



## Macmillan Publishers Will Limit Readers Access

*A Statement from Paula Kiely, Milwaukee Public Library Director  
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E-book publishers and public libraries have historically had a tenuous relationship over how to best provide digital content to library patrons. Unlike the traditional lending of print books – purchase once, lend many times – the business model for selling e-books to public libraries is evolving, and not for the benefit of library users.

This situation intensified over the summer when several of the major publishers announced a change in their sales approach, restricting access to new releases while also charging a higher price. The most dramatic change occurs this week, when on November 1<sup>st</sup> Macmillan Publishers will limit public library purchases to a single copy of newly-released titles in digital formats while imposing an eight-week embargo on the purchase of additional copies.

For Milwaukee Public Library, a system with 13 libraries that collaborates with surrounding suburban public libraries to serve the nearly one million people throughout Milwaukee County, the announcement is especially troubling. We offer e-book access through a statewide consortium, Wisconsin's Digital Library ([wplc.overdrive.com](http://wplc.overdrive.com)). This collaboration allows all public libraries in the state to share a single online collection of e-books, which is more efficient and cost effective for Wisconsin taxpayers.

This relationship defines all public libraries in the state as one system to Macmillan, meaning every public library user in the State will share *a single* copy of each new Macmillan eBook for the first eight weeks after publication. To put this in perspective, when the best-selling book "Me," by Elton John was released last month, MPL along with other public libraries in Milwaukee County purchased 29 print copies, which are all currently checked out or reserved. The next person to place a hold would be 80<sup>th</sup> in line and have a wait time of about two months. Want the e-book? Your wait time could be 6 months or more under Macmillan's restriction.

Macmillan's decision is based on the premise that public libraries undercut publishers' and therefore authors' profits by providing free access to e-books. It's worth noting that just like print books, e-books can only be used by one reader at a time. So, from the public library perspective, this is no different than limiting the number of print books a library can purchase because they offer them free to the public.

Public libraries have worked hard to remain relevant to their communities by offering the digital formats readers demand. Wisconsin's digital library book circulation is the highest in the *country* with over 5

million circulations last year. This move by Macmillan will have a chilling effect on that circulation and reduce access to materials for every patron in the state.

Public libraries are anchor institutions because they are enduring institutions. We have embraced new technologies and formats to meet patron demand and continue to connect our residents to the resources they need. Today, nearly 20% of MPL checkouts are digital and it's growing each year.

Public libraries are such an integral part of the fabric of our society that it can be easy to overlook or take for granted one of our core principles: providing equitable access for all. The values that are fundamental to the public library mission – equity, access, education and individual opportunity – are essential to a healthy, vibrant, and democratic society.

Libraries must take the lead in upholding these values and remain vigilant about ensuring fair access, which is why Macmillan should reverse its new policy. If you agree, The American Library Association's petition can be found at [ebooksforall.org](http://ebooksforall.org)

For more information or to schedule an interview, contact:

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