008) found that students used electronic reference/core medical books more than the equivalent print copies. Gueval et al. (2015) reported that nursing students at a large medical center became proficient in using e-books within one semester,

but were not satisfied until they had used the technology for a year. Chen et al. (2010) found that there was a positive relationship between student use of web-based technology and student engagement and desired learning outcomes. Chen also predicted that such technologies will continue to have a positive effect on learning and engagement. A literature review regarding the effect on learning engagement and outcomes of using e-textbooks in class yielded mixed results. Sun, Flores, and Tanguma (2012) reported that students who used e-textbooks in class believed that e-textbook features enhanced their learning experience. Also, e-books positively affected student learning outcomes. However, Daniel and Woody (2013) compared 298 students' performance in using print textbooks and e-textbooks at a medium-sized regional university. They found there was no big difference within those two groups. They mentioned that the e-textbook group students spent a significantly longer time reading. They also noted that e-textbooks were not popular among college students. Although e-textbooks are promoted as having more advanced features, students and faculty were not yet ready for adoption of e-textbooks (Elias, Phillips, and Luechtefeld, 2012). Few studies have investigated whether acceptance of e-books offered by libraries for reference and circulation purposes is correlated with students' learning experience and learning outcomes. This study therefore aims to fill this gap in the literature.

NURSING AND HEALTH SCIENCES E-BOOK COLLECTION AT JACKSONVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY

As of 2014, The Nursing and Health Sciences collection of the Houston Cole Library contains 23,397 print titles and 2,166 e-books in the Library of Congress Classification R. In the QM-QR classifications, the print titles total 4,296 and the e-book count was 369. E-books made up approximately 8% of the collection in total (Barnett-Ellis, 2015). The Library does not have any written policy regarding adoption of e-books. However, in order to accommodate the needs of the rapidly increasing growth of the student population in online nursing programs, librarians favor purchasing or licensing e-books as their funding permits. As a part of its collection development policy, the Library is not inclined to purchase any electronic textbooks for faculty and students. All e-books are available for online reading only.

METHOD

The survey instrument contained demographic and open-ended questions. Students who had or had not used e-books were asked a separate set of questions. Students with e-book experience were asked: (1) How they perceived e-books as a learning resource that possibly affects their learning engagement and outcome (2) Why and how did they use e-books? Four statements measured e-book acceptance, three statements quantified student engagement, and four statements assessed their learning outcomes. Student engagement in academic work was defined as "the student's psychological investment in and effort directed toward learning, understanding, or mastering the knowledge, skills, or crafts that academic work is intended to promote." (Newmann, Wehlage, and Lamborn, 1992, p. 12). Survey questions on student engagement examined the level of motivation students have when they use e-books in learning progress. Students' perceived learning outcomes looked at whether e-books give students more confidence in doing assignments, and whether they have a positive impact on student performance. All eleven statements asked students to rank their answers by 5 a point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A sample statement of each variable was as follows:

- I think the library should purchase more e-books.
- I am able to interact more with my classmate/instructor because we can access the same e-book.
- Using e-books made my research project easier.

On the other hand, students without e-book experience were asked why they had not used e-books for their course studies.

Students enrolled in undergraduate and graduate nursing programs in the spring term of 2015 were invited to take the survey. The statistical software package SPSS 21.0 for Windows was utilized to perform the analyses. A multivariate correlational analysis was conducted to examine research questions 1 and 2, while questions 3 to 6 were answered with descriptive statistics results.

RESULTS

DEMOGRAPHICS

A total of 81 students completed the survey. 89% were female (N = 72). The majority of the participants (N = 35) reported being in the 19–25 age range. 75% of the students (N = 61) were enrolled in undergraduate or equivalent programs, 6% of the students (N = 5) were in graduate or equivalent programs, and the remaining 19% of them (N = 15) were not classified. 58% of the students lived within a 30 mile radius of the campus. Twenty six students (32%) claimed that they lived more than 60 miles away from the campus.

STUDENTS WITH E-BOOK EXPERIENCE (N = 11)

Eleven students in nursing majors, or 11% of the correspondents, reported that they used an e-book during the semester. Seven of them were distance learning students. Students' average score of e-book acceptance, learning engagement and learning outcomes were 3.30, 2.85, and 3.34 respectively (see Table 1). There was no significant difference in e-book acceptance found with distance students (M = 3.28) and on-campus students groups (M = 3.31). 23% of the students who took distance education courses used e-books, while less than 1% of on-campus students reported that they used e-books.

Multivariate correlation analysis results revealed that learning engagement significantly correlated with e-book acceptance ($r = 0.85$, $p < 0.01$). Learning outcomes also correlated with E-book acceptance ($r = 0.58$) (see Table 2).

In correspondence about why students used e-books, six students reported that the e-book was needed for an assignment, five students found an e-book when they conducted a search, and two students stated that the e-books were required reading material.

When asked what devices they used for reading, the majority of students used a laptop device (N = 8), followed by desktop (N = 3), tablets that include iPad, Android, Kindle Fire, Nook (N = 2), and mobile phone (N = 1).

Furthermore, students were asked how they read an e-book. Eight students selected a certain chapter or section, four students browsed or skimmed pages, three students read contents based on searching keywords, and only one student read the entire book.

Finally, 73% of the students considered accessibility to multiple users as the most important function of e-books. 18% deemed ease of navigation important, and 9% counted the ability to print as important. A majority of students perceived e-books were useful for completing course work. 73% of them considered e-books as useful (55%) or very useful (18%). The remaining 27% of the students felt e-books were somewhat useful.

Table 1

Average score of e-book acceptance, learning engagement, and learning outcome.

	E-book acceptance	Learning engagement	Learning outcome
Mean	3.30	2.85	3.34
Std. deviation	0.64	0.66	0.69

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