



# To Surf or Boogie Board

## the Art E-Books Wave?

Kitty Chibnik, Head/Access Services, Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University  
Kai Alexis Smith, Ask A Librarian Intern, Pratt Institute, MSILS Expected May 2013

### Introduction

Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, provides Course Reserve readings to support the instructional requirements of the:

- Graduate School of Architecture, Planning & Preservation (graduate students)
- Department of Art History & Archaeology (upper level undergraduates & graduate students)

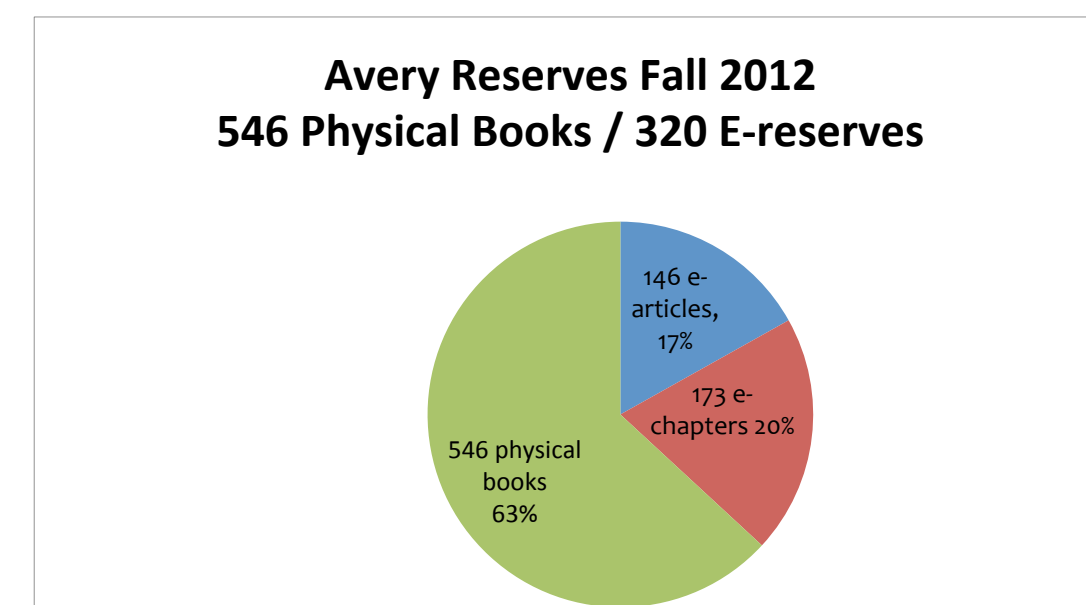
### Project Purpose

With over 500 physical books being requested for course reserves per semester, Avery access staff and selectors decided to assess the availability of e-books to be purchased in addition to the physical copy.

