

## Episode 10 Summary

### How digital media habits are redefining library expectations

#### Overview

In Episode 10 of *The Straight Download*, Ann Ford and Jeff Jankowski explain how five years of rapid digital growth, accelerated during the pandemic, have reset patron expectations around instant access, breadth of choice, and easy discovery. The episode frames these shifts as a new baseline for library strategy rather than a temporary spike. [1]

#### 1) Digital consumption has permanently changed expectations

Streaming is now default behavior. Public tracking shows Netflix exceeded 300 million global subscribers by late 2024, roughly double its 2019 level. [2][3] Patrons carry those expectations into library apps and services. [1]

#### 2) Subscription fatigue and search exhaustion are real

As households juggle multiple services, discovery fragments across apps. The growth of third-party discovery tools like JustWatch demonstrates the need to find titles across platforms without bouncing between applications. [4] Independent research also documents content overload, and the time viewers spend simply deciding what to watch. [5]

#### 3) Scale has reset expectations

Large commercial catalogs have conditioned users to expect depth and immediacy, leading patrons to benchmark library relevance against consumer experiences. When discovery feels limited or unintuitive, the challenge is visibility and ease, not simply access. [1]

#### 4) Audiobooks lead digital reading growth

Industry analysis shows sustained growth in audiobooks, one of the fastest-expanding digital formats, driven by mobile listening and streaming behavior. [6] In libraries, audiobook licensing frequently involves higher costs and metered usage, contributing to longer holds and budget fatigue. [1]

## 5) Licensing pressure and policy context: OverDrive testimony

As demand rises, licensing costs remain a key pressure point. OverDrive CEO Steve Potash submitted a January 6, 2026, written testimony opposing Washington, D.C.'s B26-0490 Library E-book Pricing Fairness Amendment Act of 2025, asserting the proposal is flawed and would reduce access to digital materials. Full testimony is publicly available. [7]

During the episode, **Jeff Jankowski offers his opinion on the testimony**, arguing that it reflects vendor resistance to pricing reform rather than a substantive engagement with library sustainability concerns. He notes that the testimony raises arguments, including references to controlled digital lending, that are not addressed in the legislation itself, and relies on selective data to support speculative outcomes. [1]

## 6) Libraries' discovery advantage

In an increasingly fragmented digital environment, the library catalog remains a trusted source of truth. When services like Hoopla are fully integrated into catalog and discovery workflows, friction is reduced and engagement increases, turning clarity and trust into meaningful advantages. [1]

## 7) Video growth and the ad-free distinction

Library video usage continues to rise alongside broader streaming adoption. The episode cites +67% growth in new Hoopla video users from 2019–2025 as an internal indicator, and public library updates, such as Abilene Public Library's 2025 report, also reflect strong Hoopla engagement. [1][8]

At the same time, ad-supported tiers now account for a growing share of new SVOD subscriptions, normalizing advertising across premium streaming platforms. [9] This contrast reinforces the library's position as an ad-free, community-centered alternative. [1]

## 8) Bingeable access supports modern viewing habits

Binge-oriented consumption is now the norm. Time-bounded and curated models, including Hoopla BingePass and Season Pass, align library offerings with how patrons already expect to consume video content. [1]

## Key takeaways for libraries

- **Optimize visibility, not just volume:** Fully surface Hoopla and other digital services in catalog and discovery layers to reduce search friction. [1]
- **Plan for audio-driven pressure:** Audiobook growth requires deliberate budgeting under metered licensing. [1]

- **Reclaim the ad-free advantage:** As advertising expands across streaming, emphasize the library’s trusted, distraction-free experience. **[1][9]**

## Endnotes

[1] *The Straight Download*, Episode 10 transcript (uploaded): episode framing, Jeff Jankowski’s commentary, discovery themes, Hoopla integration, and internal Hoopla video growth figure.

[2] [Statista. \*Netflix statistics and facts \(subscriber totals through late 2024\).\*](#)

[3] [DemandSage. \*Netflix subscribers statistics 2026 \(historical growth from ~151 million in 2019\).\*](#)

[4] [JustWatch. \*Compare U.S. streaming service catalogs and prices.\*](#)

[5] [Study Finds. \*Content overload: Streaming audiences plagued by far too many options.\*](#)

[6] [Grand View Research. \*Audiobooks market size and share: Industry report 2030.\*](#)

[7] [OverDrive. \*Testimony of Steve Potash, filed Jan. 6, 2026, to the D.C. Council Committee on Human Services regarding B26-0490 \(PDF\).\*](#)

[8] [City of Abilene, Texas. \*Hoopla Digital sees much success in 2025.\*](#)

[9] [Antenna. \*Ad-supported plans are finding an audience.\*](#)