
TRAC

Library E-book Services for Teenagers

**A Pilot Awareness and Attitude Market Research
Survey. May 2015**

About TRAC

TRAC (Teen Reading Action Campaign) is a small charity created in 2014 to promote reading for pleasure amongst teenagers

Visit www.tracbook.com to learn more and perhaps offer your support.

You can also find us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter @trac_book

Spread the word:

Feel free to report on findings or statistics included in this pilot research report, but please accredit them to TRAC.

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Library E-book Services for Teenagers

A Pilot Awareness and Attitude Market Research Survey

Why we have conducted this research

Research analysed by The Literacy Agencyⁱ has shown that the level of e-reading amongst teenagers is increasing and that reading online can boost overall reading levels, on- and off-screen. Clearly it is important that children have access not only to books, but also to e-books. Our own extensive research amongst public libraries in the UK (soon to be published) has shown that whilst the vast majority of libraries now offer an e-book service, borrowing levels amongst younger people for e-books is low.

TRAC (Teen Reading Action Campaign) plans to conduct quantifiable market research amongst teenagers in full-time education across the UK in order to establish why this is so and to help understand what can be done about it: by looking at awareness levels of libraries' e-book services; library registration levels; the potential appeal/ likely usage of an e-book offer, and addressing the practical side of things (getting registered for library e-book services).

Of course there are funding issues, but these aside, TRAC, whose remit is to promote reading for pleasure amongst teenagers, has conducted this research in order to address this conundrum and provide information that will help direct funding and create relevant promotional activity. These are the results of the pilot survey.

Our Research Method

For this our pilot research we chose an online, self-completed questionnaireⁱⁱ administered through SmartSurveyⁱⁱⁱ. The questionnaire was developed following qualitative research (exploratory face-to-face interviews with teenagers). The questionnaire that will be used in the main survey will be refined and developed in light of these preliminary findings.

Our Sample: the Respondents

Our pilot survey was completed by a random cross-section of 186 school children aged 12-18 years in West Berkshire, Sussex, Oxfordshire, Greater London, and Liverpool, with a quantifiable variation between male (47%) and female (53%) pupils. The majority (74%) attend state day schools/academies, 6% independent day schools and 20% independent boarding schools.

Some Key Findings

- The majority of our 'teenaged' school-children respondents had access to at least one electronic device that could be used to read an e-book.
- Whilst the majority said that they prefer books over e-books when reading for pleasure, e-books are clearly a practical alternative for the cash, time and geographically constrained.
- 66% said that it was 'very' or 'quite likely' they *would* use a free e-book service if it were offered by their local library, and the majority (82%) said that they would be prepared to visit their library in order to sign up for the service.
- 58% believed that they were registered with their local library to borrow books, 20% did not know whether they were or not, and 22% thought they were not.
- Only 14% of the children in the sample thought *their* local library offered e-books, 19% claimed that they did not and 67% simply did not know whether they did so or not.
- 72% were unaware that *any* libraries offered e-book loans; it is therefore unsurprising that 97% of all respondents had never borrowed an e-book from a library.
- Only 20% of those who believed that their local library offered e-books had borrowed one.

Some Preliminary Conclusions

This is a pilot study which has highlighted a number of issues that need to be addressed:

- Whilst this research has confirmed that reading hard-copy books is still preferred by the majority, e-reading is on the increase and has the potential to address a particular need amongst those teenagers who are not only technically savvy but also economically and/ or geographically disadvantaged (note concerns regarding fines for lost library books and the difficulties for some in accessing a physical library).
- Teenagers are aware of the benefits of e-books and would be happy to access them from libraries, but are unaware that the resource exists.
- Whilst the majority of teenagers are registered with their local library, a significant minority are unaware as to whether they are or are not, and this clearly needs to be addressed. Getting registered for e-books specifically is an issue, but the majority would be happy to pop in to the local library (a one-off visit) to register: the promise of a good variety of books, easy access to new books and independence (from reliance upon parents) being important motivators.

