Overview & FAQs
Effective November 1, 2019, the New Orleans Public Library (NOPL) will no longer purchase newly released e-Books from Macmillan Publishers, one of five major publishers in the U.S. This decision comes after months of discussion and advocacy to urge Macmillan to reconsider instituting a new library e-Book embargo, set to go into effect on November 1.

Under Macmillan’s new lending model, public libraries of any size will only be allowed to purchase one copy of a newly released e-Book for the first eight weeks after publication. After eight weeks, libraries will be able to lease additional copies, at double the price of the first copy.

How is NOPL responding to the Macmillan embargo?
NOPL will not be purchasing any new Macmillan e-Book titles.

Will NOPL purchase any materials from Macmillan?
NOPL will continue to purchase Macmillan titles that are not embargoed, including Macmillan titles in print, large print, audiobooks and eAudio as well as consider purchasing older copies of best-selling e-Books.

Why is this embargo by MacMillan troublesome for large library systems like NOPL?
NOPL purchases a high volume of materials in all formats in response to library user demand and maintains a “Holds to Copy” ratio of 3-to-1 to minimize wait times for popular titles. This means that for every three holds on a title, NOPL purchases one copy to minimize wait times.

This embargo will artificially inflate the demand during the embargo period—demand that normally would be met by our regular 3:1 purchasing patterns. This greatly affects the collections budget and staff efficiency. Library users will also have to wait significantly longer for new e-Book titles and patrons who rely on electronic materials will have their access severely reduced.

What do e-Books cost?
In general, e-Books are priced between three and four times higher than the retail print book price.

Who decides what e-Books will cost and how long libraries can lease them?
Each of the “Big 5” U.S. publishers (Penguin Random House, HarperCollins, Macmillan, Simon & Schuster and Hachette) set their own prices and their own terms of lease for e-Books. The lease terms are generally by circulation or by time period, or both. For example, a lease may last for 26 circulations or two years or whichever comes first.

What other publishing imprints (or brands) are associated with Macmillan?
Macmillan Publishers is the parent company of a number of publishing imprints including Tor; Henry Holt; Farrar, Straus & Giroux; St. Martin’s Press and the Macmillan Children’s Publishing Group.

Are NOPL users checking out digital materials?
Yes! e-Books have become an increasingly popular NOPL product with circulation increasing every year. In 2018, 337,770 e-Books and audiobooks were checked out, a 49.1% increase from 2017.

How can I voice my concern on this issue?
The American Library Association has denounced Macmillan’s decision and asks that the public express their concerns to press.inquiries@macmillan.com, or ALA’s Public Policy and Advocacy Office at alawash@alawash.org.