Frequently asked questions regarding e-books and U.S. libraries

Who are the "Big Six" and why are they called that?

The Big Six publishers are: Hachette, HarperCollins, Macmillan, Penguin, Random House, and Simon & Schuster. They are known as the "Big Six" because, together, they control roughly two-thirds of the U.S. consumer book publishing market.

With the October 29, 2012, announcement that Random House and Penguin plan to merge, and news in November that News Corp. (owner of HarperCollins) was in talks to acquire Simon & Schuster, the number of major publishing houses could decline to four.

What is the status of Big Six publishers selling to libraries?

While they are sometimes lumped together, the large publishers vary widely in their approaches to selling e-book titles to libraries, and conditions continue to shift as publishers change prices or restrictions and undertake pilots. As of November 27, 2012, this is the status of relations between large publishers and U.S. libraries:

Simon & Schuster has *never* offered e-books to libraries and has not indicated plans to work with libraries. Among their most popular e-book titles denied to U.S. libraries are: "Bruce" by Peter Ames Carlin and "Team of Rivals" by Doris Kearns Goodwin.

Macmillan has never offered e-books to libraries but announced plans in September 2012 to begin a pilot to explore how they might work with libraries. Among their most popular e-book titles denied to U.S. libraries are: "Killing Kennedy" by Bill O'Reilly and Martin Dugard and "Wolf Hall" by Hilary Mantel.

Penguin offered titles to libraries through e-book distributor OverDrive until February 2012, when it discontinued its relationship with OverDrive. It recently launched a pilot with two large New York libraries and announced its content will be available to libraries through the 3M Cloud Library. Among the popular titles denied wide distribution to U.S. libraries are: "This Is How You Lose Her" by Junot Diaz and "The Help" by Kathryn Stockett.

Hachette offers "backlist" (older) titles to libraries and has a pilot underway to explore conditions for offering more recent titles. OverDrive announced in September that the publisher was raising prices for its titles by about 100 percent. Among their most popular new e-book titles denied to U.S. libraries are: "The Casual Vacancy" by J.K. Rowling and "NYPD Red" by James Patterson and Marshall Karp.

HarperCollins and *Random House* have *always* offered e-book titles to libraries. In February 2011, HarperCollins announced that new titles licensed from library e-book vendors would be

able to circulate only 26 times before the license expires. In March 2012, Random House dramatically increased prices for libraries.

What about other publishers? Do they restrict sales and/or mark up costs to libraries, too?
Licensing terms of e-books to libraries vary among other publishers. In fact, hundreds of publishers of e-books have embraced the opportunity to create new sales and reach readers through our nation's libraries. One recent innovation allows library patrons to immediately purchase an e-book if the library doesn't have a copy or if there is a wait list they would like to avoid. This offers a win-win relationship for both publishers and library users since recent research from the Pew Internet Project tells us that library users are more than twice as likely to have bought their most recent book as to have borrowed it from a library.

Many small and independent publishers have actively partnered with libraries, such as those documented by Evoke Colorado: http://evoke.cvlsites.org/resources-guides-and-more/publishers-willing-to-sell-e-content/.

Why are e-books treated differently than print books?
As content migrates from physical to digital forms, the typical access model shifts from *purchasing* to *licensing*. Digital music and online journals represent examples of this shift from the last few decades; e-books represent the latest form of content to make this transition. As licenses are contracts, libraries receive the rights articulated in the agreements. The usual e-book license with a publisher or distributor often constrains or altogether prohibits libraries from archiving and preserving content, making accommodations for people with disabilities, ensuring patron privacy, receiving donations of e-books, and selling e-books that libraries do not wish to retain.

Why does library lending matter when so many people are able to buy what they want?
America's libraries have always provided unfettered, no-fee access to reading materials (no matter the format), which fosters educational opportunity for all. To deny library patrons access to e-books that are available to consumers—and which libraries are eager to purchase or license on their behalf—is discriminatory.

Society benefits from library book lending because it:
- encourages experimentation with new authors, topics, and genres. Library lending promotes literacy, creativity, and innovation—all critical for being competitive in the global knowledge economy. This experimentation also stimulates the market of books.
- provides access to books to people who cannot afford to purchase them. Access to books should be available to everyone regardless of financial or other special circumstances.

- promotes substantive pursuits that necessitate access to diverse materials, including those that may not be popular bestsellers. Education, research and other projects may depend on access to tens, hundreds, or even thousands of books.
- is complemented by library support for digital literacy. The technologies, formats, and systems associated with e-books are changing rapidly. Libraries help people develop the skills necessary to make efficient and effective use of e-books as a technology and service.
- is accompanied by library values and advocacy on behalf of individuals. Libraries strive to ensure that personally identifiable reader information, along with reading activities, remain private.

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