

Do you reside or do you visit?

Towards a new understanding of the users behavior regarding e-books

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Abstract: *This research explores the theory of Visitors and Residents (V&R) in the specific context of e-books. It is examined whether this behavioural framework can explain the digital behaviour of users at the academic library CULIS Samf interaction with e-books. The research design builds on a literature review, analysis of qualitative interviews and the characteristics of V&R behaviour. The analysis shows that the framework can be applied to the users digital behaviour and to some extent explain it.*

Keywords: Visitors & Residents, e-books, digital user behaviour, academic libraries

Introduction

The e-book is a hot topic for many reasons; one is that it is becoming a target area of both public and academic libraries. The amount of e-book titles in library catalogues are increasing every year (Minčić-Obradović, 2011:4) and academic libraries are generally putting more effort in and spending more money on e-resources. One of the libraries that practice this is the Danish Royal Library which functions as academic library. As this library uses many resources on e-books and is planning to do more so in the future as well, it is interesting to examine the user's perspective. What are their attitudes towards e-books? How does the development in e-book accessibility correspond with the users e-competencies?

In order to answer these questions a current behavioural framework - Visitors and Residents (V/R) framework - was applied to an e-book case. The case was centred a one of the Danish Royal Libraries faculty libraries, the Social Sciences Faculty Library (CULIS Samf). The function of the case is to help investigate whether or not the V&R perspective could explicate the use of e-books in an academic library context. Here it is explored how users behaved when encountering the challenges that the e-books presented them with. The RQs is: *Can you explain the users digital behaviour at the CULIS Samf library on the basis of the "Visitors and Residents" theory, by using an e-book study as case?*

Literature Review

This literature review seeks to outline some main concerns and obstacles, using the newest research literature and surveys from the large vendors Springer (2008 and 2010) and Ebrary (Global 2011 and UK 2012). Another important part of the background is a local questionnaire survey made at CULIS Samf in 2013. Relevant numbers from this survey supports the idea that the issues are still present in academic libraries today.

- Finding e-books: a large procentage of users are aware of the concept of e-books, but some still refrains from using them (Slater, 2010:310). In the 2008 Springer survey 84%

were aware of the service, and in the Samf survey 74% answered positive to this question, but in the Springer survey only 73% of the respondents had ever used an e-book and only 55% in the CULIS Samf could say the same. Not knowing how or where to find e-books were one reason for not pursuing them: In the Ebrary survey from 2012 (:8) 36.8% stated this as the reason for not using e-books.

- Marketing and promotion: many academic libraries are formulating marketing strategies for their library's e-services. E-books are often promoted alongside with other e-resources usually through the library website (Vasileiou & Rowley, 2011:631). This can be an extra hurdle for users, if they want to learn specifically about e-books. Courses in information literacy are another way for librarians to encourage the use of e-books. In the UK Ebrary study, 24.2 % of respondents would find e-books more suitable, if they had better training and instruction (:14) and 49.2% found instruction or training "Very important" (:15).
- Reading e-books and e-book readers: research often describes reading on screen as one of the biggest challenges regarding e-books, 33% points to this being a problem in Shelburne's research from 2009 (Shelburne, 2009:64). In the CULIS Samf survey only 8% had read an e-book on an e-book reader, while 83% had used a laptop or desktop computer, and 47.7% believe that better e-book readers would make them more likely to use e-books. Some of the issues concerning the utilisation of e-books, such as not being able to use certain "reading tools", sometimes are misconstrued as a format problem, but the problem is often caused by restrictions from the vendor in form of digital rights management (DRM) (Slater, 2010:305).
- Access: there are different restrictions on use of and access, depending on the vendor the book has been made available through and the library system giving access. If there is no consistency in the way the users experience accessing, printing and using tools in e-books, they get frustrated (Slater, 2010:313). Because there are so many challenges regarding DRM, this is an area that naturally confuses users. Some of the restrictions counteract the ingenuity of e-books; if a restriction makes it impossible to download, and share e-books between mobile devices, you lose the mobility of the e-book, an advantage of the digital format (Walters, 2013:4-5). 21.1% of the respondents in the UK Ebrary survey found e-books to be difficult to access remotely.
- Use: Use of e-books have limitations that open source resources on the Internet do not, like print limits, limitations on downloading etc. (DRM). Different vendors have different ways of enforcing these rights, and users can feel frustrated by the lack of transparency.
- Comparing e-books to printed books: Printed and digital versions of the same book are used differently (Slater, 2010:312). This makes it difficult to equitably compare the two types of books. Some users print the e-books they find – highlight and write notes by hand and in that respect turn the e-book into a printed book.

