November 8, 2019

John Sargent
CEO, Macmillan Publishing
120 Broadway
New York, New York 10271

Mr. Sargent,

I am writing on behalf of the Virginia Public Library Directors Association. Collectively, we support the more than 8.5 million residents across our Commonwealth. Many of these residents are readers and I’m positive that a preponderance of them have enjoyed books from Macmillan and your various imprints. Some read print, others digital. Some purchase books, some use libraries, and others utilize whatever provides them the quickest or broadest access. Whoever that reader is and whatever qualities we choose to define them by, your company’s choice to limit library’s access to digital materials hurts readers.

Libraries have long been a supporter of publishers as we buy lots of your product! We are both in the business of supporting readers; helping them find new love in the printed word, author discovery through browsing and library staff recommendations, and the simple fact that there are consumers out there who do not have the resources to purchase all the books that they might want to. As we’ve seen countless times, consumers use libraries as a first access point to new books and topics, then purchase materials that they’ve enjoyed, authors they want to support, and materials they know are worth reading again and again.

The Macmillan embargo will hurt us both. Your changes to sale and lending policies mean that libraries will be greatly limited in what they can afford to purchase in the long run. Libraries will also have less incentive to purchase digital Macmillan products. As paraphrased from a colleague, if you don’t want to sell to us, why would we want to buy from you? And if the expectation is that all of those digital library circulations will automatically transition over to sales figures, well, I look forward to seeing the data from this extended experiment.

Here in Virginia, each library is assessing their usage data and trying to chart their best path forward. For some systems, that means they will no longer be purchasing any Macmillan eBooks. For others, it means closely watching this process and ecosystem to see what their best option is to serve users, utilize tax dollars, and support our professional ethics regarding access.
We hope that you will come to see that this embargoing process is not in your best interest nor that of our shared constituents, those readers who support books, support authors, and support libraries.

Thank you,

Jessica A. Hudson
Director, Fairfax County Public Library
President, Virginia Public Library Directors Association

Those in support of this letter include:
Sonia Alcantara-Antoine, Newport News Public Library
Jenny Bakos, Blackwater Regional Library
Alison Barry, Franklin County Public Library
Whitney Berriman, Powhatan County Public Library
Jane Blue, Northumberland Public Library
Sherry Bright, Buchanan County Public Library
Wayne Crocker, Petersburg Public Library
Lisa Davis, Cumberland County Public Library
Rose Dawson, Alexandria Library
Maria Del Rosso, Fauquier County Public Library
Carrie Dos Santos, Middlesex County Public Library
Brenda Dunn, Bristol Public Library
Todd Elliott, Portsmouth Public Library
Rick Ewing, Central Virginia Regional Library
Robb Farmer, Smyth County Public Library
Scott Firestine, Richmond Public Library
Betsy Fowler, Williamsburg Regional Library
Valerie Gardner, Hampton Public Library
Julie Goyette, Rockbridge Regional Library
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Jill Hames, James L. Hamner Public Library
Harold Hayes, Samuels Public Library
Shari Henry, Roanoke County Public Library
Katie Hill, Orange County Public Library
John Huddy, Handley Regional Library
Martha Hutzel, Central Rappahannock Regional Library
Amanda Jackson, Chesapeake Public Library
Lois Jones, Massanutten Regional Library
Karim Khan, Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library
Chang Liu, Loudon County Public Library
Michael Mabe, Chesterfield County Public Library
Brian Manning, Appomattox Regional Library
Kelly McBride Delph, Russell County Public Library
Diantha McCauley, Augusta County Public Library
Chandra McPherson, Heritage Public Library
Jenny Novalis, Bedford Public Library
Kevin Osborne, Waynesboro Public Library
Julie Phillips, Botetourt County Library
David Plunkett, Jefferson-Madison Regional Library
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Mary Thomas, Wythe-Grayson Regional Library
Ann Tripp, Salem Public Library
Sheila Umberger, Roanoke Public Libraries
Megan Upshaw, Caroline County Library
Bonnie Utz, Madison County Library Inc
Becky Walker, Meherrin Regional Library System
Sally Warburton, Pulaski County Public Library
Rick Ward, Blue Ridge Regional Library
Barbara Weedman, Henrico County Public Library
Jordan Welborn, Campbell County Public Library
Sandy Whitesides, Shenandoah County Library System
Deborah Wright, Prince William Public Library
Jackie Zataweski, Nottoway County Public Library