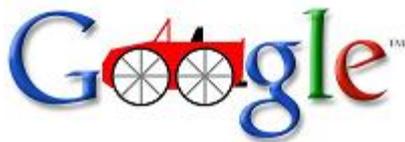


Google Tells EU Online Books Democratize Web

John O'Donnell, Foo Yun Chee, Dale Hudson, and Will Waterman

Editor's Note: It is certainly true that being able to search millions of books instantly and read titles otherwise unavailable to you online is a tremendously empowering force to the reader, but what happens to the author in this (within the copyright period)? Frankly, if they could figure out alternate compensation for authors I'd be glad to give [my book](#) [1] away online for free.



BRUSSELS

(Reuters) - Google, the Internet search group, defended its scanning and publishing of millions of books online on Monday by saying the project was making finding information on the Web more democratic.

The Californian company struck a deal with author and publisher groups in the United States earlier this year, allowing it to copy books for the Internet.

But the agreement has been criticized and come under the gaze of the U.S. Justice Department because it does not say what Google might charge libraries, for example. Some of them fear the service will become an expensive must-have.

Dan Clancy, architect of the Google program, told a hearing at the European Commission, which is the European Union's executive body, that the group hoped to allow Web surfers to find out-of-print books.

"We have seen a democratization of access to online information," said Clancy, engineering director of Google Book Search.

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"You can discover information which you did not know was there," he said. "It is important that these (out-of-print) books are not left behind. Google's interest was in helping people to find the books."

The EU said this year it would examine the Google deal in the United States after Germany said the company had scanned books from U.S. libraries to create a database without asking the authors.

COPYRIGHT SHOWDOWN

The Commission is considering what Europe should do about scanning and printing books on the Web.

Viviane Reding and Charlie McCreevy, the EU commissioners responsible for media and the European marketplace, said they would look at shaking up copyright laws.

That could make it easier for Europe to follow the United States in scanning and printing more books online.

The EU has launched its own online register, Europeana, which includes books and images ranging from William Shakespeare to pictures of French actress Brigitte Bardot.

But most European countries have been slow in scanning and publishing literature for Europeana and Reding hopes companies such as Google can pick up the slack.

The decision to allow Google to build its library of more than 10 million scanned books has divided opinion worldwide.

"The settlement mostly only affects out-of-print books," said James Gleick, one of the writers who sued Google but later agreed to let the group scan old books and print them online.

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"For us who are authors of out-of-print books, it brings our work to a whole new audience," he told the hearing.

Others are more skeptical. ICOMP, a lobby group sponsored by U.S. software giant Microsoft, said Google's plans to scan and publish would concentrate too much power in its hands.

David Wood, a lawyer working for ICOMP, told reporters Google would create an "enduring monopoly" in the supply of online books.

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