Whilst we would like to conduct further research to validate our conclusions, there are some clear messages emerging from this pilot survey. Existing e-book lending services need promoting (perhaps through schools) as awareness of their existence is low. The benefits of e-book loans are particularly relevant to economically disadvantaged teenagers and those in rural areas. Teenagers will need to be encouraged to register for e-book services. We would like to encourage a greater level of interaction between local and school libraries, and perhaps for example, librarians could visit local schools to get school children signed-up for e-book services

Summary of Findings

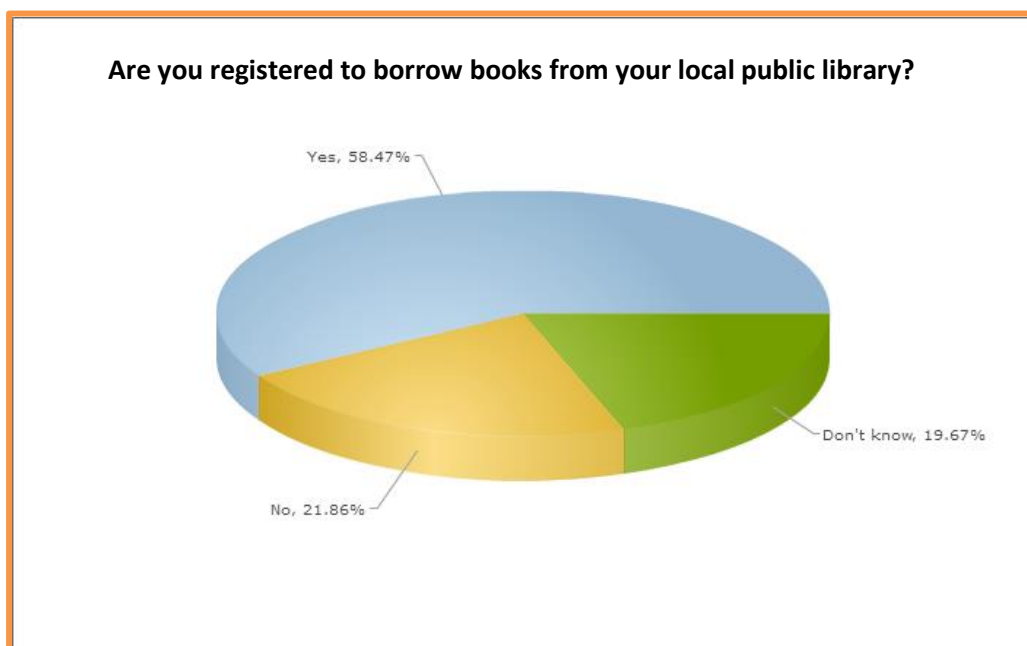
Number of books borrowed from the school library and local public library in the past 12 months

- Whilst the majority (80%) of our respondents had borrowed at least one book from their school library, just under half (48%) had not borrowed from a public library at all in the previous 12 month period.

	TOTAL	
	SCHOOL LIBRARY %	PUBLIC LIBRARY %
NONE	20	48
1-3	32	21
4-5	15	9
6-10	12	2
10+	20	11

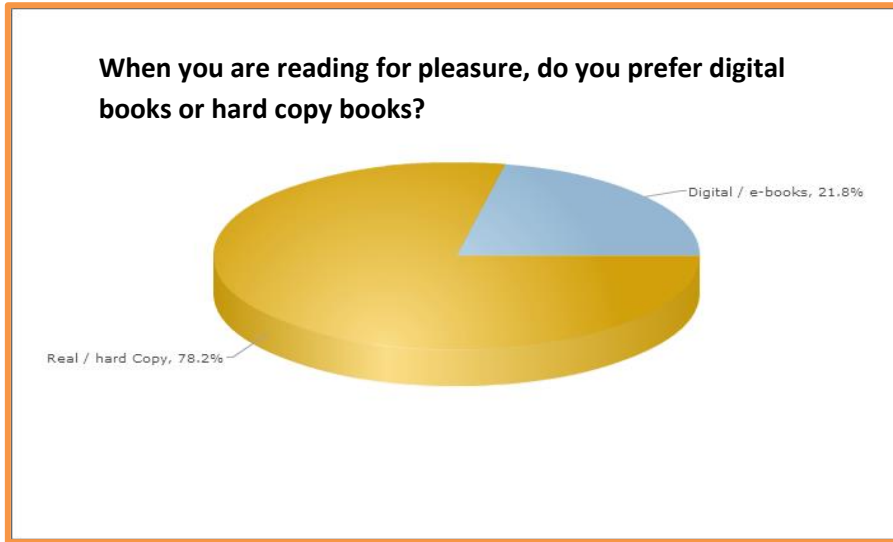
Level of registration at the local public library

- 59% of respondents thought that they *were* registered to use their local public library, 22% said that they were not, and 20% did not know. Girls were more likely to know that they were registered than were the boys, and younger teens more so than older ones.

