



Media Coverage E-Books at Toronto Public Library

Overview

The topic of e-books at Toronto Public Library has received continual media attention over the past two years, ranging from reports about e-books' popularity, the challenges the Library faces in making e-book content readily available and accessible, to "how-to" stories about downloading books from the Library's website.

Below is a summary of selected media coverage from March 2011 to April 2013. Media are interested in reporting on increasing demand for e-books and, in some instances, in covering a more in-depth look at the challenges faced by public libraries, as well as publishers. The Toronto Star and CBC have both covered the latter topic. To proactively pursue media coverage as part of a public advocacy campaign, it would be worthwhile to further cultivate relationships with reporters and publications that have already covered the topic as part of this strategy.

The coverage over the past two years also indicates that media are likely to cover stories that feature statistics, such as circulation of e-books over a specific time period and comparative data such as e-book circulation vs. print circulation. There is also an appetite for stories that draw attention to the availability of e-books at the Library.

E-Book Media Coverage

April 3, 2013

CBC Spark

Panel: e-books, public libraries, and artificial scarcity

<http://www.cbc.ca/player/Radio/Spark/ID/2369572343/>

Jane Pyper, Carolyn Wood, and David O'Brien discuss issues related to e-book lending in public libraries.

March 13, 2013

OverDrive announces library eBook leaders for 2012

Libraries in the U.S., Canada and Australia lead with campaigns for discovery of eBooks and authors

<http://www.overdrive.com/news/overdrive-announces-library-ebook-leaders-for-2012/>

Overdrive issues press release listing libraries that have achieved the greatest growth and exposure for their e-book and audiobook catalogs. Toronto Public Library is #3.

February 26, 2013

CBC

Library E-Books

<http://www.cbc.ca/metromorning/episodes/2013/02/26/library-e-books/>

Matt Galloway spoke with Vickery Bowles about the growing popularity of e-books and challenges of meeting increasing demand.

January 2, 2013

City News

Making the switch from book to eReader

<http://www.citynews.ca/2013/01/02/making-the-switch-from-book-to-ereader/>

It was a hot item under the tree this holiday season. CityNews reporter Melanie Ng with what you need to know if you've made the switch from book to eReader, including an interview about borrowing e-books from the Library.

Mar 23 2012

Toronto Observer

Are paper books dying?

<http://torontoobserver.ca/2012/03/23/are-paper-books-dying/>

E-Books continue to grow in popularity at Toronto Public Library, but so are hard covers.

Nov 28, 2011

Toronto Star

Book publishers curb library access to e-books

http://www.thestar.com/business/2011/11/28/book_publishers_curb_library_access_to_ebooks.html

The Toronto Public Library's e-book offerings are being significantly curtailed as publishers struggle to cope with the growing popularity of the new format.

Oct 12, 2011

Toronto Star

Library sees boom in e-book use — and print, too

http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2011/10/12/library_sees_boom_in_ebook_use_and_print_too.html

New figures show downloads and visits are rising, just as the Toronto Public Library is looking for a 10% cut.

Sept 23, 2011

Toronto Star

How to get free e-books from your local library

http://www.thestar.com/business/personal_finance/spending_saving/2011/09/23/how_to_get_free_e_books_from_your_local_library.html

Instructions on how to download e-books from TPL website.

March 21, 2011

Toronto Star

Shelve the cap on e-books

http://www.thestar.com/opinion/editorials/2011/03/21/shelve_the_cap_on_ebooks.html

Editorial speaking out against Harper Collins' cap on number of e-book titles sold, and advocating for greater e-book access through Toronto Public Library.

June 7, 2011

Toronto Star

Huge spike in eBook downloads at Toronto libraries

http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2011/06/07/huge_spike_in_ebook_downloads_at_toronto_libraries.html

Downloads of e-books by Toronto Public Library users have increased nearly 400% over the past year.

March 18, 2011

Toronto Star

Publisher's cap on library downloads begs question — when do e-books wear out?

http://www.thestar.com/business/2011/03/18/publishers_cap_on_library_downloads_begs_question_when_do_ebooks_wear_out.html

Jane Pyper comments on HarperCollins' 26-time checkout cap.

Business

Book publishers curb library access to e-books

As e-books grow in popularity, publishers are trying to ensure profitability — but libraries are caught in the middle.

By:Vanessa LuBusiness Reporter. Published on Mon Nov 28 2011

The Toronto Public Library's e-book offerings are being significantly curtailed as publishers struggle to cope with the growing popularity of the new format.

Penguin initially announced it was pulling all library e-titles downloaded on Amazon's Kindle device over security concerns, but last week amended it to library access to its new Penguin e-books instead.

That comes on the heels of a March decision by HarperCollins Publishers to restrict library circulation of e-book titles to 26 times, after which libraries must buy another copy.

It argues that with an average two-week borrowing period, 26 times works out to a year — about the length of time printed books wear out and popularity wanes.

