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## E-books in Academic Libraries: Challenges for Acquisition and Collection Management

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portal: Libraries and the Academy

Johns Hopkins University Press

Volume 13, Number 2, April 2013

pp. 187-211

10.1353/pla.2013.0012

ARTICLE

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### Abstract

This bibliographic essay examines the difficulties associated with the selection, licensing, acquisition, and management of e-books in academic libraries. The potential advantages of e-book technology are likely to be realized only to the extent that they advance the economic goals of e-book suppliers and are consistent with the legal framework that has been negotiated by publishers, vendors, libraries, and readers. Many difficulties can be traced to a lack of uniformity in license terms, access restrictions, and librarians' expectations. Likewise, sustainable access to e-books is hindered by impermanent physical media, proprietary file formats and software, and restrictive license provisions. Although the goals of e-book providers are sometimes inconsistent with those of universities, librarians are well-positioned to guide vendors in the development of e-book licenses and platforms.



# E-books in Academic Libraries: Challenges for Acquisition and Collection Management

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## Introduction

Thousands of advertisements, press releases, and magazine articles draw attention to the real and perceived advantages of e-books. A simple Google search will bring up news of several college libraries that have adopted e-book collections on a large scale, sometimes to the near exclusion of print titles. Information on the advantages of e-books is readily available, since every e-book publisher, aggregator, and vendor has an interest in disseminating that information as widely as possible.

In contrast, many of the challenges associated with academic e-books are not well known among librarians, students, or university administrators. This bibliographic essay examines the difficulties associated with the selection, licensing, acquisition, and

*portal: Libraries and the Academy*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (2013), pp. 187-211.  
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