

Reasons for deploying an e-reader loan service at the UOC Library

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Abstract:

The presentation will focus on the reasons for deploying an e-reader loan service at a virtual university library as a part of an e-learning support system to aid user mobility, concentration of documentary and electronic resources, and ICT skills acquisition, using the example of the UOC pilot project and its subsequent consolidation. E-reader devices at the UOC are an extension of the Virtual Campus. They are offered as a tool to aid user mobility, access to documentary and electronic resources, and development of information and IT skills. The e-reader loan service began as a pilot project in 2009 and was consolidated in 2010. The UOC Library piloted the e-reader loan service from October to December 2009. The pilot project was carried out with 15 devices and involved 37 loans. The project was extended into 2010 with the same number of devices and 218 loans (October 2010). In 2011 the e-reader loan service is to involve 190 devices, thus offering an improved service. The reasons for deploying an e-reader loan service at the UOC are the following: a) to offer library users access to the many kinds of learning materials available at the UOC through a single device that facilitates student study and learning; b) to enhance access to and use of the e-book collections subscribed to by the UOC Library; c) to align with UOC strategy on the development of learning materials in multiple formats, and promote e-devices as an extension of the UOC Virtual Campus, and d) to increase UOC Library visibility within and beyond the institution. The presentation will conclude with an analysis of the key issues to be taken into account at a university library: the e-reader market, the unclear business and license model for e-book contents, and the library's role in promoting new reading formats to increase use of e-collections.

Keywords: e-books, loan service, UOC, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, university libraries, e-readers, virtual libraries, UOC Library

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Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC)

The UOC (<http://www.uoc.edu>) is an online university born from the knowledge society and whose mission is to provide people with lifelong learning and education. The UOC was founded in 1995.

The UOC offers student-centred learning with the benefits of personalized studies, flexibility, accessibility and collaboration. The UOC is a leader and innovator in education and technology, and is a benchmark for quality in its academic work and research in e-learning based on Information and Communication Technologies (ICT).

In our online study programs, the UOC places the student at the centre of the learning process and provides him/her with the necessary distance learning resources for interaction with the whole of the university community.

Learning at the UOC is oriented to responding to the needs of the student and takes into account the demands of the professional environment and technological and social evolution.

Facts and Figures

As for academic year 2009-2010:

The UOC has over 56,000 students enrolled in its courses, 46,612 of whom are studying officially recognized qualifications.

The UOC has 234 faculty and 2,804 teaching collaborators.

The UOC offers 1,907 courses in various master's degree, postgraduate and extension programmes.

The UOC has 3,741 virtual classrooms.

UOC's Educational Model

The UOC's educational model is the university's main feature that has distinguished it since

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its introduction. It was created with the intention of appropriately responding to the educational needs of people committed to lifelong learning, and to make maximum use of the potential offered by the Web to complete an educational activity.

The UOC model is dynamic and flexible. It has been conceived to adapt and evolve constantly over time, as the internet and knowledge society evolve. In this regard, it is a model that guarantees that students learn in a similar way to how they work; they communicate with each other and they have fun on the Web. As a result, one of the added values of this model is that it guarantees the digital competences of students.

It is a model that revolves around the design of spaces, resources and dynamics that favour learning. The student and their learning activity are at the centre of the teaching activity. Assessment is a perfect strategy integrated in the learning process, in the sense that it is conceived as a mechanism for learning and providing reciprocal feedback on this process. That is why we say that UOC assessment is continuous and educational. In this regard, the assessment activities foster the achievement of learning objectives and competence acquisition. Thus, the student can be assessed while carrying out their activity and obtaining competences.

The model is oriented toward collective participation and knowledge building from an interdisciplinary plan and is open to students' learning, social and working experiences. It is committed to collaborative learning through methodologies that involve resolving problems, project development participation, combined product creation, discussion and enquiry. The student is accompanied at all times by specialised teaching staff whose main functions are guidance, advice, support and dynamism throughout the educational process.

