EBOOK LENDING IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES
A PILOT PROJECT

Emma House, Oreham Group, January 2025

Executive Summary

This report examines the evolving ecosystem of ebook lending in public libraries and presents findings from a pilot project designed to test different ebook licensing models, foster stronger collaboration between publishers and libraries, and deepen understanding of ebook borrower behavior. It builds on the 2013 Sieghart Review, which called for measures to balance the interests of publishers, authors, and libraries while mitigating potential sales cannibalization.

Context and Challenges

1. **Growth in ebook Demand**
   Over the past decade, demand for ebooks in libraries has soared, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Digital borrowing has become essential for users with print impairments or who are otherwise unable to access physical libraries.

2. **Shifting Business Models**
   The entrance of additional distributors, coupled with ebooks becoming a standard publishing format, has led to two dominant aggregators (Bolinda and OverDrive) supplying most libraries. The Sieghart Review introduced "frictions"—primarily time-limited or copy-limited licenses—to protect print sales. However, many libraries now report that shrinking budgets serve as the main constraint on acquisitions, naturally curtailing borrowing levels and thus limiting any potential cannibalisation of consumer sales.

3. **Licensing Concerns**
   Although some major publishers have moved away from "windowing" practices, concerns remain about restrictive licenses, high ebook prices (especially for popular titles), and withheld titles (e.g., Hachette's policy of not licensing ebooks to libraries). Libraries also cite a need for more flexible options, such as cost-per-circulation (CPC) or simultaneous-access licenses, to meet varied budgets and promotional activities.

4. **Budget Pressures**
   Continuous cuts to library budgets have forced libraries to be more selective. Despite incremental improvements—such as the extension of Public Lending Right (PLR) to ebooks—many librarians believe that current ebook pricing and licensing models place an unsustainable burden on their limited resources, threatening the inclusivity and modern relevance of public libraries.

The Pilot Project

1. **Objectives**

   o Test Multiple Licensing Models: One-copy/one-user, simultaneous-access, and transactional (CPC).

   o Gather Market Insights: Understand ebook borrower demographics and examine borrowing versus buying behaviors.

- o Encourage More Equitable Pricing: Especially for bestsellers, which can carry prohibitive costs.
- o Expand Title Availability: Advocate for the inclusion of currently unavailable titles from major publishers.

Methodology and Participation

Sixteen publishers (large, medium, and independent) contributed around 250 titles to the pilot, made available through Bolinda and OverDrive. Seventeen library services across England, Wales, and Northern Ireland participated. Libraries experimented with different licensing models for six months, gathering data on acquisitions, user engagement, and promotional strategies.

Key Findings

1. **Licensing Model Efficacy**
   - o Simultaneous Access: Particularly popular for community-wide reads and author events.
   - o Cost-Per-Circulation (CPC): Useful for less in-demand titles, but pricing must be set carefully to ensure value for libraries.
   - o Flexibility Matters: Many libraries chose titles on one model, then switched to another (e.g., moving from CPC to one-copy/one-user) to extend availability of popular books.

2. **Promotion and Reader Engagement**
   - o Impact of Marketing Assets: Libraries that received shareable social media materials or hosted author talks often saw boosts in circulation.
   - o Indie Publisher Appeal: Independent titles—often overlooked—found surprising success when actively promoted, confirming the potential for broadened library collections.
   - o Resource Limitations: Many libraries lacked staff time or budget to maximise promotion, underlining the need for additional funding and longer lead times.

3. **Supply Chain Complexity**
   - o Limited Data for Publishers: Most publishers did not receive detailed or timely information on sales by license model, hindering evidence-based decision-making.
   - o Communication Gaps: Independent publishers often did not know their titles were available in library e-collections, or on which licensing terms. Coordinating with aggregators and distributors remains a challenge, especially for smaller presses.

4. **Positive Relationship Building**

    o Publisher-Library Collaboration: When given opportunities to interact—via "publisher pitches," shared promotional materials, or virtual events—both sides reported stronger ties and a willingness to continue partnerships.

    o Interest in Future Engagement: Publishers are eager to expand their ebook offerings to libraries, and libraries are keen to incorporate a broader range of titles and more community-focused promotions.