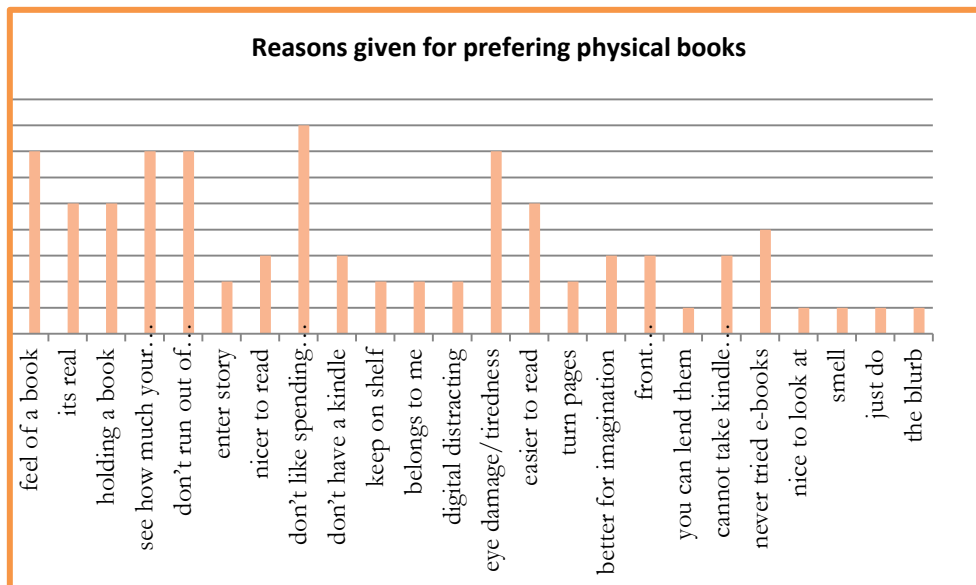


Preference for books and for e-books

- Despite the reported increasing levels of e-book readership^{iv}, it is important to note that the majority (78%) of our respondents said that when reading for pleasure, they prefer hard copy books.



- The chart below show the frequency with which certain key words and phrases were mentioned in this ‘open-answer’ question as to why books were preferred over e-books. As can be seen, amongst the majority who prefer books as well as the positive features associated with them as artefacts (handle, feel), and readability (in particular knowing easily where you are in a book), a significant number of teenagers commented that they did not want to spend a lot of additional time on a computer, “looking at pixels,” etc., and commented on eye-tiredness and headaches.



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"I like to collect my books...and to feel and touch the quality of the paper and the cover"

"If you're holding the actual book you get the real feel of the story"

"Turning a page gives a shiver down my spine"

"Real books offer the feeling of being inside the book more than a computer"

