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The purpose of this article is to highlight the importance of digital media in relation to printed media as library material in public libraries. Digital media refer to videos and DVDs, also known as Digital Versatile Discs/Digital Video Discs/Digital Visual Discs. To avoid confusion the acronym DVD will be used.

Society has gone through many changes over the past decades. It has moved from an industrial through a post-industrial society into the so-called Information Age (also known as a high-tech or information society). In the information society the information poor has either had to adapt and survive, or face technological illiteracy and stagnate. Survival within the information society requires people to be on a certain level of functioning, that is, literate, computer literate, information literate and/or technologically sound. The era of the slow-moving letter is still with us, although the paperless era is fast-moving and apparently starting to replace it.

As far back as 1987 authors such as Dalton have forecast the death of the printed word. There was talk at that stage of a paperless or bookless society. It was predicted that new electronic media would evolve very fast and make the book (and the library) obsolete. However, public libraries still depend mainly on books and other printed material for reading and research purposes. Libraries have since added new types of material to their collections. Traditionally books were the primary medium to communicate ideas, activities, stories, or events. Books also enhanced teaching and were used as a resource for research and studies. Books were the most used medium to provide, store and retrieve information.

With the arrival of visual media (videos and DVDs) in the late eighties and early nineties, many books were captured on film and used as additional resources for the provision of information. Initially many public

librarians were sceptical and somewhat reluctant to accommodate this new medium in their library collections.

If one looks at printed and visual media, there are similarities as well as differences. For instance, books are regarded to be passive in nature whereas videos and DVDs are more interactive. This interaction is displayed in a three-dimensional capacity. It can be seen, heard and read. Similarly, visual media comprise a triangulation of sounds, words and images that have a greater impact on viewers. For example, a video clip of an advertisement on television can be powerful enough to change the attitudes of viewers. As with books, DVDs are divided into more or less the same categories, such as children's and adult fiction and non-fiction (including reference works, setworks and documentaries). Nowadays various films are captured on DVDs, not forgetting the number of books that are filmed for release on DVDs, such as setwork books, making it easier for learners to understand the sometimes difficult contents. Many DVDs, such as children's DVDs are also cheaper than books. The average price of some children's DVDs (containing up to three to five children's stories) can be as little as R25. Some examples of the different categories of DVDs are instructional, for instance, How to brew beer; Let's do scrapbooking and How to play rugby or How to play golf. Examples of DVDs based on books are **Gone with the wind**, **Faith like potatoes**, **Sherlock Holmes** and **The works of William Shakespeare**. Travel DVDs include **Cape Town**, **Durban**, **West Coast** and **Hantam**. Children's DVDs are classics such as **Heidi**, **Pinocchio**, **Nils Holgerson** and **The Brothers Grimm fairy-tales**. Documentary DVDs include **Tik**, **The untold truth** and titles in the *National Geographic* series. These categories are very similar to those found in printed media. With the visual media available in public libraries the information-seeking behaviour of library users are challenged with printed media (books, periodicals and newspapers); audio (gramophone records, audio tapes and CDs); visual (slides, films, videos and DVDs) and pictorial media (posters, photographs and art prints).

The question that comes to mind is: How does the library user respond to the different media available in their libraries?

## Method

In order to establish which medium circulates the most, a specific title featuring in different media such as DVDs, videos, audio recordings, children's and adult books, namely the popular **Harry Potter and the philosopher's stone** was selected. This title is available in DVD, video, sound recording, and AJF, EJF and EF book format. The circulation of this title in its different formats was taken over an eight year period, from 2000 to 2008. The PALS library system was used to retrieve the circulation figures of the different media. In order to get authoritative data the circulation figures of each copy in the library had to be retrieved - a somewhat lengthy process. In 2008 there were 1 025 copies in various formats of **Harry Potter and the philosopher's stone** in the Western Cape Provincial Library Service:

Medium	Copies
Audio/sound recordings	3
DVDs	5
Videos	110
English Fiction (EF)	35
English Juvenile Fiction (EJF)	513
Afrikaans Juvenile Fiction (AJF)	359

In order to determine the average circulation figure the number of copies of each medium was divided into the circulation figures of that medium.

## Results

Title: **Harry Potter and the philosopher's stone/Harry Potter en die toenaar se steen**

Medium	Circulation (2000-2008)	Copies	Average circulation (2000-2008)
Audio/sound recordings	39	3	13
DVDs	531	5	106
Videos	5 539	110	50
English Fiction (EF)	1 074	35	30
English Juvenile Fiction (EJF)	7 380	513	14
Afrikaans Juvenile Fiction (AJF)	1 942	359	5

From the results it is clear that the DVD format was the most used medium as the average circulation is by far more than any other medium (106). The video format (50) was second most popular; then the EF book format (30); followed by the EJF book format (14); and then the audio/sound recording format (13). The category with the lowest average circulation figure was the AJF book format (5). This meant that the library users preferred to view this either on video or DVD rather than reading the book. It is also interesting to note that there are only

five copies of this DVD available compared to the multiple copies in the printed medium. Library users also preferred to read the English version rather than the Afrikaans translation. Although it is interesting to see that DVDs and videos are the most popular media compared to the printed media, only one title was used as a sample. This means that the results cannot be generalised. It should also be taken into account that videos and DVDs have much shorter loan periods than books, which influenced the circulation figures.

In 1987 Dalton predicted the death of the printed word and also indicated that new electronic media will make the book and the library obsolete. However, I do not fully agree. I tend to agree with Fishbeck, an author who has indicated as far back as 1969 that the printed word will not die, but will adapt to the changing circumstances as introduced by information technology. It is important to note that the public library's future rests on its ability to develop its services in line with the changing global technology. Hence it is the responsibility of the public library to expose the myths of contest between the book and electronic information media. The two are not in competition, but have a complementary relationship. The public library should therefore encourage and promote the co-existence of the printed as well as electronic media. Both have their uses and users.

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