

Micro Characteristics e-Book Research: a Literature-based Analysis

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Abstract

This research intended to identify micro-features of e-book research published during 2010 and 2011. It is based on e-book research literature published in LIS and other journals. Relevant literature was searched from various databases and analyzed to fulfill the purpose of this study. The study finds that e-book researchers have investigated aspects such as e-book use, e-book reader and commercial aspects. Further, it finds that e-book research is published in LIS as well as non-LIS journals. LIS as well as non-LIS faculties and library practitioners conduct research on e-books. There is not much difference between the citation behaviour of LIS and non-LIS e-book researchers. The research will be useful for prospective e-book researchers in planning and conducting research. This articles will also be useful for LIS curriculum developers.

Keywords: E-books, e-book readers, academic libraries, authorship pattern, e-book research themes

Introduction:

Ebooks are the most recent advancements in the evolutionary process of reading material. The human kind has witnessed transformation in the physical form of book right from clay tablets, parchments to paper-based books and now the e-books. This phase of the evolutionary process of books, however, need not be considered as the last phase. The future book may still have many more surprises for the humanity. E-book earlier emerged in the 1990s. However, due to the lack of technological, psychological, commercial, economic and other requirements the e-book could sustain itself at that time. Nevertheless, as a communication media the e-book has its own robust, competitive features. These amongst other include capacity to store large amount of information, capacity to hold and display multimedia contents, anytime any where accessibility, facility to search contents from full-text, eco-friendly, built-in dictionary facility, facility to manipulate font size etc. With these and many more features that are advantageous, the e-book is showing its presence in every academic environment. Many authors and publishers are showing enthusiasm in making available their publications in e-book format. Users, particularly, the youngsters, as usual, are showing keen interest in this techno-studded information media. Increased supply from the publishers/distributors/aggregators and the demand from the users is

forcing libraries to acquire and make available e-books. Moreover, what is encouraging is that the library profession too, as usual is responding to this change positively. As a result many library's now have an additional budget head called e-books, their collections has new addition in the form of e-books and they have e-book based services.

Every event/happening has a reason behind it is the basic presumption of any scientific research. Research in any field is carried out to investigate the cause and effect relationship of a phenomenon; to identify characteristics of a phenomenon; to know the trends in the development and so on. Since, the e-books are the recent genre of communication media, all the stakeholders are engaged in researching different aspects of e-books. The overall goal of this paper is to identify characteristics of e-book research. Specific objectives of the article are stated in the next paragraph.

E-book research literature: a brief review:

During 2010 and 2011 total 28 e-book research articles were published. A large number of articles dealt with the use of e-books. For example, Letchumanan, and Tarmizi (2011) assessed the intention to use e-book among engineering undergraduates. In another research, the same authors studied the utilization of e-books among mathematics students (Letchumanan and Tarmizi 2011a). Berg, Hoffmann and Dawson (2010) compared the information retrieval behaviour of undergraduate students in e-books and printed books. Herlihy and Yi (2010) found that there is correlation between currency of e-books and their use. Although e-books are used more and more Woody, Daniel and Baker (2010) observed that the post-graduate students preferred printed textbooks to e-books. Graduate students' e-book usage attitude indicated that they prefer to use e-books mainly for study and research and they liked e-books due the convenience in their use (Wu and Chen, 2011). Shamir and Shlafer (2011) conducted research to know the effectiveness of e-books in promoting phonological awareness children at risk for learning disabilities and found that the e-books are very useful for such special purposes. E-books also prove very useful in developing vocabulary and story comprehension among the kindergarten students (Korat, 2010). Only one survey was carried out to know the public library user's e-book use behaviour (Duncan, 2010). The survey found that there is a high level of interest among the public library users particularly for e-audio books. Lin, et al. (2010) studied the impact of different recommendation sources such as word of mouth, advertising etc. on the use of e-books in academic library. Lin and his co-authors concluded that word of mouth has wider effect on the use of e-books. Crespo and others tested (Crespo, et al.,2011) the impact of Recommendation System on the use of e-books and found that the system does help to enhance the use e-books.