Recommendations

1. **Expand and Diversify Licensing Models**

    o Broad Availability: Publishers should provide libraries with options—e.g., simultaneous access, cost-per-circulation, and one-copy/one-user—at fair and transparent pricing.

    o Monitor Pricing and Availability: Encourage all publishers (including those currently withholding titles) to offer ebooks widely, with price points aligned to library budgets.

2. **Increase Library Funding for Reader Development**

    o Outreach Initiatives: Additional resources would help libraries execute targeted programs, especially for underserved communities and reluctant readers.

    o Demonstrate Impact: Libraries can use pilot findings and demographic research to advocate for investment in digital collections.

3. **Strengthen Publisher-Library Networks**

    o Independent Publishers: Develop platforms (e.g., presentations, digital repositories, newsletters) that facilitate ongoing communication, highlight new releases, and provide ready-to-use promotional materials.

    o Larger Publishers: Offer advanced reader copies (ARCs), marketing support, and event partnerships to broaden community engagement.

4. **Improve Supply Chain Transparency**

    o Data Sharing: Aggregators and distributors should provide publishers with sales and usage data by license type, enabling more responsive pricing and better title curation.

    o Streamlined Processes: Address the technical and contractual hurdles that limit the availability of multiple license models, facilitating easier library access to ebooks.

Conclusion

Ebook lending has become a vital part of modern library services, offering accessibility and convenience for a broad spectrum of readers. This pilot project demonstrates that flexible licensing models—coupled with stronger, more direct communication between publishers and libraries—can open significant new avenues for both parties. By refining pricing strategies, enhancing data transparency, and providing adequate resources for promotion, publishers and libraries can jointly foster a robust, inclusive reading culture that benefits communities and the broader publishing ecosystem.

Full report

Introduction

Ebook lending in Public Libraries has evolved over the last 10 years, notably since the 2013 publication of the Sieghart Review into ebook Lending in Public Libraries[1]. This report set out a series of conditions and principles for ebook lending which would manage the balance of needs between all stakeholders which we were suitable for the market at the time. The demand for ebooks in libraries since their introduction has increased significantly[2]. Demand spiked during the Covid-19 pandemic and has levelled out rather than decreased to pre-pandemic levels. It is widely recognised that ebook borrowing can reach those less able to visit the physical library or have a print impairment.

Since then, there have been several changes in the ebook lending ecosystem, notably with the entrance of new distributors of ebooks, ebooks being a regular format for publishers, meaning increased catalogues of ebooks, and the settlement on 2 major ebook aggregators – Bolinda[3] and OverDrive[4] (among others) who supply ebooks to the public library system. Whilst the ecosystem is well established, there is more learning to be done amongst publishers, distributors and libraries about how ebook lending works, what business models are available and reporting of sales data.

The Sieghart review indicated a need for frictions in the system to avoid cannibalisation of sales. This was implemented through business models (mainly the one-copy, one-user model), and windowing of titles for ebook lending (now a practice only implemented by one major publisher). However, what has emerged is that the main friction that prevents libraries purchasing and making available all titles for ebook borrowing is budget. Library budgets are continuously being cut, with no signal that this will change soon. As a result, the budget for books is being cut. Even with every book available on every business model, libraries will still only be able to afford a certain number of books. This friction should ensure that sales cannibalisation is limited, with compensation being paid to authors via library sales and PLR, and publishers receiving revenues from sales to libraries.

The Libraries Connected ebook working group has been following the developments in the ebook lending space, and whilst there have been welcome advances, including the introduction of PLR for authors for ebooks, and a greater improvement in the ebook lending experience from a technical perspective, obstacles to providing a comprehensive service remain.

