

Episode 7 Overview

Our guest today is Ellen Paul, Executive Director of the Connecticut Library Consortium and the architect behind Connecticut's landmark e-book legislation. Ellen joins us to unpack one of the most urgent issues facing libraries: the legislative fight to reshape digital content access.

From Senate Bill 1234/Public Law 25-9, which prohibits libraries from agreeing to restrictive licensing terms, to a growing wave of similar bills across the U.S., the stakes have never been higher. Ellen shares her journey from local advocacy to leading a successful campaign, and we explore:

- Why libraries are challenging inequitable publishing models after decades of failed negotiations.
- The core problem: the lack of a “right of first sale” doctrine for digital content.
- Connecticut's innovative approach: regulating libraries rather than publishers to avoid federal copyright conflicts.
- Trigger clause strategy: the law activates only when states with a combined population of 7 million adopt similar measures, New Jersey may be next.
- Industry trends: shrinking catalogs, metered licenses, and high cost-per-circ.
- Advocacy tactics: voting with library dollars, leveraging author influence, and reframing library marketing from scarcity to abundance.

Ellen also previews an exciting new partnership with Hoopla—Library Marketing Makeover—designed to help libraries elevate their branding and outreach.

Whether you're a librarian, publisher, policymaker, or passionate reader, this episode reveals why these legislative efforts matter—and what's at stake for intellectual freedom and the sustainability of library services.

Key Takeaways

- **Decades in the making:** Libraries have fought for equitable e-book access for over 20 years; legislation is a last resort after traditional negotiations failed.
- **Connecticut's law:** Protects taxpayer dollars by banning harmful licensing terms without infringing on publisher copyright.
- **Trigger clause:** Designed to create a national tipping point for reform once states representing 10M people adopt similar laws.

- **Industry challenges:** Metered licenses, shrinking catalogs (down 10% YOY), and underutilized licenses drive up costs.
- **Hold list distortion:** Libraries overspend on bestsellers while mid-list authors lose visibility.
- **Advocacy strategies:** Vote with dollars, apply PR pressure through authors, and reframe messaging from scarcity (“allowed 6 borrows”) to abundance (“6 free books a month”).
- **Ultimate goal:** Not more laws, but fair pricing and sustainable access for libraries and readers.
- **Future outlook:** CLC’s next steps include continued advocacy and partnerships like Library Marketing Makeover to strengthen community engagement.

What Are the Hosts and Guest Reading, Watching, or Listening To?

- **Ellen Paul** is reading *Everyone in My Family Has Killed Someone* by Benjamin Stevenson — a witty, modern whodunit set in a remote mountain chalet, full of twists and dark humor.
- **Jeff** is reading *Happy People Don’t Live Here* by Amber Sparks — a collection of gothic, darkly whimsical stories that explore human nature with sharp, imaginative prose.
- **Ann** is reading *Alchemised* by Senlinyu — a genre-bending novel blending dystopian elements with romance and intrigue, featuring rich world-building and unexpected turns.