E-book reader is the second largest theme that has attracted the attention of e-book researchers. Dougherty (2010), for example, analyzed the affect of e-book readers on academic

libraries and concluded that e-book readers have the potential to transform librarianship. Grzeschik et al. (2011); Lai and Chang (2011) and Pattuelli and Rabina (2010) conducted research to understand user's attitude and behaviour towards dedicated e-book readers. These authors found that the portability and convenience of the e-book readers are the major features that have positive impact on the use of e-book readers. Gibson and Gibb (2011) evaluated the second generation e-books. Participants in this study did express their satisfaction towards the available e-book readers, nevertheless they expressed that more improvement should be made to the e-book reading devices. Kindle is one of the most used e-book reader. Evaluation of Kindle DX e-book reader also indicates that further improvements are expected (Qian, 2011). Modifications needed in e-book readers considering the need of a specific geographical area was the theme of another research article (Min, et al., 2011). Min and his co-researchers found that the Koreans prefer an e-book reader that includes multi-media, wi-fi, resistive touch screen and display mixing e-ink with colour TFT-LCD.

From the libraries point of view e-books are reading materials. Whereas from the book trade's point of view it is a commercial product. Garcí'a, Are'valo and Rodero (2010) surveyed the emerging e-book publishing in Spain and concluded that it is calmly accepted by the publishing sector. 'E-book bookseller's entry affects strategic interaction in the book market and impacts sellers and consumers' is the outcome of Jiang and Katsamakos (2010) research. Not only this but as Hua, Cheng and Wang (2011) concluded the prevalence of e-books has prompted many publishers to reconsider their distribution channels for new titles. Promotion and marketing of e-books is necessary to their extensive use. Lonsdale and Armstrong (2010); Vasileiou and Rowley (2011) and Ashcroft (2011) studied the promotion and marketing aspect of e-books and suggested strategies for the same. Ghaebi and Fahimifar (2011) studied Iranian information professionals' attitude towards e-book acquisition and listed their exceptions about e-books. Whereas, Loan (2011) surveyed the open access e-book collection on Central Asia and found that most of the books were published in USA and UK. Pomerantz (2010) compared the aggregators' collection with the holding of a nursing and business library and concluded that it did not match.

Objectives of the study:

Objectives of the present research are:

1. To identify characteristics of e-book research writers
2. To know the contributors to e-book research and their affiliation
3. To find the themes and sub-themes researched on by the e-book researchers
4. To study the characteristics of journals publishing e-book research
5. To know the country-wise contribution to e-book research
6. To study other characteristics i.e. citation patterns, funding, generalizability and software/techniques used for e-book research

Scope and methodology:

This paper presents review of e-book research. The review is limited to the research published during the 2010 and 2011. During these two years, total 28 research articles were published. Out of which 12 research articles are published in 2010 and 16 research articles are published in 2011. The review covers research on e-books published worldwide. Data for the present research is collected by analyzing the literature published during the scope of the study. Research articles were searched in Science Direct database (www.sciencedirect.com/), Emerald database (www.emeraldinsight.com/) and Ebsco database (www.ebscohost.com). E-books, ebooks, electronic book, ebook readers, e-book research were the keywords used for searching articles in these databases. Contents of the research articles on e-books are analyzed to know authorship pattern, institutional affiliation of e-book researchers, and country-wise output of e-book research, themes researched and, journal-wise coverage and number of citations.

Significance of this research:

Analysis in the present article will help in knowing the themes and sub-themes covered by e-book research conducted during 2010 and 2011. This will automatically help in knowing the aspects yet to be covered. This will provide research problems for the prospective researchers. E-books are for all types of libraries and all types of users. In spite of this are all types of libraries and users considered by e-book researchers is worth knowing. This knowledge will help in knowing already emphasized and overlooked libraries and users by e-book researchers. Accordingly, research can be undertaken on the types of libraries and users so far overlooked by e-book researchers. Conducting research on any topic is important. Equally important is the consumption / application of existing research. The most important contribution of this paper will be for the potential consumers of ebook research. Through this paper, the LIS professionals will come to know what research has been already carried. This in turn will help them in thinking for its application. This will also help in avoiding duplications in e-book research and bringing variety and depth in e-book research.

