

# BCCLS ebook changes as of November 20, 2019

On Nov 1st, 2019 the publisher Macmillan changed their ebook licensing terms with libraries. This happens from time to time. What's different about this particular change is that it will hurt BCCLS libraries and our patrons.

- When a new ebook is released, a public library will only be allowed to buy a single copy during the first eight weeks the book is out. [1]
- After eight weeks, the library will be allowed to purchase as many additional copies as they'd like, but at a higher price. [2]

These new ebook terms are designed to drive consumer demand on Macmillan titles by inflating library hold queues. Their assumption is that patrons who don't want to wait for the single copy in the first eight weeks will simply purchase their own copies. BCCLS believes that accepting these terms signals that we are willing to accept whatever pricing and licensing model is offered, regardless of long term sustainability or fiscal responsibility. We have chosen not to play by these rules.

**Starting on November 20, 2019, BCCLS will no longer purchase ebook editions of new Macmillan or Macmillan imprint titles.**

- New titles by some authors will only be available in hard copy. Macmillan and its imprints publish some of our most popular authors for adults, children and teens, including Liane Moriarty, Louise Penny, J.D. Robb, Nora Roberts, Lisa Scottoline, and Rainbow Rowell.
- As a large library consortium, BCCLS strives to maintain a "Holds to Copy" ratio of 5-to-1 to minimize wait times for popular titles. This means that for every five holds on a title, BCCLS purchases one copy to ensure a minimum wait time. If BCCLS is limited to one digital copy of each new title, and then has to wait eight weeks before being able to purchase more, patrons could conceivably wait years rather than months for their ebook.
- Some titles in our ebook collection will disappear. As our licensing for individual ebooks expire, we may not renew that licensing for Macmillan titles. [3]
- At present, other publishers have not followed suit, and we will continue to buy ebook copies of their titles as usual. Similarly, we will continue to buy eaudiobooks – this licensing change only applies to ebooks.

## What can you do?

- Learn more about ebooks and public libraries by visiting the BCCLS website [page to come].
- Add your name to the public petition at eBooksForAll.org.
- Tell Macmillan how you feel about this new policy. You can tweet @MacmillanUSA with the hashtag #eBooksForAll, or send a letter to John Sargent, Chief Executive Officer Macmillan Publishing, 120 Broadway, New York, NY 10271.

## Footnotes explained

**[1]** Use of library ebooks is like use of other library books: one copy, one user. It doesn't matter that it's digital and that multiple people could technically be accessing the same content at the same time. BCCLS is only allowed to make the ebooks in our collection available to one user at a time. That means that we have to buy multiple copies of titles in high demand, just like with print books.

**[2]** Library ebook pricing varies widely. For most bestsellers, you can go to your favorite site and purchase an ebook copy for yourself for less than \$15. At the time of this post, for instance, "Where the Crawdads Sing" is available for \$14.99 at Amazon, Apple, Google and other retailers. The same ebook costs BCCLS \$55. (For comparison, with the volume discount libraries get from our vendors, we can get a print copy of "Where the Crawdads Sing" for \$14.22.)

**[3]** Licensing terms vary widely. For some publishers, ebooks are like regular books: once we buy it, it's ours until we decide it's no longer needed. For other publishers, licensing expires based on a certain time period. ("Where the Crawdads Sing" is a 24 month license, which means that if we want to use it after the two-year mark, we have to repurchase it.) Still other publishers allow a certain number of checkouts before licensing expires. Twenty-six checkouts is a common limit, after which we have to repurchase if we want to continue to offer the title.