

UKSG webinar – Free eBooks for everyone: a new challenge for the University Library, 24 January 2015

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Should you have a question arising from the webinar and not answered below, please e-mail one of the speakers who will be happy to respond.

Questions arising from the Q&A session and the registration forms:

Regarding finances:

Q1: Could you give us an idea of how much the scheme cost?

A: Answered in session – please review the recording.

Q2: What is the cost and whose budget pays for it? What are the savings and hidden downsides?

A: *There are no savings within the Library budget. We are not aware of any “hidden downsides” yet.*

Q3: Where did the money come from for the pilot? I think the other HEIs who have implemented a similar service leveraged the money which academic depts. were spending on books for their students (which the libraries may have been aware of). The library basically pooled all this money together from their academic depts., went out to tender for a single supplier, and provided a centralised service. So no extra funding was sought - it was simply a case of rechanneling existing spending on books/ebooks. Was this the same at M'sex?

A: *Money was allocated by the University Executive. This was new money which had not previously been allocated either to Schools or the Library.*

Q4: Just to clarify, will the 2 million cost for the next phase be on top of your ring fenced library budget, i.e. is extra money being supplied from a central fund or is it coming out of your usual library budget?

A: *It is in addition to the normal Library budget.*

Q5: What is your negotiating strategy and what discounting are you achieving? Or is this all handled by Kortext/John Smith (without any direct contact between yourselves and publishers)?

A: *Negotiations are handled for us by Kortext/John Smith.*

Q6: What sort of discount from the Digital List Price do Kortext negotiate on your behalf?

A: *This varies between publishers*



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Q7: Can you confirm that this is an evidence based model - i.e. that you only pay Kortext for items that are used?

A: Each student has to activate their account to access their ebooks. We only pay for students who have activated their accounts.

Q8: About acquisition models or licensing models, i.e. a book = a license; and or open downloads?

A: Middlesex University only purchase the Kortext copies that have been activated by their students. Once a book has been activated, the student is licensed for permanent access to the book, to read it online and to download it onto five different devices.

Regarding students:

Q9: How do you support students out of hours? Does Kortext help out with this?

A: Queries are received via the University's central enquiry service. Simple queries will be answered immediately and others forwarded internally or to Kortext as appropriate.

Q10: Have they contacted the 15% students who didn't activate their textbooks to find out why?

A: Answered in session – please review the recording.

Q11: Are the texts available to all students or only to those studying the modules in question?

A: The eTextbooks are only given to the students studying the specific modules.

Q12: Was accessibility for student with disabilities considered? How did you ensure equality of access, and compatibility with assistive technologies?

A: Answered in session – please review the recording.

Q13: Were there any complaints from students who did not have access to the internet at home?

A: Answered in session – please review the recording.

Regarding the library:

Q14: Was there any Library input in administering this project?

A: The Library is responsible for administering the project in collaboration with Kortext/John Smith

Q15: Is the service branded as being something that is provided by the library?

A: It is branded as something offered by the University, but internally it is closely associated with the Library.



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Q16: Have you noticed any impact of this exercise in terms of savings for Library materials budget, or choice of materials? How is this process aligned to existing processes for collection building and content provision?

A: It is too early to tell at the moment but we anticipate that over time there will be the opportunity to divert some of the funds previously allocated to essential reading list materials to broadening the collection.

Q17: How much library staff time has been spent on this service? And is it sustainable going forward?

A: It has been time intensive. There is a full time project officer and assistance from junior staff in gathering and entering data. The aim of the first 18 months has been to understand and itemise the processes involved in providing free etextbooks. Work tasks will be integrated into core work processes but there will be an ongoing need for someone to oversee the project.

Regarding usage statistics:

Q18: What sort of usage data are Kortext gathering and is there an ethical issue in allowing them access to the students' devices to do so?

A: Data is gathered on the ways in which students use the etextbooks, the frequency and length of time etc. A Data processing Agreement has been signed between Middlesex and Kortext/John Smith.

Q19: Re usage. Are you able to see the duration of time student will spend with a book after activation - where they view online?

A: Not currently but we hope to be able to do so in the near future.