All of these elements combine and become interrelated in the Virtual Campus of the UOC. The life of the university community takes place in the Campus, and this community is made up of students, teachers, researchers, collaborators and administrators. The student has access to the virtual classrooms through the Campus. The classrooms are learning spaces where the teachers, classmates, content, activities and communication tools necessary for

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studying and learning can be found.

The learning activity is the central figure of the educational model (Gros, B. 2009). The students have three main elements with which to complete it: a) the resources, which include content, spaces and tools necessary to carry out the learning activities and their assessment; b) collaboration understood as the set of communicative and participative dynamics that favour the combined building of knowledge among classmates and teachers, through teamwork to solve problems, develop projects and group product creation; and c) accompaniment, which is the set of actions carried out by teaching staff to monitor students and to give them support in planning their work, in resolving activities, in assessment and in making decisions.

At the same time, the student receives personalised treatment from teacher accompaniment; they enjoy continuous guidance during their academic trajectory and they establish relations and communication with the educational community.

UOC Library: a Virtual Library

The UOC Library (<http://biblioteca.uoc.edu/eng/index.html>) has offered its services online since its creation in 1995 (March Mir, F. et al., 2010). The Library has displayed a strong commitment to new technologies throughout this time. It is important to comment that the UOC virtual library model implies that traditional library services (loan, reference, document supply, interlibrary loan, information competences, training) are offered in a non on-site model.

The UOC Library also offers remote access to electronic resources from the virtual campus without the need for extra configuration other than the campus access. They can also be consulted from a UOC IP.

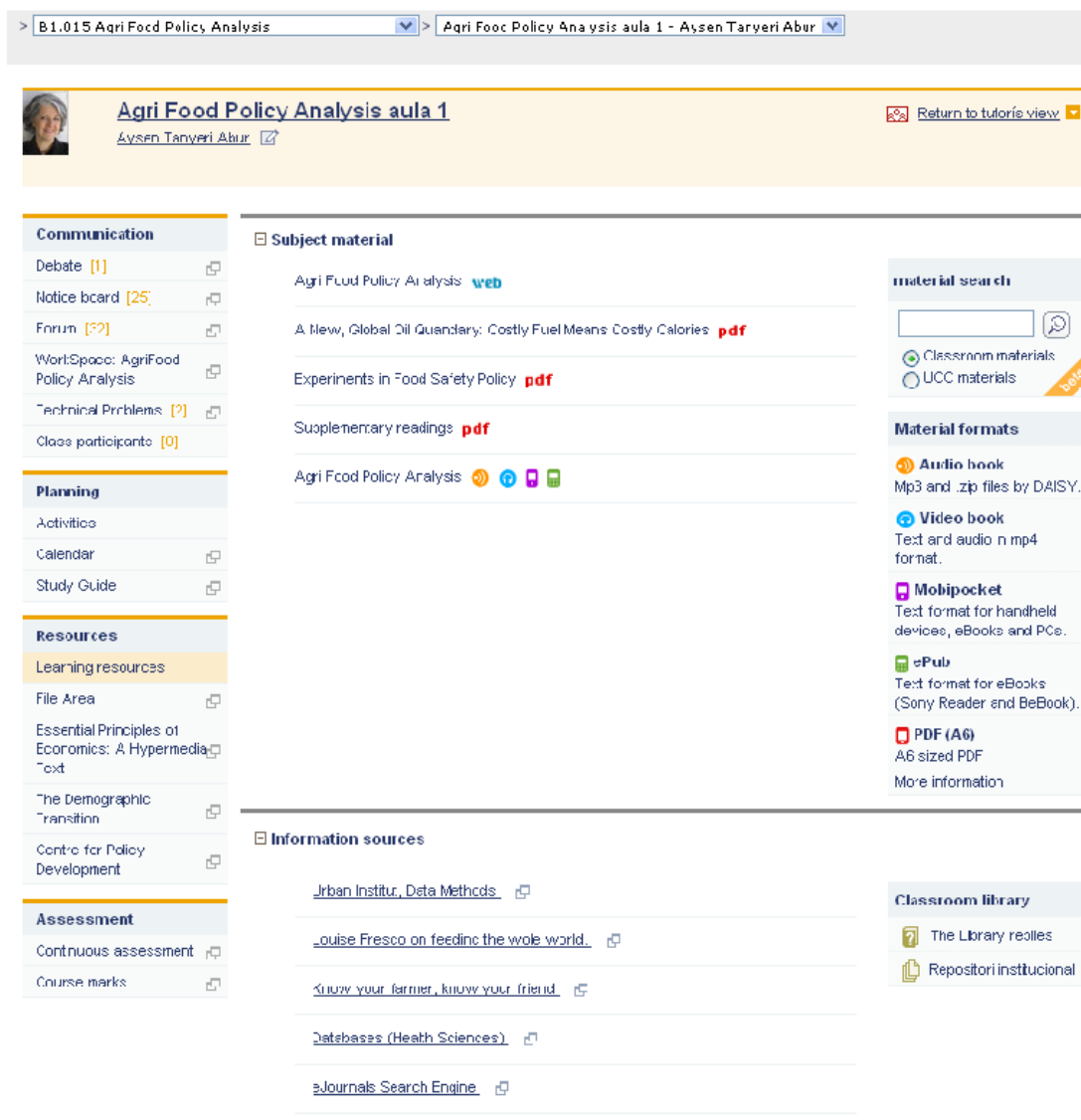
Since its creation the UOC Library has offered its services and content description in three languages: Catalan, Spanish and English.