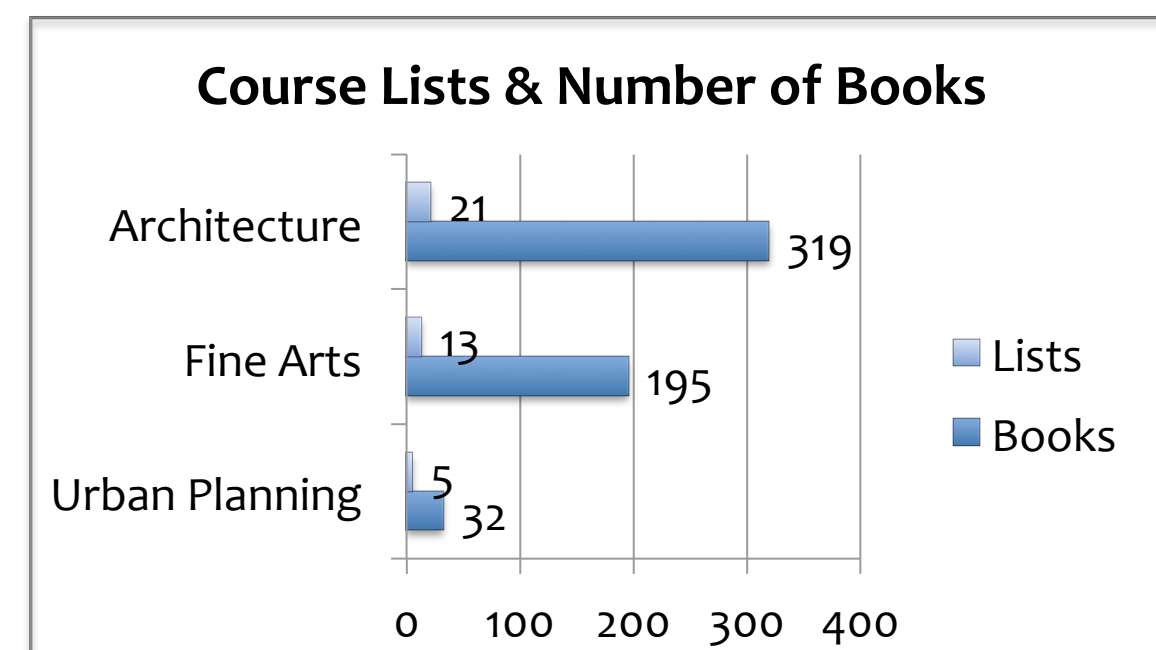
Questions we wanted to explore

- How many of these texts were available in e-format?
- Based on subject, were there differences in e-book availability?
- If there was an e-book available, did it contain the same content as the physical book?
- Was the e-book being delivered in a manner that would satisfy the needs of a class?

### How many Course Reserve readings does the Library provide?



### How many course lists are processed and how many books are on each list?



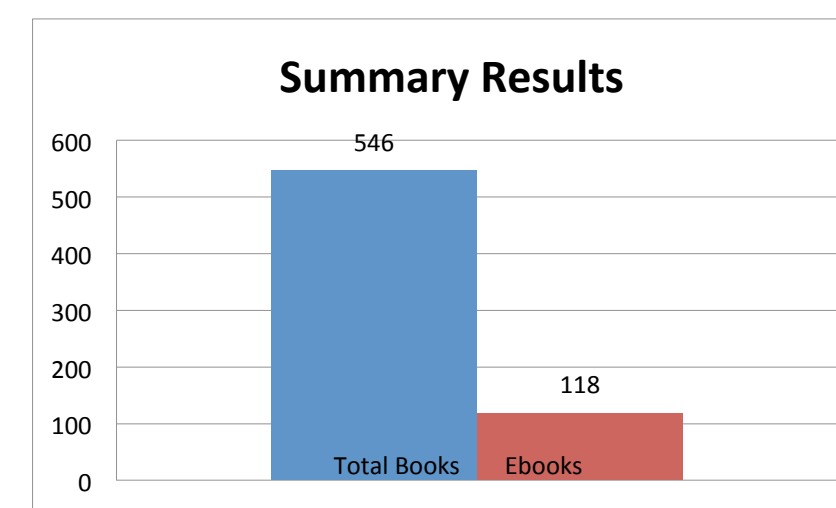
Assumptions about books appearing on faculty reserve lists include:

- Readings tend to be core texts for the class topic, critical thinking, and theory and analysis, rather than heavily illustrated "picture" books
- Publication date of the books would be mostly within the last 25 years
- Physical books are put on reserve due to
  - Length of reading (entire book required or reading was longer than we could scan within copyright)
  - Presence of illustrations
  - Availability/non-availability of e-copies
- Multiple students would want to read the same book at the same time
- The larger the class, the greater the demand would be for a book

### E-Book Availability

Kai Alexis Smith, a Pratt Institute Information and Library Science School student who was interning at Avery, searched CLIO, the Columbia Libraries online catalog, for the 546 books on the reading lists in fall 2012.

If she did not find an e-version already in CLIO, she then searched GOB13, YBP Library Services' Global Online Bibliographic Information service, to determine if an e-book was available for purchase.