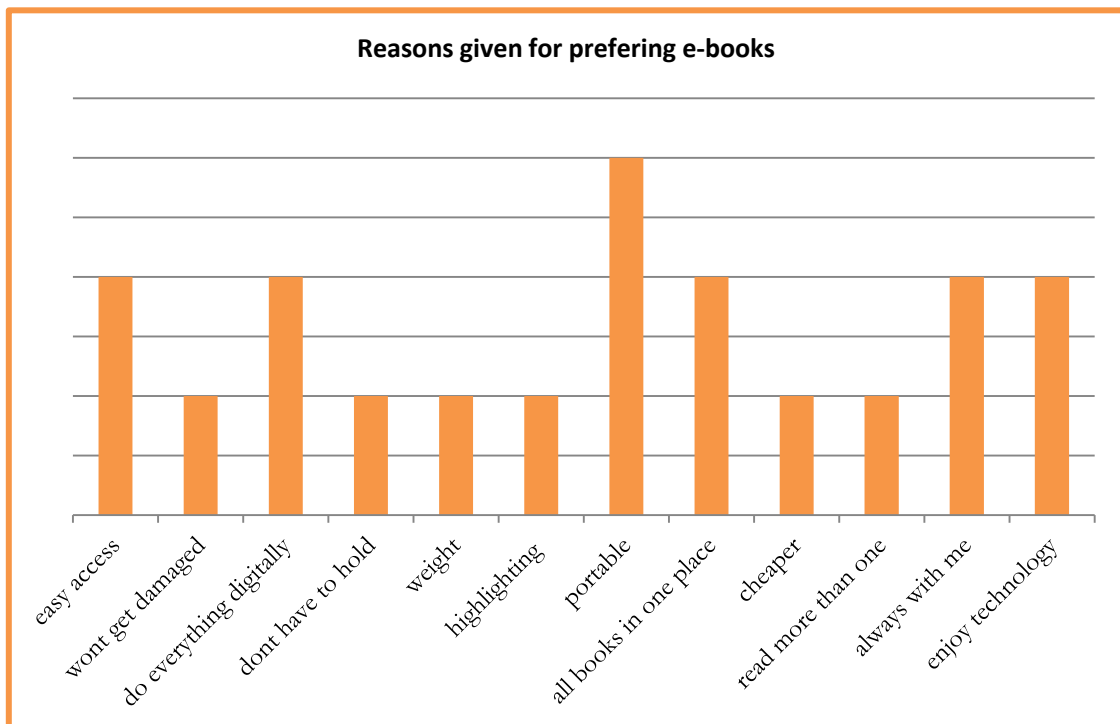
"I like the idea of it being yours and owning it properly"

"They don't run out of charge and give you a headache"

"It's a real life object and doesn't run out of battery or crack the screen"

"E-books are rubbish because they damage your eyes"

- E-book preference related to practical considerations such as portability and the general appeal of technology:



"You can store more and read more than one at a time"

"I enjoy using technology"

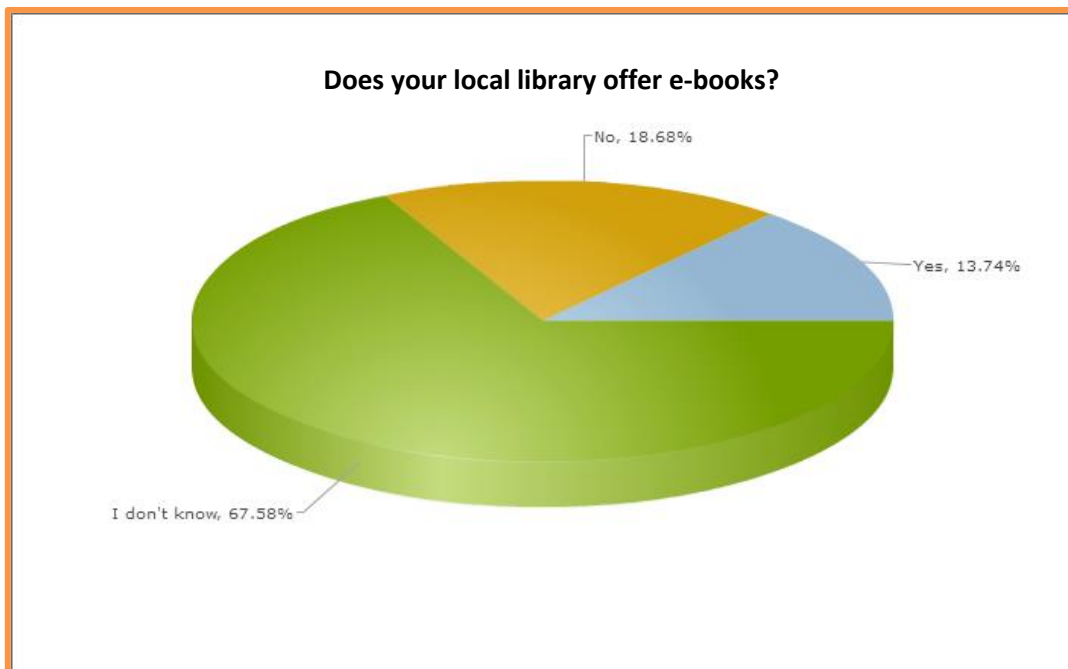
"I have it on me all the time"

"I read tonnes of manga on-line and I absolutely love it...a lot cheaper than buying the actual manga"

“They are lightweight and easier to use”

The level of awareness of local library e-book services.

