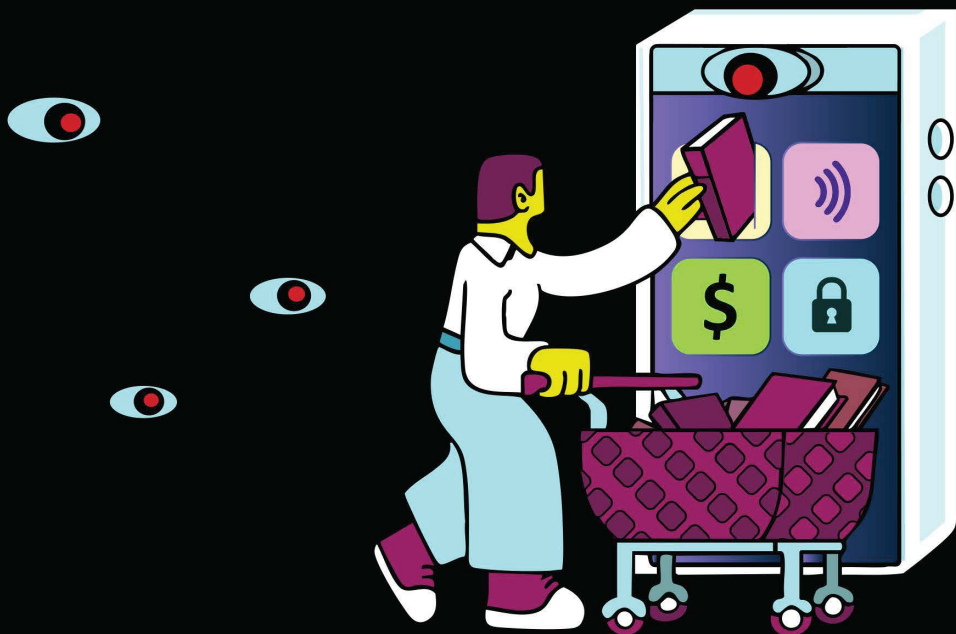


MY CONSUMER AUTOBIOGRAPHY

BOOKS READ IN 2024



AJ BOSTON

LIBRARY
FUTURES 

My Consumer Autobiography

Books Read in 2024

AJ BOSTON

LIBRARY FUTURES
NEW YORK, NY



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About Library Futures

Library Futures is the vanguard nonprofit organization uncovering and confronting the fundamental policy issues that threaten libraries in the digital age. We believe librarians, policymakers, and community leaders deserve a new approach to digital rights so they can protect, advocate for, and advance a fair digital future for libraries and the communities they serve. Library Futures meets this need with fresh research, visionary policy and advocacy initiatives, and engaging education programs.

Library Futures is a project of the Engelberg Center on Innovation Law & Policy at New York University School of Law.

Visit us [online](#).



About the Research Network

The Library Futures Research Network is a group of researchers and creatives from the Library Futures community who are interested in asking bold questions and exploring new ideas on topics relevant to the organization's [key issues](#). Our goal is to “think together” to brainstorm, problem solve, experiment, and support each other through project creation and implementation.

Library Futures provides an outlet and an audience for the research network's boldest questions and ideas. Project formats range from podcasts and zines to research papers and resource templates.

About this Project

2024 Library Futures Research Network Award

In 2024, we announced that [Arthur Boston](#), well-known to many on social media and in the scholarly communication community, would be bringing us a more personal take on many of the issues we address. As he described it, his project tackled “the personal ownership, lease, and use of digital and physical books from the perspective of a consumer, father, academic librarian, and former public librarian.”

Funding for this project was provided by the [Richard Lounsbury Foundation](#). Library Futures is proud to support the work of our community and to amplify the voices of those doing crucial work on equitable access in the digital age. We are grateful to the members of our [inaugural research network](#) for being a part of it.



About the Grantee

Arthur ("AJ") Boston is Scholarly Communication Librarian at Murray State University, where he coordinates student grants and events for the Office of Research and Creative Activity, manages the institutional repository, and teaches a scholarly communication course. AJ writes and talks about open access, peer review, and books, and he has served on the International Open Access Week Advisory Committee, the Irish Open Access Access Publishers Advisory Board, and was a Library Publishing Coalition Fellow.