Challenges articulated by the librarians represented in the Libraries Connected ebook working group

Topline

The current situation of restrictive licensing, high cost of many books, and reducing library budgets is significantly challenging the ebook lending service being offered by libraries to

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[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/an-independent-review-of-e-lending-in-public-libraries-in-englandFootnote

[2] ebook loans data for the financial year 2022/2023 is **12,662,805**
Print book loans for the for financial year 2022/2023 is **144,842,90** (Source: PLR, British Library)

[3] https://www.bolinda.com/

[4] https://www.overdrive.com/

customers. A weakened ebook lending service threatens the overall modern library service and the ability to be inclusive to all readers and their access needs and leads to loss of library members and the inability to attract new members.

1) Almost all libraries end up spending a greater % of their budget on ebooks for a smaller % of ebook borrowers and ebook loans compared to physical loans. The reasons for this are mainly due to the higher cost of ebooks, the need to replenish the stock on a more regular basis than print books because of time limited licenses, and the need to buy more copies of popular titles to keep up with demand. Libraries also believe it is essential to offer as wide a selection of ebooks as possible to meet the varying reading tastes of their members. Whilst ebook borrowers are smaller in number, they are often library members with access needs which cannot be served with the physical book offering.

2) The cost of certain ebook titles compared to the physical equivalent is much higher, especially where a title is a bestseller, and in an environment of shrinking budgets.

3) The non-availability of titles published by Hachette, who have a company policy to not allow their ebooks into the library system (mainly through a perception of a cannibalisation of sales). This is especially damaging for libraries when a publisher is acquired by Hachette and their ebooks become unavailable, and where odd titles from series are unavailable (for a variety of reasons).

4) The inflexibility or a perceived 'unfairness' of licenses available around ebooks (ie time limitations, if a library buys an ebook on a year-long license and it isn't loaned out, it will expire and the library needs to buy it again). Additionally, the lack of books available on a simultaneous access business model.

Libraries value their relationship with the publishing industry and recognise the need for author and publisher remuneration for their work. The public library network, represented by Libraries Connected is keen to find ways to work proactively and constructively with publishers to address these obstacles to the service that libraries can offer with solutions that benefit the full ecosystem of publishers, authors, libraries and library users.

Aims of the project

To summarise, the aims of the project were to:

- Encourage a more flexible approach to licenses for ebooks for libraries that allow librarians to choose which books they purchase on which business model, providing them with the opportunity to promote individual books and authors to the benefit of library users.

    The business models that the project wanted to test are:
    o One copy one user (standard licence)
    o Simultaneous access model (allowing multiple users to access a single title at the same time)
    o Transactional licence/Cost per Circulation (the library doesn't buy the title but offers the title in its catalogue and when a reader borrows the book, a payment is triggered to the publisher).

- Have a better understand ebook borrowers and the ebook market – notably demographics of borrowers and consumer behaviour around borrowing and buying books.
- Encourage lower pricing of ebooks to libraries – especially for bestsellers
- Encourage a wider range of ebooks available to libraries (ideally including Hachette ebooks)

Methodology

When considering what a win-win situation would look like for publishers and authors, feedback suggested that any pilot should be constructed to gather data, insights and evidence:

- Evidence the power and value of libraries to publishers, demonstrating the ability of libraries to reach people that publishers can't reach, the ability of libraries to promote books and reading, the ability of libraries to recommend titles readers wouldn't otherwise read and the value of libraries in getting the nation reading.
- Provide publishers with data that is useful for their publishing purposes, and to better understand demographics around ebook borrowing.
- Provide consumer research to ascertain consumer behaviour around ebook borrowing in areas such as propensity to buy, waiting lists, and reading in general.
- To test different licences and the impact on libraries and publishers.
- Encourage a stronger relationship between publishers and libraries to promote books, authors and reading.
- Encourage wider ecosystem partnerships with booksellers, literary festivals and community groups to promote books and reading.
- Provide wider knowledge to both librarians and publishers about the elending system, especially independent publishers and highlight any weaknesses and learnings in the system that we might be able to address.

A wide range of publishers were approached to join the pilot with several titles that would be made available to both Bolinda and OverDrive[5] on the 3 different licensing models listed above.

16 publishers voluntarily signed up, across large, medium and small publishers, with around 250 titles from these publishers. Commercial arrangements were agreed between publishers, distributors, and aggregators.