- All the local libraries relevant to the teenagers in our sample offer e-books, yet only 14% of our respondents thought that *their* local library offered e-books; 67% did not know and 22% thought that their library did not offer e-books. Even amongst those who knew that they were registered with their local library, awareness of the e-book offer was low (18%).

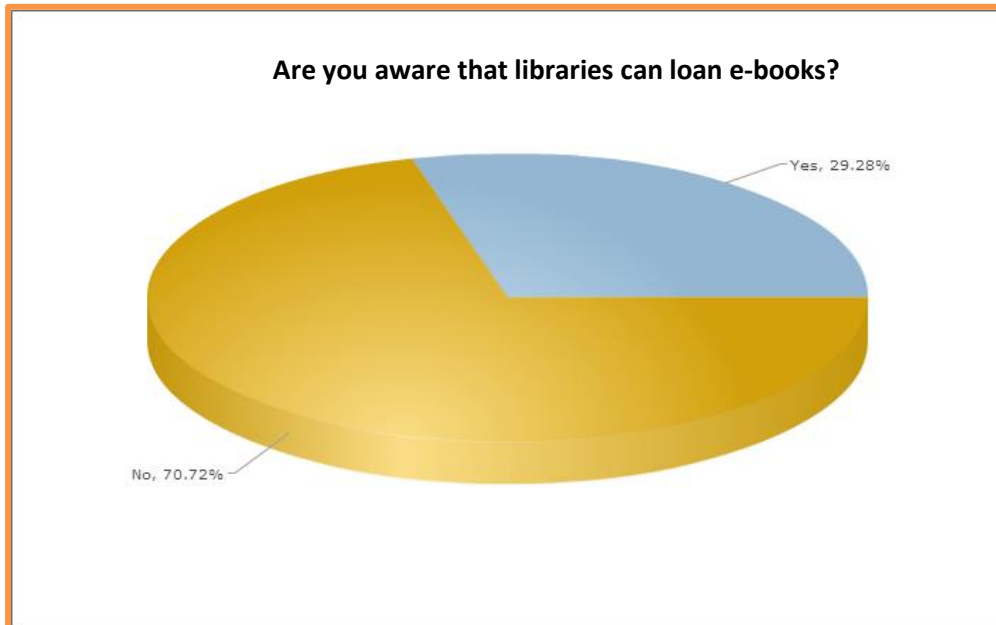


Borrowing an e-book from your local library.

- Of the 14% of students who were aware that their local library offered e-books for loan, only 20% had actively done so.
- And so the vast majority had never borrowed an e-book (97%).

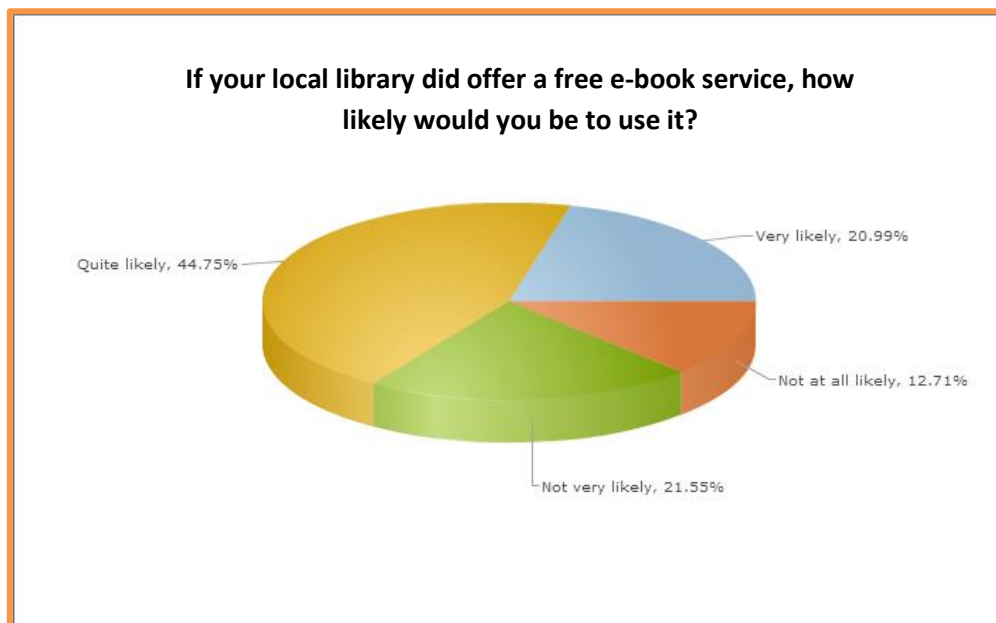
Level of awareness that many libraries can loan e-books.

