


**Barriers to e-book access
by Wits undergraduate
engineering students: a
case study**

 UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND,
JOHANNESBURG

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Presentation overview

- Wits at a glance
- Research questions, objectives and Methodology
- Background to e-Books at Wits
- Results
- Recommendations

Wits University at a glance

- Research intensive
- 11 academic libraries on 3 campuses
- 5 Faculties, 33 schools & over 3 146 courses on offer
- 38 343 Students (2017)
- Home to 4 Nobel price winners



Research Questions



- Why do students choose to use or not to use e-books?
- Sub-questions
 - How do students perceive the use of e-books in the University of the Witwatersrand?
 - What are the barriers in accessing e-books?
 - How does the library promote the use of e-books?

Objectives

- 1 To explore use of e-books among undergraduate engineering students, attitude, perception and preferences
- 2 Find out impact of e-books on studies, and challenges experienced while accessing e-books



Methodology

- The study of things in their natural setting

Qualitative
Research



- Understand the phenomenon under study

Exploratory
Research

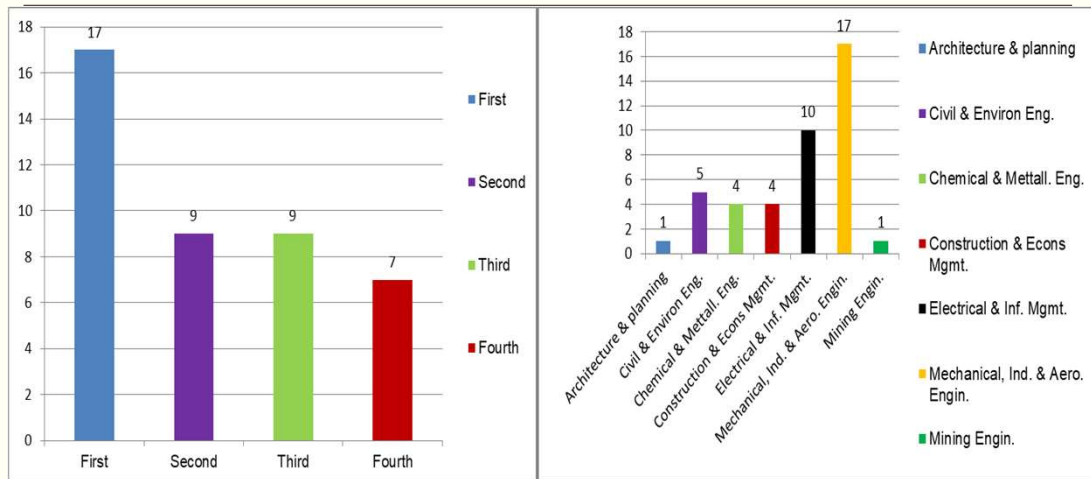


- Questionnaire (Full-time students - 42)
- Interviews (Professional librarians - 5)

Case Study



Participants



Wits University E-books background

- 2008** First acquisition of 3000 e-book titles as frontlist for books published between 2007 and 2008 from Elsevier
- 2009** Lack of subject specific e-books from packages led to ***unbundling*** or ***cherry-picking*** of single e-book titles by 2009
- 2011** Engineering Library acquired 2,500 e-books as part of the Morgan and Claypool package hosted by SpringerLink and Elsevier databases
- 2013** The e-book collection was 15,955 titles, predominantly in the Engineering and Health Sciences Faculties

Wits e-books and print statistics

Year	E-book collection	Print collection
2015	16,357	1,220,125
2016	16,473	1,230,643
2017	16,813	1,238,995

