

Open Letter to the Association of Canadian Publishers, the Canadian Publishers' Council, and the CEOs of the "big six" multinational publishers in Canada.

The Toronto Public Library Board is committed to equitable and accessible public library service that provides universal access to a broad range of human knowledge, information and ideas in all its forms. This is the cornerstone of the Library's mission and mandate. Despite the proliferation of new enabling technologies and the rapidly growing popularity of digital content – and of e-books in particular – the ability for libraries to provide this universal access has been challenged as many major publishers have placed special conditions or refused to sell or license e-books to libraries.

This isn't just about access to the popular books and current bestsellers that customers want. It's about ensuring that libraries can continue to deliver on the core principles and values that have contributed to the public good for centuries. It's about bridging the digital divide so all children have access to cultural and educational materials so they can succeed in a global knowledge-based economy. It's about meeting accessibility standards for people with disabilities by making alternate formats easily and freely available – a necessity in a free and democratic society. It's about allowing libraries to not just license but also own books and materials, to ensure the preservation of our written cultures. And it's about supporting a literate, engaged, well-informed and educated electorate to maintain an effective democracy.

Stated simply, limiting access to e-books blocks universal access.

The Library Board recognizes publishing in Canada and around the world is undergoing great change, and that the publishing industry in Canada plays an important role in the development and expression of the Canadian identity and literary culture. **It must also be recognized and acknowledged that libraries are integral to this ecosystem of reading.** Refusing to sell e-books to public libraries or imposing other terms that unreasonably increase costs are not the answer to a healthy publishing industry.

We are pleased that publishers and public libraries in Canada are working together to find mutually beneficial solutions so that public library patrons have access to e-books from all publishers. In particular, we strongly support the CULC/eBound project to pilot a made-in-Canada e-book and lending platform and hope the success of the project will encourage all publishers to participate in making their e-books available to public library patrons across Canada.

However, given how essential it is becoming for our patrons to access e-content from their public libraries, the Toronto Public Library Board will continue to advocate and work for improved public library access to e-content from all publishers.

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