

E-books FAQ

Are all books available online?

Unfortunately, no. The book's publisher in combination with the author(s) decides whether a book is released in print or as an e-book, as well as the price and license terms. Books published recently are more likely to be available as e-books, but many titles are never released as e-books; including key titles. Library staff receive regular reports of newly released e-books of previous print titles and order these. Requests are also sent to publishers and suppliers requesting e-versions of print titles.

Why not digitise or scan print books to improve access?

There are [legal restrictions](#) on digitising or scanning books; usually 10% or 2 chapters may be digitised – whichever is the larger.

Why does the number of people who can access an e-book vary?

This depends on the licence terms set by the publisher and ranges from access by a single user to unlimited simultaneous usage; there are currently more than 10 different licence types in all. The Library acquires the most generous licence available for each title to enable as many people as possible to use the book simultaneously. A single user licence is most restrictive and is only purchased as a last resort. Even then, the Library purchases multiple occurrences of the single user licence to increase access – these appear on the library catalogue as separate links.

How does the Library decide which licence type to purchase?

The number of reading lists the book appears on, the number of students using those reading lists, and the reading priority assigned to a book are jointly used to assess the level of demand for each title.

What is the reading priority?

The reading list system uses two reading categories to guide students; these are set by course academics. Essential items are key readings; something a student is expected to read. Recommended items are additional or background reading that enriches the subject but is desirable rather than mandatory. Essential items are the priority for acquisition and are provided in greater numbers.

Why is an e-book sometimes unavailable?

There may be temporary IT issues or the number of people trying to access the book may exceed the number permitted by the licence – similar to a print book being out on loan to someone when you look for it on the shelves. In both cases, please advise students to try to access the title again later.

Library staff actively monitor demand for titles and order additional e- or print copies when demand is high - this is a manual process so operates during working hours. Both the number

of unsuccessful accesses to an e-book and the number of print copies on loan/reserved are monitored.

Why do e-books vary in terms of access, loan period, printing or downloading?

Although books are accessed via the Library catalogue, reading list or Discover, the actual book file resides on the publisher's or supplier's system. The Library orders books from hundreds of different publishers and suppliers; each of which have their own book platform. This is why the access process differs from e-book to e-book. Publishers also decide how much of a book may be printed or downloaded, and in some cases the loan or time period a book is available to an individual. When the Library can set the loan period, this is typically for 2-4 hours to keep the book in circulation and available to as many users as possible, rather than being on loan (available to) one person for a longer time.

Why aren't books on my reading list in stock?

Apologies for this - there are over 4,000 active reading lists each academic year and occasionally one may slip through the net. Academics can add or edit reading lists at any point – publishing the list alerts Library staff to check for and order new items.

How has Covid impacted book access?

Following Public Health England guidance on social distancing has reduced space capacity within buildings, including the Libraries; whilst print books are quarantined when returned to the Library to reduce the possibility of transmitting the virus. This has introduced additional work processes and time to returning and re-issuing print books.

Use of e-resources is encouraged whenever possible as these are available 24/7 off-campus. Most e-books are available for multiple people to use simultaneously. Other advantages of e-books are that they can be adapted for individuals with a visual impairment and have typically been published within the last 1-10 years so contain more current information than older print books.

The number of titles available as an e-book has increased slightly during the pandemic but the number of suppliers and the pace of change means there is little consistency in e-book functionality, licensing or price at present. Each title needs to be individually researched which takes time.

Diversifying reading lists and the Library collection

Academics can update their reading list at any time to include new or topical resources. Re-publishing the list alerts Library staff to order new items.

Students can request acquisition of e-books for the collection. 18% of these title requests have subsequently been adopted onto reading lists by academics.

The Library service actively supports academics and inclusive curriculum design through highlighting books and other learning resources which represent society as a whole, and which present both global and British perspectives. Suggestions for new learning resources are welcomed.