

Book Alliance To Challenge Google

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Editor's Note: We definitely need real competition in this area.



(newsfactor.com [1]) - Google is being challenged by a trio of tech powerhouses in an attempt to stop the Internet search giant from moving forward with its Google Books project. Google Books allows users to search, view and purchase books that Google has digitized and made available online.

Microsoft, Yahoo and Amazon.com have committed to join the tentatively named Open Book Alliance, in an effort to stop the Google Books project from continuing. The companies, along with other alliance members, believe Google Books is anticompetitive and plan to voice their grievances independently with the U.S. Department of Justice.

Ironically, the Silicon Valley lawyer who is working with the alliance, Gary Reback, is the same attorney who spearheaded the efforts leading to the Justice Department's 1998 antitrust case against Microsoft.

Challenging Google

The Open Content Alliance, a collaboration conceived by Yahoo and the nonprofit group Internet Archive, and made up of technology, nonprofit and government organizations, is also firing away against Google.

Internet Archive says it is seeking an open and competitive market with safeguards for readers to browse, lend and sell digital books.

Peter Brantley, founder of Internet Archive, said more and more people are recognizing the 2005 Google Book Search settlement, which allows Google to digitize and sell millions of books, "for what it really is -- an insider deal cut between powerful, private interests that creates a profit-making monopoly over the greatest source of our culture's common knowledge." The settlement came after the Authors Guild and the Association of American Publishers filed a class action suit against Google.

The Open Content Alliance is asking Google to petition the court and seek a delay to an October hearing in which the court is expected to rule on the settlement.

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Google Fires Back

As of Friday, only Microsoft has officially confirmed that it has agreed to join the alliance, according to a spokesperson, who said an announcement would not be made until next week. Yahoo and Amazon.com are also challenging Google by joining the Alliance, the New York Times is reporting.

"The Google Books settlement is injecting more competition into the digital books space, so it's understandable why our competitors might fight hard to prevent more competition," said Gabriel Stricker, a Google spokesperson. "That said, it's ironic that some of these complaints are coming from a company that abandoned its book [digitization] effort because it lacked a commercial intent."

Stricker is referring to Microsoft's announcement in May that it would end its Live Search Books and Live Search Academic projects, and wind down its digitization initiatives.

"Based on our experience, we foresee that the best way for a search engine to make book content available will be by crawling content repositories created by book publishers and libraries," Microsoft's senior vice president of search, Satya Nadella, said during the May announcement. "With our investments, the technology to create these repositories is now available at lower costs for those with the commercial interest or public mandate to digitize book content."

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