17 library services voluntarily participated in the pilot programme following a call to library services across England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The pilot was set to run for 6 months and began in March 2025.

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[5] Bolinda and OverDrive were selected as the 2 major aggregators used by almost all publishers and libraries for the purchase of ebooks and the lending to library customers.

Chronology of the Pilot

Kick-off events were held in London and Leeds in September 2023 with the objective of promoting case studies to both libraries and publishers of how libraries are reaching readers in creative ways, to provide ideas for the pilot.

Publishers and libraries were invited to join the pilot and were onboarded with their titles via their ebook distributors to Bolinda and OverDrive. Libraries were given access to the titles on the 3 business models.

Publisher pitches were held in summer 2025 for publishers to pitch their titles to librarians.

Publishers were asked to provide libraries with promotional materials for promoting the titles in their outreach. These were kept in a central storage (SharePoint) which could easily be accessed by librarians.

Libraries were encouraged to

- Take inspiration from the events for outreach
- Draw upon publisher contacts and promotional materials provided to use for outreach
- Purchase a wide range of titles on different business models

Learnings and conclusions

At the end of the pilot, surveys were sent to participating libraries and publishers to gather their feedback.

Top line learnings

Key learnings emerged from the setting up of the pilot notably around how complicated the supply chain is to manage the flow of ebooks from publisher to library. This provided us with insights into obstacles for publishers to offer a selection of business models, which can be investigated with the supply chain players.

When setting up the pilot, what was clear is that most independent publishers did not know whether their books were made available to libraries or not, on what business models, or what resulting sales looked like. Publishers were encouraged to learn from their ebook distributors more about the business models and understand data coming back regarding sales. Almost all respondents noted that they had learnt more about how ebook lending in public libraries works because of the pilot, and that they would offer more titles to libraries on different business models.

Respondents were all keen to explore how to make ebook lending more successful and accessible to libraries. It is however noted that it isn't easy for independent publishers to communicate with distributors and aggregators to discuss business models and library needs, and to encourage libraries to buy the books.

Feedback from Participating Libraries

Libraries fed back on the licencing models and how they managed purchasing titles on different models, and their thoughts on the flexibility around the models (1). They also fed back on publishers and title selection (2) and their promotional strategies (3). Finally, libraries fed back on their overall thoughts of the pilot (4).

1) Library feedback on licensing models
- Almost all libraries actively engaged in the pilot and bought upwards of 150 titles across multiple business models.
- Simultaneous access proved to be a popular model, with a wide range of numbers of titles purchased on this model. Not all libraries bought books on all 3 business models.
- Those that did buy on a transactional model set monthly budgets, some exceeded, others did not exceed.
- Flexibility to buy titles on different models was welcomed with many services initially purchasing on one model and then buying the title again on a different model (either because it proved popular or was being used for a promotion, so upgraded to sim access or bought on transactional and upgraded, OR bought sim access and when used up bought on one copy one user to ensure it stayed in the catalogue).

Key quotes on licensing models

"It gave us the flexibility to choose different models based on our needs and, in the case of combining simultaneous use with one copy, one user, it allowed us to benefit from lots of issues whilst also ensuring that titles didn't disappear from the catalogue once the simultaneous use licences had been used up. This is particularly useful for the first books in series as these books use up their licences faster than other books in the series. It also allowed us to increase the number of licences available for titles that we suddenly discovered we wanted to promote, e,g. author talk titles."

"Being able to add multiple access titles for popular titles, or titles that we wanted to promote to customers was a great bonus, and we have seen an increase in the availability of titles under this business model during and after the pilot. And depending on the pricing, in most cases they are better value for money if you think you're going to get a lot of issues. Cost per circulation is a good model to use if you think a title isn't going to issue very well, but it really depends on the pricing."

"Allowing you to use your budget as effectively as possible, as we are a small authority titles that are limited by number of issues work well for us as they don't expire that quickly, this also means we don't end up with a lot of titles expiring at the same time which can be a big problem."