But the Toronto Public Library hasn't bought any HarperCollins e-titles since the new policy went into effect, because it doesn't have the technology to keep track of downloads.

Susan Caron, manager of collection development for Toronto's libraries, said Penguin has concerns over pirating through the Kindle device, which is not sold in Canada.

"We're collateral damage," Caron said, calling it a technical problem with Penguin officials working on a solution. "It's huge. (Penguin is) one of the largest and most important publishers in the world."

Its titles includes paranormal romance, top literary fiction and popular authors like Nora Roberts and Tom Clancy.

U.S. publishers, Simon & Schuster and Macmillan, do not sell e-books to libraries.

While e-books make up less than 1 per cent of the 32 million items that the Toronto Public Library circulates, they are growing in popularity. Users can also read e-books on certain tablets and smartphones.

The library's statistics show e-book downloads jumped 196 per cent from 2009 to 2010, and are up 288 per cent so far this year from last year.

On Christmas Day and Boxing Day last year, the Toronto public library saw a huge spike in downloads of its e-book collection as people tried out their new gifts.

The library currently carries about 13,000 e-book titles, which are checked out more than 20,000 times each month.

It can only circulate a single copy of an e-title to one borrower at a time.

Patrons can borrow 10 books for up to 21 days. After the due date, the book disappears from the individual's reading device so the item can circulate again.

The global e-book market is one of the fastest growing segments of the consumer technology industry, with a compound annual growth rate of 36 per cent through 2015, according to third party market research firms.

Toronto's Kobo, which was spun off from Indigo book retailer in 2009, has been acquired by Japan's Rakuten for \$315 million (U.S.)

Because library patrons can easily borrow an ebook just sitting at their computers without stepping inside a branch, publishers are naturally worried it will affect sales.

Would people bother to buy books if they can conveniently access them for free?

"It's a threat. It's very easy to understand where the book publishers are coming from, but the problem is it's flying in the face of some version of common sense," said Joshua Gans, a University of Toronto professor at the Rotman School of Management.

"Publishers still want to hang onto the idea that one individual will buy their book, and that will be it," Gans said.

"This has never been true. If you buy a book, everybody in your household reads it. You'll lend it to friends."

But he doesn't believe there is a clear-cut solution yet.

"Publishers may experiment. But it's still a bit of a waiting game," he said.

Top e-books

The top circulating e-books at the Toronto Public Library this month are:

IQ84 by Haruki Murakami

The Perfect Order of Things by David Gilmour

Catherine the Great by Robert Massie

Falling Backwards by Jann Arden.

Source: Toronto Public Library

Opinion / Editorials

Shelve the cap on e-books

HarperCollins Publishers says it will allow libraries to circulate its e-book titles just 26 times.

Published on Mon Mar 21 2011

Toronto's public libraries serve more than 18 million visitors a year — and not just in the traditional ways of handing out books and shushing boisterous children. Today's libraries have children's programs, language classes and free Internet computers; patrons can browse books in 40 languages while drinking a cup of coffee.

They circulate comics, DVDs and, more recently, e-books that Torontonians can check out without ever leaving their homes. It is this latest innovation that has just run up against its first barrier.

HarperCollins Publishers says it will allow libraries to circulate its e-book titles just 26 times. After that, the book will be deleted from the system and the library will be forced to buy another copy. This makes no sense.

To be sure, authors (and their publishers) need to be fairly compensated for their work and existing policies of selling an e-book to a library in perpetuity may need tweaking. But setting a limit of 26 checkouts is both arbitrary and unfair.

HarperCollins claims the cap keeps an e-book in circulation for about a year, at which point printed books wear out. That's just plain wrong. Popular books, including those published by HarperCollins, can circulate hundreds of times and still be in good shape.

Beyond that, the very idea that after the cap is reached the book would disappear from the library is unacceptable. Libraries are repositories of books new and old. The future of our public collection depends on the library's ability to buy and *keep* books.

Given this, the Toronto Public Library is right to suspend all e-book purchases from HarperCollins until sense prevails and a better system for everyone from patrons to publishers is found.

Libraries have been caught up in a larger, growing phenomenon of buying in a digital world where companies have succeeded in putting restrictions on how we can use and share what we buy.

Right now, this is a relatively small problem for Toronto's library system. E-books make up less than 1 per cent of the 32 million items checked out each year. But digital books are a rapidly growing field. As more people buy e-readers, tablets and smartphones and as libraries continue to modernize to better serve the needs of growing users, with stagnant or declining book buying budgets, demand will skyrocket.

Today's small problem with HarperCollins — especially if other publishers follow its lead on e-books — could be a much bigger one tomorrow.

“It's the Wild West out there,” noted a consultant in the Canadian publishing industry. “There are no norms on this new business.”

It's time to develop some. And, as the biggest and busiest public library system in the world, Toronto is well-placed to take a leading role in crafting a solution that serves publishers, authors and, most importantly, the reading public.