

Across the pond: an ALA response to e-books

The ALA's Digital Content and Libraries Working Group has released a six-page update on efforts to persuade the 'Big 6' trade publishers (Hachette, HarperCollins, Macmillan, Penguin, Random House, Simon & Schuster) to sell e-books to libraries 'on reasonable terms.'

The ALA's position is that e-book titles available to the public should also be available to libraries for lending; libraries should have an option to own the e-books they purchase and lend them indefinitely; and that publishers should provide metadata to make e-books easier to find in library catalogues and databases.

The ALA acknowledges that its stance is some distance from the industry it seeks to engage: "Some major trade publishers will not sell ebooks to libraries under any terms; others do so only at inflated prices or with severe restrictions." And this short document is a shot across the bows of the trade floffilla: "business . . . models that are explored in the

year ahead may well pave the way to the models of the future. It is therefore important that libraries negotiate aggressively for the most favourable and flexible terms possible."

Make no mistake, this is a call to arms, and the ALA has hoisted its colours. Sorting out the e-book issue, especially for popular fiction, may well be *the* issue for public libraries, and what the ALA does will determine outcomes in our neck of the woods. If you're involved with e-books, you need to read this despatch from the front.

To keep up to date with developments in the e-content field see the ALA's list of resources at: americanlibrariesmagazine.org/columns/outsidein/essential-bookmarks

The PDF for the report is here: americanlibrariesmagazine.org/sites/default/files/EbookBusinessModelsPublicLibs_ALA.pdf

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