

The background features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of blue, ranging from light sky blue to deep navy blue. The shapes are primarily triangles and polygons, creating a dynamic, layered effect. The text is centered in the white space between these shapes.

# Sustainable digital collections

Why do we read?

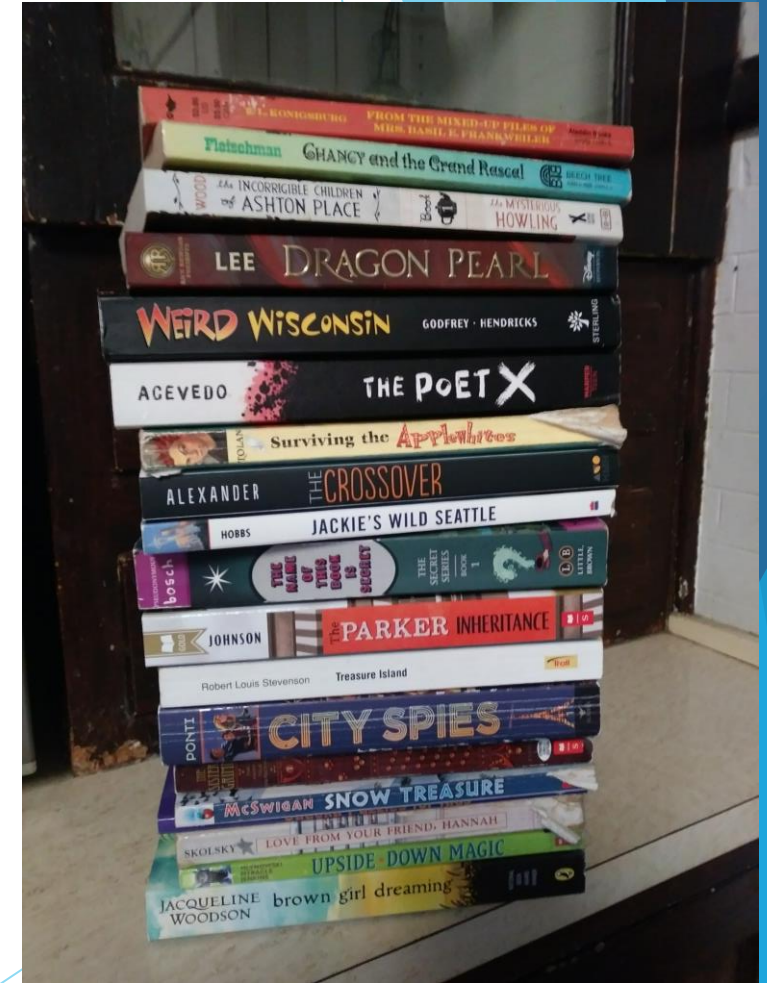


# 2020 statewide circ

▶ 52,340,959

<https://www2.sos.wa.gov/library/libraries/libdev/publications.aspx#WASStats>

If we count each of those checkouts as a trade paperback about  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches tall, and we stack them, we would create a tower as tall as 5,407 Space Needles.



# Why it matters

Barbara Kingsolver said:

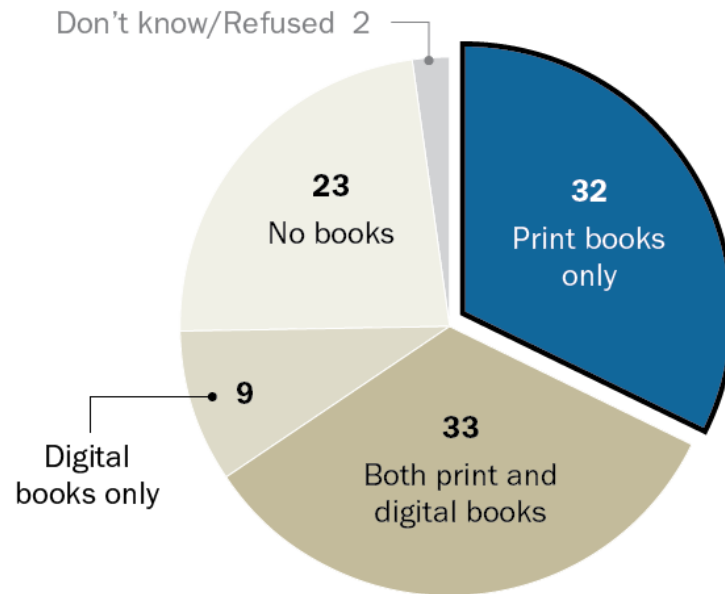
“I’m of a fearsome mind to throw my arms around every living librarian who crosses my path, on behalf of the souls they never knew they saved.”

