

The Minnesota Library Association helps libraries accomplish together  
what none can do alone.

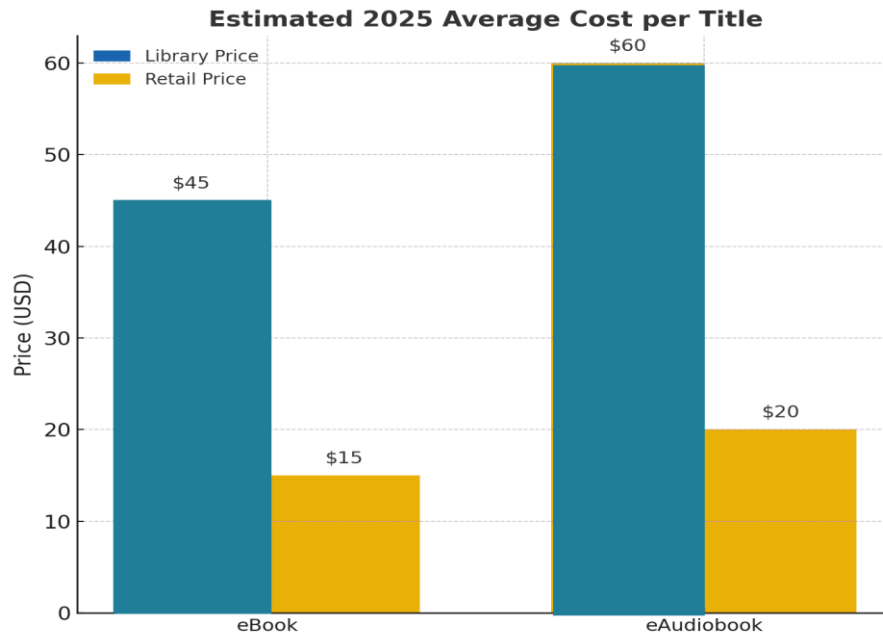


MINNESOTA LIBRARY  
ASSOCIATION

# Fair eBook Access for MN Libraries: HF 3698

# The Core Problem

- Libraries lease, not own, eBooks.
- Libraries pay 3–5x more than consumers.
- Licenses expire after 2 years or 26 checkouts.
- Taxpayer dollars spent on short-lived rentals.



Source: ReadersFirst 'Publisher Price Watch' (2025) | Library eAudio = 3x Retail



# Digital vs Print

## For Libraries

Print is owned permanently.  
eBooks are temporary.

Print is removed on the library's terms, sometimes lasting 70+ checkouts or 10+ years. eBooks expire quickly.

Vendors can change eBook prices at any time.

Digital model reverses all normal purchasing norms.



## For Authors

- Usually earn 5-15% of the list price of print.
  - Publishers keep the remainder after printing, distribution, marketing, overhead, and retailer discounts.
- Authors usually earn 10-30% of net receipts for digital.
  - Vendors keep up to 30 percent of the list price. This comes off the top.
  - Net receipts are what's left after the vendor takes its cut.
  - Publishers retains remaining revenue (70-90% of net receipts).

**Across formats, authors consistently earn the lowest percentage, while publishers and vendors capture the majority.**

# Why is this a problem?

## Access

- High eBook prices and the inability to lend between libraries (i.e. interlibrary loan)
- Many schools depend on public library collections

## Accessibility

- Readers with visual or reading impairments.
- Students with IEPs or 504 Plans.

## Taxpayer Dollars

- High prices and must repeatedly re-license the same titles, increases long-term costs
- Limits ability to build robust eBook collections.

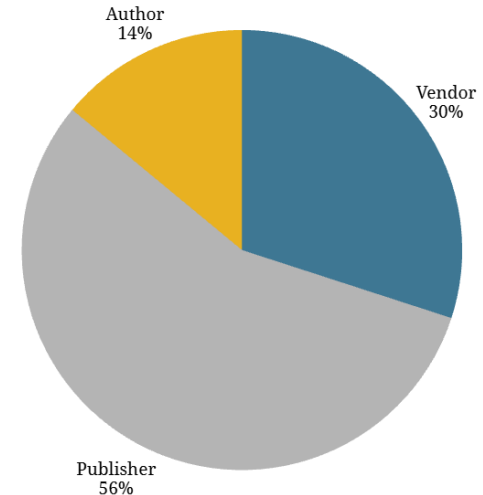


# 2025 Example: 1 Popular Author

- 835 copies purchased for \$55,711.20.
- Still 2,451 readers waiting.
- Licenses expire. Libraries must repurchase next year.

Where did the \$ go?

- Vendor: \$16,713.36.
- Publisher: \$31,198.27.
- Author: \$7,799.57.



\*based on typical contracts



# Authors and Libraries: Aligned Interests

- Libraries drive discovery and long-term sales.
- Library patrons are also book buyers.
- Authors earn fixed royalties unrelated to library pricing.
- Fair pricing increases access and future sales.



# Government Purchasing Norms

- Receive discounts (i.e. software licensing).
- Purchase on state contracts.
- Include annual price-increase caps.
- Public contracts allow for transparency.
- eBook vendors provide no discounts and no caps.
- eBook pricing is an outlier in public purchasing.
- eBook vendor NDAs block transparency.



# Connecticut's Approach

- Contract-law protections for libraries.
- Prohibits NDAs and unfair license terms.
- Requires fair lending, reasonable terms, and options.
- Model for practical, enforceable change.



# Legislative Solution: HF 3698

- Protect taxpayer dollars.
- Restore local control.
- Ensure sustainable eBook access.
- Support schools, public libraries and MN citizens.
- Strengthen Minnesota's reading ecosystem.

**Thank You**