The library contributes to the educational model through the classroom resources. The classroom resources document management service is the key component of the library

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commitment to the educational model. The classroom resources are managed together by the lecturers who are responsible for choosing the content, and the library managers who ensure that the requested resources are available in the classrooms (Cervera, A. 2010).



The screenshot shows the UOC Virtual classroom interface for the course "Agri Food Policy Analysis aula 1" by Aysen Tanyeri Abur. The interface is divided into several sections:

- Navigation:** At the top, there are dropdown menus for the course and the specific aula.
- Header:** Includes the course title, lecturer name, and a "Return to tutorial view" button.
- Left Sidebar:** Contains navigation menus for "Communication" (Debate, Notice board, Forum, WordSpace, Technical Problems, Class participants), "Planning" (Activities, Calendar, Study Guide), "Resources" (Learning resources, File Area, Essential Principles of Economics, The Demographic Transition, Centre for Policy Development), and "Assessment" (Continuous assessment, Course marks).
- Main Content Area:**
 - Subject material:** Lists resources such as "Agri Food Policy Analysis" (web), "A New, Global Oil Quandary: Costly Fuel Means Costly Calories" (pdf), "Experiments in Food Safety Policy" (pdf), "Supplementary readings" (pdf), and "Agri Food Policy Analysis" (with social media icons).
 - Information sources:** Lists sources like "Urban Institut, Data Methods", "Cuisine Fresco on feeding the whole world", "Know your farmer, know your friend", "Databases (Health Sciences)", and "Journals Search Engine".
- Right Sidebar:**
 - Material search:** Includes a search box and filters for "Classroom materials" and "UCC materials".
 - Material formats:** Lists formats like "Audio book" (Mp3 and .zip files by DAISY), "Video book" (Text and audio in mp4 format), "Mobipocket" (Text format for handheld devices, eBooks and PCs), "ePub" (Text format for eBooks), and "PDF (A6)" (A6 sized PDF).
 - Classroom library:** Includes "The Library reels" and "Repositori institucional".

Image 1: UOC Virtual classroom. Resources.

Concerning the classroom resources, it is important to know that the project TRIA! [Choose!

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in Catalan], developed by the UOC Office of Learning Technologies (<http://lt.uoc.edu/>), aims to provide all UOC learning materials and resources in multiple formats, leaving it up to the student to choose their preferred format. The learning materials are available as audio-books (mp3 and Daisy zip files), video-books (text and mp4), mobipocket (text format for portable devices, e-books and computers), ePub (e-book format) and PDF (A6). In 2010 most of the UOC learning materials were available in multiple formats.

e-Reader Devices Loan and in-situ Consultation Service

During 3 months, from October to December 2009, the UOC Library piloted an e-reader loan and consultation service (*Cervera, E. 2010*).