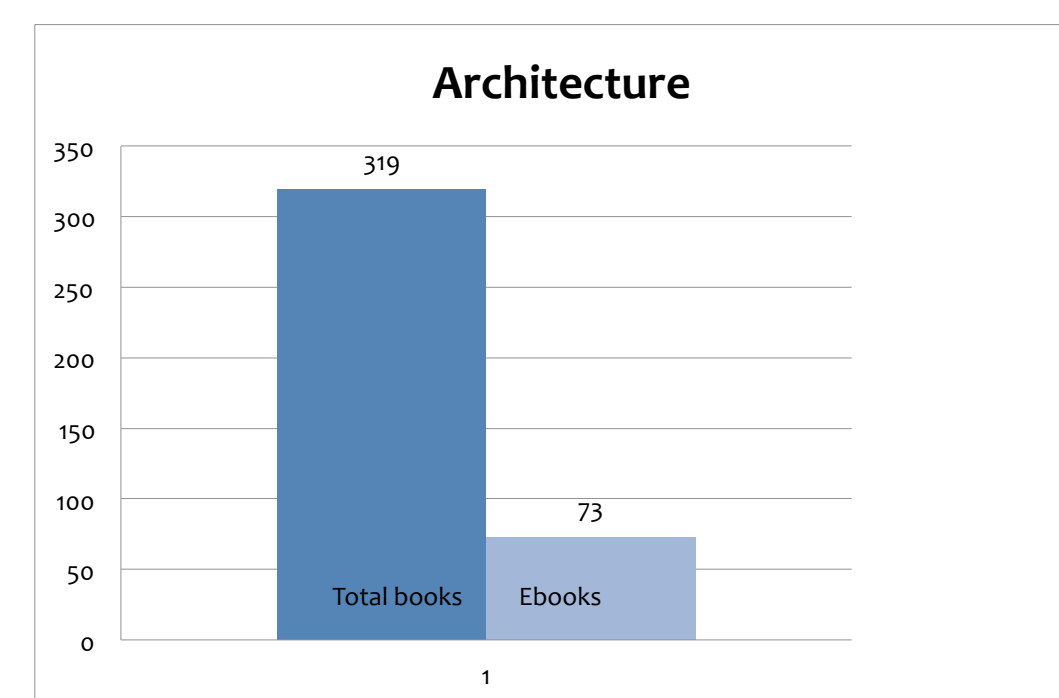


546 titles were searched

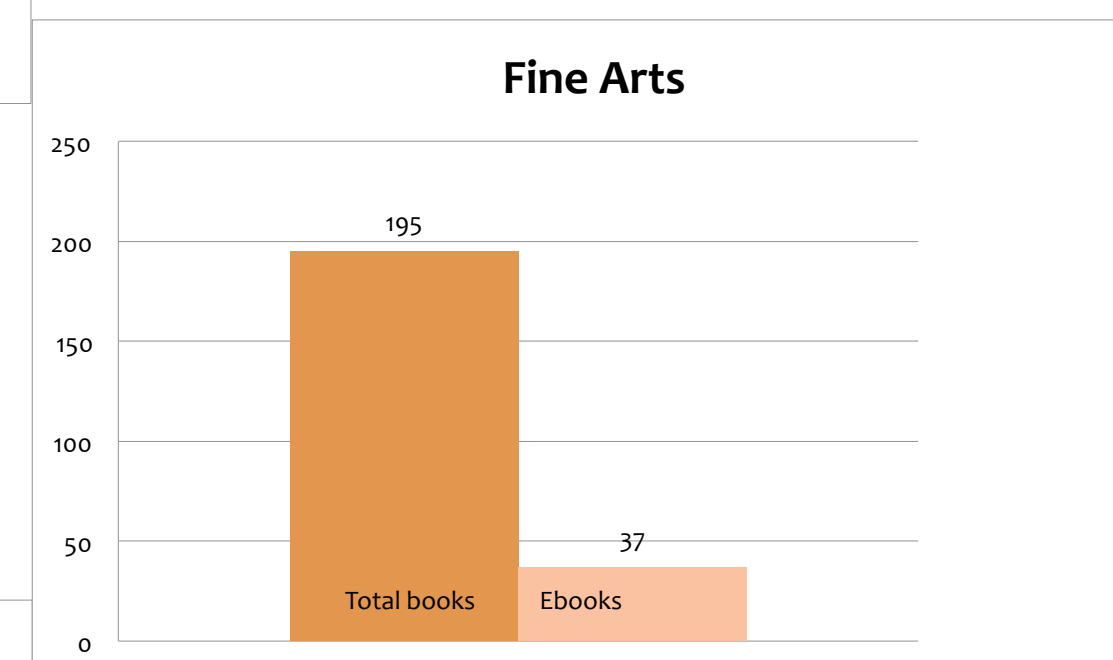
- 53 were already held by Columbia as e-books
- 65 additional e-books were listed in GOB13

