

EVALUATING E-TEXTBOOKS IN A BUSINESS CURRICULUM

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ABSTRACT

Given the growing popularity of electronic textbooks (e-textbooks) in academia, it is important to evaluate the educational value of such textbooks and whether users can interact with the interface. The problem identified in this study is how to effectively use e-textbooks in a four-year undergraduate business curriculum to facilitate student learning. The primary goal of this study was to evaluate the educational usefulness of e-textbooks. The secondary goal was to evaluate the user interface usability of e-textbooks.

Two methods of evaluation were used in this study. A web-based survey was used and the sample included current student users of e-textbooks in a variety of business topics in four-year undergraduate business schools. A user review was used and included a “think-aloud” method of evaluation in which participants were asked to perform tasks with one business e-textbook and complete a questionnaire.

The participants used included seven undergraduate business students enrolled at Southern Oregon University in a business course in which an e-textbook was used and presented in the Adobe Acrobat Reader 7.0 format.

The investigator expected to provide insight to what ways e-textbooks enable students to meet learning objectives. The web-based survey results showed students are satisfied with the criteria presented and deemed important in evaluating the educational usefulness of e-books. A key finding in the web-based survey was the dissatisfaction that users reported on the ability to edit, mark and annotate when using e-textbooks. These features are considered to be important assets in promoting the use of e-books. The investigator also expected to provide insight to what ways e-textbook interfaces make possible the performance of the tasks required of students. The user review results showed students are satisfied with the criteria presented and deemed important in evaluating the user interface usability of e-books. A key finding in the user review was that users sought paper book metaphors for finding information in the e-textbook that were not available.