Every circulation is a positive human transaction intended to make something better. Over 52 million circulations is a lot of better.

So, maximizing circulation given the resources we have, is really important work, which brings us to sustainable digital collections.

# 41% of adults read a digital book in 2020

*% of U.S. adults who say they have read \_\_\_\_\_  
in the previous 12 months*



Note: The “digital books” category includes both e-books and audiobooks.

Source: Survey conducted Jan. 25-Feb. 8, 2021.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

# What is a sustainable digital collection?

Costs are aligned with patron and/or circulation growth, as they are with print collections

- ▶ Physical circ and new user accounts at Whatcom waver around 1-2% per year
- ▶ Print prices have averaged about a .5% increase per year over the last 10 years
- ▶ Digital circ for WDLC will be up about ~4% in 2022, but costs are tracking at a 25-30% increase over 2021. Not sustainable.

What differences between digital and print collections threaten sustainability

- ▶ Volatility
- ▶ Discoverability

# Volatility

- ▶ The average unit price WDLC paid for HarperCollins digital books increased in 2022 by 24%.
- ▶ HarperCollins, Macmillan, & Penguin Random House currently offer eAudio on a perpetual license. If they switch to a 24-month metered access license, we will be in trouble.

| Publisher            | % WDLC total spending |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Penguin Random House | 27%                   |
| HarperCollins        | 17%                   |
| Simon & Schuster     | 15%                   |
| Macmillan            | 12%                   |
| Hachette             | 10%                   |
| Total                | 80%                   |

# Discoverability

- ▶ High unit prices mean our digital collections are smaller than print, which means we are concentrating demand on relatively few titles that tend to be popular and expensive.
- ▶ User interfaces by default organize the collection by popularity, which again focuses patron attention on relatively few titles that tend to be popular and expensive, like a vortex.





# Improving discoverability

Three things we are exploring to address discoverability

- ▶ More books for the buck: Dean Street Press
- ▶ Simultaneous Use packages
- ▶ Curated lists to highlight “beyond bestsellers”

# Dean Street Press



## The Milliner's Hat Mystery

An Inspector Richardson Mystery  
by Basil Thomson

\$1.35

**OC/OU**  
\$1.35

Unit(s):  **ADD TO NEW CART** ▾

|               |   |            |                                |                 |    |
|---------------|---|------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|----|
| Language      | English                                     | Series     | --                             | Text difficu... | -- |
| Street date   | 4/11/2016                                   | Audience   | Adult Fiction                  | Interest le...  | -- |
| Publisher ... | Lightning Source Inc  <br>Dean Street Press | Subject(s) | Mystery, Suspense,<br>Thriller | ATOS boo...     | -- |
| ISBN          | 9781911095804                               | BISAC      | Fiction / Crime                | Lexile® me...   | -- |



Ebook ▾

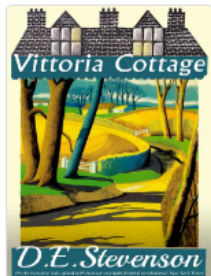
Kindle, OverDrive Read,  
EPUB

**SAMPLE** ▾



Select

[Share](#)



## Vittoria Cottage

by D.E. Stevenson, Alexander McCall Smith

\$3.99

**OC/OU**  
\$3.99

Unit(s):  **ADD TO NEW CART** ▾

|               |   |            |                   |                 |    |
|---------------|---|------------|-------------------|-----------------|----|
| Language      | English   | Series     | --                | Text difficu... | -- |
| Street date   | 1/6/2020  | Audience   | Adult Fiction     | Interest le...  | -- |
| Publisher ... | Ingram/Coresource Plus<br>Self - Published   Dean<br>Street Press | Subject(s) | Literature        | ATOS boo...     | -- |
| ISBN          | 9781913054649   | BISAC      | Fiction / General | Lexile® me...   | -- |



