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ULC Press Contact

Curtis Rogers

202-750-8658

crogers@urbanlibraries.org

Top e-Content Publishers Are Taking “Dangerous Step Backwards” with New Pricing Models for Libraries

The Urban Libraries Council issues a statement in response to the Hachette Book Group’s newly announced terms for licensing e-books to libraries.

WASHINGTON — The Hachette Book Group has announced that it will stop allowing libraries to purchase perpetual access licenses for e-books beginning July 1, 2019, and will instead only offer metered licenses that expire after two years. This shift in e-books pricing follows a similar change made last year by Penguin Random House, which also gave up a perpetual access model in favor of two-year licenses for libraries.

In addition, Blackstone Audio has announced it will begin embargoing e-audiobook sales to libraries for 90 days after release. Macmillan Publishers imposed a four-month embargo on its Tor e-audiobooks in 2018. This represents a disturbing trend as these actions deny access to new titles based on an individual’s ability or willingness to pay. This stands in direct opposition to the core value of public libraries in providing equitable access to information for all.

In response to these changes, the Urban Libraries Council’s President & CEO Susan Benton has issued the following statement:

“Libraries have been fighting an uphill battle when it comes to pricing and access to e-books – publishers have kept pricing unreasonably high, and restrictions such as embargos on new titles have only made matters worse. The decisions by Hachette Book Group and Penguin Random House to eliminate perpetual e-book licensing represent a dangerous step backwards in establishing a fair and sustainable e-book market between libraries and publishers. Although the new model will lower the initial costs of e-books, the two-year licenses will undermine the ability for libraries to establish rich collections that can meet the needs of a wide and diverse readership. For many individuals in the digital age, the library provides their *only* point of access for e-books – ULC urges these publishers to consider the real impact of these changes on readers and authors from all backgrounds.”

ULC joins other organizations in the library and publishing fields that are voicing concern over the Hachette Book Group's announcement, including the [American Library Association](#), [Canadian Urban Libraries Council](#) and [OverDrive](#).

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About the Urban Libraries Council

The Urban Libraries Council, founded in 1971, is the voice for public libraries and the force that inspires them to evolve. ULC creates the tools, techniques and ideas to make ongoing improvements and upgrades in services and technology. ULC also speaks loudly and clearly about the value public libraries bring to communities, and secures funding for research that results in the development of new programs and services. And by serving as a forum for library leadership, ULC produces innovative ideas and leading practices that ensure community impact.