

San Diego Public Library Boycotts Macmillan E-Books

The San Diego Public Library has a goal to broaden access to library resources. We have worked hard to eliminate barriers to library use for our patrons by eliminating overdue fines, expanding outreach in our communities and developing programming based on community needs. We expanded our e-collection by joining Cloud Library in 2018 and combining our titles with those of other California libraries, increasing our collection by over 100,000 titles. In 2019, patrons checked out over 465,000 e-books and e-audiobooks. We are dedicated to increasing our collection, but our ability to connect our patrons with digital content is being threatened.

A decision by Macmillan Publishers, one of the biggest book publishers in the industry, to impose an embargo on library e-book purchases starting November 1 creates a significant new barrier for library patrons by making it more difficult for libraries to purchase e-books and e-audiobooks. Under this new policy, libraries are limited to purchasing only one new e-book for eight weeks after release. The justification for Macmillan's decision is their own internal research that shows libraries are hurting their sales. Libraries have long been champions of books, authors and publishers. We often introduce readers to new authors and can be one of the best promotional tools for writers and publishers. Libraries buy multiple copies of books that patrons want to read even though we pay a higher price of over 3 times the retail cost and have limited licenses that require repurchasing the materials. This decision by Macmillan may make them more money but it does so by creating barriers to library resources for our patrons.

This decision by Macmillan sets a very troubling precedent and I, along with library leaders nationwide, are very worried that other publishers will follow suit. Therefore, we have decided that, effective immediately, we will no longer purchase new Macmillan e-books. This is a difficult decision and not one we wanted to make but there comes a time when we must take a stand and demand that access to e-books be for everyone, not just those that can afford to purchase.

We will continue to purchase Macmillan titles in print and audio and we will continue to provide the same excellent customer service to all patrons. Thank you for your continued support of the San Diego Public Library.

Misty Jones, Library Director