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ALA denounces new Macmillan library lending model, urges library customers to voice objections

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WASHINGTON, DC - The American Library Association (ALA) denounces the new library ebook lending model announced today by Macmillan Publishers. Under the new model, a library may purchase one copy upon release of a new title in ebook format, after which the publisher will impose an eight-week embargo on additional copies of that title sold to libraries.

“Macmillan Publishers’ new model for library ebook lending will make it difficult for libraries to fulfill our central mission: ensuring access to information for all,” said ALA President Wanda Brown. “Limiting access to new titles for libraries means limiting access for patrons most dependent on libraries.

“When a library serving many thousands has only a single copy of a new title in ebook format, it’s the library – not the publisher – that feels the heat. It’s the local library that’s perceived as being unresponsive to community needs.

“Macmillan’s new policy is unacceptable,” said Brown. “ALA urges Macmillan to cancel the embargo.”

The new Macmillan ebook lending model is an expansion of an existing policy that went into effect in July 2018, when the company, without warning, issued a four-month embargo applying solely to titles from the company’s Tor imprint. At the time ALA stated that the delay would hurt readers, authors and libraries.

Since last fall, Hachette Book Group (HBG) and Penguin Random House (PRH) have eliminated “perpetual access” for libraries and replaced it with a two-year access model. Simon & Schuster changed from a one-year to two-year access model. While re-evaluating their business models, none of these firms implemented an embargo—deciding that equitable access to information through libraries is also in their business interest. HarperCollins continues with its 26-loan model. Macmillan now stands alone in its embargo policy among the largest (Big 5) publishers.

Macmillan will decrease its price to \$30 for the single initial copy of an ebook. Unlike other Big 5 publishers, this copy of Macmillan titles come with perpetual access. After the embargo period, additional copies will be available for \$60 per copy for two years of access.

“This new embargo is the latest evidence of a troubling trend in the publishing industry,” said Brown. “ALA is developing a strategy to address this trend in the long term. Following the model of ALA’s former Digital Content Working Group, this advocacy effort will extend several years, not several months, and will not be

limited to one company in the publishing ecosystem. ALA will push harder and explore all possible avenues to ensure that libraries can do our jobs of providing access to information for all, without arbitrary limitations that undermine libraries' abilities to serve their communities.

"In the short term, ALA calls on library customers of Macmillan Publishers to tell CEO John Sargent they object to the publishing company's new policy."

Macmillan Publishers

Attn: Mr. John Sargent, CEO

120 Broadway Street

New York, NY 10271

Phone: 646-307-5151

Email: press.inquiries@macmillan.com (<mailto:press.inquiries@macmillan.com>)

Twitter: [@MacmillanUSA](https://twitter.com/MacmillanUSA)

ALA asks that these communications also be sent to ALA's Public Policy and Advocacy Office at alawash@alawash.org (<mailto:alawash@alawash.org>).

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