



It's hard to believe that another Oregon summer has flown by again! These past few months, Multnomah County libraries welcomed thousands of youth and volunteers for our annual Summer Reading program, while also hosting numerous camps and programs — everything from Hip Hop Soulsation to babysitter training for teens. In addition to our daily public library activities, we've been working on producing our annual Equity and Inclusion Report, which highlights significant efforts across the library system to remove barriers and address racial inequities with intersectional and thoughtful changes.

Recently, I've been continuing my conversations with partner organizations, county entities, and other municipalities about library spaces and how we can transform libraries to better fit the current and future needs of our community. I'm also continuing advocacy work as part of a national conversation around a troubling trend by publishers to place restrictions on sales of digital content to libraries. This trend grew worse when Macmillan, one of the country's biggest publishers, announced even more restrictions for libraries (more detail is included in a piece below).

In spite of the challenges we face, change is all around us and we are serving patrons in new ways every day. I'm proud of the evolving work of Multnomah County Library and the exciting direction for its future.

Vailey Oehlke
Director of Libraries

Publishers' e-content policy changes imperil libraries' relevance

I talk often about the changing landscape that public libraries must navigate to remain relevant. Often, these changes are a result of how we access and use information in our daily lives. Now, libraries face another daunting challenge, driven instead by corporate pursuit of profit above all else.

A group of publishers have announced or implemented changes to how libraries access e-books and audiobooks. These changes limit and delay libraries' access and dramatically increase the costs of maintaining a robust collection of content that we are forced to purchase again and again. Here is a summary of some of the changes:

Macmillan Publishers imposing an eight-week embargo on e-books Nov. 1. During that time, library “systems,” regardless of size, may purchase just one single copy of a title and no more for about two months. This extreme move is intended to create friction so that consumers will purchase titles instead of borrowing them from the library. When the embargo is in effect, patron holds will accumulate, artificially inflating demand and forcing libraries to buy more copies after the embargo is lifted and frustrating patrons in the process. Multnomah County Library, like most public library systems, tries to keep a reasonable hold ratio (we purchase one new e-book license for every six holds) but that is while the title is circulating and already filling holds.

Hachette Book Group and Penguin Random House have blocked libraries from perpetual access licenses for e-books. While publishers have long charged exorbitant fees for e-books (\$86 for a title that a consumer can buy for \$15) and limited checkouts (sometimes 26 times per license), this change has serious financial implications. Libraries will now have to re-purchase the same titles over and over, regardless of price or frequency of use. Starting next fiscal year, we estimate a quarter of Multnomah County Library’s e-book budget (\$307,000) will be going toward re-buying content, which means that money can’t go toward buying a broader range of titles or buying more copies of popular titles.

Other publishers are following suit. Blackstone Publishing recently implemented a 90-day embargo for library purchase of some new-release audio titles. In addition to raising prices, Simon & Schuster is further limiting how libraries can access and make available both e-books and audiobooks.

These publishers assert that libraries undercut profit by allowing readers free access to materials that they would otherwise purchase. We know this to be untrue. Libraries pay much higher rates to license e-content, not “purchase” as we do with physical books. Prices are often the same for a bestseller as for little-circulated niche content. And, research shows that readers who purchase books by a particular author quite often discover that author’s works through the public library before purchasing. In other words, libraries provide free marketing and exposure for publishers and authors.

As publishers change their business models to compete with Amazon (which is increasingly signing exclusive publishing deals with notable authors like Michael Pollan, Mindy Kaling and Dean Koontz), they are further punishing libraries for a problem libraries didn’t cause. In addition to competing with traditional publishers, Amazon’s growing publishing empire compounds a problem for libraries, as Amazon does not sell their e-content to libraries.

Issues of cost and access to e-content are not new. As a member of ALA's Digital Content Working Group from 2011 to 2015, I was part of a group that examined these issues and proposed solutions that protect readers' access. Sadly, not much has changed, except the increasing capriciousness of giant corporations that care nothing for the ecosystem of reading and literacy that underlies the work of the public library. Our library will continue to fight against efforts to limit access and deprive our community of collective benefit.



Inside the library: too close for comfort

Andrew Carnegie was many things: an immigrant, an industrialist and a philanthropist. Among his greatest legacies was the widespread establishment and expansion of the free public library. In 47 U.S. states, in Canada and abroad, Carnegie helped create about 3,000 libraries, many of which are still in existence today.

In Multnomah County, St. Johns and North Portland libraries, with their stately red brick exteriors — both original Carnegie libraries — are remnants of that legacy. Inside St. Johns Library, the passage of a century has a different impact.

St. Johns Library is typical of the small libraries we find across Multnomah County. One hundred years ago, the main function of those buildings was to house books.

Today, libraries are spaces for people, programs and hands-on learning — and yes, books. Some programs, like children's storytime, are so popular, people are regularly turned away. Other times, the library is forced to hold programs amidst the book stacks, making them inaccessible to others.

With more than 5,400 storytimes in our libraries and more than 110,000 young people participating in summer reading each year, our community's children feel the space pinch every day. And some of our most popular new programs, like the makerspace (a science and technology space just for teenagers) at Rockwood Library, are only offered in one location because we don't have enough space in other library buildings.

