

Google fined \$14,300 a day in France over books

GREG KELLER - AP Business Writer - Associated Press

A Paris court ruled Friday that Google Inc.'s expansion into digital books breaks France's copyright laws, and a judge slapped the Internet search leader with a €10,000-a-day fine until it stops showing literary snippets.

Besides being fined the equivalent of \$14,300 for each day in violation, Google was ordered to pay €300,000 (\$430,000) in damages and interest to French publisher La Martiniere, which brought the case on behalf of a group of French publishers.

Google attorney Alexandra Neri said the company would appeal.

The decision erects another legal barrier that may prevent Google from realizing its 5-year-old goal of scanning all the world's books into a digital library accessible to anyone with an Internet connection.

A U.S. legal settlement that would give Google the digital rights to millions of books is in limbo because U.S. regulators have warned a federal judge in New York that the arrangement probably would thwart competition in the budding electronic book market and compromise copyrights, as well.

The top U.S. copyright official and the governments in Germany and France also have raised objections about that settlement overstepping its bounds. Google is trying to address the critics with a revised settlement that is still under court review.

The French case is relatively small in comparison. It didn't even seem to faze investors as Google shares gained \$3.86 to \$597.80 in Friday afternoon trading.

Still, the ruling served as a reminder that Google's ambitious push into other markets beyond Internet search increasingly is clashing with fears the Mountain View, Calif., company is getting too powerful.

As part of the backlash, Google has been depicted as a copyright scofflaw that prospers off the content of others — a portrayal the company's management insists is totally off base.

The head of the French publisher's union applauded Friday's verdict.

"It shows Google that they are not the kings of the world and they can't do whatever they want," said Serge Eyrolles, president of France's Syndicat National de l'Edition. He said Google had scanned 100,000 French books into its database, 80 percent of which were under copyright.

Eyrolles said French publishers would still like to work with Google to digitize their

Google fined \$14,300 a day in France over books

Published on Electronic Component News (<http://www.ecnmag.com>)

books, "but only if they stop playing around with us and start respecting intellectual property rights."

Philippe Colombet, the head of Google's book-scanning project in France, said the company disagrees with the court's ruling.

"French readers now face the threat of losing access to a significant body of knowledge and falling behind the rest of Internet users," Colombet said in a conference call with reporters. "We believe that displaying a limited number of short extracts from books complies with copyright legislation both in France and the U.S. — and improves access to books."

Colombet declined to answer questions about whether Google would remove the books from its database or pay the fine. "We are going to study the judgment carefully over the coming days," he said.

The judgment will have little or no effect on Internet users outside of France. And French books that are in Google's database with publishers' consent will remain searchable, even in France. Colombet could not say how many French books Google has scanned overall, or how many French publishers allowing Google to show its works.

Google has scanned more than 10 million books worldwide since 2004, including 2 million with the consent of about 30,000 publishers, About 9,000 of those publishers are in Europe, Colombet said. Another 2 million books in Google's library no longer are in copyright. Google has been only showing snippets from the remaining books while it tries to iron out copyright disputes.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy has made catching up on France's digital delay one of the national priorities by earmarking €750 million (about \$1 billion) of a €35 billion spending plan announced earlier this week for digitizing France's libraries, film and music archives and other repositories of the nation's recorded heritage.

Earlier this week a consortium of French technology companies announced a plan to create a book scanning project they said would be better than Google's, but only in three years time.

—

Associated Press Writer Nicolas Vaux-Montagny in Paris and AP Technology Writer Michael Liedtke in San Francisco contributed to this report.

Source URL (retrieved on 12/27/2014 - 6:18am):

http://www.ecnmag.com/news/2009/12/google-fined-14300-day-france-over-books?qt-video_of_the_day=0&qt-most_popular=0