

Cambridge University Libraries

Policy on the purchase of accessible ebooks

Background

In the light of legislation ([Equality Act \(2010\)](#)) and the [University's commitment to identify and remove barriers to equitable learning opportunities](#) the aim of this policy is to ensure that as many ebooks as possible are available to students in an accessible, DRM-free format. DRM (Digital Rights Management) is technology employed by publishers to control the usage of electronic material after purchase (e.g. by imposing a time or printing/copying limit or restricting download to specific, compatible software) and often reduces the accessibility of materials for readers, especially those with a disability.

In scope

The focus of the policy is on titles on reading lists for taught undergraduate and postgraduate courses, whether purchased by ebooks@cambridge or by individual faculty and departmental libraries.

Out of scope

This policy does not apply to ebooks purchased for research purposes at this point in time. Electronic Legal Deposit books are also out of scope since they are not purchased.

Purchasing DRM-free ebooks: *DRM-free first*

Before purchasing an ebook, purchasers should check for the availability of DRM-free licences across a range of suppliers. DRM-free licences should be selected whenever they are available and their cost is not prohibitively high. It is acknowledged that there are cases where DRM-free ebook licences do not exist or purchases cannot be justified in terms of potential use; librarians should always make purchasing decisions on a case-by-case basis.

If the cost of a DRM-free title is prohibitively high, or a DRM-free licence is not available, a DRM-protected ebook may be purchased for general use. In such cases, a cost-free PDF may be sourced direct from the publisher or from services such as RNIB Bookshare for students with a disability. Note that PDFs provided in this way are for the exclusive use of the requesting individual.

Working with publishers and training library staff

The ebooks team will work to improve the availability and affordability of DRM-free ebooks in various ways including, but not restricted to:

- Developing the supplier portfolio; actively exploring discount opportunities on DRM-free material; educating vendors on the importance of providing affordable DRM-free content.
- Providing up-to-date information and training to library staff on available discounts for and sources of DRM-free ebooks; enabling purchasers to access a wide range of suppliers by facilitating account creation.

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