Digital Textbooks

in K-12 Parochial and Independent Schools
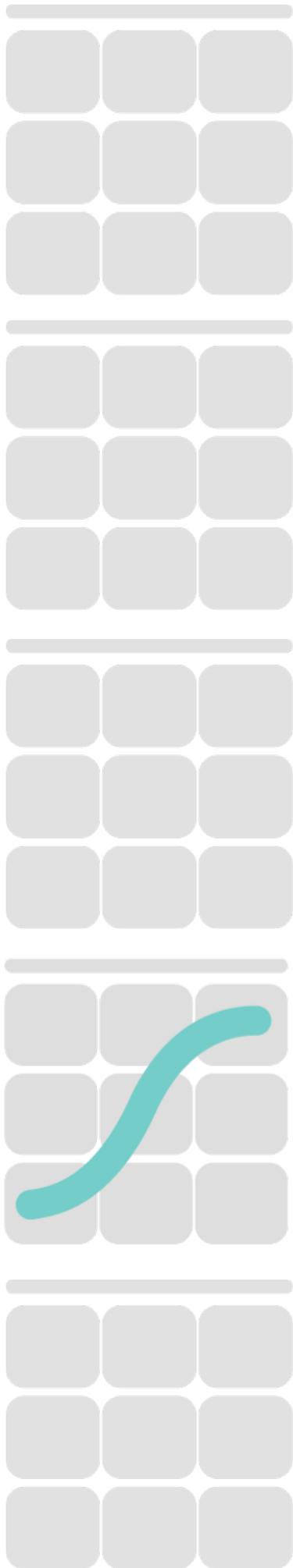
PARG

Data Report

Executive Summary

Digital textbooks have long been a disrupter in the publishing industry. Starting with the higher education market, escalating prices have made new print textbooks increasingly unaffordable for students. Digital textbooks have also improved rapidly – providing short-term licenses at lower cost, with access online and off, and flexibility on a wide variety of devices. Transitioning to digital has been slower, however, for K-12 schools.

PARG surveyed 3,194 schools about their use of digital materials and devices in Winter 2019/20. Survey data shows that schools are increasingly providing 1:1 device access to students, and larger schools are emphasizing digital textbooks for faster access to quality materials, easier distribution and administration, and increased flexibility for teachers and students.

Introduction & Methodology

PARG surveyed 3,194 schools in all 50 states and the District of Columbia about in Winter 2019/20. Schools were called and participated in a 15-20 minute phone survey with one of our poll representatives.

Although some participants may have answered more questions or provided more detail, the following charts and data reflect questions that received significant responses.

The survey was conducted prior to the outbreak of the Coronavirus Pandemic and reflects the environment prior to school closings and the implementation of distance/on-line learning. The report indicated that 58% of responding schools with more than 500 students were using digital textbooks. Given continued or recurring school closures and planned hybrid models, we anticipate that more schools will be distributing textbooks and materials digitally in the 2020/2021 school year.

Student Information Systems (SIS)

A Student Information System (SIS) is software that manages student data. The SIS has student schedules, class changes and updates. Schools with an SIS can distribute digital textbooks to students directly when the SIS and digital textbook platform are integrated.

The top 10 reported School Information Systems. PARG Survey, 2020.

Top 10 Student Information Systems (SIS)	
	%SIS
FACTS	24%
PowerSchool	8%
Blackbaud	5%
PlusPortals	2%
Sycamore	2%
Gradelink	2%
SchoolSpeak	1%
Veracross	1%
Jupiter Ed	1%
Educate TADS	1%
School Based System	5%
None	6%
Other	40%

Learning Management Systems (LMS)

A Learning Management System (LMS) is software that manages courses and course content, including online teaching and digital resources such as textbooks. School LMS can integrate a virtual bookshelf for student materials by class or teacher, with assignments and grading. Schools with an LMS can integrate with a digital textbook platform to automatically capture assignments into the gradebook.