My Consumer Autobiography

1.

Book Reading

A family friend still recounts the time a teacher found my copy of *A Tale of Two Cities*, torn up, in the cafeteria. It was once hard to imagine that I would become a regular reader, much less a librarian. Dickens novels notwithstanding, reading is now a part of my daily practice. It's a trained habit that I cling to, knowing how easily my concentration issues could derail it. Last year, at 41, I had my [biggest reading year ever](#).

In all, I'm a pretty good reader of books, but as a consumer of books, it's a different story. I largely support one single international retailer that spies on me and gives me fewer rights in exchange for my money. Why do I do this, when I could support local shops and libraries? When I could give unique copies to family or strangers later? The answer comes down to the affordances of ebooks and the legal and technological web governing them.

About two-thirds of the books I read are in ebook format and the remaining third are digital audiobooks. I can trace a pretty clear line between my adoption of digital reading and my reading frequency. The font size is always the same, the next paragraph is always on top, multiple books are always in rotation, and reading can take place discreetly in public or in the dark at home.

I like libraries. I work in an academic library and the public library I used to work for is located down the street. I made a new year's resolution to use libraries more last year and about a tenth of the books I finished were borrowed from a library. As a frequent reader, is a rate of 1 out of 10 a desirable rate for library borrowing?

If I had more patience for ebook waitlists, the rate could have been 46.5%. And if I used interlibrary loan and read more physical books, that rate could well have been 100%. Technically, I could have borrowed every book I read last year. Is this just a case of one individual exercising personal choice?

My 'personal choices' point to idiosyncratic answers. But I do wonder if my reasons may actually be more common than not. That's why I feel compelled to share this 'consumer autobiography' with the Library Futures audience and to encourage others to share their stories. Perhaps an accumulation of testimony may draw out patterns useful to advocates in the fight for the future of libraries and digital reading.

Enough. Let's talk books.

2.

Rest and Relaxation

The first book I finished reading in 2024 was Ottessa Moshfegh's [My Year of Rest and Relaxation](#), which is about a privileged young woman in New York who uses prescription drugs to sleep as much as possible. This was one of ten novels I read last year, in case any [op-ed writers](#) are keeping score. This was admittedly a dark choice of book to start the day after Christmas 2023, but Moshfegh had been on my to-read list and being on holiday break, I was in the right mindset to take on new fiction.

When I paid \$13.77 (including tax) to “own this item,” the [terms and conditions](#) did not state that “Kindle Content is licensed, not sold, to you by the Content Provider” as it does [now](#) after the September 2024 passage of [California Assembly Bill No. 2426](#). I appreciate the clarification, but wonder if this change had any connection with Amazon's recent decision to [stop allowing users](#) to download Kindle files for backup.

Would it have been better had I used a library copy? Considering how publishers charge libraries more money to loan books to users for less time than a Kindle lease, I honestly don't know. And when I checked today, the public library's two audiobook copies, two ebook copies, and one hardback copy were all checked out.

I generally follow the principle that Alan Jacobs describes in his book, [The Pleasures of Reading in an Age of Distraction](#), which is to Read at Whim. In most cases, I agree with [Amanda Mull's opinion](#) that online shopping is much too fast and frictionless. But reading has never come easily to me, so when it comes to books, it helps to have access to a given book as soon as my interest appears.

3.

Pachinko

One of the best books I read in 2024 was Min Jin Lee's novel about four generations of a Korean family spanning the 20th century. When I bought [Pachinko](#), I didn't know if or when I would actually read it. Amazon advertised it for \$2.99 at the start of their Black Friday 2023 sales blitz and the deal seemed too good to pass up. Early in January, I dutifully opened this book I had purchased (leased), read a few pages, and got hooked.

This year, I also bought *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* on a similar sale. Deep discounting is a great marketing tool for ebooks not only for pulling in readers it might otherwise miss, but due to the added exposure from climbing bestseller lists. I'm curious about the strategies behind ebook deep discounting. Are these a result of publisher-led advertising versus, or are they an internal choice by Amazon? The Tolkien book sales fit well with Amazon's ownership of their *Rings of Power* television series. Would it benefit Amazon in some way to discount *Pachinko* between the Apple TV series adaptation? Or maybe there is no conspiracy here and ebooks just needed a remainder table equivalent.

