

eBooks – a platform to build on

MAXIM VAN GISBERGEN

SwetsWise Product Manager

Although still a relatively new publishing format, eBooks are increasingly being adopted as they provide an alternative, and often cost-effective, source of information for students and researchers. As one of the leading information agents, Swets has seen an increase in the number of eBook purchases it has handled in recent years. In order to gain a deeper understanding of customers' eBook experiences, Swets conducted a survey in February 2009 with over 1,000 customers worldwide. We discovered that, although librarians presently spend a relatively small part of their total budget on eBooks (around 9% on average), many expect this to double in the next three years and increase further after that. While research clearly shows there is an interest in the format, as well as highlighting its potential growth, the survey also shone light on a number of the issues and challenges librarians are facing, relating mainly to the selection and acquisition of content.



Librarians have discovered that traditional and familiar sources of information on printed books simply do not, and in many cases cannot, offer complete information on the varied pricing and licensing options available for eBooks. As a result, processes like finding out whether a title is available electronically, which vendors it can be purchased from and against which prices and licensing conditions proves to be a costly and time-consuming exercise. These challenges are similar to those the library community faced in the mid-late 1990's with the rapid rise of e-journals.

When asked what could make eBook workflow processes more efficient, our customers were clear in asking for a single platform from which they could share, discover and compare available vendors and eBook purchasing options. Swets has consequently been working hard to develop a solution to satisfy this need.

We have integrated an eBooks selection and acquisition platform into SwetsWise, and in October this new platform entered its beta testing phase. This phase will see a select group of customers using the platform to check whether it works, not only how they imagined it, but how it should actually operate. This follows the same development path as all our products and services, where we work in close contact with our customers throughout.

Once launched, SwetsWise's eBooks platform will provide customers with a single source for eBooks purchasing and a means to choose their desired access route, enabling them to make effective and informed collection decisions. By fully integrating the platform with the rest of our services, we will create a single environment where librarians, information professionals, students and researchers will be able to browse, acquire, access, manage and evaluate all of their purchased content, irrespective of format.

Swets has brought this product to fruition in a relatively short space of time, because we do not carry the historical baggage associated with handling print books. In essence, we are new to the books market, but we are experts in handling e-journals and the complex pricing and access models associated with them. This means that we are able to leverage a wealth of experience to create a platform that delivers upon a clear customer need.

Swets will be showcasing the SwetsWise eBooks platform at Online Information, **Stand 644**. Please contact us to arrange a meeting or drop by for a demonstration.

e. info@uk.swets.com
www.swets.com