"We focused on the concurrent users' model because this gave us the opportunity to run a county wide promotion called "Everybody's Reading". Encouraging people to get their friends, family, or colleagues to read the same book at the same time and enjoy the feeling of community that sharing a story brings. The model and promotion also gave established and new reading groups the chance to access digital copies of titles with far greater ease, and at far less cost to the service."

"I would buy more on the sim access model if they were reasonably priced. The simultaneous use titles enable us to run countywide promotions of set titles, as well as allowing us to

promote titles more generally safe in the knowledge that they'll be available when people check and increase customer satisfaction by titles always being available whilst they have licences left. This is the model that customers expect when they access a digital service."

2) Library feedback on title selections and engagement with publishers

In most cases the titles account for around 1% of the overall collection but performed well with check outs.

- Generally, the independent publishers' titles performed well, and almost all services reported discovering new publishers and new titles because of the pilot and saying they would follow the publishers and purchase more titles from them in the future.
- Publishers welcomed the Publisher Pitches and said they would attend them in the future.
- Titles performed better when promoted for author talks or special promotions.
- Covers and local interest seemed to influence check outs.

Key quotes on title selection and engagement with publishers

"A small selection of the less well-known titles performed better than expected. I think mainly due to them being from popular genres and, in the case of Equinox (9 checkouts), because the cover showed a stone circle, and the northern lights so was both topical and had local interest with Wiltshire's stone circles. The most checkouts were received from the well-known titles that were available for simultaneous use but there were a few of those that underperformed, especially the children's titles The less well-known titles that were chosen for author talks saw an increase in checkouts with the promotion for those"

"The titles from the indie publishers issued much better than we were expecting"

"We were delighted to find Bright I Burn and Happiness Falls both reaching around 100 issues each"

"No surprises, the thriller and commercial fiction titles outperformed the adult non-fiction titles, with the poetry titles bringing up the rear."

"It was as expected to us. The independently published books with less attractive covers, unfortunately did not issue well, and the bright, mainstream covers issued very well. Popular, well known trending titles issued well, which we predicted."

"It wasn't the case for all publishers and in fact the ones that made more lending models available were less likely to do this but some of the publishers made even their one copy one user models prohibitively expensive to the extent that I wouldn't have been able to justify buying them outside of the pilot. I understand that a price difference would be natural between the lending models, but it would be good if publishers could keep in mind the benefits of libraries lending their books when setting prices and models."

"Regular newsletters would be helpful for stock officers to get their books on their radar when considering purchasing."

3) Library feedback on book and author promotions

Not all libraries made use of the promotional assets provided. However, those who did reported that they found them reasonably useful. Libraries also reported that having authors available for author talks was of great interest, with an overwhelming response that they would promote online author events to their members if they were centrally organised for them and it was made easy to promote them with sufficient notice.

Key quotes on promotions

"Offering author talks by zoom which anyone can attend - Having readymade social media assets is always useful."

"It would be great to work with publishers on author talks and to potentially set temporary lending models for short promotions (such as county reads), if they're not already offering a range of models."

Outreach examples provided by libraries

"We used two of the simultaneous use titles from the pilot to allow us to have county wide reads to go along with a series of author talks and reading group activities we were holding. These were promoted to reading groups across the county as well as organisations that support people to develop their literacy skills. We also increased our promotion of ebooks from small publishers via social media during the pilot."

"We promoted our ebook book offer more heavily during our Big Indie Read adult reading promotion, than we usually do, and working with some of the indie publishers we were able to offer a lot of author talks via zoom to our reading friends from home book group, who perhaps weren't an audience that would have engaged with this type of literature, having ebook copies of their titles available, especially if they were available as multiple access copies."

"Ebook of the week on social media between May and July promoting 12 titles. We promoted in our customer newsletter which goes out to over 112 000 customers and Page Turners (reading groups) which goes out to over 8 000 people."

