

**REPORT TO:** Leisure Arts and Communities Committee - 8th March 2010

**REPORT ON:** Introduction of an E-Book and E-Audio Book Service

**REPORT BY:** Director of Leisure and Communities

**REPORT NO:** 142-2010

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To seek committee approval on the introduction of a downloadable e-book and e-audio book lending service for members of Dundee City Libraries using the Overdrive Digital Library Reserve Service.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Committee approves the introduction of this new service.

## **3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The annual subscription cost of £11,250 to introduce this service is contained within the Leisure and Communities Department revenue budget.

## **4.0 MAIN TEXT**

An e-book is the electronic version of a book which can be downloaded to a computer read via a PC, laptop or other compatible media such as an e-book reader, smartphone or an MP3 player. An e-audio book is a recording of a reading of the full text or abridgement of a book which can be downloaded to a computer and listened to via a PC, laptop or other compatible media such as MP3 players. See Appendix 1 for more information.

There are only two companies. OCLC and Overdrive who provide a comprehensive e-book and e-audio book integrated system which can be incorporated into the library catalogue. The packages offered by both companies were evaluated against a set of criteria and Overdrive was identified as providing the best value.

The Overdrive platform provides the means by which registered library users can access e-books and e-audio books through the library catalogue both within the library and from home. This is in line with the Library and Information Service's aim to provide a 24/7 facility and will also contribute to the Council's sustainability agenda.

Demand has been expressed amongst borrowers who have witnessed the increase of the provision of similar services from other local authorities and through online booksellers such as Amazon.

This will provide additional resources to members of the community who may be unable to access traditional library services such as housebound and visually impaired users.

## **5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

This Report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty and Equality Impact Assessment.

There are no major issues.

## **6.0 CONSULTATIONS**

The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services) and Director of Finance have been consulted in the development of this report and are in agreement with its contents..

## **7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

**Stewart Murdoch**  
**Director of Leisure and Communities**  
**1 March 2010**

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **Background**

Developments in technology have expanded the opportunities for accessing books and audio books. The growth of portable e-readers and smart phones has meant that people are now downloading books and audio books onto their personal devices or PCs and reading them on screen. Much as the popularity of downloading music changed the way the music industry operates, the growth in e-book and e-audio book downloads are changing the business model for publishers. A number of publishers have now established an online presence where customers can choose to buy a print copy or a download of any book, often these are sold through booksellers such as Amazon. These developments have not only affected the way people buy books, but also the way people borrow library material.

For the public library service, this development is an opportunity to reach a wider user base, particularly among people who have not been traditional library users or have moved away from libraries. Providing downloadable books for loan is a way of increasing the library offer. As the books can be accessed remotely, the service also has the capacity to reach people who have been physically excluded from library facilities due to personal circumstance or pressure on time.

### **Consultation**

A consultation exercise has been undertaken both within libraries and to the wider community. Staff at all locations have been asking customers to register and interest and over the space of one week, have found that nearly 200 existing borrowers would be keen to take advantage of such a service.

A post on the library's Facebook page about the possibility of the introduction of this service has gleaned positive responses from around 50% of the users of the library Facebook pages. A message was posted on the council's own 'Allstaff' notices and was favourably met, with 120 positive responses in just a few days.

School librarians in Dundee have expressed an interest in introducing pupils to digital books. Many school pupils have their own devices to download audio books on to and there is support within the education department to encourage this through use of any online library services. School pupils can access library services online through their National Entitlement Cards.

An increasing percentage of customers who use the housebound service currently borrow CDs for audio books and would be able to take advantage, with staff assistance, of the flexibility and choice this service could offer. The possibility of purchasing portable devices specifically for housebound users is being investigated. This is in line with the council's digital inclusion strategy.

Dundee University Library has expressed an interest in working with the Council to promote the library services on offer to their students which would complement the university's own e-book service. Dundee City Libraries already have a reciprocal agreement and shared National Entitlement Card with the University of Abertay. Many students already use e-books from the University library for their course work and the service would offer alternative leisure reading titles.

### **Advantages Over CDs and the Printed Word**

- Items cannot be stolen, lost or damaged
- Items cannot be taken out and not returned
- No need for storage
- Books are available immediately without delay to allow for cataloguing and processing
- When an item is surplus to requirements, it can be replaced without wastage.

### **How the Service Will Operate**

Library members will access the e-book and e-audio book titles through the online Library Catalogue. The titles they select can then be downloaded onto a computer or mobile device. At the end of the loan period, the item is automatically returned to the library without any action needed from the library member.

The initial collection will consist of approximately 750 titles to select from. Multiple copies of popular titles, such as the latest James Patterson, will be purchased to satisfy demand. The collection will be kept regularly refreshed with new titles to ensure a variety of choice is always available.

E-books and e-audio books can be reserved in the same way as other library items, through the library catalogue. Library members will be able to choose from the collection either in libraries or from home, providing more flexible access to library resources.

### **Promoting Inclusion**

The growth in e-audio books is having a dramatic impact on the range of reading material available for visually impaired and housebound people. With more choice and flexibility in terms of text, e-books and e-audio books can offer a range of solutions for people with problems from dyslexia and visual impairments to arthritis. Once a book has been downloaded to an individual's device or PC, the text can be enlarged and the background colour and font can be changed thus allowing more people to be able to access the material they want in a way that suits their own personal needs.