San Jose State University

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2017

Comparing Ebooks Across Different Platforms, Providers, and Devices

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Susan L. Kendall, *San Jose State University*

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/emily_chan/20/

Comparing Ebooks Across Different Platforms, Providers, and Devices

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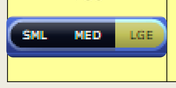
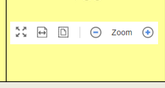
ABSTRACT

Health science ebooks on eight different platforms were evaluated on their ability to accommodate varying learning styles and needs in a responsive, device-agnostic environment. These health science ebooks from the San José State University Library were evaluated on:

- text adjustment,
- search/navigation,
- annotations,
- in-platform text-to-speech,
- dictionary support,
- printing,
- downloading, and
- citing.

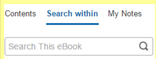
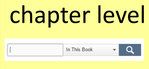
The ebooks were viewed on smartphones (Android and iOS), tablets (iPad and Kindle), and desktops (Windows and iOS). The appropriate browsers were selected, based on the device. Tools and ease of use differed greatly among the platforms, providers, and devices, especially on the basis of access with respect to digital rights management.

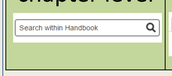
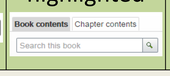
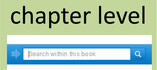
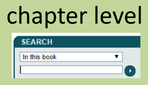
TEXT ADJUSTMENT

EBL	ebrary	EBSCO	JSTOR
Yes 	Yes	Yes 	None; relies on resizing webpage/pdf

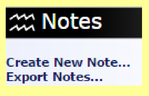
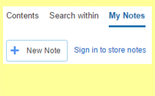
Sage	ScienceDirect	Springer	Wiley
Yes	None; relies on resizing webpage/pdf	None; relies on resizing webpage/pdf	None; relies on resizing webpage/pdf

SEARCH/NAVIGATION

EBL	ebrary	EBSCO	JSTOR
Yes; results in KWIC format	Yes; results in KWIC format	Yes; results in KWIC format 	Yes; results at chapter level 

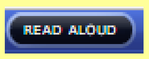
Sage	ScienceDirect	Springer	Wiley
Yes; results at chapter level 	Yes; results highlighted 	Yes; results at chapter level 	Yes; results at chapter level 

ANNOTATIONS

EBL	ebrary	EBSCO	JSTOR
Yes 	Yes	Yes 	None; relies on pdf annotation

Sage	ScienceDirect	Springer	Wiley
None; relies on pdf annotation	None; relies on pdf annotation	None; relies on pdf annotation	None; relies on pdf annotation

(IN-PLATFORM) TEXT-TO-SPEECH

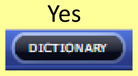
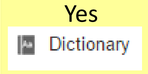
EBL	ebrary	EBSCO	JSTOR
Yes 	None; relies on pdf read aloud tool	None; relies on pdf read aloud tool	None; relies on pdf read aloud tool

Sage	ScienceDirect	Springer	Wiley
None; relies on pdf read aloud tool	None; relies on pdf read aloud tool	None; relies on pdf read aloud tool	None; relies on pdf read aloud tool

Evaluated eBooks and Platforms

		Book Title
Aggregator	EBL	*Asian Parenting and Parent-Adolescent Relationships*
	ebrary	*Transcultural Nursing Theory and Models : Application in Nursing Education, Practice, and Administration*
	EBSCO	*Assessing Progress on the Institute of Medicine Report: The Future of Nursing*
	JSTOR	*More Than Just Food: Food Justice and Community Change*
Publisher	Sage	*Leadership in Science and Technology: A Reference Handbook*
	ScienceDirect	*Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning: Policy Issues, the Workplace, Health and Public Libraries*
	Springer	*Handbook of Marriage and the Family*
	Wiley	*Comparative Reproductive Biology*

DICTIONARY SUPPORT

EBL	ebrary	EBSCO	JSTOR
Yes 	None	Yes 	None

Sage	ScienceDirect	Springer	Wiley
None	None	None	None

PRINTING

EBL	ebrary	EBSCO	JSTOR
Limited; sampled book = 57 pages or 40%	Limited; sampled book = 54 pages or 30%	Limited; sampled book = 100 pages or 50%	By segment (e.g., chapter, front matter, TOC, etc.)

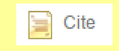
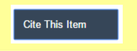
Sage	ScienceDirect	Springer	Wiley
By segment (e.g., chapter, front matter, TOC, etc.)	By segment (e.g., chapter, front matter, TOC, etc.)	Whole or by segment; MyCopy option	Whole or by segment

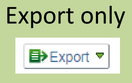
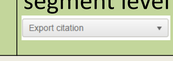
DOWNLOADING

EBL	ebrary	EBSCO	JSTOR
Yes; requires Adobe Digital Editions (pdf or epub)	Yes; requires Adobe Digital Editions (pdf or epub)	Yes; requires Adobe Digital Editions (pdf or epub)	Yes; by chapter/ segment only (pdf)

Sage	ScienceDirect	Springer	Wiley
Yes; by chapter/ segment only (pdf)	Yes; by chapter/ segment; bulk allowed (pdf)	Yes; whole book or by segment (pdf and epub)	Yes; by chapter/ segment; bulk allowed (pdf)

CITING

EBL	ebrary	EBSCO	JSTOR
Yes	Yes	Yes 	Yes 

Sage	ScienceDirect	Springer	Wiley
Yes	Export only 	Citation export at segment level 	Citation export at segment level

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Devices used:

- Windows desktop
- iOs desktop
- iPad
- Kindle
- Android smartphone
- iOs smartphone

Browsers used:

- Safari
- Mozilla Firefox
- Google Chrome
- Silk Browser

Online Reading Experience. Each sampled book provided a consistent online reading experience from device to device and browser to browser.

Offline Reading Experience for EBL, ebrary, and EBSCO. Offline reading in these platforms required aggregator account registration, installation of Adobe Digital Editions, and registration with Adobe for an ID. On mobile devices, it was particularly difficult to download ebooks, if one was not familiar with the process. Compounding the problem was the seeming absence of technical support.

Offline Reading Experience for JSTOR and Publishers Group. Books were divided into their component parts; each part was available as a pdf download. Thus, one could download an entire book for offline reading; the only limitation was the lack of a bulk downloader.

Final Thoughts. It is important to note that the publishers tended to provide little in the way of in-platform tools, like text-to-speech, dictionary, and annotation. Instead, by relying on the pdf as the format of choice, these publishers were able to leverage the built-in tools to most pdf viewers, including read aloud, annotation, and text adjustment features. Aggregators and single publishers present and provide access to ebooks using different models with varying restrictions. Aggregator platforms, particularly EBL and ebrary, seek to provide a book-like experience, but force users to comply with highly restrictive digital rights management (DRM). JSTOR and the publishers group tended to treat books like journal issues, parsing books into downloadable pdf files.

REFERENCES

Mune, C. (2017, February 20). SJSU Research Guides: eBook Accessibility Project: Home. Retrieved February 25, 2017, from http://libguides.sjsu.edu/eap

The Charlotte Initiative. (2017). Retrieved February 20, 2017, from http://charlotteinitiative.uncc.edu/

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