A snapshot of eLending in public libraries

ALIA Book Industry and eLending Advisory Committee survey 2019

Background

The survey took place during August 2019 through Survey Monkey. It was promoted by the ALIA Australian Public Library Alliance, in ALIA Weekly and with support from social media.

We received state and territory-wide responses for ACT, Northern Territory, South Australia, and Tasmania; a sample of 18 library service responses from NSW, representing 106 locations; 18 responses from library services in WA representing 44 locations. In total, the responses were on behalf of 398 libraries and branches – approximately a quarter of all public library locations.[1]

Libraries were asked about their holdings of print books, ebooks, audio books, eaudio books, magazines, emagazines, DVDs, music CDs, emusic and streaming services.

Findings

Print books as % of loans

ACT	60
NSW	54
NT	63
SA	62
TAS	69
WA	60

Audio books as % of loans

ACT	3
NSW	3
NT	1
SA	2
TAS	2
WA	4

eBooks as % of loans

ACT	6
NSW	5
NT	5
SA	5
TAS	6
WA	8

eAudio books as % of loans

ACT	8
NSW	5
NT	8
SA	2
TAS	2
WA	4
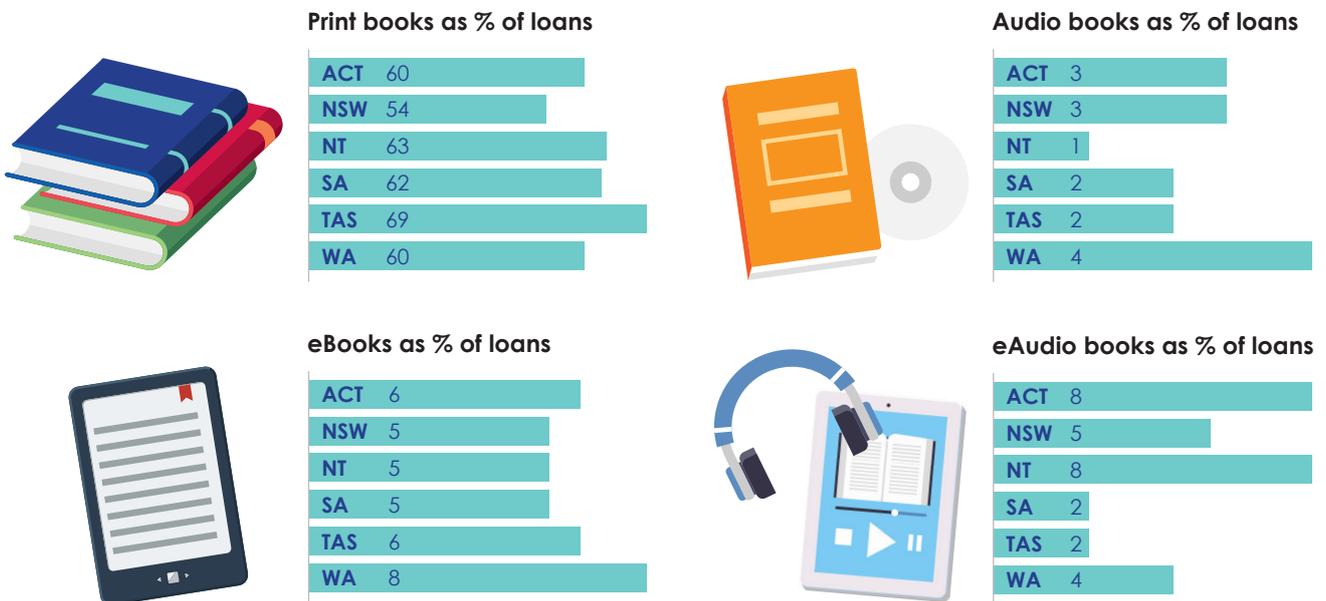
29% of public libraries in the survey held other electronic content for library users, including elearning, databases (reference, family history, legal and health information), streaming video, eStories, eComics, eNewspapers.

