

Pre-Symposium Lecture Series

Communications Law & Policy Society

Google Books is a web-based application that aims to allow a user to search the full text of books and read them online. A user can visit the site and search for a book just like a web search. If a book is out of copyright, or the publisher has given Google Books permission, a user will be able to see a preview of the book and in some cases the entire text. If the book is within the public domain, the user is free to download a PDF copy of the book. Proponents have praised Google Books for vastly increasing access to educational materials and other resources of literary value.

Currently, Google Books has filed a groundbreaking agreement with authors and publishers. The agreement proposes certain changes to the Google Books website. The agreement would allow Google Books to expand the number of books in the database. For example, many of the out-of-print books that are usually difficult to find in libraries will be available for preview on Google Books. The agreement will also create new options for reading entire books. A user with an account can read entire books and keep them on an electronic bookshelf for future access. Libraries and universities will now be able to purchase subscriptions, which will give users access to complete text of millions of books while compensating authors and publishers for the service. Students and researchers will have access to an electronic library that combines the collections from many of the top universities across the country. Public and university libraries will also be able to offer terminals where readers can access the full text of books for free.

Issues regarding the use of Google Books typically involve copyright law. Publishers that are opponents of Google Books have filed suit to stop its Library Project, which is Google Books' partnership with libraries around the country to scan both public domain and in-copyright books. Google Books contends that it protects copyright holders by ensuring that when users find a book under copyright, they only see a card catalog-style entry providing basic information about the book and no more than a few sentences of text surrounding the search term. Publishers believe that a third party, such as Google Books, should not be able to copy and index copyrighted works so that users can search through them, even if all a user sees is the bibliographic information and a few sentences of text. Other critics argue that Google Books will become a substitute for the printed word. Google Books counters that its goal is to improve access to books, not to replace them. Also, an important issue to be resolved is whether Google Books would constitute as fair use,

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