4) Library feedback on the pilot and their views on the current status of ebook lending in public libraries

"Main two issues for me are that some titles are just not available for public libraries to buy, and some publishers books are incredibly expensive, especially when compared to printed editions. Also, some of the lending models offered aren't ideal, ie several issues in a certain time frame (sometimes copies get weeded out before they've issued the maximum number of times), and I would have liked some more exploration of this. Somehow, we need to lobby publishers to a) make their books available, and b) reduce prices. if they were cheaper, we'd buy more copies! However, it was incredible to have the exposure to the Indie titles and the opportunity to engage with the publishers that we did, and we really loved being part of the project",

"I feel it was a very useful project to be part of. Allowing us to gain more insight into cost-per-circulation and how that may work for us. Also having access to digital assets gave us the ability to be a bit more creative with our social media posts".

"Glad to have taken part, we understand more about how elicensing works"

"I think that the hard work done on this project by everyone at all levels, from the project board to the staff in branches promoting the stock, has been commendable. A HUGE task to get so many different things joined up between different LMS's, aggregators, authorities, publishers etc. It's pleasing that one of the side-benefits has been such an increase in engagement and awareness of smaller presses for many, as it's something I have a long and well-documented history of advocating for. It may be that because of our unique position re: this work - i.e. we're already engaged with small presses, have a healthy budget (for the time being) for eStock and an existing, large active user base with excellent loan figures. I think being able to showcase the value of taking a data-driven approach is something that a lot of other services could benefit from, especially when every penny is being squeezed, so hopefully that will lead to some positive outcomes in future"

"Will be interesting to see how this project can be used with aggregators and publishers to encourage more favourable pricing for public libraries and lending models that more closely match our printed book stock"

"I've enjoyed being part of the pilot, we need to have early notice of the author talks to allow greater promotion and to have had more promotional materials"

Feedback from Publishers

Publishers were surveyed after the pilot and asked for their feedback across 3 main areas – sales of their ebooks included in the pilot to participating libraries, marketing and outreach and the role public libraries play now and could play in the future in promoting books, authors and reading.

1) **Sales**

At the time of writing, very few publishers had access to their sales data to participating libraries. Few of the publishers knew what their sales were by business model/type of licence. The publishers who did know their sales have reported that they are higher than expected and higher than their usual sales to libraries.

2) **Marketing and relationships with libraries**

Libraries Connected hosted a directory of digital assets for libraries to access. Some publishers were contacted directly for assets. Only 18% of publishers report building better relationships with libraries throughout the pilot, mainly due to hosting events and having a close relationship with Norfolk and Lancashire libraries. Almost all publishers noted that the pilot has incentivised them to work more closely with libraries moving forward.

Quotes from publishers

"It would be good to extend our offering to our full catalogue"

"Very keen to continue to build a relationship with libraries - the online events were a great way of gaining more exposure for our authors"

"Now that I know that libraries are receptive to social media graphics, we create packs for them and circulate on email! It also means we can offer online events and book club material"

3) Additional feedback from publishers

Having participated in the pilot, publishers were keen to see greater connections with libraries and different channels for engagement. This included 2-way discussions in person and virtually and finding ways to engage with the correct personnel at the library (stock manager, event managers, marketeers etc). Publishers also had ideas for how they could work further with libraries to engage library users. It is recognised that library services and publishers have restricted funds, which impacts the ability to pay authors to events, and that this is challenging. The Indie publishers were especially keen to find ways to work more closely with libraries.

Quote from publishers

"More outreach avenues (newsletters, social media, conferences/fairs) to form connections. Feedback from libraries more widely circulated on what they would like to see/receive from libraries"

"Perhaps publisher pop up days at libraries. Where several authors can be there to give readings and just engage with library users. Potential to also facilitate creative writing and editorial workshops"

"It would really useful if all library services had someone who was able to liaise and make decisions about events, either online or in person"

"Independent publishing months where they highlight indie presses"

"I would love to work with local libraries in bringing author and other events into them. Our funds and capacity as a small publisher to organise or facilitate this is limited, which is usually only exceeded by the limited funds and capacities of our local libraries"

"Love indie publisher displays and would love to see a newsletter about library 'wants' throughout the year"

Views from publishers on public libraries and their role in promoting books and reading

"With their limited budgets and the monopolies by the top ten publishing companies, opportunities for smaller publishers are reduced"

