

## Why Do I Have to Wait for an E-Book?



Technically, there are an infinite number of copies of digital materials. So why do you have to wait so long for your e-book or e-audiobook title?

It is all about the way publishers have structured the e-materials market for libraries. With physical books, libraries own the copies they buy. The books can be checked out until they fall apart.

It's different with digital titles. In most cases, libraries must license (rather than purchase outright) individual "copies" of digital titles from publishers, often at about twice the price of print versions. The publishers require that these digital copies only be loaned out to one patron at a time, as if they were physical copies. The payment models vary by publisher: sometimes the licenses are limited by time (typically one or two years), other times by limiting the number of virtual checkouts. When those limits are reached, the library's "copy" disappears.

Recently, big multinational publishers have made it much harder for public libraries to buy and lend e-books, even to the point of not allowing them to buy new titles for eight weeks after publication.

The rising cost of e-books and other downloadable materials comes at a time when demand is soaring. When the pandemic hit in mid-March 2020, the library closed and its physical materials were unavailable until July 2020, when we started curbside pickup service. (Glencoe was the first library in the area to offer curbside service.) During this hiatus, the popularity of our digital materials skyrocketed. In 2020, usage went up 72% and it has held strong.

It seems that many readers have changed their format preferences. Our staff have adjusted to this sea change in demand, and have reallocated substantial funds from physical to digital formats. Our downloadable content budget will be increased 37% next year. We're also working with suppliers to keep atop the shifting license requirements.

All of the library's digital materials are so-called "Advantage" copies, which means that they're available to Glencoe Public Library cardholders only. Our e-copies are not being checked out to non-GPL patrons.

So how can you get your e-books and e-audiobooks faster? We have a couple of tips:

- Place a hold on your desired title *early*. And then be patient.
- Older titles may be readily available through Hoopla or Freading. To look through what's available through these services, go to the library's website and search under Resources/Digital Collection.
- As soon as you are finished with your digital book, please return it so the next person can use it. Within 15 minutes of your returning it, someone else can have that copy.

If you need help obtaining digital materials, just call the Adult Services Department and we'll do our best to help. And we're back to offering in-person technical help if you need it. Do give us a call before coming in with your device so we can be sure to have someone available to give you one-on-one help.