4.

Happiness

After *Relaxation* and *Pachinko*, I started acting on my new year's resolutions to use libraries more often. I began by borrowing physical copies of [The Architecture of Happiness](#) and [Architecture: A Very Short Introduction](#) from my university library. Around this time, I was operating under the delusion that we might build our next house (lol. lmao, even). A newly-built house was not on the horizon but it was fun to read about architecture.

5.

Crying

Next, I checked out a physical copy of Michelle Zauner's excellent memoir [Crying in H-Mart](#) from the public library. I started reading this at the home I live in but did not build that weekend with music from the author's band Japanese Breakfast playing in the background. It was a nice experience, but when the workweek returned, I had to decide whether it was worth it to weigh down my work bag with physical books.

There was little chance that I would pull this book out to read while walking in the parking lot like I do with my Kindle. There was even less chance I was going to whip out a book with a visible cover standing in the grocery line. (I live in a part of the mid-south where strangers talk to you and it's rude to not talk back.)

It was barely February but my experiment with printed books was over. I didn't finish any other physical books for the rest of the year.

6.

Sidebar: Tidying Up

When I was 32 and our firstborn was two, I read Marie Kondo's [*The Life-Changing Magic Of Tidying Up*](#), which led to a decluttering of several boxes that made up my home library. Over the previous thirteen years, I had entertained ideas about the books my children would grow up seeing on my shelves. Fast-forward to two years of parenthood, and it no longer felt so imperative that the fat spine of William Gaddis's *The Recognitions* take up my son's imagination. A local shop, which I once bought second-hand books from, was happy to resell what I had collected.

7.

Shadows

Decluttering is a gateway drug to minimalism. Kyle Chayka wrote a critique of both trends in his book, [The Longing for Less: What's Missing From Minimalism](#). Having enjoyed that book, I requested my academic library acquire his new book, [Filterworld: How Algorithms Flattened Culture](#). While I waited, I found his [2020 LitHub essay](#) where he writes about finding a vintage book in Donald Judd's personal library.

That book was Jun'ichirō Tanizaki's [In Praise Of Shadows](#) (1933), which compares Eastern and Western approaches to the use of light and shadow in architecture. My library's copy of the 72-page translated work was checked out and overdue. New print copies were [\\$9 on Amazon](#). Meanwhile, PDF copies displayed at the top of Google search results. I debated the ethics of reading the PDF copy. The author was not alive, but the translators were. Had I borrowed the book like I intended, nobody alive or dead would receive royalties.

So I started to read the PDF, but less than twenty pages in, I remembered how much I hated reading long PDFs on a computer. I went back to the book's Amazon product page, switched formats from paperback to ebook and discovered I could read this immediately on my Kindle at no added cost. This title was available through Kindle Unlimited, a service I forgot I had subscribed to (more on this later.)

Authors who enroll in Amazon's program are able to [receive royalties](#) (at a rate of around \$0.004 to \$0.005 per page read) through Kindle Unlimited. Whether the translators for *Shadows* were eligible for enrollment, I do not know.

8.

Filterworld

Filterworld eventually showed up on the New Books display in the lobby of the academic library where I work. I checked it out and skimmed pages I had already read in the Kindle sample. I considered whether to read this as a physical book or to buy the ebook. After all that, I listened to this book on Spotify.

During my on-again, off-again relationship with Audible, I discovered there were certain books (usually non-fiction) that my brain preferred to take in as audiobooks played at 1.5X to 2.0X speed. Chayka's book fits the bill.

In [November 2023](#), [Spotify](#) added "access to a catalog of more than 200,000 audiobook titles—including titles from all the Big Five publishers" for premium subscribers, such as me. [Spotify offers authors](#) a suite of tools for growing and expanding audiences similar to musicians, but their exact author royalty rate is hard to [find online](#).

Instead of purchasing books with credits like Audible, Spotify gives users 15 hours of listening on any number of audiobooks each. Spotify users have the option to pay extra to "top off" hours, but 15 was enough for *Filterworld's* 11 hour and 56 minute playtime. Now Spotify knows to recommend book titles similar to *Filterworld* to me.

