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**Ocean State Libraries Calls for Macmillan to Reverse Library eBook Embargo**

On July 25, Macmillan Publishers announced it would become the only major (Big 5) publisher to limit eBook lending for U.S. libraries. Under its new licensing model, scheduled to begin November 1, 2019, 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. While the first copy is available via a perpetual access license, the subsequent copies will only be available via metered access. Ocean State Libraries urges Macmillan to immediately reverse this decision and to engage the library community in thoughtful dialog on the partnership between libraries and publishers to connect people to books.

Ocean State Libraries (OSL) Executive Director Stephen Spohn asserts,

“This action by Macmillan is shocking. An embargo on library ebook and audiobook purchasing hurts people of all ages who rely on libraries to provide access to educational, informational and recreational literature. The eight-week embargo reinforces the digital divide between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots’ and contributes to inequalities with far-reaching effects in society.

“Additionally, the ‘ability’ to purchase a single copy upon release is simply motivated by greed. That single copy, if purchased, would fuel unrealistic expectations among library users and result in an unmanageable – financially and logistically – holds queue.

“It is important to note that these actions are not in isolation. In the past 15 months, libraries have seen major changes to publisher terms for library sales from many large publishers including other embargoes and other changes that add money and time that libraries simply cannot spare.

“It is time for action. Ocean State Libraries will not idly accept these changes. In the coming year, our members will explore new approaches and advocacy efforts to respond to these unfair practices. Our communities deserve better.”

Ocean State Libraries is not alone in its disapproval of this action by Macmillan. OSL joins with library leaders nationally and locally:

**American Library Association (ALA)** President Wanda Brown asserted that same day, “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. Macmillan’s new policy is unacceptable.”

**Public Library Association (PLA)** President Ramiro Salazar stated, “Access to digital content in libraries is more than a financial issue: it is an equity issue. We encourage Macmillan Publishers to reverse course before libraries and the people they serve are harmed.”

**Rhode Island Library Association (RILA)** President Julie Holden adds, “By providing readers with wide access to authors and their works, libraries are partners, not adversaries, of the publishing industry. We contribute to the success of Macmillan’s writers and authors, who will be negatively affected by this embargo.”

Millions of people now use digital content as their preferred or only access to books, music and movies. Digital content is portable, accessible to people with print disabilities, available anywhere 24/7, and brokered by libraries to provide diverse options to our diverse communities.

Libraries not only pay for books; they market them. Lost marketing means lost publicity and sales for publishers and authors, particularly new authors.

Furthermore, Ocean State Libraries affirms the principles that:

- All published works must be available for libraries to purchase and lend to library users in all formats.
- Access to and use of eBooks must equitably balance the rights and privileges of readers, authors and publishers.
- Digital content must be accessible to all people, regardless of physical or reading disability.
- Library patrons must be able to access digital content on the device of their choosing.
- Reading records must remain private in the digital age.

A copy of this press release has been shared with Macmillan in hopes that they will reconsider this action.

Mr. John Sargent  
Chief Executive Officer

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**About OSL**

Ocean State Libraries (OSL) is a consortium of Rhode Island's 48 public libraries and St. George's School. OSL coordinates a statewide catalog of library materials, digital content and future-ready technology services for its member libraries so they may better serve their patrons and communities. Through their library's membership in OSL and OSL's partnership with the Rhode Island Office of Library & Information Services, library patrons have access to over six million books, movies and more, all available at or through their local public library.