



## WAIT? WHY THE LONG HOLD LINES?

### EXPLAINING WAIT TIMES IN THE WISCONSIN'S DIGITAL LIBRARY

Wait times for audio and eBooks are a source of frustration for library staff and patrons alike. One solution often proposed to the problem of long wait times is to add additional money to the WI Digital Library collection. One way to do this is through donations. Patrons interested in making financial contributions can find information on donations here: <https://www.wplc.info/donate>. Digital audio and eBooks cannot be donated due to restrictions from publishers.

Although money is one part of the solution, there are other factors that must be addressed in order to make a significant, visible impact on wait times and high holds that affect the WI Digital Library.



#### 1. PRICE OF DIGITAL BOOKS

There is a perception that digital books are far less expensive than print books. After all, there are no paper or printing costs to incur. In reality, eBooks, particularly bestsellers, are often double the price of the same title in print.

Example: *Camino Island* by John Grisham has a list price of \$28.95 in print. It sells for \$19.97 via Amazon. The Kindle format via Amazon retails for \$14.99. **The same title as an eBook via OverDrive is \$65.00.**

Libraries are paying significantly more for copies of eBooks than copies in print of the same titles. In addition, libraries are paying significantly more for digital copies of books than consumers are via Amazon.

#### 2. LENDING MODELS

Publishers of eBooks and digital audiobooks have two basic lending models: one copy/one user and metered access. Both models allow only one patron at a time to use a copy of a title. There are some advantages to metered access by checkout or by the length of time as opposed to the one copy/one user model. This includes not having to repurchase every copy of a title when the time or checkouts expire. This is particularly useful for high demand titles after their popularity has waned. In addition, metered access titles are often priced much less than titles under the one copy/one user model.

Both models require libraries to purchase a large number of copies to accommodate patron holds. When a bestseller is no longer in demand, the WI Digital Library is left with several hundred copies of a title.

Example: *Gone Girl* by Gillian Flynn, at its peak, had thousands of holds on it. There are 375 copies in the WI Digital Library and the eBook is modestly priced at \$45.00. As a result, \$16,875 was spent on one eBook title and the Wisconsin Public Library Consortium (WPLC) was still unable to meet a 20:1 holds to copy ratio.

Publishers, particularly the 'Big Five' that publish 95% of adult bestsellers, must be willing to change their lending models before we can make a lasting impact on wait times. Advocating for digital book rentals, simultaneous usage within the

metered access model, and listening and responding to the needs of libraries, are all part of the conversations library advocates are having around the country.

### 3. UNDERSTANDING HOLDS VS. WAIT TIMES

It is important to understand that although holds contribute to wait times, holds and particularly hold ratios do not always equate to wait times. This can be illustrated in the example below.

Example: *The Whistler* by John Grisham is a popular title with 1244 holds in the shared collection and 1198 holds via Advantage. There is a total of 295 copies available for patrons. The holds ratios are as follows:

*Shared collection: 6.22 holds per copy*

*Advantage collection: 4.061 holds per copy*

The holds ratios for this title are both below the 10:1 holds to copies ratio the WPLC strives for, yet the wait times are an average of 34 days for a copy of the title. A reminder that patrons can return most titles early before their lending periods expire helps shorten wait times overall. For information on how to return titles early, please see: <https://help.overdrive.com/customer/portal/articles/1481263>

In addition to the disparity between the number of copies available and wait times, the messaging currently used by Overdrive to communicate a patron's position in line can be misleading. The WPLC Project Managers are working with OverDrive to review and revise messaging to give a more accurate depiction of actual wait times.

We hope that through education about the factors affecting wait times for materials, we will be able to help patrons better understand Wisconsin's Digital Library.

### RESOURCES FOR READERS

Donate to WPLC: <https://www.wplc.info/donate>

Returning materials early to the WI Digital Library: <https://help.overdrive.com/customer/portal/articles/1481263>

ReadersFirst, an organization to improve e-book access and services for public library users: <http://www.readersfirst.org/>

### CONTACT INFORMATION FOR TOP PUBLISHERS

#### **Hachette Book Group**

237 Park Avenue  
New York, NY 10017  
(212) 364-1200  
hachettebookgroup.com

#### **Macmillan Publishers**

175 Fifth Avenue  
New York, NY 10010  
646-307-5151  
us.macmillan.com

#### **Simon and Schuster**

1230 Avenue of the Americas  
New York, NY 10020  
(212) 698-7000  
simonandschuster.com

#### **HarperCollins**

195 Broadway  
New York, NY 10007  
(212) 207-7000  
harpercollins.com

#### **Penguin Random House**

345 Hudson Street  
New York, NY 10014  
(646) 674-4000  
penguinrandomhouse.com