9.

The Vegetarian

After enjoying *Crying in H-Mart* and *Pachinko*, I googled to see what other Korean-authored books I had been missing out on. More than one list included Han Kang's novel [The Vegetarian](#). A college friend had given me his paperback copy maybe six years ago. That copy eventually got included, unread, in one of the big boxes of books I had purged. I almost never act on recommendations, but now the whim to read this had struck and, importantly, my public library had an ebook available. Through the OverDrive website, I selected my preferred format, which redirected me to Amazon where another mouse click sent the file to my Kindle.

10.

Bedtime Stories

This is the world we wanted. All who would have seen us dead are dead. I hear the witch's cry break in the moonlight through a sheet of sugar: God rewards. Her tongue shrivels into gas...

-excerpt of "Gretel In Darkness" from The House on Marshland (1975) by Louise Glück

During the height of COVID-19 social acknowledgment, I started reading for long stretches of time to my kids at night. We worked through ebook versions of J. A. Baker's [The Peregrine](#), about the first third of [Moby-Dick](#), and Emily Wilson's translation of [The Odyssey](#). In case anyone is worried, the kids were asleep when I read Odysseus' bloody homecoming.

In October 2020, after reading [Devotions: The Selected Poems of Mary Oliver](#), I turned to [Louise Glück's collected poems](#). Even though my kids were mostly asleep, it felt weird to read some of the Glück poems to seven year olds. Reading progress stalled, but I finally finished reading this collection's 600+ pages in March 2024.

There are books I can read in a week, and others that take me years. [The World-Ending Fire: The Essential Wendell Berry](#), which I bought in April 2020, sits at 70%. Studs Terkel's [Working](#) bought in July 2021 sits at 30%. And I finished Ryan Holiday's [The Daily Stoic: 366 Meditations on Wisdom, Perseverance, and the Art of Living](#) in April 2024, one year after starting it. For the books it takes me time to work through, it just makes more logistical sense to purchase than borrow.

11.

Amusing Ourselves

My academic library had a physical copy of Neil Postman's classic 1985 text that I flipped through, but like *Filterworld*, I chose to listen to [Amusing Ourselves to Death](#) as an audiobook on Spotify. Postman (building on McLuhan) describes how the medium of television had shaped culture and the content it presented. Media criticism in this vein has enjoyed some rejuvenated purpose in recent times, given changes in social media, legacy news, and streaming content.

In one chapter, Postman describes the [Lincoln/Douglas debates](#) as public events in which both parties offered multi-hour responses to each other. Postman wondered who these audiences were that could “so cheerfully accommodate themselves to seven hours of oratory.” Was there any American audience who could today (then, 1985) “endure seven hours of talk” and “comprehend lengthy and complex sentences aurally”? While my listening sessions were segmented, this was how I experienced Postman's four hour & forty-eight minute book.

When audiobooks were limited to tapes and CDs, my brain would drift to other thoughts while I waited for narrators to finish a sentence. It's entirely possible that I pay attention less closely, but now with apps that can adjust playback speed, I can better handle this medium. Chores, showers, and commutes—activities previously reserved for weekly podcasts supported by Viagra and sports gambling ads—are now more frequently including books.

12.

Ice Planet Barbarians (🌶️🌶️🌶️)

Amazon advertised discounted access to their Kindle Unlimited program ([not to be confused](#) with their Prime Reading program, which is like Prime Video or Prime Music, but for books and magazines) to me in August 2023. Paying \$5.29 got me three months of subscription access. When I bought a new Kindle in October 2023 (after ruining my old Kindle, showing off at the pool), I got three additional months at no added cost. When March 2024 rolled around, I forgot to cancel and was charged at the regular rate. I ended up keeping the service until my final charge in July 2024.

While subscribed, I read the first in Ruby Dixon's popular "sci-fi romance" series [Ice Planet Barbarians](#). Dixon's twenty-one book series follows a kidnapped group of young women crash-landed on a harsh planet inhabited by strikingly fit beings seeking mates. It's hugely popular online, both as a source of pleasure and derision. I heard about it while watching a [YouTube review](#) of the Boox Palma e-reader. While reading *Barbarians*, I also bought Edgar Rice Burrough's collected [Barsoom series](#) (on sale for \$4.23 after tax).