- Although a greater number of students were aware that many libraries offered e-books for loan than those who believed that their own local library did, still only 28% of the 179 students who answered this question answered positively. 72% of the students were unaware of the potential for loaning e-books from *any* library.



The likelihood of using a free e-book loan service from the local library

- 66% of our respondents said that they would be “very” (45%) or “quite likely” (21%). 22% answered that it was “not very likely”, and 13% said that it was “not at all likely”.



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Of the 66% who answered saying that they were “quite” or “very” likely to use an e-book service, many validated their response on the basis that they thought that the idea sounded ‘easy’ to use: that the entire process can take place remotely without having to enter a library; removes reliance on parents to access the library; and is easier and quicker, and removes the worry of losing a book. It should be noticed that there was often the presumption that there would be a wide range of books on offer.

“If you had your book on your phone then you wouldn’t have to worry about losing your book”

“You won’t lose library books and have to pay a fine”

“The time-limit on books is quite annoying, but with e-books you could probably extend it without going back to the library”

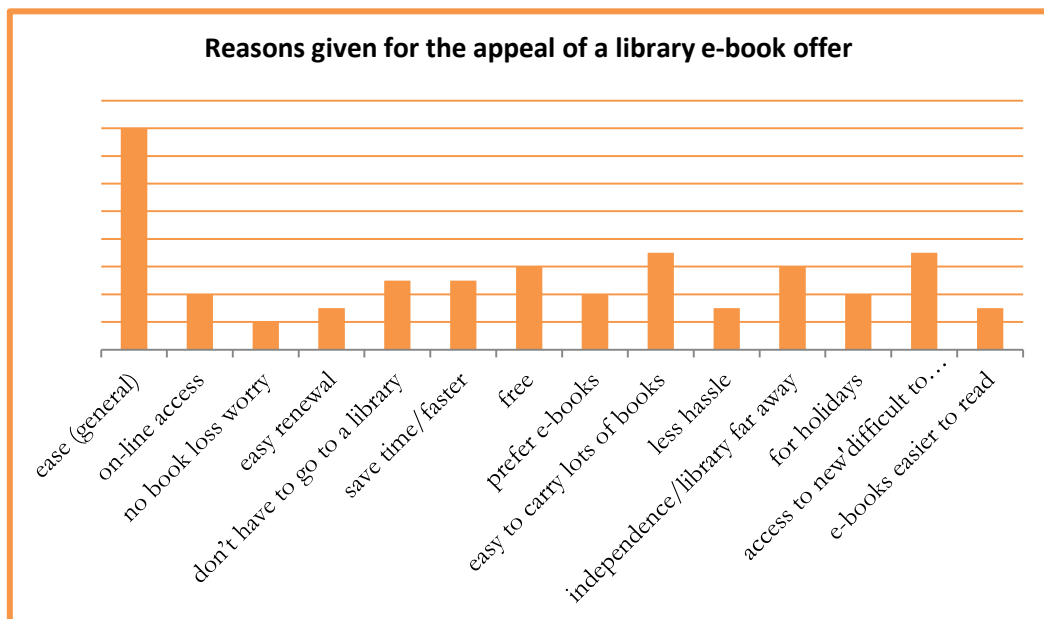
“Coz it would save time”

“Because there would be so many more books on offer”

“I read a lot of books on my Kindle and so free books on my Kindle would really help”

“Because I wouldn’t have to ask my mum to drive me to the library, I could just go online”

- The following chart shows the frequency with which certain key words and phrases were mentioned in this ‘open-answer’ question:



- Amongst those who answered that they were unlikely to make use of such a service, answers related to a preference for physical books over e-books rather than issues with a library offer, because: they enjoyed the feel of a book in their hands when reading; they did not like reading on a computer screen; they had a preference to own their own books and; of the enjoyment of going to a library.