Some e-book studies treats two or more of the research subjects above, and investigate these problems either through a library perspective or a user perspective. This study contributes to the research presented by giving an insight to the motivation behind the users behaviour, when combining the use (or non-use) of e-books with the Visitors and Residents framework. This means that this study will not just identify what challenges e-books bring along, but try to set these challenges into a context that could lead to a understanding of the users behaviour hereby revealing behaviour that could help view the users in a more realistic and sincere light.

V&R

Digital Visitors and Residents theory by David White and Alison Le Cornu from 2011, is used in this research. It puts emphasis on the users attitude towards digital technology. This

new framework is interesting in relation to examining user behaviour concerning different digital services because it focuses on the motivation behind the users' behaviour online. The Visitor and Residents project investigates digital literacy as not being dependent on age, but on how people behave on the Internet.

In short, the *Visitors* sees the Internet as a tool-shed where they can pick out the right tool to solve their problem, using the Internet as a mean to obtain their goal. The *Residents*, on the other hand, uses the Web as a mean in itself, a way to extend their identity, a place to discover and develop themselves. According to White and Le Cornu the difference between the Visitor and Resident behaviour is that the Visitor does his thinking off-line while the Resident does his thinking on-line, seeing the Web as a community he is part of (White & Le Cornu, 2011). The following characteristics were identified in the project's Progress Rapport, released in June 2012:

Visitors	Residents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See web as untidy garden tool shed • Defined goal or task • Select most appropriate tool for task • Need to see concrete benefit from use of a platform • Relatively anonymous • Try to avoid the creation of digital identity • Caution: identity theft, privacy • Sense that online social networking is banal and potentially a time waster • Will use technology to maintain relationships • Web offers set of tools to deliver or manipulate content (including conversations) • Tendency to respect (and seek out) authoritative sources • Thinking often takes place offline • Users, not members, of the web • See no value in 'belonging' online 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See web as place (park, building) where clusters of friends and colleagues meet • Live out a proportion of their life online • Distinction between online and offline increasingly blurred • Sense of belonging to a community • Have a profile in social networking platforms • Comfortable expressing their identity online • Web is a place to express opinions, to form and extend relationships, maintain and develop a digital identity • Aspect of their persona remains once logged off • See web as networks or clusters of individuals who generate content/opinion • No clear distinction between concepts of persona and content

Figure 1: V&R Characteristics (White et al., 2012:6)

Methodology

The framework of V&R is used to examine the data gathered through a questionnaire study and qualitative interviews. To identify the user's specific behaviour concerning e-books, a modified model of characteristics, based on the V&R thinking has been created. The empirical data is discussed on the basis of this modified model.

To explore the users behaviour and perception regarding e-books a qualitative study was conducted with interviews consisting of a sample of users at CULIS Samf. To structure the interviews an *interview guide* was designed to ensure that the respondents would elaborate on the e-book topic and on their general online behaviour, leading to an understanding of the respondent's behaviour in the interaction with e-books. Ten qualitative interviews with users at CULIS Samf were conducted with six females and four males. The age span covered ages from 21 to 37. Two of the respondents were Anglophone (exchange students from Canada and England) and 8 were Danish. Nine of the respondents were students and one was not. The respondents were chosen by the premise that they were users at CULIS Samf and off course

by their willingness to participate. As the interviews were conducted in a conference room at CULIS Samf the respondents were met in their natural setting.

Data Analysis

In order to answer the RQ, this section will use the framework of V&R to examine the data gathered through the questionnaire and the qualitative interviews. To identify the user's specific behaviour concerning e-books, a modified model of characteristics, based on the V&R thinking has been created:

