

STATEMENT ON CHANGES TO DIGITAL LOANS FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The Canadian Urban Libraries Council / Conseil des Bibliothèques Urbaines du Canada (CULC/CBUC) is dismayed with changes announced by Hachette Book Group (HBG) and Blackstone Publishing to their ebook and digital audiobook lending models for libraries.

Effective July 1, 2019, HBG, one of the “Big Five” publishers (HBG, HarperCollins, Macmillan Publishers, Penguin Random House, and Simon & Schuster), will replace its perpetual ownership model for libraries with a two-year access model for ebooks. This means that at the end of a two-year period, libraries will have to re-purchase ebooks that they have already paid for when renewing their access agreements.

While HBG announced that it will decrease ebook prices for libraries for the “vast majority” of ebooks by as much as twenty-five percent, the initial “discount” will be eliminated when the library renews its annual access to those titles, and costs will be further increased by the staff time required to review and repurchase expired titles.

Also, Blackstone Publishing announced last week that it will be placing a 90-day embargo on digital audiobook titles effective July 1, 2019. This embargo means that libraries will not be able to purchase new in-demand content for 90 days after release, putting library users at a distinct disadvantage accessing new titles.

These actions are in direct contrast to the calls to publishers made during the #eContentForLibraries campaign, where 303 libraries participated and engaged Canadians to advocate for fair pricing and access to digital content. Access to digital content is imperative for those who have low literacy or other restrictions that limit their ability to read materials in traditional formats. Restrictive access and pricing models also negatively impact vulnerable populations who rely most heavily on the library: those who cannot afford to purchase individual or subscription content.

CULC/CBUC agrees with ALA President Loida Garcia-Febo that “the elimination of perpetual ownership will reduce long-term access to ebooks and digital audiobooks and increase challenges to the long-term preservation of our nation’s cultural heritage”.

Recent research on the Canadian Book Buyer from BookNet demonstrates that library users are more likely than non-library users to purchase books. Research from The Panorama Project demonstrates that library promotion has a significant positive impact on retail sales. Throughout the entire month of June, over 300 public libraries are participating in the *One eRead Canada* program. Programs like *One eRead Canada* demonstrate the positive impact public libraries have on the publishing industry.

Pilar Martinez, chair of CULC/CBUC, affirms: “Restrictive licensing models and prohibitive pricing make it difficult for libraries to provide important digital content that contributes to having thriving and engaged communities, and disproportionately affects some of the most vulnerable groups of library users. Rather than imposing barriers to access, we call on publishers to come to the table to discuss models that will serve all of our needs and ensure all Canadians have equitable access to digital resources through their public libraries.”



ALA STATEMENT:

<http://www.ala.org/news/press-releases/2019/06/ala-concerned-over-hachette-book-group-ebook-and-audio-book-lending-model>

OVERDRIVE STATEMENT:

<https://company.overdrive.com/2019/06/18/a-message-from-steve-potash-on-recent-publisher-lending-model-changes>

PW STATEMENT:

<https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/libraries/article/80486-hachette-book-group-changes-library-e-book-terms.html>
