

# Joint Statement on Wiley's withdrawal of access to ebook titles



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On 31<sup>st</sup> August access was removed to over 1,350 ebook titles published by Wiley on ProQuest's Academic Complete platform. Subscribing institutions were only notified of the withdrawal of the titles at the end of June, leaving libraries and staff only weeks before the beginning of the new academic year to source alternatives, edit reading lists, update collections and discovery tools. Although access has now been restated until June 2023, the situation highlights once more the precarity and cost of access to core textbooks.

As set out in the sector's [Joint Statement](#), the failure of e-book and e-textbook publishers to provide stable and affordable access to key titles is failing students and teaching staff. The Wiley titles, many of which are high-use and feature on student reading lists, will after June only be available for libraries to acquire via expensive annual subscription models priced on a per student basis. This will result in significant cost increases and not reflect actual use or the how courses are taught – whereby students need access to key materials for a time limited period.

A failure to provide institutions with flexible and affordable purchasing options that reflects actual use and budgets inhibits the library's key role in providing resources to the university community and results in a poor student experience as materials have to be changed at short notice or worse still, the financial burden of purchasing resources is moved onto students during a period when student hardship is a critical concern for [universities and government](#).

*"This is a retrograde move by a major publisher and shows a failure to listen and understand the impact on libraries and their users of these out-of-date business practices which prevent equality of access." said Libby Homer, Co-Chair of SCONUL and Director of Student and Library Services at Anglia Ruskin University. "Libraries are not in a position to pay significant cost increases and we expect this to backfire."*

We encourage Wiley and other publishers to speak to consortia and to offer affordable and flexible models as outlined that will secure access to key content and ensure that key content remains at the heart of teaching. We join our [Irish](#) and [American](#) colleagues in urging Wiley and other publishers to engage with consortia and national organisations to involve institutions in decisions that have such a significant impact on our communities.

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Caren Milloy, Director of Licensing at Jisc said *“The changes brought about by Wiley to remove e-book titles at a critical time of the academic year provided little opportunity for library and teaching staff to make the necessary adjustments. While the reversal of this decision for a year is helpful in the short term, the practice of removing e-book titles with little or no notification remains an ongoing issue for subscribing institutions and their libraries in being able to provide sustainable, flexible, and affordable access to e-books and learning content. Going forward, we request that Wiley and all e-book publishers work directly with institutions and the sector on the initiatives proposed.”*

We want to increase communication in productive ways. A positive step forward would be for institutions, publishers and aggregators to work together to develop and agree the following:

- A code of practice, setting out an agreed list of expected behaviours for all parties
- Protocols and communications forums so that emerging issues can be discussed quickly and effectively

Commitment from all sides to achieving the above points would go a long way towards easing tension with the sector and would avoid situations that can create reputational damage to publishers, and significant disruption to universities in the future.

Caroline Ball, #ebookSOS campaign and Academic Librarian, University of Derby said *“These actions by Wiley demonstrate just how much library collections are at the mercy of commercial decisions taken by publishers. In the absence of digital ownership options, libraries face a bleak future of unreliable access to ebooks, with more and more items being withdrawn from general library licence in favour of more lucrative e-textbook models, undermining the core purpose of libraries in making access to our collections available to all who need them.”*

Signatories:

- Advanced Procurement for Universities & Colleges (APUC)
- British Universities Finance Directors Group (BUFDG)
- Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP)
- #ebooksSOS campaign
- Jisc
- National Acquisitions Group (NAG)
- Research Libraries UK (RLUK)
- SCONUL (Society of College, National and University Libraries)
- SUPC