In our region and across the country, other libraries are greeting the future with open arms, with spaces for children to read, explore and play. Imagine if children at our libraries could have not only space for storytime, but perhaps a dress-up closet, structures to climb on, learning gardens, functioning kitchens or science and technology learning.

Imagine if more of our library buildings could offer space to sit and learn together, for workshops, or private rooms for a Skype job interview.

We're hard at work creating a vision for modern library spaces in Multnomah County. Join us as we explore ways to bring all people in Multnomah County modern and adequate library spaces that they need and deserve. Learn more at multcolib.org/planning/.

Hillsdale Library is first-ever library awarded 'Backyard Habitat' certification

Hillsdale Library, in southwest Portland, was awarded silver-level Backyard Habitat certification by a joint program through the Portland Audubon Society and the Columbia Land Trust. It's the first-ever library to receive the certification!

Behind Hillsdale is a bioswale that filters the water runoff from the library's roof and driveway. It's planted with native plants that don't require irrigation and also provide shelter and food for wildlife. The adjacent area behind the building, next to the bioswale, has a large native maple tree and smaller native plants that also provide habitat for birds and insects.



Hillsdale was rated on the property's efforts to remove invasive weeds, use native plants, reduce pesticide use, manage stormwater and engage in wildlife stewardship.

Patron comments

"Thank you SO much for the tech help. I have a laptop and needed extra help with an issue. The Microsoft Store charges \$150 for an annual contract if you need more than 5-10 minutes help. I am elderly, disabled and low income due to disability - so free tech help is a lifesaver. I use my laptop to watch movies to make my daily home physical therapy more fun. If I didn't have this tech help at the library my son-in-law would have to do it and he lives on the other side of the river and has limited time. Any time with my family can now be family time and NOT tech time. It helps me stay independent. Thank you!" — Holly, Central Library patron, August 2019

"Toni Morrison means so much, to so many people. Not only as a novelist, but, more so to me, as a *wise teacher* of my generation and subsequent generations. Thanks so much to Heidi who knew this and acted quickly with a display of Morrison's writings, the first thing I noticed upon entering the library the morning Morrison passed. Some of the items Heidi had on display were new to me, and I thought I knew all about Morrison. I quickly checked out what was original/new to me, so I will be further enriched by Morrison. Thanks so much to Heidi for acting fast, and to Mult Co Lib for having employees who notice what patrons want and need, and that is to honor and *read* great teachers of literature. Thanks." — Terence, Central Library patron, August 2019

"Thank you so much for providing this service [My Discovery Pass]. It is really helpful to college students who do not have as much money as full-time workers. This pass has let me enjoy Portland much more than I otherwise would have!" — anonymous library patron

"The children's librarian @Sellwood is incredible! Brianne is so engaged, attentive and caring to our children. She puts her heart into every storytime like no other librarian I've ever seen. We have been to many libraries and storytimes but none compare to Brianne's. She is just so creative and thoughtful. Our entire community values and adores Brianne. She should be recognized for her efforts. Thank you to Brianne!" — Leah, Sellwood Library patron, July 2019

"I want to say I have not been to a public Library in several years. I came in today and was helped by Shane. He set me up very well with my educators card, and answered all of my questions. He then introduced me to Carla. I didn't know there was so much the Midland

Library offers. I am so excited to bring my students for a visit." — Ciara, Midland Library patron, July 2019

In the news

[Black Pacific Northwest Collection at North Portland Library](#) (The Skanner, September 4)
[Inclusive by Design: Reevaluating physical and virtual spaces to address inequity](#) (American Libraries, September 3)
[The Supreme Court comes to Portland](#) (Portland Business Journal, August 28)
[Justice Sonia Sotomayor will visit Portland to present her new picture book about accepting different abilities](#) (The Oregonian, August 28)
[Multnomah County Library, Portland Community College to Host Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor](#) (The Skanner, August 28)
[In Search of Portland: Central Library](#) (In Search of Portland podcast, August 25)
[Meals 4 Kids: Summer program fills a hunger gap](#) (Portland Observer, August 21)
[PDX Good Deeds | Meals on Wheels helps Portland kids](#) (KGW, August 20)
[Gresham Library to revel in Indian dance and culture](#) (Gresham Outlook, August 20)

Upcoming events

[Musical Yoga](#)

Friday, September 13
Troutdale Library, 10:30 am

[Urban Head Wrapping](#)

Saturday, September 14
Rockwood Library, 1 pm

[Choro da Alegria Plays the Beautiful Melodies of Brazil](#)

Saturday, September 14
Holgate Library, 3 pm

[Talking Across the Political Divide](#)

Sunday, September 15
Northwest Library, 12:30 pm

[Welcome to Clown Town: a Teen Drag Workshop](#)

Tuesday, September 17
Hollywood Library, 5:30 pm

[Free Money for Your Innovative Technologies](#)

Thursday, September 19
Central Library, 12 pm

[Earthquake Preparedness](#)

Saturday, September 21
Belmont Library, 3 pm

[Celebremos el mes de Hispanidad con Melao de Cuba / Celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month with Melao de Cuba](#)

Saturday, October 5
St. Johns Library, 2 pm