

Book Review

Susan Hornby

The Reviewers

Susan Hornby, Manchester Metropolitan University, UK

Review Subject

The Electronic Book. The Change of Paradigm for a Changing Book Market

Daniela Zivkovic

Publisher Name: Bibspider

Place of Publication: Berlin

Publication Year: 2005

Article type: Review

Keywords: Electronic books, Electronic publishing

Journal of Documentation
Volume 62 Number 3 2006 pp. 418-419
Copyright © Emerald Group Publishing Limited ISSN 0022-0418

This is an interesting and timely text. We are becoming more used to the term “electronic book” yet seldom does an individual attempt to define the term precisely and this lack of precision in language often means that discourse on the topic is confused as people select their own meaning of the term. The author's definition is succinct:

... one or several files available to the public online, on CD-ROM, diskette or the like physical carriers. In addition to text it may include images and sound, links to related online pages and programs to change and supplement it.

This slim volume was first published in Croatia in 2001 and only now is available in translation. The size of the text disguises just how much is covered and the depth of analysis undertaken. The author describes and examines the changes that have followed the arrival and expansion of the electronic book on the book sector analysing the impacts on librarians, publishers, booksellers, lawyers and information experts.

The author pays particular attention to influences that the electronic book has had on bibliographic control, legal deposit, copyright, identifiers digitisation, purchase and reading. The book is particularly relevant as libraries increasing take electronic publications and professionals have to make decisions on access and retrieval policies.

The text falls neatly into two main sections. The first half starts with a definition of the book and articulates a brief history of the ISBN. In 1999 research by the author was undertaken to establish the spread of ISBN. The results of this research are presented and make interesting reading; it was particularly instructive to see which publications caused difficulties for assigning ISBNs and the various definitions of "book". While most countries used the ISBN manual definition some had additions that were nationally accepted standards and some did not use ISBN Manual.

The second part of the text defines the electronic book and discusses the issues, already mentioned, of bibliographic control, legal deposit and copyright.

Personally I found the section of copyright was most useful. This area changes rapidly and the author gives an excellent overview – and outlines the particular problems associated with the electronic book. This text is useful for academics, students and information professionals.
