**Submitting an Op-Ed to Your Local Paper**

**[Created for libraries specifically, but can easily be adapted by readers, local leaders, library users, and library supporters]**

Following are guidelines and a sample op-ed for libraries to localize and submit a piece to outlets in your city, town or region. Since the eBooksForAll campaign is of the moment, it is suggested that you adapt the copy and send your submission as soon as possible.

**Guidelines.** Many newspapers and commentary sites post guidelines about how they prefer to receive op-eds and the information you need to include, such as the author’s title, phone number, and 1-2 sentence bio.

* **Watch word count.** Limit your op-ed to 650 words
* **Include stats and sources.** The op-ed template below can be customized to share stats or anecdotes from your own library. Cite a source for any stats you’ve included.
* **Make it eye-catching**. You’re welcomed to include the headline suggested below or feel free to draft a catchy headline. Try not to spend too much time thinking one up as newspapers like to create their own headlines.
* **Identify the best outlet.** Select the local media outlet (state, city or town) with the highest circulation. National outlets receive an enormous number of submissions, and you’ll have a better chance of being published by a regional outlet that serves your community.
* **Include your correct contact info.** Double check that you’ve included the requested info such as your name, best contact number, and email.
* **Portal or email.** If the outlet does not have a portal through which to submit the op-ed, send the op-ed from the email account of the person who authored the piece.
* **Watch for a response.** Some outlets specify their review time. Wait to submit your op-ed to another media outlet until the review time has passed. If the outlet hasn’t stated how long it takes them to review submissions, wait at least a week to try another outlet.
* **Try, try again**. Media outlets receive a large number of submissions, so it’s worth trying another outlet if your op-ed isn’t selected at the first outlet you tried. Good luck!

**Access Denied: eBook Embargo Unfair to Library Readers**

We’re sorry, but there are 374 people ahead of you in line for our one copy of the eBook you’ve been anticipating all year.

This is the message public libraries like [insert name of your library] will be forced to relay to readers of eBooks published by Macmillan Publishers this fall.

Millions of people now use digital content as their preferred - or only - access to books, and yet the two-month embargo on new titles, to be imposed by Macmillan Publishers on November 1, will make it difficult for libraries to fulfill our central mission: ensuring access to information and content for all.

The number of Americans who read for pleasure dropped by more than 30% between 2004 and 2018, according to the latest American Time Use Survey from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. We need more people reading, not barriers that limit access. Libraries bring authors, publishers, teachers, and readers together for the purpose of boosting knowledge, creativity, literacy, ideas, and imagination. Libraries and library users are allies, not adversaries.

This is true for so many reasons:

* Most of us can’t afford to buy every book that interests us. The library is a place of limitless learning opportunities for all, not just those with the money or inclination to buy books.
* The Macmillan policy harms library patrons with disabilities or learning issues. eBooks can easily become large-print books, and most eBook readers offer options that make reading easier for people with dyslexia.
* Readers living in remote locations, and those without the ability to go to a physical library, along with students and researchers who need content from numerous sources, will also be negatively affected.

Residents in towns and cities with dense populations will especially feel the impact of the Macmillan embargo. A large library system that serves millions of patrons will be allowed to purchase the same number of copies -- one -- as a small library serving a community of thousands. In some instances, the embargo will force readers to wait a year or more to borrow an eBook.

The policy will also punish authors. [Insert name of library here] is willing to buy multiple copies of books that patrons want to read, even though libraries pay as much as four times the cover price for most eBooks.

Finally, Macmillan’s policy harms booksellers. People who frequent libraries buy books for themselves and as gifts. Readers are often known to download an eBook from the library and then be inspired to purchase more titles by the same author from a bookseller.

Macmillan’s embargo is an outlier in the publishing industry. None of the other Big 5 publishers are building barriers to library purchasing and creating inequitable reader access. There is no data to support the idea that every copy borrowed from a library means a sale lost to a publisher.

There are an estimated 116,867 libraries in the U.S. [If you have statistics, please add: Last year, ours topped X [thousand/million] downloads.] As more and more people choose to read on their tablets and phones, we join libraries across the country in striving to meet readers’ needs both online and in person.

Libraries are finding innovative ways to promote eBook reading in particular - another free service that clearly benefits publishers.  We need to find innovative ways to collaborate, as the American Library Association (ALA) has with Rakuten OverDrive on the “Libraries Transform Book Pick.”  Everyone who uses a library card to borrow eBooks will be able to read the same title at the same time. The first eBook selection is “After the Flood” by Kassandra Montag,

published by Harper Collins.  “After the Flood” is a debut novel - just the kind for which libraries often help find readers and spur popularity. “After the Flood” will be available for unlimited ebook checkouts Oct. 7-21, 2019 at public libraries using Rakuten OverDrive. Readers will only need a library card to download a free copy of the ebook to their device. There will be no wait lists or holds for the title.

Libraries must remain vigilant about ensuring fair access, which is why we’re asking Macmillan to reverse its new policy. Tens of thousands of readers have already added their names to a petition launched by the ALA, at eBooksForAll.org.

Let’s revise this chapter in eBook access history so that library patrons will be able to read the books they want. We’d much prefer to send our readers the following message this fall: Your eBook is ready to download.

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