Dixon's and Burrough's books bear passing resemblance to each other. *Barsoom's* hero, John Carter, finds himself transported to Mars where he engages in one of the earliest instances of interplanetary romance in a story that debuted in serialized form, sandwiched between [pulp magazine](#) ads for Campbell's Soups and Colgate's Shaving Lathers. Dixon's sensational story follows this narrative tradition and finds a large audience on a website selling [soups](#) and [shaving cream](#).

With discounts, my 9-month dalliance with Kindle Unlimited cost me \$68.84. In all, I read four full books, averaging out to a \$17.21 cost per title. In addition to *Ice Planet Barbarians* and the previously discussed *In Praise of Shadows*, I read Frank Norris's [McTeague](#) (a 19th century novel about the misadventures of a weird dentist) and Vernor Vinge's Hugo Award winning [A Fire Upon the Deep](#) (which happens to also feature a bit of interstellar intimacy).

I should have just "purchased a license" for *A Fire*, which took me five months to finish. The same for *McTeague*, whose ebook version is sold for \$0.99. *Barbarians* took no time to read and, for those readers, the Kindle Unlimited program does make sense, which probably has the effect of incentivizing more authors to write in that style.

13.

Kubrick: An Odyssey

Similar to the Kindle Unlimited playbook, Audible first lured me in with a free trial month, followed by a discounted 12-month program (\$94.87). My sister at one point gifted me several of her unused credits and as the unlistened books accumulated, I let my membership lapse until an Apple promo brought me back very briefly in 2023.

A separate promotion appeared in 2024 for three book credits at a dollar apiece, piggybacked by another promo for one free credit if I used my existing credits by a certain time. The promos worked and I ended up using Audible a lot in 2024 with what I assumed were typical customer retention deals. In retrospect, it seems like they may have been planning for the competition that Spotify's audiobook program was about to pose.

Audiobook programs at these levels have been great. I've burned through a lot of books that would have sat in to-be-read purgatory without it. Graeber's *Debt*, Hyde's *The Gift*, Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. The best book I listened to in 2024 was Robert P. Kolker & Nathan Abrams's [Kubrick: An Odyssey](#) as narrated by Perry Daniels.

My brother-in-law clued me in that Audible lets you return books you don't like and riding my year of promotions and bonuses, I tried this out with Kubrick, the first book to appear when I opened the app. I realized I probably hurt the [creators and not Amazon](#). I take the blame and do not criticize the idea of a return feature. I've returned at least one book that I truly did not enjoy. The sample seemed fine, but 20 more minutes in I realized it was not for me.

Audible's system of buying credits to exchange for books leads to anxiety about which book to select on the one hand and, on the other hand, buyer's remorse for some books you do select. The book return option partially solves the remorse problem, but creates new problems like return abuse (sorry), and does nothing to alleviate decision anxiety. The 15 monthly hours offered by Spotify feels too short, but I feel no anxiety about freely dipping into (and out of) books at will.

14.

My Brilliant Friend

Just before the HBO Series adaptation debuted in 2018, I borrowed the first volume of Elena Ferrante's *Neapolitan Quartet* and always meant to get around to the other three. Last year the *New York Times* crowned [My Brilliant Friend](#) as the [Best Book of the 21st Century](#) so far. Then Amazon put the four ebooks in the series on sale for \$3.99, \$3.99, \$10.35, and \$1.99.

Thanks to a mind susceptible to suggestion, I bought all four and have now gotten around to the other three. This lifelong portrait of two frenemies, if I may coin the worst synopsis possible, really is worth reading.

Since many of the finer details had left my memory, I re-read *My Brilliant Friend* before moving forward. Of the almost 600 books I've logged to Goodreads, this is just the 15th I've marked as 'read-twice.' My 2.5% re-reading rate makes it hard to get too worked up about my ebook purchases only being leases. Meanwhile, when I check out ebooks from my public library, I have anxiety about increasing hold lines for book leases which are [much more expensive](#).