The e-reader loan service was set up in line with the UOC's commitment to promote the use of e-readers and e-books as an extension of the UOC 5.0 virtual campus in support of student learning. The project TRIA! aims to provide all UOC learning materials and resources in multiple formats, leaving it up to the user to choose their preferred format. The learning materials are available as audio-books (mp3 and Daisy zip files), video-books (text and mp4), mobipocket (text format for portable devices, e-books and computers), ePub (e-book format) and PDF (A6).

In this context, the objective of the e-book lending and consultation project was to contribute to learning and teaching activities by providing e-reader devices to access UOC learning materials in e-book and PDF formats, as well as to access e-book contents subscribed to by the UOC Library.

From October to December 2009 the UOC Library piloted an e-reader loan service with 15 iRex iLiad e-readers, which were borrowed 37 times. By the end of the pilot there were 300 users on the waiting list. The e-readers were delivered with 50 e-book titles included. The e-reader pilot included also an e-book web site (<http://biblioteca.uoc.edu/ebooks/eng/>) specifically developed for the service. The library e-book web site included a presentation of the service, information regarding the e-book collections available, shortcuts to the UOC

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Library open access public catalogue (OPAC), the UOC learning materials search widget and the library e-resources search widget. The results of the pilot encouraged the library to consolidate the e-reader in-situ and loan service.


During 2010 the e-reader in-situ and loan service increased the number of e-reader devices, from 15 to 35 with the acquisition of 20 Kindle 2. During 2010 there were 218 loans (October 2010). At the beginning of 2011 the number of available e-readers was increased to 235 with the acquisition of 200 Leqctor e-readers.

There are 5,800 e-book titles available from Elsevier, Emerald, Ovid, Palgrave, Springerlink, Ebrary, Safari and Net Library, and a big part of the UOC learning materials.

The e-reader loan service works the same way as with books. E-readers are an item inside the UOC Library OPAC. Library users at the UOC must choose the pick-up location, this can be either a UOC regional centre, the university headquarters or directly at home. Once the e-reader has arrived at the chosen pick-up location, the user receives an e-mail informing them and then has 4 days to pick it up. The loan service of e-readers via the OPAC allows management of loans, reservations, users, as well as the returned devices, which are checked over to ensure that they function correctly and documents uploaded by previous users are deleted.

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e-Books

a service of the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya
Virtual Library with the Office of Learning
Technologies

FRONT COVER
About
E-BOOK READERS
Regulations of
IN-SITU CONSULTATION SERVICE
Regulations of
DEVICE LENDING SERVICE
Service
PRESENTATION

SEE WHAT RESOURCES WE HAVE AND WHAT THEY OFFER

[library replies](#)

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ask for

ASK FOR AN E-READER TO LOAN

Given the high levels of demand for e-book readers during the pilot test for the UOC Library's new consultation and loan service - which, as planned, is to end on 31 December 2009 - we are to continue offering this service with the same regulations and procedures as established to date.

Once the pilot test ends, we will start a phase of analysis and assessment of the results that will allow us to improve the service and integrate it into the rest of the services offered by the Library.

Please send comments, queries and incidents arising from the e-book reader consultation and loan service to [library replies](#).

find

We offer you some resources related to e-Books

UOC resources search

HOW THE UOC MATERIALS SEARCH WORKS This search engine lets you search all the UOC materials available in electronic format: web, PDF, audiobook, ePub and Mobipocket.

LIBRARY'S E-RESOURCES SEARCH ENGINE

SEE WHAT RESOURCES WE HAVE AND WHAT THEY OFFER

other resources:

MORE RESOURCES ON INTERNET where you can find books to download.

Image 2: UOC e-books in-situ consultation and loan services website.

e-books and the e-readers loan service. In other words, the e-book web site (<http://biblioteca.uoc.edu/ebooks/eng/>); it includes all the information about the service, the e-book contents available, how to find the contents, etc. needed for users to use this service.

