**FAQs FOR LIBRARIES CONSIDERING THE BOYCOTT**

Note: this document is subject to change. If you have information about of the questions below, please [let us know](https://www.wcls.org/boycott-interest-form/). We would be happy to hear from you and add your insight.

1. **How will this impact our patrons?**

The Washington Digital Library Consortium (WDLC), representing 45 libraries in Washington State, analyzed the Macmillan eBooks in our collection. We anticipate that the boycott will affect 5-7% of our patrons who check out eBooks. If you would like to analyze your own collection, there is step-by-step guide [here](https://www.wcls.org/macmillan-boycott-toolkit/).

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

Regardless, we anticipate that some patrons will be disappointed that we are not purchasing these formats, but we see this as an opportunity to help them understand how the library takes seriously the task of ensuring that taxpayer 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.

Some patrons who do not know about the boycott will simply believe that the eBook or eAudiobook format is unavailable because the library has failed to purchase something they want, and unless they complain or request the desired 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.

1. **What if Macmillan doesn’t drop the embargo? Then our patrons will have limited access for no good reason.**

We know that one library system does not have enough financial leverage alone to induce Macmillan to drop the embargo. But we choose to boycott anyway because we believe that if we continue to pay the bills, we implicitly condone embargoes and invite other publishers to implement them. Guy Gonzales Charles, an industry expert recently tapped to head the Panorama Project, stated in [*Library Journal*](https://www.libraryjournal.com/?detailStory=guy-lecharles-gonzalez-making-library-ebook-access-personal-panorama-project):

“There’s a broad spectrum of opinions amongst publishers about the role public libraries play—ranging from recognizing them as a critical resource for discovery and engagement (and, ultimately, sales) to Sargent’s view that they unequivocally cannibalize sales. Across the industry, some are certainly closer to him and will be watching Macmillan’s embargo very closely”

ALA’s valuable legislative advocacy targets embargo tactics, but we fear that by the time it bears fruit, embargoes and exclusive content may have become the norm in eLending. Macmillan is the second publisher to embargo eLending, after Blackstone, which enacted an [exclusive content deal](https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/libraries/article/80658-citing-embargo-libraries-plan-boycott-of-blackstone-digital-audio.html) with Audible.com earlier this year.

We hoped that ALA’s [#ebooksforall](https://ebooksforall.org/) PR campaign and the many letters, resolutions, and news articles in protest would induce Macmillan to drop the embargo, but John Sargent’s [October 29 letter to librarians](https://d1x9nywezhk0w2.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/29160131/A-Letter-from-John-Sargent-.pdf) signaled no plans to do so. As such, we believe it is time to show as well as tell publishers that we cannot in good conscience pay for a service that creates inequitable access.

1. **Has anyone reached out to Macmillan specifically about these concerns?**

One member of the WDLC contacted Macmillan soon after the new terms of sale were announce and received [this information](https://d1x9nywezhk0w2.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/29160131/A-Letter-from-John-Sargent-.pdf) in reply on October 29, 2019. Likewise, ALA has invested extensively in a [public relations campaign](https://ebooksforall.org/), as well as [legislative advocacy](http://www.ala.org/news/press-releases/2019/11/ala-turns-congress-macmillan-ignores-public-call-reverse-library-e-book). Rumor has it that there was a meeting between ALA representatives and John Sargent in October wherein ALA asked Macmillan to delay the embargo. It declined, but has agreed to meet with state librarians and others at MidWinter.

1. **Our patrons will be upset if we boycott the Louise Penny eBooks. Can we just boycott the Macmillan midlist?**

We welcome you to design the parameters of a boycott in any way that works best for your library and patrons. You do not have to do exactly what WDLC is doing in order to join us. We considered other boycott models too.

1. **At the end of the boycott, would we just buy the titles we have been boycotting, effectively just delaying the purchase of the items?**

At the end of the boycott, WDLC plans to purchase the titles that patrons request during the boycott. We expect to purchase fewer copies than we would if offering the title at the time of release since we hope patrons will choose to read in other formats.