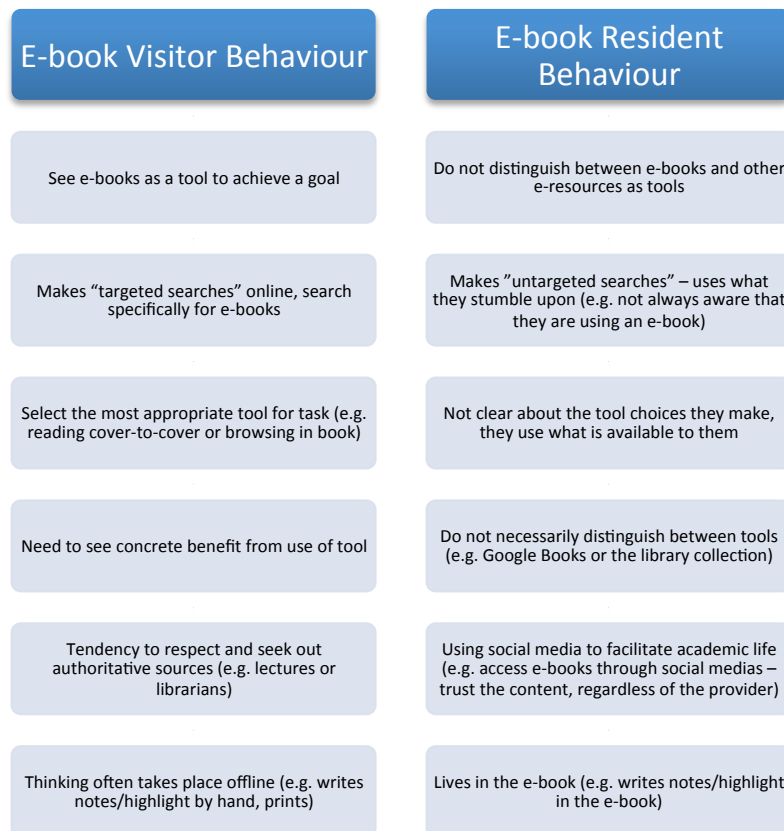


Figure 2: V&R E-book Characteristics (revision of figure 1)

E-book Visitor Behaviour

One of the Visitor characteristics is seeing the e-book as a *tool* they use to achieve a goal; the line between the concept of an e-book as an online book or a reading device was blurry when RD was asked if he used e-books he responded: *"I have a birthday soon and I've registered for a Kindle"* (RD), so when asked about e-books (the digital book) he assumed it was an e-book reader that was referred to. Furthermore he said *"I do have some books (e-books) that I have bought over Amazon on sale, which I read online"* (RD)", so he *did* use e-books and probably did know the difference, but did not articulate it clearly.

The purpose of using the e-book was, for most of the respondents to achieve a professional goal; they did not use e-books for personal reasons. Like RC, who used e-books to acquire literature for a course and had not used printed books the entire school year: *"No I do not think it is as good as a physical book - it is easier because, in a context like this (ed. study-related) where there is so much to read I can't afford to buy everything"* (RC).

Typically the respondents would rather attain the book as a printed version, and the digital version would be the second choice, but if the printed option were not available, they would settle with an e-book. RF emphasised this by stating: “(...) *When you can't get the (ed. printed) book... then sometimes you can choose an e-book...I have used that*” (RF). When the respondents *did* make targeted searches for e-books, it would usually be because the printed version was not available. It was never a first choice by the respondents and not a calculated “mission” with a specific e-book result and therefore in this case it cannot be identified as Visitor behaviour. With the exception of RH, who explained that she used e-books particularly when she wrote assignments and in these periods would choose the online version of a book, if there was any available in her search results: “*I think I prefer e-books*” (RH). So maybe RH did not search specifically for an e-book, but she would however pick the online version if there were one that appeared in her search results. In that way this could be identified as Visitor behaviour.

Visitor behaviour is characterised by having reservations about online navigation, they do not want to linger on the web and browse when they are online; they choose to get in and get out (White & Le Cornu, 2011). The CULIS Samf questionnaire survey presented some interesting results in the commentary section; users had asked “*How do you access these?*”, “*How, where – can you find e-books?*” and “*How can I borrow them?*”. These questions indicate lack of information and curiosity. Users that never made focused searches for e-books surely ask these questions.

When asked if they used the different options available in an e-book, some were not aware of these, like RA, when asked what she would add to an e-book to make it more appealing, answered: “*Then you would have to have the option to underline and write notes in it*” (RA). This shows an obvious lack of knowledge about this media and its possibilities e.g. RB would end up using the e-book as she would a printed book –writing notes by hand; indicating Visitor behaviour.

