

Board packet March 15, 2022: ReadersFirst membership

Friday, March 11, 2022 11:24 AM

Subject	Board packet March 15, 2022: ReadersFirst membership
From	Ryan Livergood
To	libraryboard
Cc	Noreen Reese; Gina Ornelas; Amy Blanchard; Sandy Beda
Sent	Friday, March 11, 2022 11:23 AM

Good morning,

As you will recall, the legislation I proposed to the Illinois Library Association Public Policy Committee to address equitable access to eContent for libraries became one of ILA's lead legislative priority items. This legislation became the "Equitable Access to Electronic Literature Act", and it received bipartisan co-sponsorship support in the House Consumer Protection Committee, out of which is passed unanimously. However, it did not pass out of the Senate. This can be attributed to a ruling that occurred last month in the U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland regarding Maryland's legislation on this issue (that was one of the inspirations for our efforts in Illinois). The judge ruled in favor of publishers, issuing a preliminary injunction preventing Maryland's law requiring "reasonable" pricing and access to e-books for libraries from taking effect. Articles in [Infodocket](#), [Publishers Weekly](#), and [Bloomberg Law](#), cover the decision, which places responsibility for resolving this issue squarely on Congress rather than in state legislatures or in the courts.

At this point, efforts to address equitable access to eContent for libraries will have to be done at the federal level, although I believe ILA will still explore options for what we might be able to do legislatively at the state level. I think one very small way we can assist with the federal effort is to become a member of ReadersFirst. ReadersFirst is an organization of nearly 300 libraries representing 200 million readers dedicated to ensuring that library users have the same open, easy and free access to e-books that they have come to rely on with physical books. You can read more about this collaboration of libraries across the world at readersfirst.org. I see no downside to WNPL becoming a member, as there is no cost to join and no time commitment. Admittedly, this would be primarily a symbolic action on the part of WNPL, but one I think we should take as the library community continues our efforts towards requiring publishers to offer e-book and digital audiobook licenses to libraries on reasonable terms.

Thanks,
Ryan

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