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During the pilot project questionnaires were sent to the e-reader users and on the basis of their answers, as well as from the analysis the Library performed on the pilot project in terms of internal procedures, a number of issues were detected that needed to be addressed for the Library to be able to consolidate the e-reader loan service, if so desired.

What we learned from the e-reader in-situ and loan service pilot is the following:

- 90% of the users rated the e-reader loan service positively or very positively
- the service needed to increase the loan time and number of devices
- content available did not satisfy users; 52% believed content was not adapted to e-readers or could not be loaded on the e-reader device
- e-readers were used much more to read PDF documents downloaded from magazines subscribed to by the UOC Library and the UOC learning materials than to use the e-book collection
- insufficient selection of e-books in Catalan and Spanish
- most users found it easy to load content in the e-readers
- on-screen reading was comfortable for most users
- better user guides have to be developed by the UOC Library
- the questions received by the Library Replies (virtual reference service) showed that some users were using the e-reader service as a part of their e-reader shopping process

As mentioned earlier the pilot results encouraged the UOC Library to consolidate the service.

Improvements were made concerning the following aspects:

- an e-reader model was chosen that is more user-friendly for UOC users
- the number of devices was increased
- improvements in the technical processing aspects, for example enriching the bibliographic records including each subject title to increase title findability
- UOC learning materials electronic version was included in the OPAC with access limited to campus users

The e-book web site and the user guides have to be improved but this has not been done yet

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because they are both affected by the new UOC Library web site project.

Reasons for deploying an e-reader loan service

The most relevant reasons seen by the UOC Library for deploying an e-reader loan service are the following:

a) To offer library users access to the many kinds of learning materials available at the UOC through a single device that facilitates student study and learning.

The UOC Library understands e-readers as learning and studying tools. The e-reader loan service fulfils users' needs for access to electronic learning contents and materials.

In this regard, the UOC Library has also deployed a smaller pilot program with the Law Department. This pilot consists in loaning an iPad loaded with a law suite application and legal texts to students for some of their subjects. Both the content and the device are being offered in collaboration with an editor. The objective of this pilot is to find out if this kind of service/product is useful for them and whether it improves the learning experience.

b) To enhance access to and use of the e-book collections subscribed to by the UOC Library.

The UOC Library invests an important part of its budget in subscribing to electronic resources and making them available through the Virtual Campus. At the same time, the UOC Library has chosen to buy electronic contents as opposed to print format whenever possible as a guideline of its collection development policy. This allows the Library to provide better services to its users in terms of time and content availability. Thus, it is important to offer all available options for users to access this type of content.

c) To align with the UOC strategy on the development of learning materials in multiple formats and to promote e-devices as an extension of the UOC Virtual Campus.

As mentioned previously, the TRIA! [*Choose! in Catalan*] project has enabled us to offer students UOC learning materials in multiple formats. This option means that learning materials are no longer linked to a PC or to the Virtual Campus classrooms. This expansion is enhanced and further promoted by the e-reader loan service because it offers the students the option of experience with the ePub or PDF formats in different devices, anytime and

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anywhere.

d) To increase UOC Library visibility within and beyond the institution.

In the context of the UOC Library, this service also has the strategic objective of increasing library visibility. Internally it has allowed the Library to demonstrate its commitment to the learning and teaching activity as well as connecting with users (students as well as scholars and management staff) who have the desire and curiosity to experiment with new devices. Externally, in collaboration with the UOC Communication Office, the pilot and the service developed subsequently have allowed both the UOC and the Library to obtain notoriety in the media.

Key issues to be taken into account concerning e-books and e-readers from the UOC Library point of view.

E-books and e-readers raise some complex issues for libraries but they also affect content creators as well as the business models of publishers, editors and e-reader manufactures. For this reason it is not the authors' intention to provide an in-depth analysis of those issues but to raise awareness about the difficulties libraries face.

a) The e-readers

For the time being, the e-reader market is characterized by being neither stable nor standardized. In a short period of time a wide range of e-book reading devices have appeared on the market. These devices range from notebooks to mobile phones, together with tablets, kindles, iPads and e-readers themselves. Each type of device offers different functionalities and they face a rather high rate of obsolescence. With this scenario it is not simple for a library to make a choice on what to buy, but different reports, as for example the Horizon Report (Johnson, L. 2011) point them as the next device to be adopted by learning institutions in the mid-term.