The top 5 ebook platform providers were Bolinda, Overdrive, Wavesound, Wheelers and Bibliotheca. The main video streaming providers were Kanopy and Beamafilm. Other digital services were provided by Lynda.com, PressReader, Flipster, Freegal, Naxos, Ziptales and Story Box Library.

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[1] We received three individual responses from Queensland and Victoria, which gave us insufficient data for these states.

eBooks

86%
Satisfied or very satisfied

14%
Less than satisfied or not satisfied

eAudio books

87%
Satisfied or very satisfied

13%
Less than satisfied or not satisfied

How satisfied are you with the range of resources available from your eLending providers?

Concerns expressed about ebooks were the high expectation of users, who expect everything to be available in 'e'; lack of access to Hachette titles; new restrictions being trialled by Macmillan; limited number of titles in 'e' and not necessarily all titles in a series; performance of platform apps; long wait lists for popular titles; cumbersome search through multiple platforms; lack of foreign language material, and the high price point. For eFilms, the poor user experience by comparison with the retail market. For eMusic, limited catalogue, prohibitive cost (the latter also applied to eComics).

How satisfied are you with the service you receive from your eLending providers?

Comments included: some are better than others; licensing uniformity across suppliers would be helpful; challenges in understanding how publishers set prices and decide availability across jurisdictions; the need for a sustainable model for licensing which reflects the realities of library lending; less prohibitive pricing.

25%	75%	Reporting and usage
13%	87%	Selection support
30%	70%	Collection maintenance services
17%	83%	Choice of eBooks
9%	91%	Licensing conditions and cost

■ Satisfied or very satisfied   ■ Less than satisfied or not satisfied
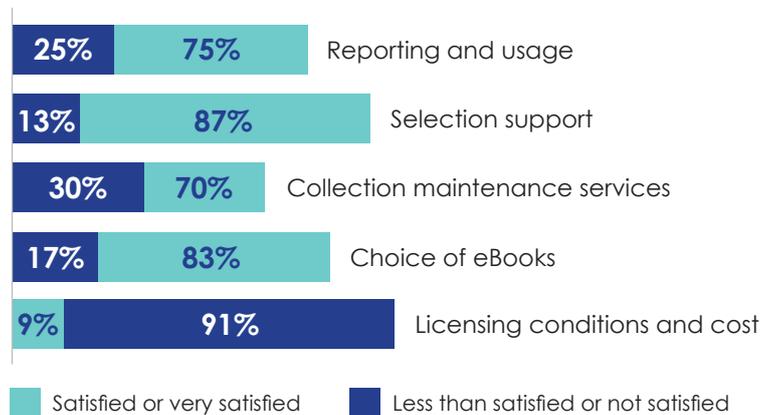
## What are your priorities for improving the library eBook service from publishers and providers?

Respondents cited issues with too many different models for pricing and licensing; improvement in the timeliness of release; problems with the quality of metadata; confusion for customers using multiple platforms and apps.

1%	99%	Wide range of content
1%	99%	Better lending model conditions
2%	98%	Improved cost per use
2%	98%	Improved timeliness of release to libraries
5%	95%	Improved reporting
27%	73%	Improved selection support
14%	86%	Improved collection maintenance support
26%	74%	Improved quality of metadata