Characteristics of e-book research writers:

Table 1: Collaborative behaviour of authors

Sr.	Nature of	Subject affiliation of the author	Number	Total
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No.	collaboration (i.e. number of authors)		of articles	number of articles
1	Single author	Library Science	7	8
		Education	1	
2	Two-authors	Library Science	7	12
		mathematics	2	
		Computer and Information Science	1	
		Technology management	1	
		Education	1	
3	Three-authors	Library Science	2	4
		Logistics management	1	
		Psychology	1	
4	Four-authors	Library Science	1	3
		Information and industrial engineering	1	
		Management science	1	
5	Six-authors	computer science	1	1
	Total			28

Out of total 28 research articles on e-books 17 have been written by LIS professionals and the remaining 11 by non-LIS experts. As far as the collaboration pattern is concerned maximum, i.e. 12 articles are written by two-authors jointly. Single author articles are next in the rank i.e. eight articles are written by single-authors. LIS professionals in collaboration with non-LIS experts wrote only three e-book research articles. As many as 20 articles (71%) are written in joint authorship. 50% of this are collaborative writings of LIS professionals. This is an encouraging scenario because in the earlier days there was less collaborative writing in LIS. However, out of eight articles written by three, four and six-authors, five are written by non-LIS professionals. This means there is more collaboration among the non-LIS researchers.

Faculty and practitioner's contribution to e-book research:

Total 62 authors wrote 28 research papers on e-books. These 62 contributors are grouped under three categories (Table 2).

Table 2: Contributors to e-book research

Sr. No.	Discipline	No. of authors	%
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1	Library faculties	22	35
2	Non-LIS faculties	22	35
3	Library practitioners	18	29
Total		62	100

E-book research is conducted and published by three main stakeholders i.e. the LIS faculties, library practitioners and non-LIS faculties (Table 2). Out of these the library practitioners and LIS faculties are the legitimate claimants of e-book research. Out of total 62 authors 40 (65%) are from LIS field (i.e. LIS faculties and practitioners taken together). The library practitioners and library faculties have almost equal contribution (i.e. LIS faculties 35%; library practitioners 30%) in e-book research. This shows the equal concern and interest of LIS faculties and library practitioners. E-book research by faculties helps in formulating curricular policies for e-book education. Library practitioner's interest in e-book research helps in designing and strengthening e-book services.

The non-LIS faculties too have contributed fairly (35%) (Table 2) to e-book research. These faculties are from education, psychology, computer science and management. These are the closely related peripheral subjects to e-books. For example, the education experts are interested in finding effects of e-books on learning practices. The psychology faculties want to know student's behaviour towards the new leaning devices/mechanism i.e. the e-book. The computer science faculties are interested in testing usability of the e-book technology.

Collaboration between faculties and library practitioners:

There does not seem to be much collaboration between the LIS faculty and library practitioners in e-book research as they write only one article in collaboration. Similarly, there is very less collaboration between non-LIS faculty and library a practitioner as this category produced only one research article on e-books.

Themes and sub-themes researched- Analysis of keywords:

The 28 research articles studied in the present research contained total 82 keywords. Out of this, 14 keywords are related with e-books (Frame 1); 16 keywords are related with various aspects of LIS (Frame 2) and remaining 52 keywords are not directly related e-books and LIS (Frame 3); rather they are related with other aspects of the theme of the individual articles.

