



Yolo County Library

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Date: October 3, 2019
Contact: Mark Fink, County Librarian and Chief Archivist
Re: Blackstone and MacMillan Publishing Boycott

For more than 100 years, Yolo County Library has provided communities with access to ideas that inform, entertain and inspire. Last year we interacted with our residents more than two million times – they borrowed free materials, visited our branches and website, and participated in our programs. Yolo County Library is dedicated to providing free access to digital materials, including eBooks and eAudiobooks. However, our ability to connect patrons to digital materials is threatened.

On August 1st Blackstone Publishing embargoed eAudiobook titles from purchase by public libraries for three months after their release date. **Yolo County Library, along with libraries in Arizona, Idaho, Pennsylvania and Texas, joined the [Washington Digital Library Consortium's boycott](#) of Blackstone Publishing's eAudiobooks for six months in response to this prohibition on library purchases. We invite other libraries to join us in this effort.**

On November 1st Macmillan Publishing, one of the country's biggest publishers, will launch a library eBook embargo; for the first eight weeks after publication, public libraries are limited to purchasing a single copy of a new eBook. Yolo County Library, along with libraries across the country, is demanding that Macmillan reverse this policy so we can continue to meet readers' needs. **If Macmillan does not remove this restriction, Yolo County Library will boycott Macmillan eBooks for six months, effective November 1st. During this time, no new MacMillan eBooks will be added to our digital collection.**

Many publishers now require that libraries purchase eBooks at prices four times higher than what consumers pay. We regularly purchase multiple copies at these inflated prices to meet patron demand. Macmillan and other publishers also require libraries to repurchase an eBook after two years or after it has been borrowed 26 times.

Public libraries, including Yolo County Library, have shown a willingness to adapt, compromise and accept such unilateral policy changes as we seek win-win solutions. Macmillan has ignored these good faith gestures and will now prevent us from buying the eBooks our patrons need when they need them. Their justification for this action is that they lose sales to libraries as customers forego buying and borrow instead. However, studies suggest that libraries are an essential part of the publishing ecosystem that promotes books, reading and learning. One study compiled by the [Panorama Project](#) showed that 50% of all library users report purchasing books by an author they were introduced to in the library. Patrons “try out” books at the library and then go back and purchase their favorites for their personal libraries and as gifts.

Yolo County Librarian Mark Fink noted, “we are concerned about the pattern we see, with publishers creating barriers for libraries and limiting access for library patrons. We are using our purchasing power to communicate to MacMillan, Blackstone and other publishers that libraries have an ethical obligation to maximize patron access to materials and get the best possible value for our taxpayer dollars. We will not support publishers who impede patron access as it puts these obligations at risk.”

Yolo County Library will continue to purchase Blackstone and MacMillan products in other formats that are not impacted by the embargoes. We will continue to add new eBook and eAudiobook content to the digital collection, choosing items from other publishers. Previously-published MacMillan eBooks and Blackstone eAudiobooks already in the digital collection will not be affected.

We encourage you to stand with us and work toward a more just outcome for the greater reading community. Tens of thousands of readers have already added their names to a [petition launched by the American Library Association](#) at eBooksForAll.org.

#eBooks **ForAll**