Regarding lecturers and pedagogy:

Q20: Were the ebooks integrated within the learning design for the modules, or did it just ensure every student had the core text?

A: This varied depending on the School and department and how quickly they engaged with the project. The aim is for each free etextbook to be fully integrated but this will take time.

Q21: Are lecturers offered training and support to embed the ebooks into their pedagogy?

A: Training has so far focused on functionality and familiarisation but this will be developed over the coming year.



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Q22: I don't believe this approach means the end of the library (we have something similar going on in our business school with VitalSource) but I do have concerns about the over-reliance on one text. From a pedagogical point of view, should academics or librarians be advocating the use of a single book or encouraging wider reading and independent study?

A: The free textbook project integrates with our online reading lists. These present a range of resources which students should use, all of which are held in the Library, some of which they may wish to purchase and one of which they will be given to keep.

Q23: Any concerns from the academics that ebook availability would dictate or influence set readings?

A: We have been able to reassure academics that the vast majority of books that they choose will be available, or can be made available given sufficient time for KorText/John Smith to negotiate with publishers.

Q24: What percentage of books that lecturers wanted was KorText able to get from publishers? Is there a feeling that the choice of texts is becoming based on availability rather than learning outcomes?

A: 85-90% of first choices have been provided.

Q25: What if lecturers don't respond when you ask them to recommend a book for the module?

A: Answered in session – please review the recording.

Q26: Does this impact on wider reading for students not on that module?

A: There is no impact on students not on the module.

Technical questions:

Q27: Can access be shared with other students in other programmes within the same university and others outside the university?

A: Answered in session – please review the recording.

Q28: For how long do the students have access to the books?

A: Answered in session – please review the recording.

Q29: Do the students retain access to the ebooks after they have completed the module, or do they get passed on to the next intake?

A: Answered in session – please review the recording.



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Q30: Can you confirm that last comment about life long access please. Are the licences/ e-books individual licences then? How do the students access the texts after graduation?

A: Students have permanent individual access to their free e-textbooks. Once they leave the University they access them via their Kortext account.

Q31: What percentage of books went to wrong students/modules?

A: Very few (-5%). The main issue was with students changing modules at the last minute.

Q32: Can other library ebooks be added/linked to the students' Kortext account?

A: Standard library ebooks can't be linked to the Kortext account, but if download is permitted they can be accessed via the Kortext app which is non-proprietary.

Q33: What if the ebook request is a foreign language book published by a foreign publisher? How would you go about this?

A: We haven't been asked for any foreign language books, but have worked with foreign publishers. Kortext/John Smith have negotiated with them as they would for UK based publishers.

Q34: Do you have to worry about open book exams?

A: We have checked with Schools that this is not an issue for us.

Q35: What online reading list service does Middlesex use, and how did they get that information into John Smith's bookstore to make them available to their students?

A: We use Talis Aspire. We exported a file of essential books from reading lists to give Kortext/John Smith an idea of the books that would be required. We will be working with both companies to integrate the free ebooks into the reading lists.

Q36: Why do Kortext books allow more pages to be printed?

A: Answered in session – please review the recording.

Q37: How do you ensure copyright compliance- i.e. printing with permitted limits?

A: Answered in session – please review the recording.

Q38: How secure are the e-books? Do they include any DRM/TPMs? What prevents the students from sharing the books with their friends outside of Middlesex?

A: Answered in session – please review the recording.



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Going forward:

Q39: How are you planning to manage new editions - will it be easy to switch to the newest available version, or will you have to "run out" the old edition until the next module run? And how do you plan to manage text switching on a module?

A: Students will be given the latest edition available at the start of their module (unless the module leader has asked for an older edition). This won't be changed during the run of that module, but a search for new editions will be taken as part of the preparation for the next run.

Q40: If not eBooks, is the content within other OA formats of interest, outside of OA journals?

A: We will explore all options.

Q41: How easy would you find it to transfer to another supplier, particularly as new suppliers come on board?

A: Answered in session – please review the recording.

Miscellaneous:

Q42: Question to any publishers listening - what are the barriers to creating more epub3 content?

A: Shared with audience.