Frame 1: Keywords related with e-books (14)

- A) E-books (23); E-resources (2); Intelligent e-books; Digital books; Digital documents; E-journals; Open access books; CD-ROM storybook
B) E-book readers (4)
C) Digital libraries (2)
D) E-book usage; E-ink; Online customer reviews; Electronic publishing

- Bracketed number indicated frequency of occurrence
- Keyword without numbers indicate single occurrence
- Keywords are collocated by their subject affinity

This paper analyses various micro-aspects of the e-book research conducted worldwide. As these are the research articles on e-books, 23 (82%) out of total 28 articles include the keyword 'e-books'. Other equivalent or near equivalent keywords used are intelligent e-books, digital books, digital documents, e-resources and open access books. 'E-book readers' is the equipment useful for using e-books. It is a device useful for reading e-books. That is why four articles related with e-book research have used the 'e-book readers' keyword.

Frame 2 : Keywords related with LIS (16)

- A) Libraries; Academic libraries, (7); University libraries; Public libraries
B) User studies (3); Information studies
C) Printed books (2); Books
D) Collections management; Acquisition
E) Information professionals; Librarians
F) User satisfaction; Customer satisfaction
G) Information studies
H) Library users
I) Library suppliers

- Bracketed number indicated frequency of occurrence
- Keyword without number indicate single occurrence
- Keywords are collocated by their subject affinity

Libraries, academic libraries, printed books, books, collection management etc. are the librarianship-related keywords used by the articles under this study. 'Academic libraries' is the most frequently used keyword (used in seven articles). From this, it could be inferred that most of the e-book research at present, is related with academic libraries. User studied is the second most frequently used keyword (used three times). From this it could be concluded that e-book researchers are more interested in exploring the user aspect of e-books. Two articles use the

keyword 'printed books'. This means the e-book researchers are still comparing e-books with printed books.

Frame 3: Keywords not related with LIS (52)

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| <p>A) Information goods (2); Book industry; Product differentiation; Supply chain management; Distribution channel; Channel competition; Ownership; Transformation; Marketing; Promotion; Promotional methods; Service improvements; E-commerce; Economic analysis; Currency options</p> <p>B) Pedagogical issues; E-learning; Learning objects</p> <p>C) Undergraduates (2); Students; Graduate students; Kindergarten children; First graders;</p> <p>D) Higher education; Post-secondary education</p> <p>E) Vocabulary; Word reading; Reading; Story comprehension; Individual perception; Interaction</p> <p>F) Information technology; Media richness; Portable computers; Internet</p> <p>G) Attitudes; Individual behaviour; Human-computer interface; Intention to use</p> <p>H) Kano model; Newsvendor model; Korean preference; Conjoint analysis; Technology acceptance model; Recommendation System; Compatibility; Convenience</p> <p>I) Group of general keywords: Social sciences; Emergent literacy; Kindergarteners at risk for learning disabilities; Sociotechnical change; Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bracketed number indicated frequency of occurrence• Keyword without number indicate single occurrence• Keywords are collocated by their subject affinity |
|---|

Keywords listed in Frame 3 are not directly related with e-books or librarianship. These keywords are related with the themes discussed by e-book research articles. One of the prime aspects of e-book research is commercial aspect. That is the reason, distribution channel, information goods, marketing; promotions etc. are the keywords used by the e-book researchers. Education is the second largest aspect dealt by the researchers on e-books. Various levels of education, pedagogical issues, reading, and vocabulary are some of the education related keywords used by the e-book researchers. Application, testing of various models is another feature of e-book research. That is why Kano model, Conjoint analysis, Technology Acceptance Model, etc. are the keywords used by these researchers.

Pricing models, acquisition of e-books, collection development, management of e-book collections, counting of e-book usage are some of the issues not yet adequately attended to by the e-book researchers. Particularly by the LIS professionals must conduct and publish research on these aspects of e-books.

