

Dear MSP,

Scotland's library sector was founded on the principle of equitable access to knowledge, which is why we at CILIPS, the professional association for library and information professionals in Scotland, are deeply concerned by publishing practices that are making many eBooks unaffordable, unsustainable, and inaccessible to libraries and would like to ask for your support.

As evidenced by the [#ebookSOS campaign](#), founded by a group of academic librarians, extortionate prices and restrictive licences are significantly curtailing the ability of library professionals to provide students and researchers with the resources they need at college or university.

Due to UK copyright law, libraries cannot simply purchase an eBook in the way an individual can – instead they are required to purchase a version licensed specifically for university use, which is leading to exclusionary and increasingly unsustainable market practices.

This is also having an effect on other sectors too with the likes of medical, legal, government and public libraries all being impacted by the high costs of many eBooks, resulting in their users and stakeholders being unable to access vital information or resources.

[Evidence gathered by academic librarians across the UK](#) indicates that there are many examples of this practice. On their crowdsourced list, 139 titles cost at least 1000% more for university libraries in eBook form than they do in physical print, with a further 150 titles at least 100% more. One example is that of *The Study Skills Handbook* by Stella Cottrell. Recognised as '[the ultimate guide to study skills](#)' and 'an invaluable resource for undergraduate students of all disciplines, and ideal for postgraduates, mature students and international students,' a print copy costs around £15. The eBook price for a one-year licence, however, has been £5,000: a price increase of 31,000%.

The COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns, where students and researchers were unable to physically visit libraries and access paper books, starkly illuminated the educational as well as financial costs of this untenable situation. Indeed, many lecturers are now facing the prospect of being forced to design their teaching content around what reading is available and affordable electronically.

We believe that this unfair and unsustainable landscape is a serious contravention of the principles that inform the Scottish Government's 2021 strategy [A Changing Nation: How Scotland Will Thrive in a Digital World](#), which explicitly states that digital services should be 'inclusive, ethical and resilient, and uphold people's digital rights', committing Scotland to ensuring that 'no one is left behind'.

We and Scotland's dedicated community of librarians wholeheartedly support the drive to 'embed digital learning in every part of education' in Scotland, but unfortunately the current practices of certain eBook publishers are making this impossible for us to achieve.

Regrettably, the Education Select Committee at Westminster has [declined to investigate the eBook crisis](#), and we believe that this is therefore an opportunity for Scotland to lead the way in standing up for equitable access to knowledge and learning.

We support the #ebookSOS campaign's call for urgent market regulation and hope that you will do the same. We recognise that Competition and Market Law is a reserved matter, but we ask that you help support the campaign as follows:

1. Support the campaign on social media using #ebookSOS.
2. Raise the issues in the Scottish Parliament where appropriate and ensure they are discussed at the relevant cross-party groups.
3. Sign up to support the campaign - <http://forms.gle/dyF1mA4Vj9zWV3pt5>

Many thanks

CILIP Scotland