

Are DVDs Dinosaurs?

The Impact, and Inequities, of Streaming

YESICA HURD

When the main branch of the San Francisco Public Library (SFPL) re-opened in August 2020 after being shuttered to the public for six months, it launched a soft reopening with *SFPL To Go*. Patrons could return materials and put holds on physical items at the branch's entrance, but the public health order prohibited the public from entering the building; this restriction would not be lifted until May 2021.

At first, the main branch received all returns that had accumulated during the closure for a system of twenty-seven branches and a bookmobile. Two media formats, DVDs and Blu-rays—belong to a floating collection. With only two locations open, the main branch was inundated with these returns.

Before the pandemic, DVDs and Blu-rays were one of the highest circulating materials in the children's department. At the end of 2018-2019, the main branch owned 4,613 items; after reopening, that collection ballooned to 5,638.

Because of the overflow, in the main library's children's section, Blu-rays were being shelved into sections that were reserved for showcasing picture books; those tops were now crowded with a seemingly endless number (a 6.1% increase in Blu-ray). The check-outs, however, were significantly less

than DVDs. In November 2018, 430 Blu-rays moved off of our shelves, while in November 2021, only 276 were checked-out.

Overall, DVD production and consumption has had a steep decline over the years due to paid streaming services. According to the Motion Picture Association, in 2020, "The digital market increased by 33 percent compared to 2019, while the physical market decreased by 26 percent."¹

Subscription services continue to increase while physical purchases decline. These national trends can be observed at our main branch as well. In November 2018, juvenile fiction DVDs had a circulation of 1,692 at the main, compared to November 2021, which had a circulation of 753.

Paid streaming service content is not a new phenomenon, with the advent of Netflix in 2007. However, in the library world, free streaming for the public was only made available in the last ten years.

At least at our library, consumption of DVDs and Blu-rays has decreased with the demand of digital content viewing, including free sites such as YouTube. SFPL's e-video usage (adult and children's content) on Kanopy, Hoopla, and Alexander Street Press, was 27,505 in November 2018, compared to 61,829 in November 2021. This shows that e-video usage of SFPL's streaming platforms have more than doubled after the pandemic re-opening.

What does this mean for our current DVD and Blu-rays—have they gone the way of VHS and cassette tapes? Should we rethink the amount of space we reserve for this material?

Just last year, Douglas Crane wrote in *Public Libraries Online*, "Based on checkouts, demand for DVDs across North American libraries has dropped."² Based on Crane's informal



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survey of library directors across the country, most systems have seen a downward trend.

SFPL retains a robust DVD and Blu-ray collection for patrons who are unable to stream content. However, the proliferation of streaming technologies exacerbates existing inequalities. Certain shows and movies are only available to view through a paid streaming platform. For example, *El Deafo*, based on Cece Bell's Newbery Honor graphic novel, is only available on Apple+, *Stinky and Dirty* based on Kate McMullan's picture

books can only be viewed on Amazon Prime, and *A Shaun the Sheep Movie: Farmageddon* is available only on Netflix.

As library professionals, we could advocate that paid streaming services be available for free for library patrons—perhaps on a check-out model, much like e-books are managed.

Carefully considering how the proliferation of streaming services affects use of library materials will help us to usher in the next stage in offering AV materials. &

References

1. Motion Picture Association, "THEME Report 2020: A Comprehensive Analysis and Survey of the Theatrical Home/Mobile Entertainment Market Environment for 2020," <https://www.motionpictures.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/MPA-2020-THEME-Report.pdf>.
2. Douglas Crane, "Are We Reaching the End of Library DVD Collections?," *Public Libraries Online*, June 30, 2021, <http://publiclibrariesonline.org/2021/06/are-we-reaching-the-end-of-library-dvd-collections/>.

Game On!

Authors, Fans Face Off in Innovative Experiment

Sharon Verbeten

Authors have total recall of *everything* in their books, right? Or would an avid fan kick their butt in a trivia match? This ingenious concept—conceived in the early days of the pandemic by three-time National Book Award finalist Steve Sheinkin and Stacey Rattner, librarian at Castleton Elementary School in upstate New York—was only supposed to be a temporary virtual offering.

"A lot of people were trying to think of ways to help teachers," said Sheinkin, whose book *Fallout: Spies, Superbombs, and the Ultimate Cold War Showdown* received a 2022 Sibert Honor.

"I thought we'd just do one and see how it goes," he added. "By the end of (2020), I thought that was it."

But hosts Sheinkin and Rattner have now recorded more than seventy episodes—found on YouTube—featuring middle-grade authors like Jason Reynolds and Kate DiCamillo squaring off with mega fans.

When Sheinkin wondered how he could reach out during the pandemic, he thought, "The one asset I have is these authors."

Sheinkin and Rattner write the questions—"That was the most time-consuming part of it," he admitted. And the authors and fans have not been hard to find.



Stacey Rattner and Steve Sheinkin on one of their Author Fan Face-Offs.

"We've been making this up as we go along," Sheinkin admitted.

The ten-minute segments feature the humbled authors, casual in their homes, adorable kids and zany sound effects, and—spoiler alert!—you never know which authors will stumble on facts they've written.

Sheinkin himself got in on the fun. Watch episode #57 to see him take on an eighth-grade superfan of his book *Bomb: The Race to Build—and Steal—the World's Most Dangerous Weapon*.

Rattner said, "It's so great to give this opportunity to the kids—like it is a once in a lifetime and unforgettable experience for them. Here they are with their favorite author, basically alone (with Steve and I looking on) for fifteen minutes. How awesome is that?"

"And on top of that, they know the book better! There are episodes where the author has been so humbled by the experience and so kind to the fans, that I get emotional.

"The kids are so great. One fan wrote to me saying it was 'one of the best experiences I've ever had.'" &