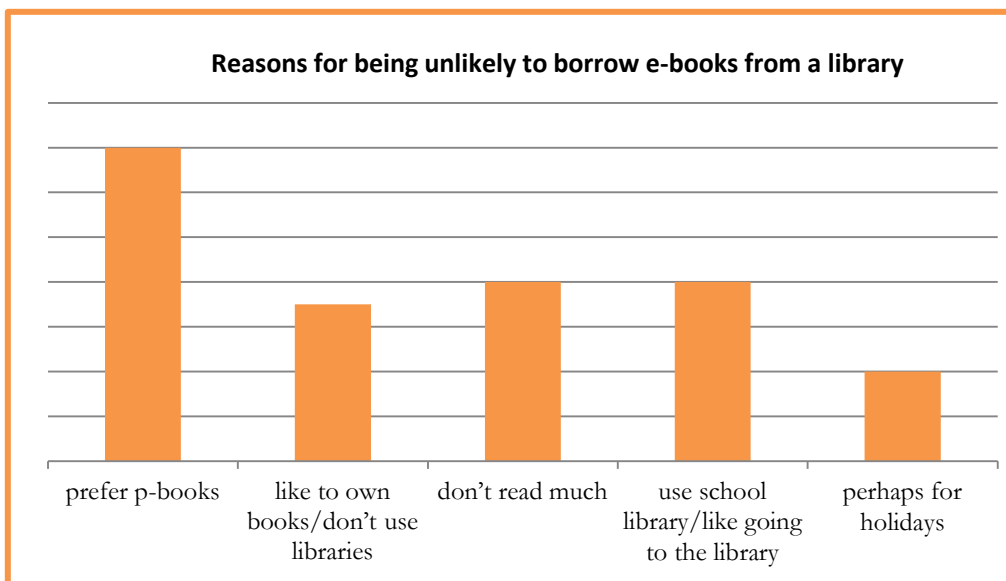
“I like reading books not computers”

“I like reading paper books. It’s nice to look at the cover and artwork and keep it on my shelf”

“I like the feel of holding a book and turning the pages”

“I much prefer going to the library and actually having the book on my hand”

The chart below shows the frequency with which certain key words and phrases were mentioned in this ‘open-answer’ question:



Willingness to go to the library just once in order to sign up for e-books

- 81% of respondents said that they would be willing to go to their local library to sign up (girls even keener than boys: 90% vs. 75%). Of the 19% who answered that they would *not* be willing to take the time for a one-off visit to the library to sign up for e-books, 42% said this was just because they did not think that they would use the service. They gave reasons for not wishing to use the service such as:

“Reading on a screen for a long time hurts my eyes”

“I don’t want to read books on an electronic device”

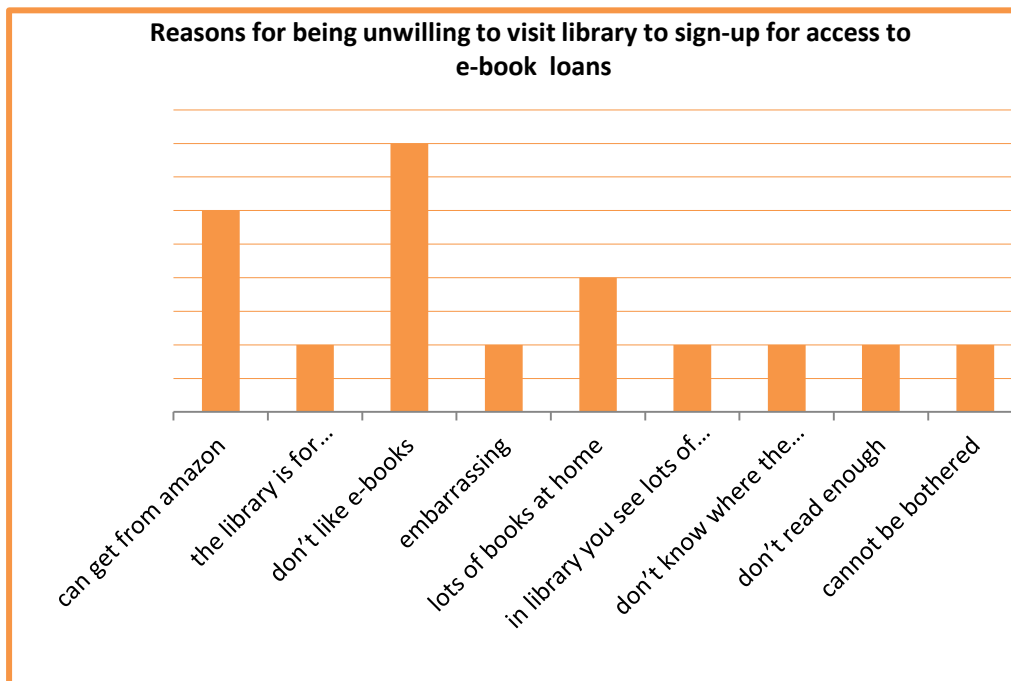
“I don’t like reading”