15.

The Lesser Dead

Speaking of hold lines.... In October, I wanted to read a horror title. A Reddit post suggested Christopher Buehlman's witty and violent vampire book [The Lesser Dead](#). The Kindle sample sank its fangs in (oh dear), but the hold for the library ebook would not arrive in time for a Halloween read, so I ended up dropping \$14.83 into Bezos' outstretched candy bag (sorry).

16.

Ali

As a former Louisvillian, Muhammad Ali has always been a towering figure in my imagination. But as someone who doesn't care about boxing, it took me over a year to work through Jonathan Eig's nearly 23-hour audiobook, [Ali: A Life](#). Just like Louise Glück's collected poetry, it simply would not have been viable to have checked this title out, not without amassing an incredible overdue fine. *Ali* was the final book that I finished reading in 2024.

17.

Also Read

Not all the books I read this year led to any special insights about being a reader at the start of the 21st century. I'll briefly note some of the other books I finished below. For sickos and completists, a full list of the books I read can be found on [my website](#).

- Something led me to books about Zen practice, including [Discovering the True Self: Kodo Sawaki's Art of Zen Meditation](#), [Opening the Hand of Thought: Foundations of Zen Buddhist Practice](#), and [The Miracle of Mindfulness: An Introduction to the Practice of Meditation](#).
- Meanwhile, I kept a foot firmly in the material world with Scott Galloway's perfect airplane read [The Algebra of Wealth: A Simple Formula for Financial Security](#) and the oddly-fascinating [Become a Franchise Owner!: The Start-Up Guide to Lowering Risk, Making Money, and Owning What You Do](#).
- I kept another (third?) foot in the door of academia with Gail Pool's [Faint Praise: The Plight of Book Reviewing in America](#) and Anna Kornbluh's [Immediacy: Or, The Style of Too Late Capitalism](#).
- My favorite non-fiction book of the year was Roland Allen's [The Notebook: A History of Thinking on Paper](#).

18.

The Mood Machine

One of the last books that I bought in 2024 was a preorder of Liz Pelly's [The Mood Machine: The Rise of Spotify and the Cost of the Perfect Playlist](#) on Audible.

Pelly's book narrates the rise of Spotify and discusses how the company makes more sense when you think of them as an advertising business rather than a music business. When *Mood Machine* became available in 2025, I noticed I could stream it on Spotify. As funny as it would be to listen to this particular book on Spotify, my guilty conscience with Kubrick wouldn't let me cancel my pre-order.

Not everyone agrees that listening to an audiobook "counts" as reading, which I find silly. More seriously, digital platforms most certainly believe that both text-based books and audiobooks "count" as content. Spotify's audiobook program needs to be closely paid attention to on its own terms as well as a harbinger of things to come in the wider business of books.

For one example, [Pelly's reporting](#) shows that Spotify has seeded its playlists with A.I.-generated music and music by pseudonymous artists "presumably in an effort to reduce its royalty payouts." With [ebooks](#) and digital audiobooks [continuing to dominate circulation in U.S. public libraries](#) for the second year in a row, we should be vigilant about [partially](#)—and fully—[A.I. Generated Slop](#) infiltrating library collections.

Padding book packages with 'slop' will allow providers to give libraries the old song-and-dance about low costs per title, even as overall digital content [costs continue to rise](#). This is what academic libraries once heard from journal publishers, who created more and more journal titles, as a defense of their [overall rising costs](#).

19.

Reflection

As an individual consumer, I am nimble: able to buy, borrow, or lease where I may; join or leave services as I please; take advantage of deals as they are offered. Libraries as buyers do not enjoy these luxuries, with budgets that need to remain stable from year to year while serving diverse constituencies. As a consumer, I may perceive the problems of the library as separate from mine as an individual. But libraries are the only legal non-market alternative in this space and the choices I make are only as good as the options that I have afforded to me.

Digital has made possible pocketable libraries of ebooks and speed-boosting in-app audiobooks. These options have improved my reading life and as such I would never turn away the progress made here. But along with the good comes the less good. It is not a necessary condition that digital makes things harder for libraries, but it is a possibility. Just as it is possible for digital to make things easier for libraries, and better for library users.

