An overview of the e-book marketplace

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Abstract

Purpose
The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the e-book marketplace players and their services against a context in which e-books are becoming an increasingly significant category of digital resource.

Design/methodology/approach
The paper starts with a brief overview of the literature on the global e-book market and e-book business models offered by vendors to libraries. Analysis of the web sites of nine e-book publishers and 11 e-book aggregators was used as a basis for profiling the main features of e-books (user-oriented features and librarian-oriented features) and the services offered by e-book publishers and e-book aggregators. Key points from these profiles are discussed, and conclusions and recommendations for the future of the e-book marketplace are offered.

Findings
The e-book market is under constant change and it is important to monitor its development, not just at national but also at international level. Currently, the majority of e-book vendors market to libraries – typically academic libraries, and publishers are increasingly using e-aggregators to distribute their titles. Collections of e-books are expanding gradually and there is evidence of increasing uptake. Current e-book business models are complex and range considerably.

Practical implications
This development of the availability of e-books could have significant implications for the future role of libraries and for library strategies, policies and processes.

Originality/value
The paper draws attention to the potential of the future importance of e-books and profiles the uptake of the e-book marketplace in terms of main players and their services.

Keywords
Electronic books, Electronic publishing, Publishers, Libraries

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