There was little difference in availability based on topic with percentage of availability ranging from 19%-25%.

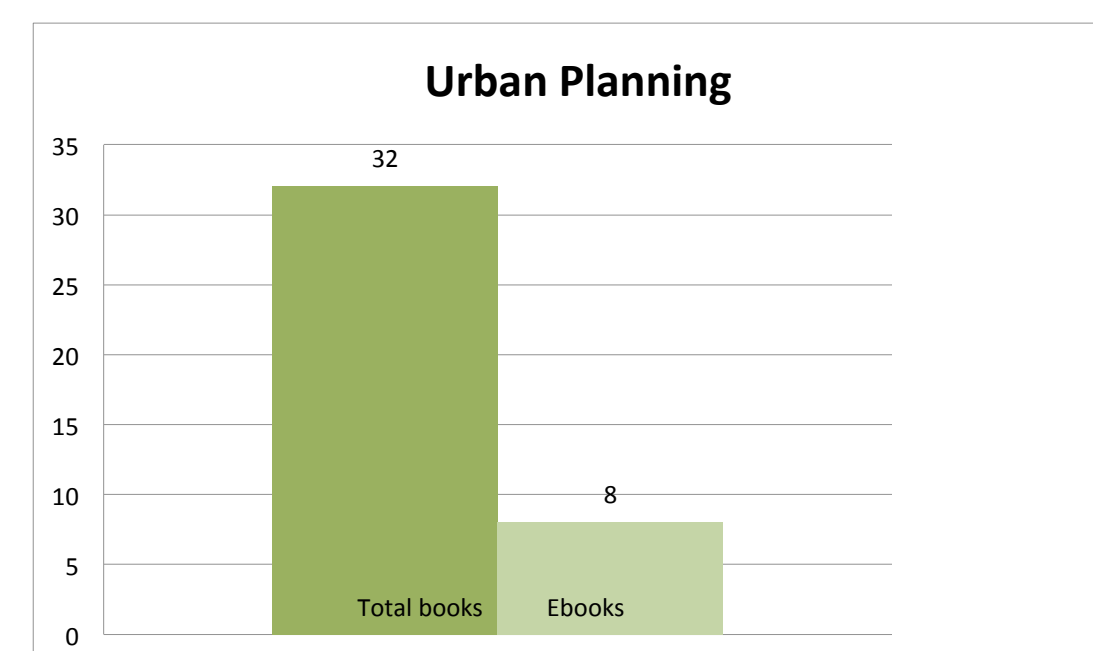
Surprisingly—although admittedly the urban planning sample was quite small—e-versions of fine arts and architecture books were as available as e-versions of urban planning books. We speculate that within the realm of fine arts and architecture books, those requested for course readings are more text-based and less image-based, making them equally likely as the urban planning books to be published in e-versions.



23% e-books availability



19% e-book availability



25% e-book availability

### E-Books and Access

When considering the purchase of e-books for reserves, user expectations of digital versions come into play. A physical book can only be read when someone else is not reading it. However, there is an expectation that a digital copy, by its very nature, will be available at any time to multiple readers. The reality is, depending upon the vendor and the purchase/license agreement, this expectation may or may not be true.