The top 10 reported Learning Management Systems. PARG Survey, 2020.

| Top 10 Learning Management Systems (LMS)	
	%LMS
FACTS	24%
PowerSchool	7%
Blackbaud	6%
PlusPortals	3%
Sycamore	2%
Gradelink	2%
OptionC	1%
SchoolSpeak	1%
Google Classroom	1%
Naviance	1%
School Based System	7%
None	8%
Other	10%

Devices Used

In keeping with K-12 trends nationally, private schools are largely using Chromebooks. However, larger schools show a higher percentage in iOS and BYOD device types. We suggest this may be attributable to larger schools investing earlier in technology, preceding more recent market trends.

*BYOD – Bring Your Own Device. Refers to policies where individuals can use and access materials with their personal computer, laptop or mobile devices, not restrictive to operating system or other requirements.

Devices reported by Schools, By Size, PARG Survey, 2020.
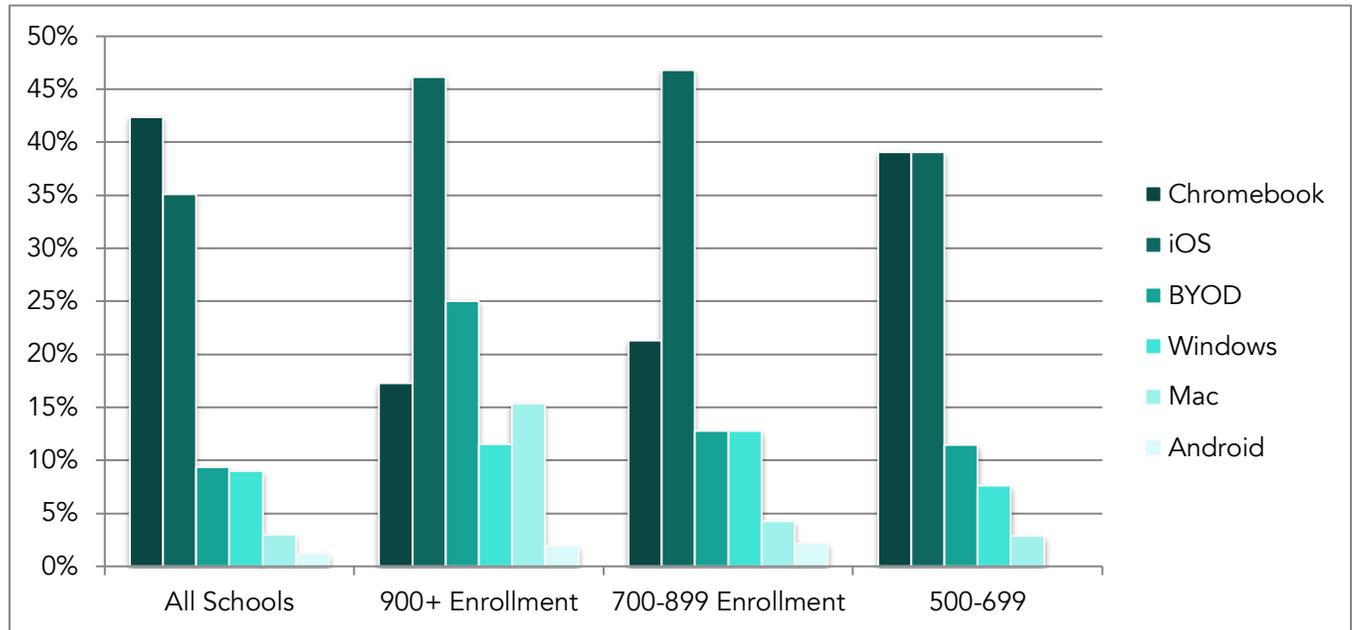
Device Management, PARG Survey, 2020.
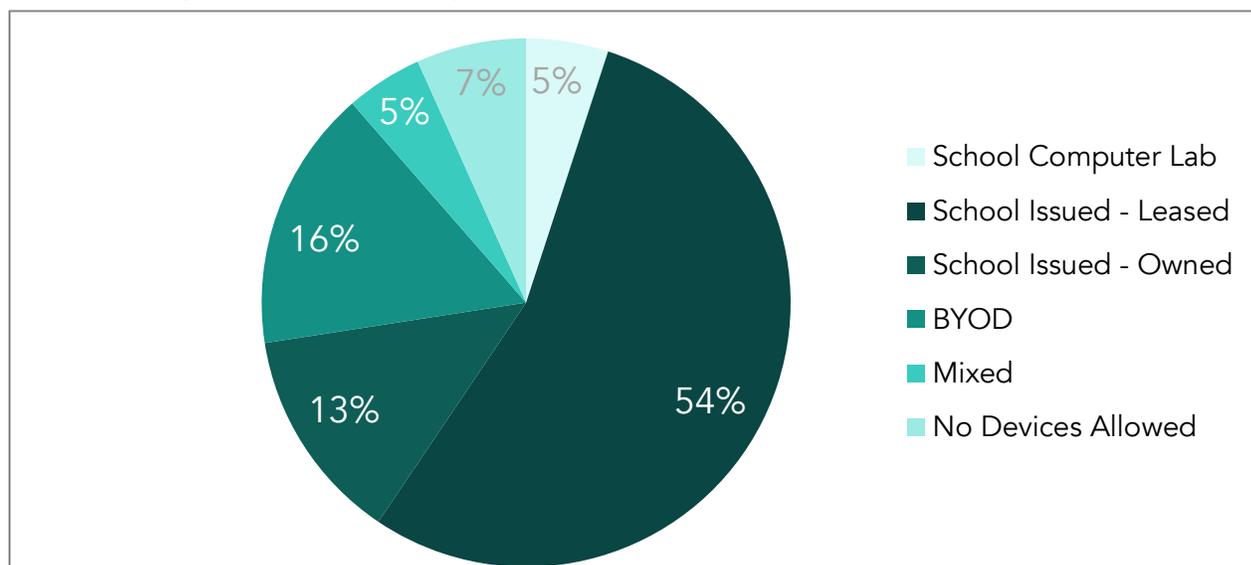
Publishers

