

Talking points for stakeholders

Summary

Blackstone Publishing is prohibiting libraries from purchasing some of their new eAudiobooks for 90 days after the titles become available to the public. They hope that library patrons will purchase the titles privately rather than waiting 90 days and then borrowing from the library.

Public libraries have an ethical obligation to ensure that our patrons have access to a broad range of material. When a publisher creates a barrier to access, we must look to other publishers whose materials are not similarly limited.

We are public servants and are obliged to spend the money that taxpayers entrust to us as effectively as possible. It is fiscally irresponsible to work with a publisher who creates barriers when there are other publishers offering similar material who do not create barriers.

Blackstone is one of four publishers that have introduced new barriers to access or have increased library costs on eBooks and eAudiobooks in the last 15 months. We believe that this pattern will continue unless libraries take steps to remind publishers of the importance of library sales to their businesses. That is why we propose a temporary boycott on Blackstone eAudiobooks.

How will this impact our patrons?

The Washington Digital Library Consortium (representing 44 libraries in Washington State) analyzed the Blackstone eAudiobooks in their collection and they anticipate that the boycott will impact 1-2% of their patrons who check out eAudiobooks.

We will continue to purchase the Audiobook on CD, print, and eBook versions of the books we boycott, so patrons will have an opportunity to read the books that interest them as soon as the books are released. Only the eAudiobook format will be delayed.

Regardless, we anticipate that some patrons will be disappointed at having to wait for the eAudiobook format, but we see this as an opportunity to help them understand how the library takes seriously the task of ensuring that tax payer dollars go toward the best possible services. We may also be able to help patrons find new authors and series to read while they wait for the eAudiobook format.

Some patrons who do not know about the boycott will simply believe that the eAudiobook format is unavailable because the library has failed to purchase something they want, and unless they complain or request the eAudiobook format, we will not be able to address their disappointment. They will, unfortunately, believe that the library is at fault. Through patron education, we hope to reach as many patrons as possible to avoid that scenario. While we do not want to disappoint any patrons, we believe that the boycott is a necessary step to counter increasing costs and limitations on the part of publishers. Since library budgets do not increase at the same rate that costs increase, these limitations can only result in fewer books in our collections and more disappointed patrons in the future.