Ebook ▾

Kindle, OverDrive Read,  
EPUB

Advanced Search > Publisher field (not Publisher account) > Dean Street Press

# Simultaneous Use package experiment

## ▶ Parameters

- ▶ Two SU eAudio packages with 50 titles each, one from Blackstone and one from Tantor, licensed in late August. Range of fiction and nonfiction, mostly adult.
- ▶ Blackstone promoted in top curated list for the month of Sept, Tantor not promoted. Neither promoted for October.

## ▶ Questions:

- ▶ How do titles circulated in curated lists compare to titles that are available but are not in a curated list?
- ▶ Was the eAudio holds count lower in September than expected, suggesting that SU titles were deflecting some patrons from placing holds?
- ▶ Will the titles be inexpensive enough at the end of the year to merit continued investment?

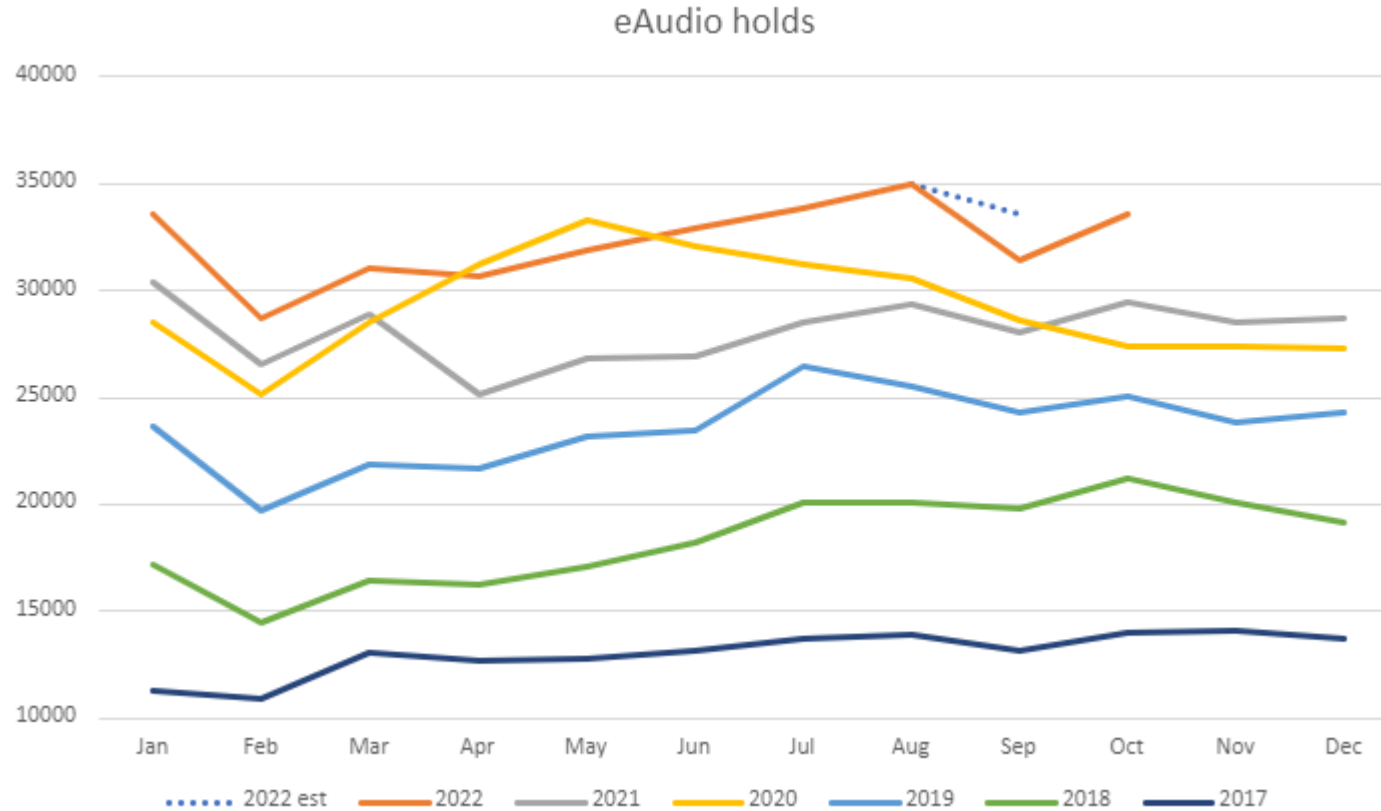
# Comparing Blackstone & Tantor circ

|            | Sept | Oct  |
|------------|------|------|
| Blackstone | 5108 | 2136 |
| Tantor     | 3303 | 2803 |

The data here shows us two things. First, readers are definitely using the curated lists to discover new things to read. The Blackstone list performed better than the Tantor list in Sept. But the circulation on the Tantor set was still high, with each of its 50 titles averaging 66 checkouts in the month. So, readers also appear to be favoring available titles and perhaps filtering by availability in their searches.

