

Libraries protest Random House price hike

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(AP) -- The American Library Association is urging Random House Inc. to reconsider its steep increases in the price of e-books for library wholesalers

Random House, the country's largest trade publisher, has informed [libraries](#) that wholesale charges for e-books would rise by more than 20 percent for new adult releases and more than double for new children's books. [Random House](#) noted that e-books can be "repeatedly circulated without limitation," unlike [paper books](#), which eventually become worn or damaged. It also asked that libraries provide more information about patrons' "borrowing patterns."

"Currently absent such information in quantity, it is important to reiterate that our [guiding principles](#) in setting these new e-prices are the unrestricted and perpetual availability of our complete frontlist and backlist of Random House, Inc. titles under a model of one-copy, one user," according to a statement issued Friday by Random House.

"We believe that pricing to libraries must account for the higher value of this institutional model, which permits e-books to be repeatedly circulated without limitation. The library e-book and the lending privileges it allows enables many more readers to enjoy that copy than a typical consumer copy. Therefore, Random House believes it has greater value, and should be priced accordingly."

The library association issued a statement later Friday saying that libraries were enduring "extreme financial restraint," which a major

price hike would worsen.

"While I appreciate Random House's engagement with libraries and its commitment to perpetual access," ALA president Molly Raphael said in the statement, "I am deeply disappointed in the severe escalation in e-book pricing reported today. Calling on our history together and our hope to satisfy mutual goals moving forward, the American Library Association strongly urges Random House to reconsider its decision. In a time of extreme financial constraint, a major price increase effectively curtails access for many libraries, and especially our communities that are hardest hit economically."

Random House, where authors include Stieg Larsson, John Grisham and Toni Morrison, is one of the few major publishers to offer its entire e-book catalog to libraries. Competitors such as Penguin Group (USA) and Simon & Schuster have either limited e-books for libraries or made them entirely unavailable. Publishers are concerned that free downloads could cost them sales.

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