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S&S Changes Library E-book, Digital Audio Terms

by Andrew Albanese |
Jul 01, 2019

Simon & Schuster this week became the latest Big Five publisher to change its terms for licensing digital content to public libraries. In a statement sent to libraries through their vendors, S&S officials confirmed that as of August 1, S&S e-books will be available to libraries for two-year terms, on a one copy/one user model, with most "new release" e-books priced between \$38.99 and \$52.99. Previously, S&S e-books were sold on one-year licenses, with some titles available for two year licenses.

S&S officials also said they will make "a select number" of e-books available on a "per-checkout basis," with prices ranging from 99 cents to \$2.99. S&S already makes a selection of its digital audio titles available to public libraries on per-checkout basis. That change could be welcome news for some libraries, who have been asking for more flexibility in purchasing options for e-books, depending on what titles are available, and at what price point.

"It is our intent that, by including titles from both digital formats in per-checkout programs, we are enabling libraries to continue to offer a broad selection of eBooks and eAudio to their patrons," S&S officials explained, in their statement.

What's not welcome news for libraries: S&S will now apply the two-year meter to digital audio. S&S officials said that as of August 1, digital audio titles will range from \$39.99 to \$79.99 for two year access. Until last month, digital audio titles from all the Big Five publishers, including S&S, were available to U.S. libraries on a perpetual access model. The S&S change [comes after Hachette last month became the first Big Five publisher to meter digital audio access in U.S. libraries.](#)

S&S is now the fourth Big Five publisher to change its terms for libraries in recent months. [On June 17, Hachette announced its change to a two-year metered model for e-books and digital audio](#), with top prices of around \$65 per title; [Penguin Random House moved to a two-year metered model for e-books last October](#), with top prices in the \$55 range. And [last July, Macmillan drew criticism for implementing a four-month embargo on library e-books for new titles from its Tor imprint](#). Macmillan already offered e-books to libraries via two-year licenses or 52-lends, whichever comes first.

HarperCollins, meanwhile, still offers e-books to libraries for 26 lends per license, with no time limit, with a selection of backlist titles available on a per-checkout (cost-per-circulation) basis. And HarperCollins digital audio titles remain available via perpetual access licenses, with some titles also available on a per-checkout basis.

Also noteworthy, S&S pledged not to embargo new titles in libraries (as did Hachette and Penguin Random House in their previous announcements).

"All Simon & Schuster titles that are available digitally will continue to be available to public libraries simultaneously with their release at retail," reads the S&S statement. "We know how critical it is for you to have these titles for your patrons when they are fresh in the marketplace, and we are happy to support you in your effort to provide your patrons with our books at the same time as they are on-sale to the general public."

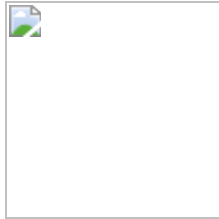
UPDATE: The American Library Association has released a statement in response to the changes announced by S&S, reiterating the library community's concerns with the current market for digital content in libraries:

"Libraries must have fair and equitable access to resources, regardless of format, that is predictable and sustainable," said ALA president Wanda Brown. "In the months ahead, ALA will amplify its role in championing the valuable and essential role of libraries in the publishing ecosystem. For example, we are re-establishing the Digital Content Working Group to focus and bolster our efforts. Librarians across the country have increasing consternation about e-book access. The high prices and complexity across publishers are only growing."

The [full statement can be read on the ALA website.](#)

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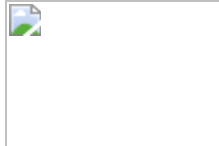
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