

Thanks to a new state law, Marylanders' right to read just got a boost.



Library users in Maryland enjoy 24/7 access to a broad collection of eBooks, audiobooks and streaming material through library websites and apps, but publishers' restrictions mean that some materials cannot be purchased by libraries and are only accessible to people who can afford to buy them.

Readers of all ages should have access to a full range of high-quality informational and literary resources. Libraries spend millions of dollars each year acquiring digital content from publishers and producers for our patrons. Since March 2020, Maryland public libraries have circulated 50% more digital content than previously. More Marylanders are borrowing a limited number of titles at higher costs to libraries, who are being shut out of the marketplace of ideas and information. **But that's about to change.**

THE PUBLIC LIBRARIES – ELECTRONIC LITERARY PRODUCT LICENSES – ACCESS LAW ([HB518](#)/[SB432](#))

- **EFFECTIVE DATE:** January 1, 2022
- **REQUIRES:** "...a publisher who offers to license an electronic literary product to the public to also offer to license the product to public libraries in the State on reasonable terms that would enable public libraries to provide library users with access to the electronic literary product."

Beginning January 1, 2022, Maryland library users will have greater access to electronic materials, thanks to a new law passed by the Maryland General Assembly.

WHY IS THE BILL IMPORTANT?

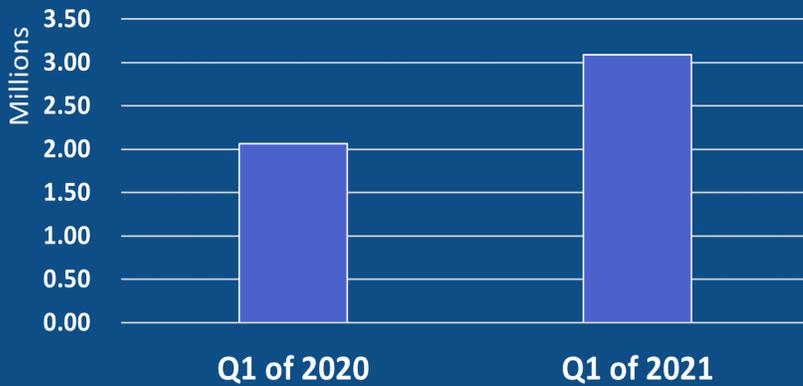
- The first law of its kind in the nation, the legislation will require publishers to sell or license to libraries any content available to the public in Maryland.

HOW WILL THE BILL IMPACT YOU?

- Your local public library will be able to purchase more of the eBooks and audiobooks you want to read, when you want to read them.
- Your library card will provide you with increased access to streaming content.



Circulation: Maryland Digital eLibrary Consortium



Circulation of digital content increased by nearly 50% from the end of Q1 2020 to Q1 2021.

Maryland's new law will help ensure greater access to electronic materials through Maryland libraries.

HOW WILL THE BILL IMPACT PUBLISHERS AND AUTHORS?

- This legislation provides a fair framework in which libraries can share titles while respecting the publishers' rights to license content and an author's need for fair compensation.
- The legislation does not set specific terms for licensing, selling or purchasing. Rather than interfering in the publishing business and library marketplace, Maryland legislators focused on equity of access to content.

WHAT ARE "REASONABLE TERMS?"

- Libraries have been purchasing authors' non-digital works from publishers and distributors for centuries. Libraries are willing to pay fair prices for digital works—indeed, libraries need publishers, distributors, and authors to continue to remain economically viable. However, libraries will not be able to purchase and market digital materials at excessive prices.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

- The Maryland Library Association is optimistic that publishers, as law-abiding people, will craft "reasonable terms" by the end of 2021. MLA looks forward to forthcoming discussions. However, if reasonableness is not realized, MLA will seek relief elsewhere, such as through a media campaign and/or appeals to relevant state agencies, or the Maryland court system.

For more information, please visit mdlib.org.

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