

Why can't my library buy more e-books and audiobooks?

Publishers put limits on library e-books & e-audiobooks



Print books are owned by the library and can be used for decades until they're worn out.

e-books and digital audiobooks are licensed—libraries don't own them.

Plus, publishers put limits on how long the content can be used:

1 or 2 years or 26 or 52 checkouts

Once that limit is reached, libraries need to re-purchase the license at the same inflated price if they want to keep offering it to their community.

e-Content usage is increasing

In 2024, a mid-size, suburban public library saw:

25%

increase in e-book circulation

15%

increase in audiobook circulation

Source: Warren-Newport Public Library

e-book and digital audiobook costs are too high for libraries, and access is limited.

It's unsustainable for libraries to continue to purchase digital content this way.

They're free for patrons to use, but not free for libraries to offer.

An average e-book costs a library **3.9x more** than what you would pay to buy it on your Kindle.



Source: ReadersFirst

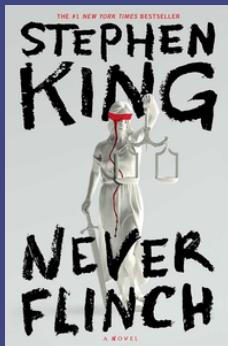
The cost per circulation of an electronic title is **3.7x higher** than a physical title.



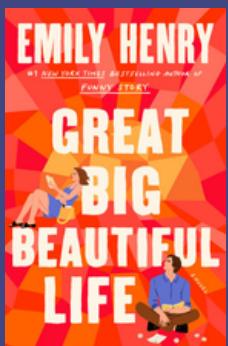
Source: Fremont Public Library

Let's see some real-time examples:

*library costs reflect single user, 2-year limit agreement

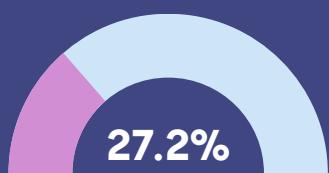


| Format | Consumer Cost | Library Cost |
|------------|---------------|----------------|
| Book | \$32.00 | \$32.00 |
| Phone | \$16.99 | \$67.99 |
| Headphones | \$19.99 | \$84.99 |



| Format | Consumer Cost | Library Cost |
|------------|---------------|----------------|
| Book | \$32.00 | \$29.00 |
| Phone | \$14.99 | \$55.00 |
| Headphones | \$14.99 | \$95.00 |

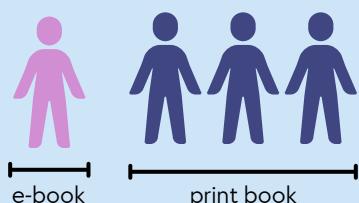
Sources: TS360, The Palace Marketplace, Amazon, and Apple Books



Source: LibraryJournal

Libraries spend nearly **one-third of their budget** on digital content so their patrons can enjoy these popular titles.

Three people could check out the same print book for **less than the cost of a single e-book checkout.**



How does this affect my community?



Hold wait lists will get even longer

Your wait times will increase



You'll have limited options

Libraries can't afford to buy the content your community wants



Libraries will reach their budget breaking point

Providing you with less for your tax dollars



Illinois is known for its leadership in support of libraries, but...

if publishers continue to control the terms of digital content for libraries, we'll see an erosion of resource sharing across the state. **We will lose one of the best things that makes Illinois stand out in the national library landscape.**

How you can help

Keep borrowing e-content from your library
The numbers help us advocate for funding

Stay informed and support your library-serving organizations:

American Library Association
Illinois Library Association
Reaching Across Illinois Library System