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The book lives on

Scholarly publishing is in a state of flux as electronic resources have arisen as an alternative to print. A distinct shift has occurred in the case of journals: print journal collections are dramatically declining with electronic journals becoming the standard format. The College Library is a case in point. The Library currently has switched from 400 to 20 print subscriptions and offers users access to 2500 e-journals via the College's website. But what of books? Depending on the nature of the book's content, users express preferences between print and electronic formats. A survey of UK universities showed that users prefer to read short sections of books online but prefer print for reading an entire book.[1] The online reading experience was one of very short viewing and visiting times akin to e-journal use. In a study by Folb and colleagues,[2] reference or pharmaceutical books seemed better suited for the electronic format. At the same time, their study's respondents, including clinical physicians, who were among the heaviest e-book users, demonstrated a great deal of flexibility: either format was acceptable so long as it was conveniently available at the time of need. Clearly e-books are now well entrenched in the scholarly publishing marketplace, but the utility of print persists. Accordingly, the College Library offers access to approximately 100 e-books on its website (www.cpsbc.ca/library) and continues to maintain an excellent collection of print books with a focus on clinical medicine. Borrowed books are free for College registrants to receive and return via post.

—Karen MacDonell, Robert Melrose, Judy Neill
Library Co-managers

This article is the opinion of the Library of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC and has not been peer reviewed by the BCMJ *Editorial Board.*

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