



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 Wisconsin's 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 Wisconsin's Digital Library.



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.

For example, *It Starts with Us* by Colleen Hoover has a list price of \$17.99 in print. It sells for \$10.49 via Amazon. The Kindle format via Amazon retails for \$12.49. **Libraries are charged \$59.99 for the same title.**

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 from our distributors than consumers are via Amazon. **It is important to note the publishers set the prices and purchasing restrictions for libraries.**

LENDING MODELS

Publishers of ebooks and digital audiobooks have **three basic lending models**: permanent ownership (also known as one copy/one user titles) in which all the copies purchased stay in the collection permanently; metered access, which limits the number checkouts by time, such as one year, or by number of checkouts before the title must be repurchased; and concurrent metered access. The first two models allow only one patron at a time to use a copy of a title. The concurrent metered access model allows patrons to checkout the title concurrently up to a license limit, i.e. 100 checkouts. Many publishers offer a choice of two or more lending models to allow a permanent copy to be added to a collection and then additional copies purchased in a metered access model. This is significant because titles that are available through metered access are often more economical for libraries. This is because a library does not need to repurchase every copy of a title when it expires. This is particularly useful for high-demand titles after popularity has waned. Metered access titles are the least expensive followed by titles in the permanent owners. In addition, metered access titles are often priced much lower than titles under the permanent ownership model.

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

For example, *Gone Girl* by Gillian Flynn, at its peak, had thousands of holds on it. There are 375 copies in Wisconsin's Digital Library and the ebook is modestly priced at \$27.50. As a result, \$10,313 was spent on one ebook title and the Wisconsin Public Library Consortium (WPLC) was still unable to meet a ratio of 20 holds to 1 copy.

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 of licenses within the metered access models, and listening and responding to the needs of libraries are all part of the conversations library advocates are having around the country. Additional information on lending models available through OverDrive can be found here: <https://help.marketplace.overdrive.com/7011.htm>

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 how long a patron will wait before a hold becomes available for checkout.

For example, *Spare* by Prince Harry is a popular title with 2488 holds. There are 50 copies available for patrons in the statewide collection and there are 123 local (Advantage) copies. The holds ratios are as follows:

Statewide Collection: 54.9 holds per copy

Your Local Library Collection: 14.2 holds per copy

The average wait time for a consortium copy is several months. Depending on the library system a patron is in, the average wait time for a local copy is several weeks.

WAYS TO ALLEVIATE WAIT TIMES

Please encourage your patrons to visit the Lucky Day collection, which has in-demand titles available immediately for checkout. No holds are permitted on titles in the Lucky Day collection.

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>

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

How to Support WPLC: <https://www.wplc.info/supportWDL>

Returning materials early to Wisconsin’s 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/>