Table 3: Journals publishing e-book research:

Name of the Journals	Subject affiliation of the journal	No. of papers
The Electronic Library	Library Science	4
Library High Tech	Library Science	4
Collection Building	Library Science	2
Program	Library Science	2
The Journal of Academic Librarianship	Library Science	2
New Library World	Library Science	1
Library Management	Library Science	1
Aplis	Library Science	1
Online Information Review	Library Science	1
Aslib Proceedings	Library Science	1
Journal of Documentation	Library Science	1
Computers & Education	Computers & Education	3
Expert Systems with Applications	Computer Science	1
Computers in Human Behaviour	Computer & Behaviour	1
International Journal of Production Economics	Economics	1
Electronic Commerce Research and Application	E-commerce	1
Performance Measurement and Metrics	Management	1
Total		28

The analysis (Table 3) shows that 71% of the total e-book research is published in LIS journals. The remaining 29% e-book research is published in non-LIS journals and this percentage too is worth noticing. This indicates the interdisciplinary nature of e-book and further strengthens the Bradford's Law of Scattering.

The Electronic Library and the Library Hi Tech published four e-book research articles each. These two are the specialized journals devoted to information technology applications in libraries as a result they have published more articles on e-books than other LIS journals. The higher coverage of e-book research by these two LIS journals matches with their purpose and scope. Each of the other three LIS journals i.e. Collection Building, Program and The Journal of Academic Librarianship published two e-book research articles.

Out of the eight e-book research articles published in non-LIS journals five are published in computer related journals and one each in e-commerce, economics and management science

journals. Rationality is observed between the nature of the e-book research and the scope of the journal selected for its publication.

Different country’s contribution to e-book research:

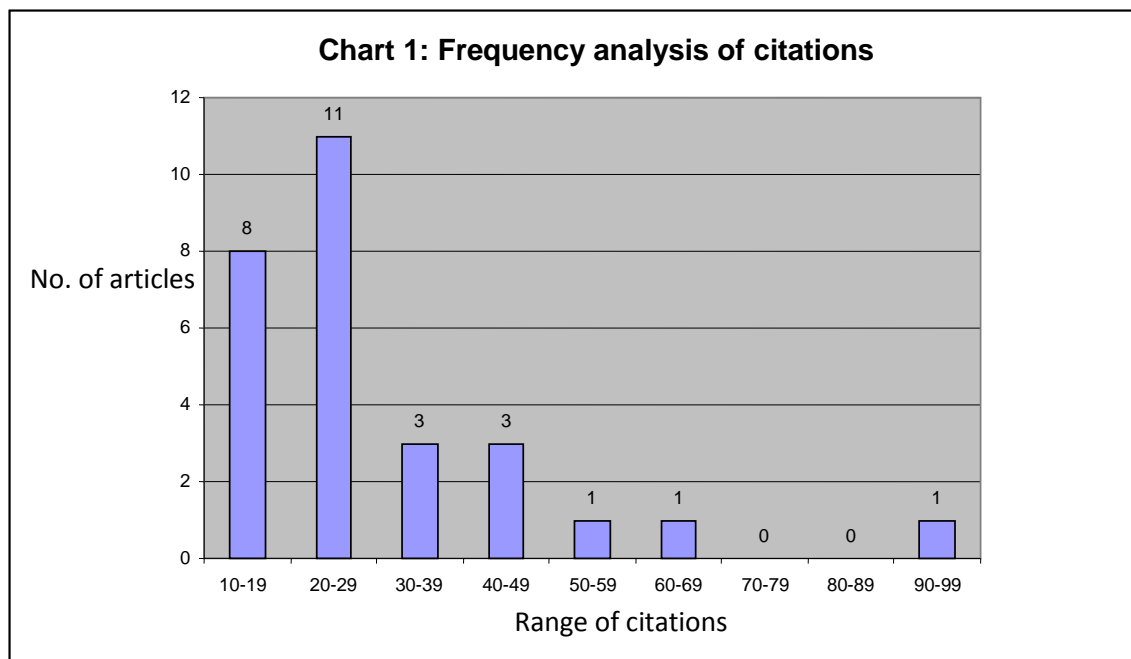
The table 4, indicates that USA leads the e-book research with maximum contribution i.e. 29% followed by UK (14%). Research has been reported from as many as seven Asian countries. These seven Asian countries together contributed 39% to the e-book research. Since most of these countries are developing countries, this is a very encouraging scenario.

