

Compilation of Responses for Michlib – Blackstone Unlimited

Question:

Good morning,

We are looking to end hoopla soon and are considering Blackstone Unlimited as an option for access to no-reserve audiobooks. Does anyone have experience with Blackstone Unlimited? They recommend a 3-year contract, but I don't want to lock us into that if the resource isn't worth it. I can compile and share responses if there is interest.

Thank you,

Kelsey Rutkowski

Library Director

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Responses:

Hi Kelsey,

We do not have a subscription. When I considered getting one a few years ago, I looked at our local borrowing history for Blackstone published titles in Hoopla and determined less than 5% of circs would be covered by Blackstone Unlimited (at the time, they exclusively offered their own books...not sure if that has changed). I just ran the same report for our Hoopla circs in the last two years and determined that only 22 out of 1595 circs were for Blackstone books/audiobooks, which is 1.4% of all circs. That number isn't a perfect representation of interest, because some of the titles aren't available in Hoopla to my patrons due to our maximum per-circulation cap—but many of those we or our coop purchase through Overdrive instead of paying per use. Looking at circs for the same period in Overdrive, 82/4610 borrows were for Blackstone titles.

Really, the only locally popular authors I'm currently seeing under their mantle are Jeneva Rose, Sally Page, Karin Slaughter, and Jonathan Maberry. So, I just didn't anticipate enough usage to

justify the cost at that time. I would be interested if other small libraries have tried it and found usage exceeded expectations.

Regards,
Jessica

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Good Morning,

We used Blackstone for 3 years but did not renew due to low usage. They did not carry the popular authors and publishers our patrons were looking for, and most of the collection was rather old. It is in no way comparable to Hoopla or Libby, as far as the collection goes.

Hope this helps. I would be happy to answer any further questions.

Laura

Laura Fromwiller, Director
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Kelsey,

We signed up with Blackstone Unlimited a couple of years ago. Our digital borrowing is roughly 2/3 audiobooks, through Overdrive and Hoopla, so it seemed like a sure bet. Unfortunately, circulation has been poor. My guess is that our patrons are already accustomed to getting their digital audiobooks with Overdrive and Hoopla, so there's not much enticement to use another platform. Despite the low use, I did recently subscribe for another 2 years. Our experience is that it sometimes just takes awhile for people to really gravitate towards a new offering, and Blackstone Unlimited was still brand new when we signed up; with an ever expanding catalog, I'm hopeful it will pull in more people.

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Our Blackstone Audio has not had a significant circulation rate. We are a small rural Class III library, and I am considering canceling our contract this fall.

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