A typical Visitor behaviour is to see no value in “belonging” online and have a desire to be anonymous. In this section this is expressed by identifying how the respondents are logged on to social media and how they use an e-book; using its unique features or by treating it like a printed book. The respondents behaviour can be divided into two groups; those who prefer to print and “live outside the e-book”: “*To the extent possible I try to print the things... I prefer to read on paper rather than on a screen*” (RG), and those who uses e-books as a digital media and read them on a tablet, computer screen etc.: “*I often read text, instead of printing them out eh... on the computer*” (RF). Visitor behaviour manifests itself, when the user prints the book, highlights and writes notes by hand. This behaviour is recognised in several of the respondents’ actions (RB, RD and RG), because they choose to print and make notes in the printed text.

E-book Resident Behaviour

Several of the characteristics of the V&R model deals with the Residents habit of using whatever “tool” they encounter (White & Le Cornu, 2011). In our results respondents did not have a clear distinction between using an e-book or another e-resource “*It's probably both e-books and articles from REX and things like that we use? But again it is Facebook that we use, so that if one has found something from the curriculum, that everyone needs, it is (red. posted), an then I am not sure which channel it comes from*” (RG). This quote from RG also brings light to another of the Resident characteristics, concerning the use of social media to facilitate ones academic life.

In line with the Resident characteristic concerning not being able to tell tools apart and seeing the web as “park” full of possibilities (White & Le Cornu, 2011), another Resident e-book behaviour was identified: *“If I am looking in to getting a book I’ll read like the first couple of things online in Google Books”* (RJ). This service from Google is used by some respondents to browse and get a feeling if a certain book holds the information you need. Because the respondents implicates that they did not consider this Google service as an e-book and the fact that they sometimes end up in the e-book by “accident”, shows that their is evidence of a Resident behaviour

If a user interacts with the e-book and leave marks it can be identified as Resident behaviour because they live out a part of their institutional life through an online service: *“I am not sure... It’s probably both e-books and articles from REX and things like that we use? But again it is Facebook that we use, so that if one has found something from the curriculum, that everyone needs, it is (red. posted), an then I am not sure which channel it comes from”* (RH). This respondent expresses behaviour of one who lives in the e-book. Whenever there is an online version of a book available RH will prefer it, but only in relation to her academic life, because when reading fiction she expressed a need for some kind of tablet, to get the full enjoyment out of reading. This is the behaviour of someone who is comfortable in the digital world – identified here as Resident behaviour

Some of the respondents who do not print e-books but do use some of the functions available when reading the e-book, however still writes notes by hand: *“I mean things like the highlighting tool is useful ehh... to go back and remember things that are important, but I find that actually I end up writing down (red. by hand), and that will be what I prefer to do”* (RC). This tells us that even though the respondents might have a Resident behaviour, they sometimes still do not access the e-book fully as Residents: highlighting, make digital notes etc. This offline thinking was an overall recurrent empirical finding, as the majority of the interview respondents would use e-books as either an “emergency-situation” or with a particularly purpose.

The point that only a few users would live entirely in an e-book corresponds with the CULIS Samf questionnaire results regarding reading preference, where only 5% of the respondents *always* preferred to read an e-book over a printed book, which indicates that there is a need to improve both usability and promotion of e-books at CULIS Samf. You could argue that this preference of e-books i.a. has to do with how the users perceive e-books and if they have been presented to what advantages the e-books can give them.

Results

This project has placed the issues regarding the use of e-books in a new framework, taking the users’ perspective and setting it into the Visitor and Resident framework.

Comparing the results of this study to other surveys, it is revealed that the users at CULIS Samf had less knowledge of and used e-books to a lesser degree than the larger studies compared them with. Even though this result partly can be the issues regarding general e-book use in Denmark, it is still a problem as the libraries’ future purchasing policy will contain fewer printed books and a lot more digital books.

Turning to the findings, it is clear that even from the small sample and little focus on general digital behaviour it is possible to identify both Resident and Visitor behaviour outside the use of e-books, using the original V&R characteristic model. In some cases it is ambiguous how to interpret the behaviour of the respondents, dependent on their motivation and the setting,

given that there is often more than one motivation behind the behaviour. The behaviour of the different respondents is shown to be all over the map. In that sense we can verify the V&R theory, in the respect that you are not either Visitor or Resident.

As it is possible to translate some of the original V&R characteristics in an e-book behaviour model, it could be argued that this already leads to the conclusion that the V&R theory supports this behaviour.

The goal was to learn about the users at CULIS Samf's attitude towards e-books and it became clear that there is a long implementation period, before the use of e-books will be as high as in other countries (shown in the comparative study). Ownership of tablets needs to increase and some of the issues regarding use, access and retrieval discussed in the literature review as well as in this research, must be addressed, before this can happen.

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