50:50 BY 2020

ALIA STATEMENT

We predict that library print and ebook collections will establish a 50:50 equilibrium by 2020 and that this balance will be maintained for the foreseeable future.

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Those born in 1990 grew up with print, studied with print, and are the last print-only generation. This final print-only generation will be 80 in 2070. For the next 50 years a significant proportion of the population will have lived with print books, and while they may embrace the opportunities of ereaders, there is no sign that they will convert to a fully digital reading experience. The latest research suggests a 50:50 balance for the foreseeable future.

From the Brisbane City Council survey of library users in 2012: 58% say they believe all books will be available equally in print and ebook formats.[1]

From the Pew Research report *Younger Americans' Library Habits and Expectations*, 25 June 2013:

Younger Americans—those ages 16–29—exhibit a fascinating mix of habits and preferences when it comes to reading, libraries, and technology. Almost all Americans under age 30 are online, and they are more likely than older patrons to use libraries' computer and internet connections; however, they are also still closely bound to print, as three-quarters (75%) of younger Americans say they have read at least one book in print in the past year, compared with 64% of adults ages 30 and older.

Similarly, younger Americans' library usage reflect a blend of traditional and technological services. Americans under age 30 are just as likely as older adults to visit the library, and once there they borrow print books and browse the shelves at similar rates. Large majorities of those under age 30 say it is

"very important" for libraries to have librarians as well as books for borrowing, and relatively few think that libraries should automate most library services, move most services online, or move print books out of public areas.[2]

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR LIBRARIES AND LIBRARY MANAGEMENT

Shelf space will be freed up, which will allow more space for study, relaxation, events, meetings and creative uses. It must be remembered that actual shelf space is already less than half the floor area of most public libraries.

There will be fewer library users coming into the library to borrow books, but there will be more opportunity for people to use the library space for other learning and community purposes. User-focused collection management and reader advisory services will be the added value contribution of library staff.

Collection budgets will need to increase, as library users will want titles in both print and ebook formats. However, the sector will enter into negotiations with publishers and aggregators to reach an affordable (for libraries) and commercially viable (for vendors) balance, which will benefit all parties.

The workload in terms of making books shelf-ready will diminish but **new skills** will be required for purchasing and contract management of ebook licences.

RFID will continue to be a worthwhile investment and the **print infrastructure** (return chutes, carts, etc) will continue to feature in libraries.

1 http://www.alia.org.au/sites/default/files/documents/advocacy/Sharan%20Harvey%20ALIA%20ebooks%20think%20tank%2015%20February%202013.pdf

2 http://libraries.pewinternet.org/2013/06/25/younger-americans-library-services/