K-12 schools communicate with several publishers to compare, renew, order and return textbooks.

The top 10 reported Publishers. PARG Survey, 2020

Top Publishers	
Savvas, formerly Pearson (inc. Prentice Hall)	43%
McGraw-Hill	34%
BJU	22%
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (inc. Saxon)	18%
Abeka	17%
MacMillan (inc. Bedford/St. Martins, Freeman)	8%
Sadlier	6%
Cengage (inc. Brooks/Cole, Gale, South-Western)	4%
Henry Holt & Co.	3%
Vista Higher Learning (inc. Santillana)	3%

Online Bookstore

Some K-12 schools work with many individual publishers to manage their textbooks. However, just over half of schools prefer managing their textbooks with a vendor to streamline orders, update or add students, select a new textbooks and other needs.

The top 10 reported Publishers. PARG Survey, 2020

- Integrated Solution
- Individual Publishers

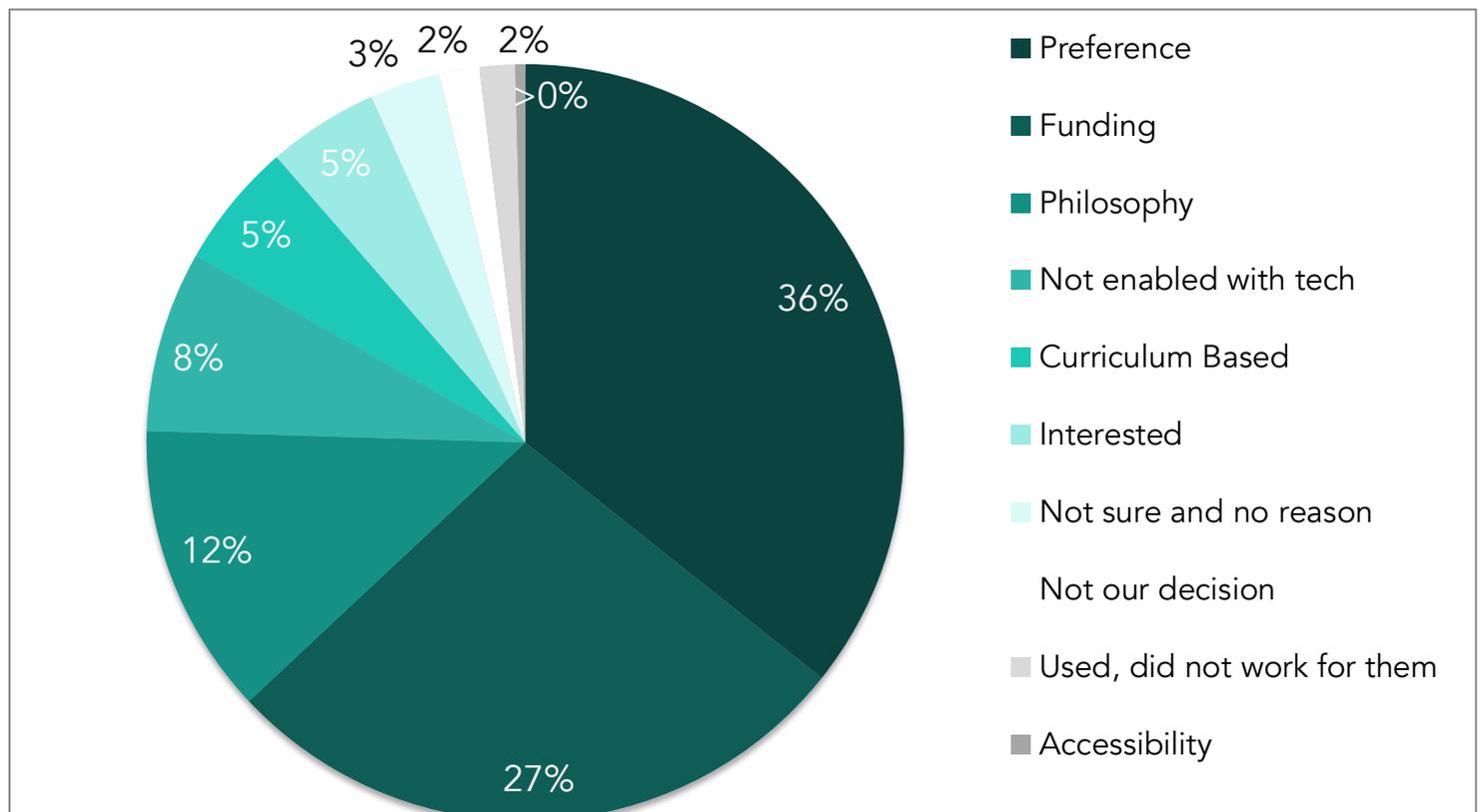46%

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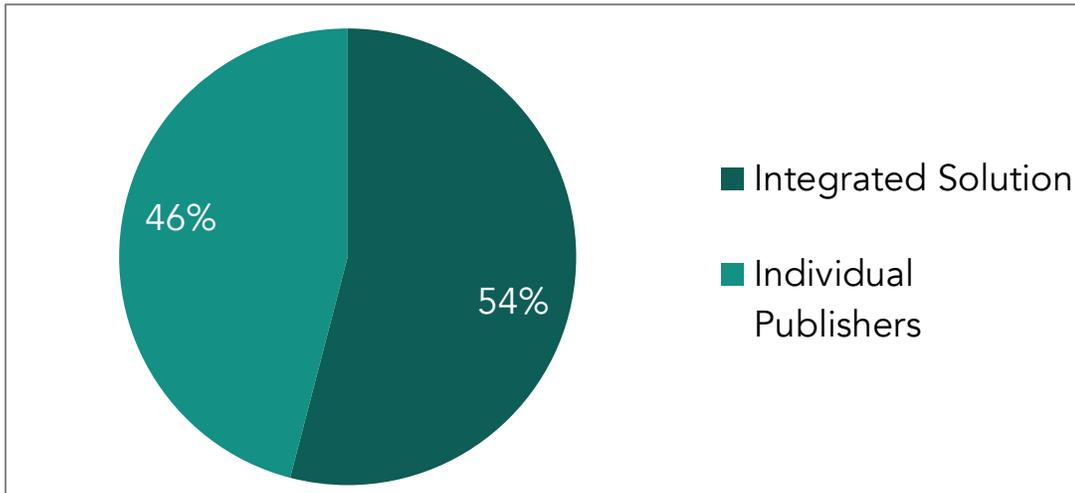
Digital Textbook Preferences

Schools not using digital textbooks, or those using a mix of digital and print, share one or more reasons for their choices. Larger schools were more likely to state that the decision was not theirs, but came from their board or other governing body. Some schools were committed to digital and retained print only for specific curriculum that was unavailable in digital format. Schools that cited a lack of technology included a wide variety of reasons, including rural wifi access, wifi access at home, and device availability,

Philosophy accounted for 12% of responses. Zero-technology schools are counted here, but most of these responses came from subsets of Montessori schools and schools using a classical approach that opt not to use tech or digital materials in their classrooms.

Funding accounted for more than a quarter of responses. However, because digital textbooks are typically lower cost per student over several years, not including management, it seems likely that cost refers more to the purchasing of 1:1 devices.

Preference was mentioned by the largest percentage of schools, often leaving that decision to classroom teachers, resulting in schools with mixed digital and print for students.

Digital Textbook Resistance, PARG Survey, 2020.

Legend:
- Preference
- Funding
- Philosophy
- Not enabled with tech
- Curriculum Based
- Interested
- Not sure and no reason
- Not our decision
- Used, did not work for them
- Accessibility

Pie chart values: 36%, 27%, 12%, 8%, 5%, 5%, 3%, 2%, 2%, >0%

Textbook Management

Larger schools use digital textbooks at much higher rates than the average school, likely due to serving upper grades as well as emphasis on accelerated courses for college readiness.

Digital Textbooks reported by Schools, By Size, PARG Survey, 2020.

