

**TO:** ALA Executive Board

**RE:** Digital Content & Libraries Working Group

**ACTION REQUESTED/  
INFORMATION/REPORT:** For information and discussion

**ACTION REQUESTED BY:** Sari Feldman and Robert Wolven, Co-chairs, ALA Digital Content & Libraries Working Group

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**DRAFT OF MOTION:** Not applicable

**DATE:** June 21, 2013

**BACKGROUND:** This written report provides a summary of activities of the Digital Content & Libraries Working Group since the 2013 Midwinter Meeting and provides directions for the future. This report is intended to serve as the baseline for an oral discussion at the Executive Board I meeting at the 2013 ALA Annual Conference.

**Attachments:** Print copies of the new *American Libraries* E-Content Supplement available in the meeting room

## Report of the Digital Content & Libraries Working Group to the Executive Board – EBD #12.37 June 2013, Chicago, Illinois

Overall, the Digital Content & Libraries Working Group (DCWG) is optimistic about the progress to date. Foremost, four of the Big Six publishers have made positive moves on library ebook lending:

- In January, Macmillan [announced](#) its entry into the library ebook lending business via a pilot of its mystery books.
- In March, Penguin Book Group (USA) [announced](#) the termination of its embargo policy so that all ebook titles would be available to libraries at the same time as in the consumer market.
- In April, Simon & Schuster [announced](#) a New York-based library ebook pilot.
- In May, Hachette Book Group [announced](#) that all of its ebook titles would be available to libraries.

For the first time ever, all of the Big Six publishers are engaged with library ebook lending.

Our assessment concludes that ALA's engagement during the past 18 months was a significant factor in these developments. For example, in Hachette Book Group's [press release](#), ALA is referenced twice as an influential stakeholder. *Publishers Weekly* reached a similar [conclusion](#): "... the patience and hard work of the ALA's Digital Content Working Group (DCWG), which continues to study the e-book issue and has remained engaged in conversations with publishers, now appears to be paying off," June 7. *School Library Journal* made similar comments in an [editorial](#):

The last time ALA leadership really confronted a pressing perception problem—the refusal of publishers to offer ebooks for lending in public libraries—they broke the mold and made inroads with industry leaders through a persistent series of high-level meetings to raise awareness about the role libraries play in building a reading public and marketing publishers' products—books. (June 4).

### February – June 2013

Since the 2013 Midwinter Meeting, the DCWG and ALA leadership engaged in direct advocacy with publishers, distributors, authors, and their representative groups via two trips to New York. The April [trip](#) featured a meeting with Penguin that included both the President and CEO of Penguin's USA unit, as well as Chairman and CEO of Penguin Worldwide.

At the end of May, we participated in the Book Expo America [event](#). Maureen Sullivan served on a panel organized by the Association of Authors' Representatives (we first met with them in December 2012). Maureen, along with Keith Michael Fiels and Alan Inouye, met with various representatives within the publishing ecosystem, and visited the booth of Califa and

Douglas County (Colo.) Libraries. In addition to facilitating progress on the ebook issue, ALA's engagement through its multiple New York trips and subsequent follow-ups have yielded other opportunities, especially some that may support ALA's work on school library advocacy.

An additional major development this spring was the publication of our third *American Libraries* [supplement on digital content](#). As with the previous supplement, the issue opened with an article chronicling DCWG efforts and plans. The other articles provided the foundation for DCWG's directions in 2013-14, namely libraries as publishers, libraries working with smaller and mid-sized publishers, the challenges with preservation, the opportunities afforded by new technologies, and strengthening cooperation among organizations within the library community. As before, the DCWG appreciates the excellent work of the *American Libraries* team in the production of this supplement.

DCWG members and staff and ALA leadership continue to [spread the word](#) through speaking engagements. These opportunities have taken our representatives to the Library Days Conference (Orebro, Sweden); Michigan Library Association (East Lansing, Michigan); Independent Book Publishers Association Publishing University (Chicago); Knight Foundation Libraries Conference (Miami); Alaska Library Association (Valdez, Alaska); Public Library Directors Symposium (San Francisco); and elsewhere. For the past five months, we have had a blog on [Digital Book World](#), enabling access to a major audience of digital publishing professionals; and we had articles published in the *Maine Policy Review*, *Young Adult Library Services*, and the *Library and Book Trade Almanac* (Bowker Annual).

In addition the DCWG and ALA leadership continue to reach out on related initiatives. Maureen Sullivan provided an update at a ReadersFirst webinar and DCWG members and staff continue to participate in meetings. We continue to serve on the advisory group for the OCLC/Big Shift initiative. We've had regular communication with representatives of the Ohio Library Council regarding their plans. Finally, Maureen Sullivan had planned to represent ALA at the public launch events of the Digital Public Library of America, which were [postponed](#) because of the bombing during the Boston Marathon.

## Looking Ahead

ALA has contributed to the progress with the Big Six publishers that the library community has enjoyed in the past months. However, while the situation has improved, it is not yet *good*. Library pricing is generally bad, with library prices similar to those of consumers but with only a limited term license (e.g., one year or 26 circulations), or at multiple times the consumer pricing for a perpetual license. We view pricing as one of the more difficult challenges.

Some publishers only provide partial access to libraries through "pilots." ALA will be encouraging these publishers to expedite this pilot phase, noting OverDrive CEO Steve Potash's observation that library ebook lending is [not a science project](#)—that his company's ebook circulations already reach into the hundreds of millions. Patron privacy and library access to data, provisions for preservation, and accommodations for people with disabilities remain problematic in varying ways and necessitate continued ALA advocacy.

At this annual conference, ALA is launching its initiative to engage authors to stand with libraries on ebook lending. Several prominent authors comprise the initial effort and we expect to recruit others in the weeks ahead. An ALA press release provides further details on this DCWG initiative.

In the coming months, the DCWG will be increasing its focus on how libraries can (and should) serve as publishers in their own right as well as improving access to self-published works as well as works by small and mid-sized publishers. Digital preservation is on the agenda for increased attention, beginning with an internal DCWG brainstorming meeting on Monday of the conference. These topics represent the centerpiece of the DCWG's main [public program](#) on Saturday, 1-2:30 p.m. in the convention center room S502.

DCWG subgroups have been collecting information and analyzing issues concerning access for people with disabilities, school libraries and ebooks, and digital content and privacy. These subgroups have work in-process and we look forward to seeing results this fall. In addition, DCWG is undertaking a review of other possible topics that merit emphasis in the coming year.

We appreciate the continuing strong support from the Executive Board and the ALA membership broadly. Several new members will be joining the DCWG for 2013-14 as well as our new Board liaison Courtney Young, Incoming ALA President-elect. We look forward to their contributions. Several DCWG members are rotating off the group and we acknowledge their service to ALA.

Though the DCWG has made progress, many opportunities and challenges remain. We are hopeful for our continued progress in the coming year.