# Did the SU package availability result in fewer holds?

- ▶ The SU package availability and promotion does coincide with a holds count for September that is lower than projected.



# Does the SU package cost per circ merit future investment in SU packages?

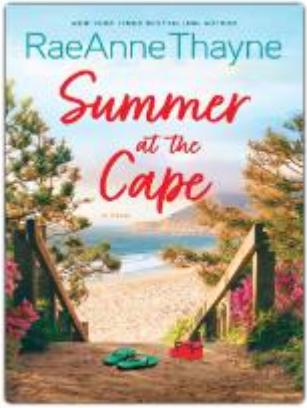
- ▶ Yes. The cost per circ after 9 weeks was under \$1.00 and we have not yet promoted the Tantor titles at all, so we expect the cpc to be pennies by the end of the year.

|            | Circ since SU license | Cost-per-circ |
|------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Blackstone | 8327                  | \$0.86        |
| Tantor     | 7308                  | \$0.82        |

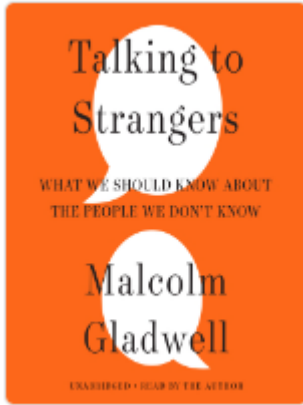
# Use curated lists to move patrons beyond the bestsellers

We think that about half of patrons are generally browsing for something new rather than looking specifically for a title that they heard someone recommend. These browsing patrons will benefit from help exploring the wide range of books we offer, especially those available now.

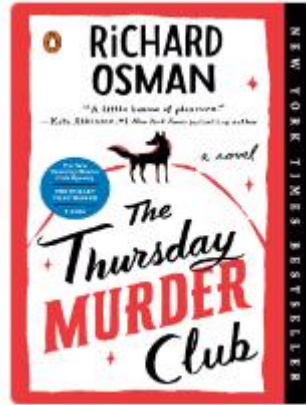
LESS MA



\$15.99 (eBook)  
26 cko  
CPC: \$0.62  
HarperCollins



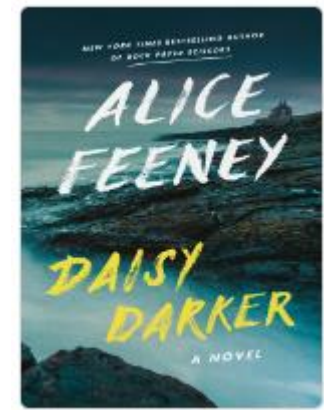
\$65.00 (eAudio)  
24-mo MA  
best CPC: \$1.25  
Hachette