Wits Libraries Annual Reports

E-book advantages and disadvantages

Advantages

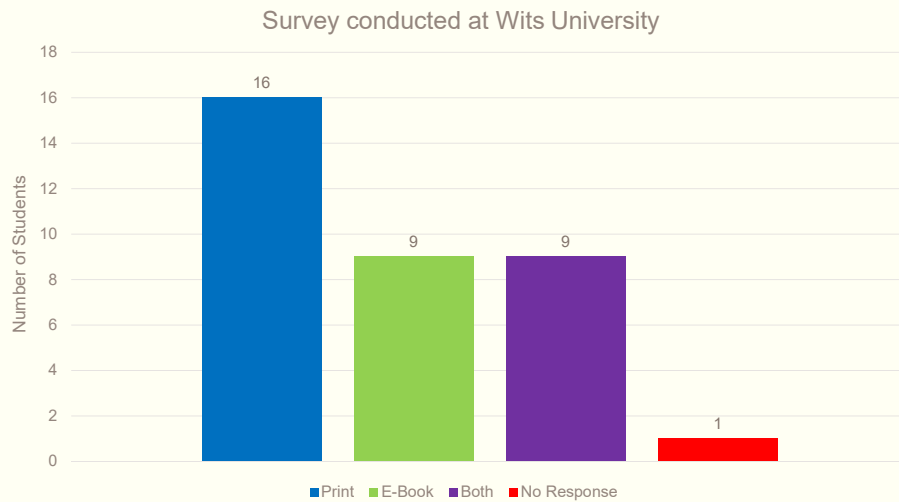
- *Always available, anywhere, anytime*
- *...for academic purposes, convenient and portable*
- *...easy access, can be stored on a laptop, saves time from going to the library*
- *...there is no need to carry heavy textbooks around campus*
- *...access as many documents at once*
- *Very light weight :)*
- *the convenience of carrying an iPad as opposed to large cumbersome books*

Disadvantages

- *distracted easily by opening other webpages*
- *eye fatigue while reading on the screen*
- *Lack of e-books in some subject areas*
- *Scrolling through many pages*
- *Requires passwords*
- *Low battery on laptop/e-reader*
- *Lack of tactile feedback*
- *Navigation – search difficulty*
- *Restrictions on downloading and printing*
- *Lack of standard formats, licenses and platforms*

Atsango, 2015

Print or e-book preferences



Atsango (2015)

UX=User experience

- ***“I do not like e-books because they are labour intensive, I need to have a device, battery life for the device, access to the internet to download ..., whereas for print, I can touch it, feel it, smell it, store it, and keep going back to it, all I need is light!”***

Results – some of the challenges

- Majority prefer print (Smyth and Carlin, 2012; Chou, 2014; Nasser Al-Suqri, 2014; Bomhold, 2013;Palumbo)
- Lack of subject specific e-books from local publishers (Zinn and Langdown, 2011)
- Lack of awareness (Underwood and Wilkin, 2015; Asunka, 2013)
- Inadequate e-book infrastructure e.g. device charging stations
- Lack of access to e-reading devices (computers, laptops, tablets, iPads)
- Lack of familiarity on different platforms (Maduku, 2017)

Results – cont.

- Intermittent power outages
- Slow or unreliable internet connectivity - Wi-Fi
- Costly – VAT (14%), currency fluctuations & lack of uniformity
- Publisher/Vendor /Aggregator restrictions (DRMs, downloads, printing, sharing, passwords and embargoes)
- Lack of clear e-book policies, workflow and ownership
- Different acquisition models and licenses e.g. DDAs, PDAs (Kahn and Underwood, 2013)
- Lack of access from home

Recommendations

Allocate adequate budget

Invest in loanable e-reading devices

Improve Wi-Fi access across the university

Improve technology infrastructure

Provide a balanced collection in all formats

Further university-wide research on e-books (Fulltime, part-time, and visually challenged)

Create awareness of e-books within the university community

Develop adequate technology infrastructure policies

Develop adequate e-book policies

Current projects

- Hybrid
- Comparative research on global university presses and how they support their parent bodies
- 48 print titles donated to Wits libraries
- Wits University press partnering with Cambridge Core to host their e-books
- Legal deposit libraries and their policies on print vs e-book acquisition
- Champions – University Librarian and Deputy Vice Chancellor Research

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THANK YOU

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