- SUPO (one reader at a time) vs. MUPO (multiple readers at one time)  
13 of the 65 e-books (20%) that we did not own were limited to one-reader at a time.

- Ease of downloading, printing, and manipulating text  
This category of issues were not explored in this project, but anecdotally, users have voiced concern when downloading, printing, especially chapters, and manipulating text is unavailable or hard to do.

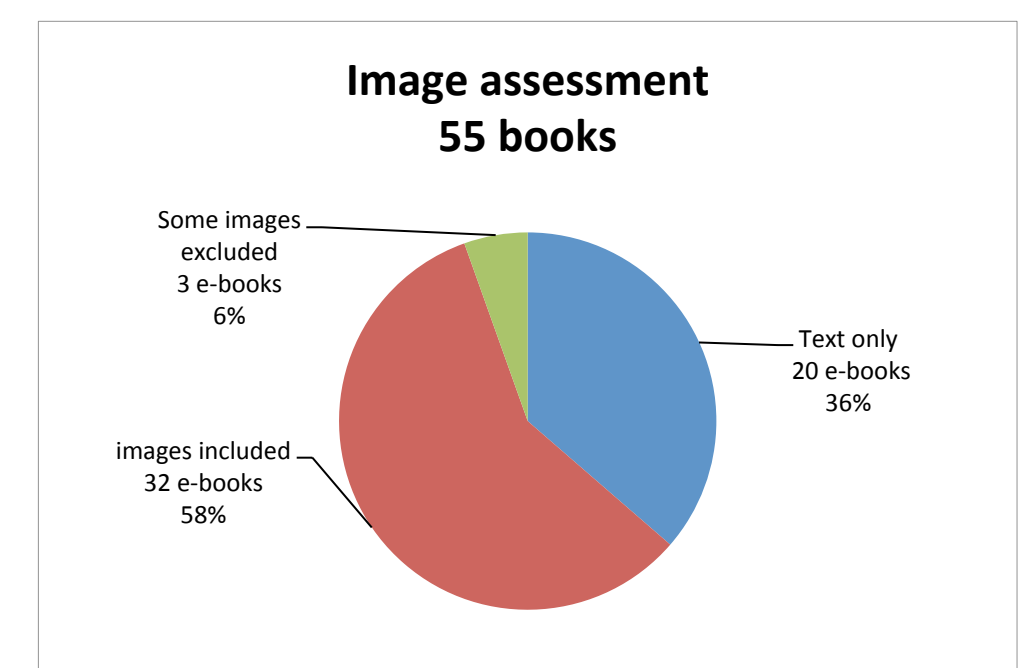
### E-books and Images

In order to assess the issue of images—included or excluded—from the e-books offerings, Kai tracked whether neither the physical book nor the e-book contained images, whether the e-book published the images as available in the physical book or whether it had some images removed. To do this, she referenced images from the physical books on the course reserves shelves and then matched these to the corresponding pages within the preview of the e-book displayed in GOB13.

The e-book previews were sampled for images rather than compared image for image.

Of the 35 books with images, 3 e-books had at least some images excluded.

Vendors do not normally include information about whether the e-book version includes or excludes images from the paper version.



### What Lessons Can We Take Away from This Exercise?

A 22% hit rate is pretty good! If you are an academic selector considering purchasing art or architecture e-books, focusing on the acquisition of e-books for course readings, can prove to be both a fruitful use of your spending dollars and a way of increasing students' library satisfaction.

Although our data set is quite small, the hotly discussed "e-books without images" problem seems to be somewhat less risky in the area of course reserves, where readings concentrate on core texts and critical thought/theory, rather than images and image analysis.

### Caveats

- Some e-books you purchase will have images excluded.
- When given a choice, go for the vendor who allows multiple simultaneous usage.
- The completion time for the project was 40 hours. This time commitment is worth noting, if only because reserves processing occurs during the busy beginning of semesters.
- Be conscious of limitations to downloading, printing, and, to a lesser extent, manipulating digital versions. Inability to download and print easily is aggravating to readers!

### Acknowledgements

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