\$55.00 (eBook)  
24-mo MA  
best CPC: \$1.05  
PRH

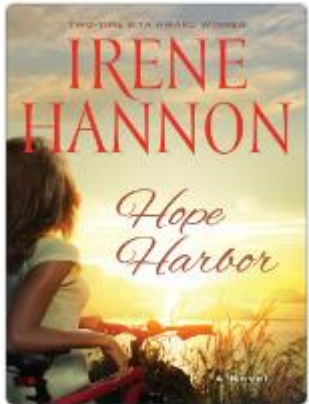


\$129.99 (eAudio)  
24-mo MA  
best CPC: \$2.50  
Simon & Schuster

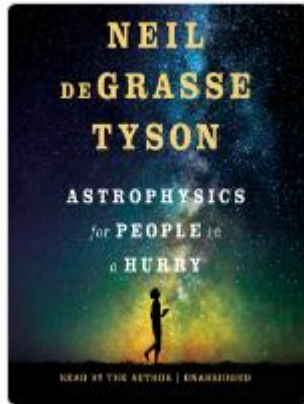


\$60.00 (eBook)  
24-mo MA  
best CPC: \$1.15  
Macmillan

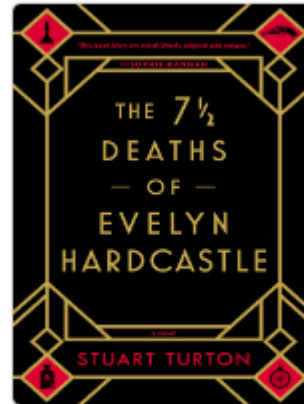
MORE OC/OU



\$14.99 (eBook)  
OC/OU  
CPC (so far): \$0.08  
Baker Publishing Group



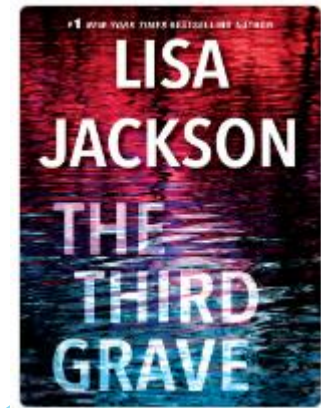
\$29.95 (eAudio)  
OC/OU  
CPC (so far): \$0.15  
Blackstone Publishing



\$25.00 (eBook)  
OC/OU  
CPC (so far): \$0.20  
Sourcebooks



\$79.99 (eAudio)  
OC/OU  
CPC (so far): \$1.48  
Dreamscape Media



\$9.99 (eBook)  
OC/OU  
CPC (so far): \$0.27  
Kensington Books



# Addressing volatility: legislative advocacy

- ▶ Publisher behavior with digital books has shown us that in order to achieve the access to digital books that we have to print, we will need changes to the law.
- ▶ Maryland and New York both passed state laws with overwhelming bipartisan support that stated: If a publisher offers a digital book at retail in the state, it has to offer it to libraries on reasonable terms
- ▶ The terminology ran afoul of copyright, so Massachusetts is now taking a consumer protection approach that states that libraries in the state can only do business with publishers who offer reasonable terms.