When I reflect on my experiences in 2024, I can make out a profile of a reader. This reader has many desires when it comes to books and reading, such as supporting libraries, saving money, compensating creators, understanding ownership and usage rights. But at the top of the hierarchy of needs are concerns about the reading itself. Books need to be sampled. Books must become accessible within a limited period of interest. Books need to be put down without anguish. Books need to take as long as they take to finish.

Sir Francis Bacon wrote that “some books are to be tasted.” Sampling books (or tasting them) is amazing. But sample lengths are not always enough to tell me if a book is right for me or not. In a physical library, I can pick up a book and sample however much I need from any section. But if I want to read it, I have to then check it out. We have allowed counterproductive impositions on the structure of library leases that puts stress on book checkouts.

Limiting the number of checkouts that a library can purchase limits the overall number of people who can read a book at any given time. Making the cost for a library lease more expensive than for individual consumers limits library readership even further. This may make financial sense if you imagine that if a new release is popular, limiting the number of library leases will lead to those facing a long wait time will simply purchase it on their own.

This is certainly happening, but aren't booksellers losing money on those direct consumer purchases which are less expensive than the library version? If the book is very well written, wouldn't there be more money to be had in readers who borrow that book a second time, rather than simply re-opens the book they purchased? Does this come down to how bestsellers are calculated? If so, can we update that formula?

It pains me to think that if I want to peruse an ebook a little lengthier than the sample, and end up not even reading it, that this action eats up an entire loan.

Doesn't it pain booksellers a bit to know that people walk into libraries everyday, sampling your wares, and it's not monetized one iota?

In both of these cases, there is a binary “paid” or “unpaid” use. The Kindle Unlimited program and Spotify's audiobook tier operate in a model that conceptualizes beyond this and look instead at pages or minutes spent

in a book, with no limitation on number of books-per-user or users-per-book. Can thoughtfully-designed pro rata models be explored in more depth for libraries?

For individuals, ebook reading means never running into physical space limitations. The same is true for libraries, which is why I don't totally understand the just-in-case model (as opposed to a just-in-time model).

20.

Moving Forward

I like the idea of [Bookshop.org](#) because it leverages the internet to connect books and readers while supporting local sellers rather than hoarding all the proceeds up into a single multinational company. I've never used it because I primarily read digital now. Bookshop recently began selling ebooks and so I bought my first book from there. Due to [DRM restrictions](#), I can only read Bookshop purchases in the Bookshop app, not my Kindle, though there are apparently plans to make this available with Kobo later in the year.

For a while, I've considered buying a non-Kindle e-reader. Yes, some part of that thought derives from my wanting to escape the Amazon ecosystem. But true to my reader profile, an even greater part of me wants an e-reader that is smaller than the Kindle and that accepts more formats than the Kindle. If an e-ink device with a desirable form factor that also allowed me to support local bookshops came onto the market, I may have to jump ship finally.

Indie bookstores [gaining the ability](#) to sell ebooks to customers is opening more consumer options. Dare I hope that this could mean more options for libraries? Could libraries source their books through Bookshop, or something similar, and keep more of their tax-funded dollars within their own community?

21.

Final Thought

We need a lot of changes to the digital book market. In the meantime, I know that I will continue to hop around services taking what offers I can. As the Audibles and Spotifys of the world fight it out, I will surely be the beneficiary of some deals. It would be tempting to observe this and think that no changes in the digital book market are needed because the free market is apparently providing better services at lower rates.

But if recent history teaches us anything, it's that this is a temporary state of affairs until one model finally dominates or a handful of these companies reach some detente verging on antitrust.

In the digital world, we can rent beach houses, watch them flood, and move to another. Because new beach houses pop up, it's possible to ignore the receding coastline for a time. But we may one day find the land has shrunk to a patch only able to support a single high-rise building welcoming us digital serfs home with targeted and tracked lease ads. Let's hope not.

Author's note: books mentioned in this essay often link to Bookstore.org in support of [Bolin Books](#), an independent bookseller in my community. None of the books I read in this essay were bought in support of Bolin Books. If you consider purchasing any book mentioned here, please consider helping me atone for my biblio-sins.