Digital Textbooks

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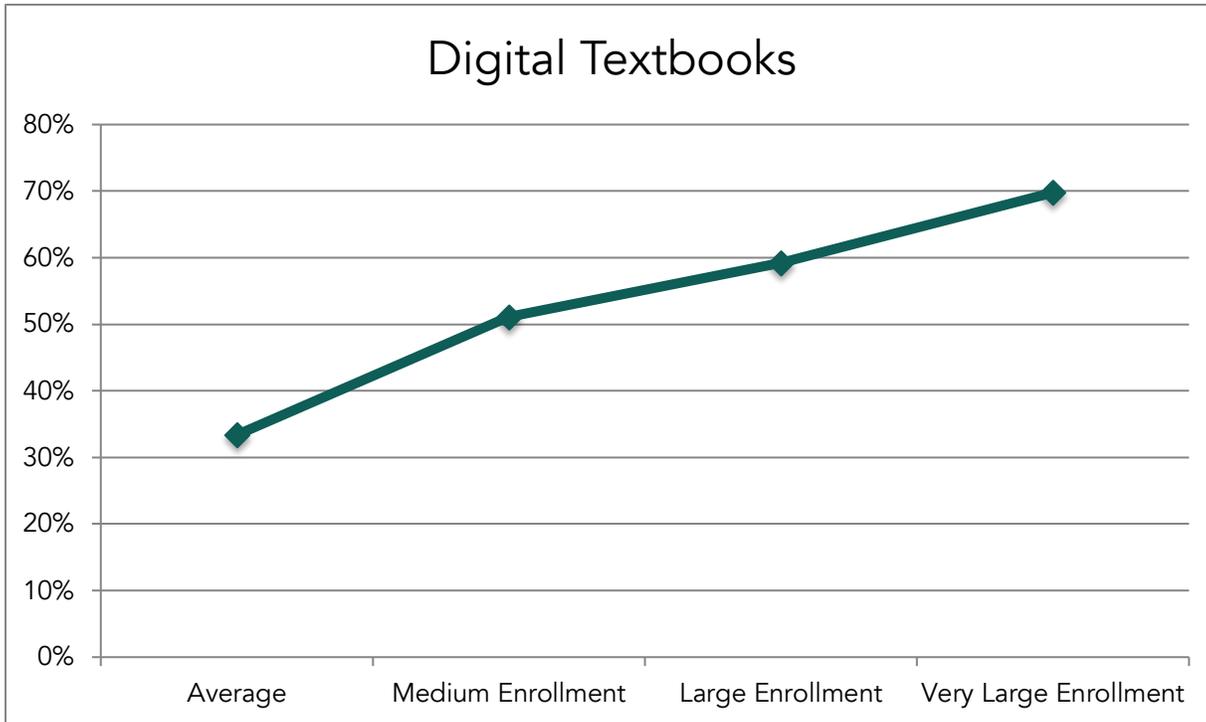
Conclusion

This research was intended to explore the relationship of education infrastructure (SIS & LMS) technology to digital resource use. Smaller schools and schools serving younger grades rely upon stand-alone tech solutions. Larger schools, however, require infrastructure that supports their organizational mission and educational goals. SIS & LMS systems used by larger schools provide streamlined grade reporting, family communication, seamless distribution of digital materials, data security, alumni relations, college and graduation tool integration and more. Those larger schools choose from a smaller range of platform options, made up of the segment (Top 10) leaders.

Larger schools also reported more use of digital textbooks – with 70% of the largest schools surveyed reporting digital textbook use. Transitioning to digital textbooks and materials is clearly a successful strategy for larger schools.

Future Research

Future research to investigate what kinds of digital materials are most frequently used, what features teachers and students use most effectively, and what time and cost savings can be achieved, would help provide a baseline for schools seeking to enhance their digital approach to meet the needs of future students and families.

Digital Materials
- Digital Textbooks – licensed for school-year or semester
- eBooks – for literature classes (English and Foreign Language)
- Casual reading materials for Book Club programs, focused reading time, etc.
- Test Prep ebooks
- Teacher created/curated digital content
- Digital workbooks/worksheets, paperless handouts, etc.

Features
- Teacher curated content, course design
- Analytics/Usage statistics
- Embedded quizzes/Assessments
- Integration with LMS for all materials in one place with a single sign-in for students
- Adaptive/Personalization features

Time/Cost Savings
- No-touch distribution
- Anywhere, anytime access for on campus, remote learning, hybrid
- No inventory, damage, backorders, etc.
- Class updates with student class adds/drops
- Digital license allows for more frequent changes to textbook selection

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Palo Alto Research Group conducted a telephone survey to schools in November 2019 – February 2020. PARG successfully included data from 3,194 schools. This report is provided to schools who requested it during the conclusion of the survey.

PARG received funding to prepare and distribute this final report from TextbookHub, Inc. TextbookHub is a digital textbook platform focused on K-12 parochial and independent schools. TextbookHub provides great digital resources to your devices, with seamless integration, single sign-in, booklist support, classroom set-up and the care and customer support that schools need.

For information about TextbookHub or to stay informed about industry updates and advances in publishing for K-12 schools, please sign-up to receive periodic news and information at https://www.textbookhub.com/.

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