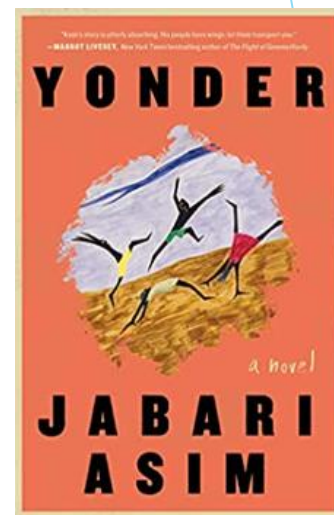
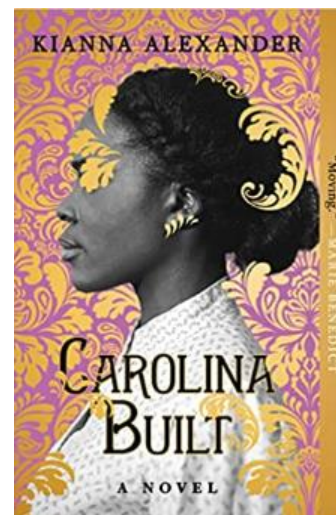
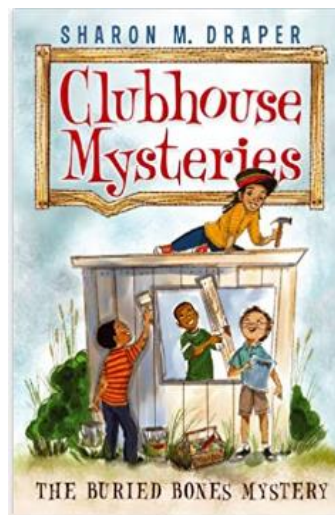
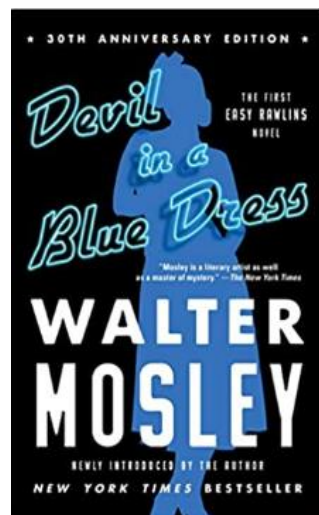
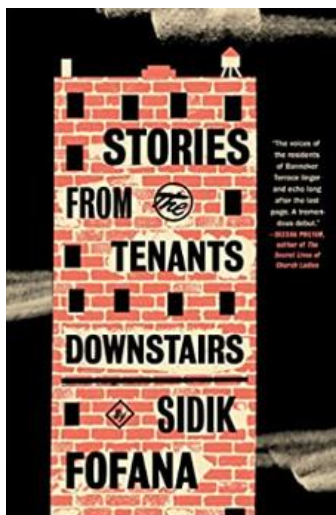
Consider the RFP processes required to protect taxpayer dollars for library contracts exceeding say \$50,000 per year. WDLC spends more than that on books from Macmillan, our 4<sup>th</sup> biggest publisher, alone.

# Email me

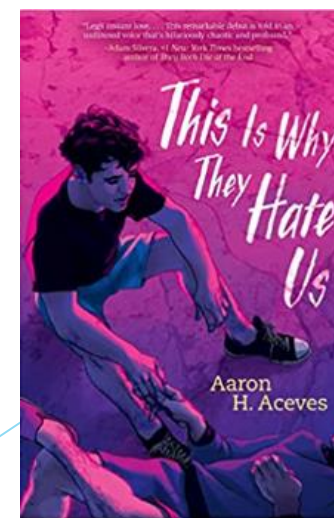
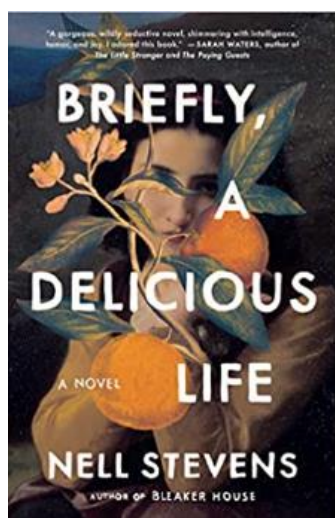
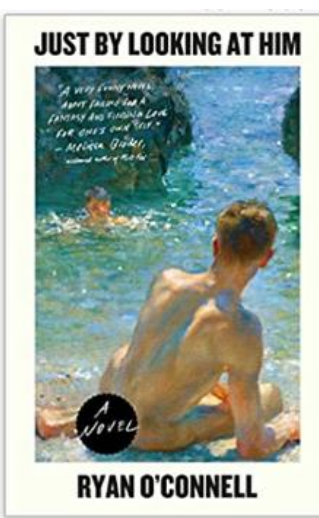
▶ [carmi.parker@wcls.org](mailto:carmi.parker@wcls.org)

# What are we NOT collecting?

African American fiction



LGBTQIA+ fiction



# Turning point

For many years, circ was increasing in double-digits so we kept pace with double-digit annual budget increases. We are continuing to keep pace with circ, but it's not enough to cover costs. Higher costs require us to **degrade access:**

- Increase holds ratios or set other new constraints on patrons, and/or
- Make fewer titles available

