

Publisher speeds up e-book access for libraries

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The publisher of Khaled Hosseini, Harlan Coben and other popular authors has decided that it's comfortable with letting libraries offer e-book editions of brand new releases.

Starting Tuesday, libraries can offer e-books from Penguin Group (USA) at the same time that the hardcover comes out, a switch from the previous policy of delaying downloads for six months, the [publisher](#) told The Associated Press. While vastly more e-books are available to libraries compared with a few years ago, Penguin and other publishers have limited digital access for fear of losing sales. The American Library Association has been calling for less restrictive terms.

"I am pleased to learn that Penguin's pilot is confirming what research suggests and librarians believe: There is more to be gained than lost when publishers work with libraries," association president Maureen Sullivan said in a statement. "We are encouraged by Penguin's willingness to experiment, make adjustments and move forward with libraries and our millions of readers."

Penguin has for months been tracking e-book usage at libraries through pilot programs around the country. The effect of library downloads on commercial revenues has been acceptable and the publisher was comfortable with making new releases available, the director of online [sales and marketing](#), Tim McCall, said Wednesday. That means libraries can provide e-editions of Hosseini's "And the Mountains Echoed" starting with its official date of publication, May 21.

"We feel that we're ready to take the next step and offer what consumers and libraries have been asking for," said McCall, who added that Penguin was not raising the price charged to libraries for e-books.

Like HarperCollins, Hachette Book Group and other publishers, Penguin is still not offering unlimited access to e-books. Libraries are allowed to lend out one e-edition at a time, for a duration determined by the library. Because e-books don't wear out, [libraries](#) can purchase them for one year, then must pay again to continue making them available.

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