Financially, we expect to have a bigger impact on the Macmillan midlist than on best-sellers. Many patrons who want a new book are looking not for a specific author or series, but rather for cozy mysteries, self-help books, or YA dystopian fiction. We will be able to offer these patrons many excellent choices from publishers that do not restrict libraries.

That said, we do not expect to affect Macmillan’s income unless several of the extra-large library systems in the country join the boycott. WDLC doesn’t purchase enough to make a financial difference. Rather, the boycott is about communicating that publishers should not expect to do “business as usual” with libraries at the same time that they place restrictions on libraries. Many publishers offer us wonderful books without placing restrictions.

1. **What happens if a boycotted title gets ordered accidentally?**

This action is voluntary and we do not have a way (as far as we know) to set up any kind of filter in Marketplace. Selectors will be asked to check publisher info visually before purchasing. OverDrive is aware that the sorting tool in carts needs improvement. If one title gets ordered here or there, the order cannot be canceled and the WDLC does not propose immediately weeding the title. The item would just become part of the collection. No Added Copies would be added to the WDLC collection to support any holds that are placed beyond the holds ratio.

If you are considering joining the boycott, you may set up a different workflow that is convenient for your library.

During the Blackstone boycott, individual selectors with the WDLC did accidentally add a handful of new titles, which quickly generated an outrageous number of holds on the one copy. Some libraries proactively contacted patrons about the long holds list. The email template we use to communicate with patrons is available [here](https://www.wcls.org/macmillan-boycott-toolkit/).

1. **Did you discuss this with other libraries? I’m curious what the big libraries think about Macmillan’s change, and how they’re planning to proceed/if they are going to change their purchasing in light of Macmillan’s announcement.**

Certainly, the big libraries have more purchasing power than the smaller ones and we would like for them to join us for that reason. King County Library System, which circulates more digital items than any other public library system, [announced](https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/libraries/article/81475-this-major-public-library-system-will-boycott-macmillan-e-books-will-others-follow.html) their official boycott, set to begin November 1st, and it has reached out to other libraries that are involved in the Urban Library Council. Likewise, we are reaching out to other Washington libraries and have invited all the libraries who partner with us or who follow the Blackstone boycott to join as well.

1. **What about Blackstone?  What effect has the WDLC boycott had on that embargo?**

It has only been a few months since the WDLC announced its boycott on Blackstone items, which began August 1st, 2019. 45 other libraries joined with WDLC in boycotting Blackstone, and many other libraries across the country decided to drop or reduce their standing orders in protest. According to Blackstone, this has created financial difficulties for them, but they are locked in to a contract with Audible.com for two years. The contract apparently gives Blackstone no room to negotiate lifting their embargo for libraries. We asked them to attempt to adjust the contract, but they declined.

1. **What about other publishers that place lending restrictions? What does the WDLC have to say about the 26 circ, 52 circ, or two-year lending period other publishers are requiring?**

WDLC is extremely concerned about the on-going health of our collection due to Metered Access, and we are actively looking at ways to adjust our selection to consider access when buying. We are working on resources that highlight publishers who are eLending friendly, with reasonable prices and access limitations (if any) that align with print. We hope to work with other libraries on selection tools that will help us all minimize our dependency on metered access titles and grow healthy collections.

1. **I’m a selector.  What should I do?**

Please see the selector aid document [here](https://www.wcls.org/macmillan-boycott-toolkit/). If you discover issues or have tips and tricks to suggest, please let us know [here](https://www.wcls.org/boycott-interest-form/).

1. **I represent a tiny library.  How can a boycott make a difference?**

Since our goal is to communicate to Macmillan specifically and to publishers in general that we protest the embargo, each library’s voice is important, no matter how much they spend. The WDLC encourages active participation by libraries of all sizes.