The acquisition of e-readers for deployment of an e-reader loan service involves a substantial investment. The option chosen by the UOC Library was to buy the greatest number of devices possible by selecting a device that fulfils e-reader users' needs, but which is not the

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trendiest device.

Due to the rapid changes in the e-reader device market, perhaps the library should consider offering users the option of buying the devices that they may have already borrowed once it is time to renew the e-readers available. This option could serve to recover a part of the investment made.

b) The e-books

In regard to the e-book, from the UOC Library point of view, there are three main issues which are still unresolved and that have a significant impact on libraries: the form of buying e-books and the technical treatment needed to make e-books available from the UOC Library web site, what users can do with e-titles, and the price or license model for e-books.

In regard to the first issue, there is no single form for buying e-book titles; they can be offered as a part of a platform that cannot be unbundled, or they can be a new type of document in a previously existing database, or libraries can buy a single title either from the publisher, an institution which edits reports or from a bookshop.

About the second issue, most of the e-book titles can be included in the OPAC but what users can do with them is diverse. In most cases, it is necessary to link to the e-book platform from the OPAC; in other cases you can provide access to the content directly from the OPAC. While printing e-books is mostly possible, in some cases users cannot download the titles and load them in their e-reader devices; in others it is only possible to download the books by chapters or only a part of the book. Neither is there an established option regarding the digital rights management software used.

The third issue that affects libraries is the price or license model for e-book titles. Some of the editors are reproducing the same license model that was established when electronic journals first appeared; editors offer packages of titles or collections and a license agreement that needs to be renewed periodically while in other cases those titles are bought in perpetuity. Other editors offer both packages of titles and the option of choosing single titles; in this case, however, there is a significant price difference. In most cases, buying single titles is far more expensive than buying a package. In some other cases, editors, quite often fiction

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book editors, only sell to individuals and do not sell to libraries or institutions, or they follow the same model as with paper books where the Library has to buy as many items as needed. The UOC Library faces important challenges in the described scenario because it is not clear whether the Library will be able to face the license and price models offered at the moment. It is also a challenge for the UOC Library to increase the use of e-books when all users have in mind paper books and the traditional loan service, which are far simpler than e-reader and e-book use.

c) The library's role in promoting new reading formats to increase use of e-collections.

Libraries have always played an important role in promoting access to information, culture and knowledge; this is part of most libraries' mission. For this reason offering access to e-readers is a key issue to enhance and promote the use of e-books. Besides the fact that the use of electronic collections always needs to be promoted because investment in resources is high, e-readers allow access to a huge amount of contents regardless of space and time. Still, the UOC library has established the e-reader loan service not only to increase the use of e-collections but also because UOC learning materials are available for use in e-reader devices and this allows the UOC library to contribute to the excellence of the UOC educational model.

Conclusions

Whether the e-reader loan service in libraries will become a permanent library service is very difficult to say. It depends on many factors, among them, the e-reader or similar devices, market penetration rate, the title offer and prices, and the degree of simplicity achieved in the process of buying an e-book and loading it into the e-reader. In any case, from now on projects on e-books will focus more on contents than in e-reader devices itself because content is what users value.

In regard to university libraries, it is important that acquisition policies that prioritize e-books vs paper are supported by the University board of directors. Besides raising awareness on the e-book issue at institutional level, it is a form of obtaining recognition for a new policy. In the

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case of UOC Library, this support was received in May 2011.

E-books are already on the net and they can be found with a simple search. Users value simplicity and libraries are willing to offer e-books with quality and fulfil the law. It is in the hands of the different players involved- editors, publishers, authors, device producers, bookshops, libraries and readers- to achieve and consolidate a new way of reading, teaching and learning. In the context of the Spanish academic e-book offer there are important challenges as well as business opportunities (Cordón García, J.A. 2010).

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