■ Important or very important   ■ Less important or not important
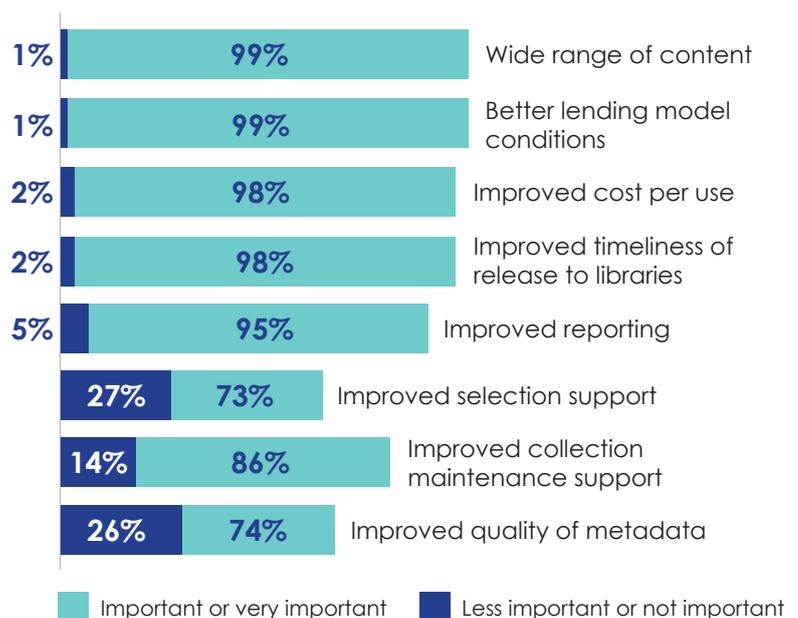
Do you list individual eLending titles in your library catalogue?

eBooks
15% no
85% yes

eAudio books
15% no
85% yes

eMagazines
18% no
82% yes

eBooks and devices

Can eBooks be downloaded directly from your library catalogue?
37% no
63% yes

Does your library lend devices for reading eBooks?
11% yes
89% no
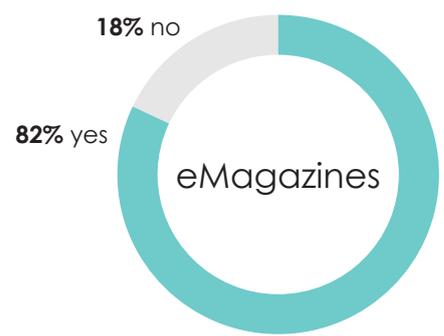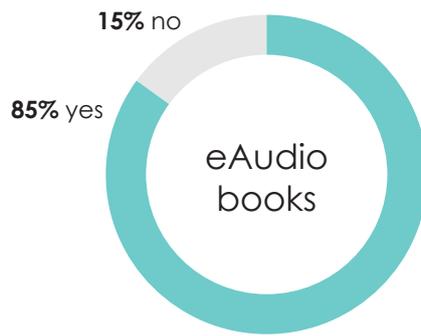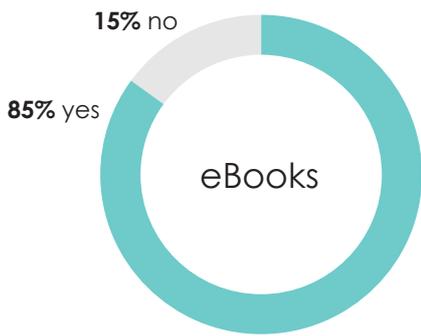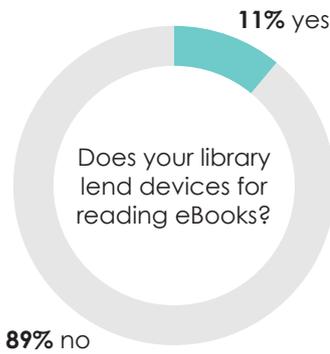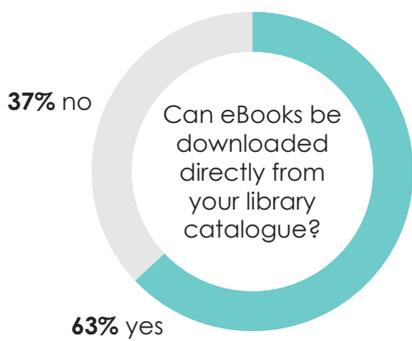
Comments included that there were too many eMusic titles, which would overwhelm the catalogue; rapid changes to titles make this too onerous; statewide consortia approaches introduce other issues.

Do you feel that your library team has the skills needed to offer advice and support to clients who want to access eBooks and other eLending resources?

3%
All staff members are skilled

78%
Most staff members are skilled

19%
Some staff members are skilled