"A potential untapped avenue for us as a small publisher - especially for our children's books. However, it has seemed reasonably hard work or not possible to get our books into libraries, so it is time that we tend to spend on trying to promote the book to potential buyers/customers"

"Essential for making books accessible to all incomes and for visibility in the trade for indie titles"

"A great way to reach new/different types of readers and encourage people to take a chance with less well-known authors and books"

"They are important but should be more important. Criminally underfunded. They should have the same impact as a great indie bookshop: engaged local community, destination for events, curated shelves, etc. However, due to lack of funding we find it hard for our books to find much space with them. With their limit budgets they would rather stock titles that they know will be borrowed"

Conclusion of Findings

1) **The ebook Lending service**

   Licensing Models: Libraries hugely valued the flexibility offered by the different licensing models. As a result, they were able to vary their purchases, and able to put stronger marketing efforts around titles. They were also able to offer a much wider range of titles thanks to the cost per circulation model that gave readers greater choice and greater exposure to titles they may not have considered reading before. Pricing also plays a major factor into which titles libraries buy; where they are considered very high, they will not purchase the title.

   Supply Chain: The pilot demonstrated several obstacles in a complicated supply chain. These are principally around offering different licensing models to the aggregators (from the publishers, and via ebook distributors). This limits the ability of the aggregators to offer libraries books for sale on different models. The pilot also demonstrated a lack of data being provided to publishers on their sales to libraries, under different licences, where the variety of licences are offered.

   Curation of content: The pilot included many independent publishers who don't have any contact with libraries and aren't aware of their ebooks being sold into libraries. Libraries reported spending most of their budget on bestsellers which they know will be borrowed. Through the pilot we have created more of an appetite for independent publishers' books from libraries. Both parties indicated a willingness to engage more in the future.

2) **Reader Development and reaching underserved communities**

   One area the pilot set out to demonstrate was the power of libraries to build readers and reach underserved communities. The study conducted by Independent Mind provides the demographics on who is engaged in ebook borrowing. The pilot project encouraged the libraries to carry out outreach into underserved communities to evidence their influence. Some of the libraries were able to do this with grants to provide additional resource and the results showed good engagement with initiatives. What became clear from the pilot is that libraries are often short on people and resources to plan and implement activities, they need long lead times, and they need financial support. With the pilot conducted over the summer, libraries allocated many of their resources to the Summer Reading Challenge.

Recommendations based on the project

1) To provide a modern-day library service that is inclusive of all readers, libraries need greater access to ebooks:
    a. Libraries call on publishers to make their books available on a variety of business models that are not time-restricted, providing librarians with choice in what books they purchase and on what licences.
    b. Libraries call on ALL publishers to make their ebooks available to public libraries to purchase.
    c. Libraries call for cheaper pricing of ebooks, many of which are priced much higher than their print equivalents for the same number of loans.
    d. This should be monitored one year on from the publication of the report to measure change.

    The ebook ecosystem needs to work together to streamline language around licensing, as well as make it technically possible for publishers to offer their ebooks to libraries under a range of different licences. This is currently an obstacle within the supply chain.

2) More funding needs to be made available to libraries for dedicated Reader Development work to reach underserved communities. Since the pilot began, various reports have been published showing the decline in reading in the UK. Libraries are well placed to help communities develop and maintain a reading habit. Case studies and user demographics evidence the power of libraires in reader development, especially using the ebook lending system.

3) Greater efforts should be made to facilitate the relationship between independent publishers and libraries. Independent publishers have a wide range of titles which appeal to library users. Relationship building can be helped through:
    a. Regular presentations from independent publishers to library stock managers.
    b. Face to face opportunities for independent publishers and library stock managers to meet.
    c. A centralised repository of promotional materials from independent publishers for libraries to access to assist with marketing efforts.
    d. Databases of independent publishers and stock managers/library event managers to facilitate easier communications.

4) Larger publishers to consider libraries as important channels to readers and work in partnership with libraries to promote books and reading.
    a. Providing libraries with ARC copies, and marketing support materials.
    b. Working closely with libraries on community outreach and reader development programmes