Table 4: Contribution of different countries

Country	Number of papers
USA	8
UK	4
Taiwan	3
Israel	2
Malaysia	2
Spain	2
1. Australia 2. Canada 3. China 4. Germany 5. India 6. Iran 7. Korea	7 (One e-book research is reported from each country)
Total	28

Analysis of citations:

Citations are essential components of any research article. 28 e-book research articles studied in this research included total 815 citations. That means there are average 29 citations per article. Minimum there are 10 citations and maximum 91 thereby having a range 81 citations. 20 articles are published in LIS journals and the remaining eight are published in non-LIS journals. The citations were analyzed to know whether there are drastic quantitative differences in the citation patterns of LIS and non-LIS journals. The analysis shows no such difference; journals of both the categories have average 29 citations. Based on this observation, it could be very broadly, inferred that, both, the LIS and non-LIS writers have similar citation behaviour.



Further analysis (Chart 1) of citations appearing the 28 e-book research articles indicate that maximum (11 i.e. 39%) articles have 20 to 29 citations. Eight articles (29%) have 10 to 19 citations. In another words, total 68% (19) articles have 10 to 29 citations. E-book as a subject is developing rapidly. Analysis of the citations in the present research also indicates that the e-book research articles published in the year 2010 have average 26 citations, whereas those articles published in 2011 have average 31 citations. Every year more and more literature is published on e-books. From the above analysis it could be inferred that more the available literature, more the citations. However, this inference has to test further with larger sample.

Funding for e-book research:

Researcher's vision and dedication of the researcher are the two important pre-requisites for successful research in any field. Growth and development of research in any field also depends upon availability of adequate finance. LIS associations, government bodies, universities and private agencies such as publishers, database aggregators could provide finance for research. Analysis of 28 research articles shows that there is very poor financial support for e-book research as only one research (Hua; Cheng and Wang, 2011) has received financial support that too partial.

Generalization feature of e-book research:

A research could be categorized as generalizable or not generalizable. If the research results are applicable to a large community, the research is said to have generalization capacity.

Contrary to this, there could be a research that identifies features of a specific group, entity, product etc., which could not be generalized. Generalisation is one of the desirable characteristics of successful research. Analysis of the 28 e-book research articles indicates that only 29% of them are generalizable. Remaining 71% are not generalizable. This may be due to the very nature of research, as for example, Gibson and Gibb (2011) wanted to understand specific user group's reactions towards e-book readers. Generalization may not also be possible due to very small sample used by the individual researchers (Pattuelli and Rabina, 2010). Actually, it is better to have more research that is generalizable.

Software/ Statistical Techniques/Models used for data analysis:

Numbers of statistical software are available for analyzing research data. Such software could be very beneficial for accurate and appropriate quantitative analysis. In addition, various statistical techniques could be applied for analysis and inference. Out of 28 e-book research articles, seven (25%) used some statistical software and or a statistical technique to analyze the research data. Only Ghaebi and Fahimifar (2011) used Excel to describe and summarize the results. Letchmumann and Tarmzi (2011) analyzed their data by applying Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). Berg; Hoffmann and Dawson (2010) adopted the six steps of Thematic Analysis suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). Whereas, Lai and Chang (2011) used Partial Least Square (PLS) technique to analyze their data. It is a regression-based technique. Woody, Daniel and Baker (2010); Lin, et al. (2010) and Hua, Cheng and Wang (2011) too used statistical techniques to analyze their data.

Conclusion:

The future e-book research should cover more aspects of e-books. There should be more collaboration among LIS faculties and library practitioners in e-book research and writing. Availability of finance will help to increase both the extension and intension of e-book research. Using e-book research libraries, publishers, LIS educators and governments will be able to frame better policies related with e-books. Therefore, these agencies should sponsor e-book research.

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