- In this pilot survey, we are looking at a relatively small sample size, and so the extent to which these two following comments are reflective of more widely held beliefs cannot be determined:

“Because we can do it via Amazon without having to leave our houses, so why would we do it via our library if we have to go there?”

“It can be embarrassing say crossing the street and going into the library on the same street all your friends live on and can see you”

- Of the other 58%, many cited a general lack of interest in reading, or lack of time or knowledge as to the location of their local library.

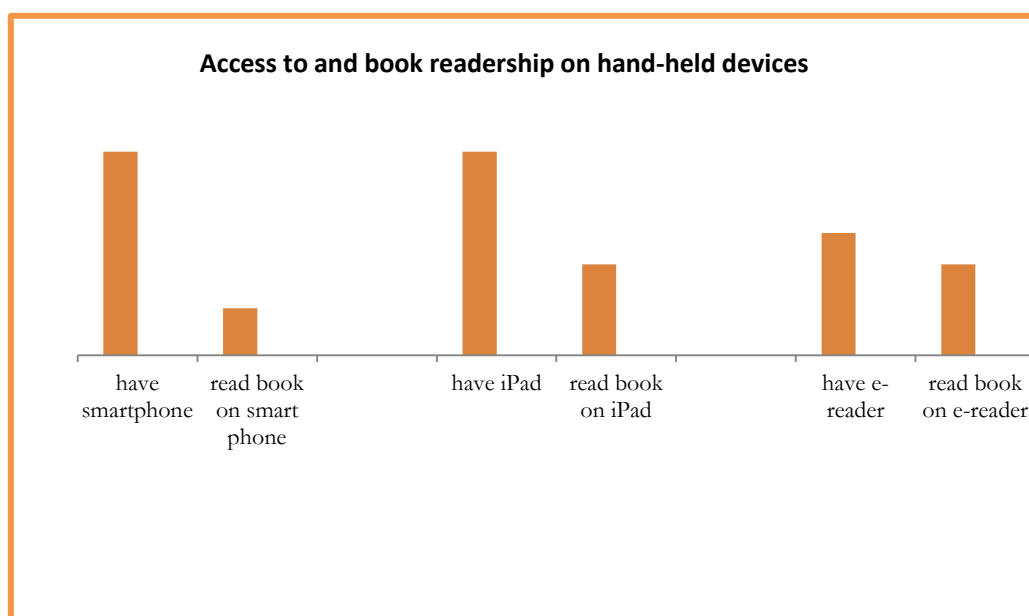


Access to a smartphone, an e-Reader (e.g. Kindle) or a tablet computer (e.g. iPad), and book readership on hand-held devices.

The majority of respondents have access to a portable electronic device on which they could read an e-book:

- e-Reader: 46%
- smartphone: 76%
- other hand-held device: 76%

Although access to smartphones is high, only 23% of respondents had ever read a book on one. 83% of those with access to an e-Reader had read a book using an electronic device, as had 45% of those with access to an iPad (or other hand-held device):



For further information about this pilot research survey please contact TRAC at info@tracbook.com

References and Notes

ⁱ Picton, I. (2014). The Impact of ebooks on the Reading Motivation and Reading Skills of Children and Young People: A rapid literature review, London: National Literacy Trust
http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/assets/0002/3898/Ebooks_lit_review_2014.pdf

ⁱⁱ Links to the survey were offered to children by parents and/or teachers (MRS Code of Conduct)

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/>

^{iv} Picton (as above)