

1 Academic time machine

2 <http://www.economist.com/blogs/babbage/2011/11/digitising-books>

3 SPRINGER GROUP traces its roots to a Berlin bookshop, opened by Julius
4 Springer in 1842. Despite many mergers, acquisitions and spin-offs, the
5 publisher of academic and business tomes has a great sense of its own history.
6 Like many of its peers, it now publishes print and electronic versions of books
7 simultaneously. Its contemporary digital library contains some 50,000 titles,
8 mostly published after 2005. Now, though, Springer has decided to make the
9 65,000 books hidden in its vast archive available electronically under a
10 commercial licence.

11 Many are pedestrian volumes or outdated research, but there are also some
12 gems. I was sent a few samples—works by Albert Einstein, Sir John Eccles and
13 Rudolf Diesel. Crisp digital reproductions of other seminal writings, long since out
14 of print, by Niels Bohr, Lise Meitner, Werner Siemens and a host of scientific and
15 technological luminaries can now be had, with the full text embedded for
16 excerpting or searching.

17 Copyright remains a bother. The United States has a solid dividing line—all works
18 published or registered in America before 1923 are firmly in the public domain.
19 But other countries maintain fuzzier policies, some of which have yet to be
20 properly tested in court. In principle, books published as early as 1870 might still
21 be under copyright in Britain. If a work was published that year, say, by an
22 author who was 20 at the time, but who lived to 100, it would remain under
23 copyright for 70 years after the author's death, ie, until 2020. The odds of this
24 happening are long, but British publishers refrain from releasing pre-1870 titles
25 into the public domain, just in case.

26 Springer only began securing electronic rights in 1995. To make scanned
27 versions of older books available, it often required tracking down and negotiating
28 with estates and authors. Mr Willems says that living writers typically cheer the
29 project. The publisher also hoped to avoid the controversy surrounding Google
30 Books, where the internet-search giant and academic institutions involved in the
31 project owned no copyrights.

32 Springer has painstakingly produced the highest possible quality of scans,
33 principally to avoid having to start from scratch when today's viewing technology
34 is superseded by something dramatically better. Mr Willems and his team also
35 embedded rich metadata—details like author, date of publication, number of
36 pages, and so on—in standard formats which are likely to persist for a while.
37 They took especial care in reproducing illustrations. These digital books are, after
38 all, meant to last forever.

Questions

1. What is, according to the text, the biggest problem in publishing e-books?
2. Why only pre-1870 books can be sold freely in e-form?
3. Why do you think that living writers typically cheer the project?
4. Why has been Google Books project controversial?
5. Explain the meaning of "tracking down" in line 27.
6. What is meant by "metadata" in line 35?
7. Which books are in the public domain in the United States?
8. Do you think such project should be done in the Czech Republic? Which authors should (not) be included?

Vocabulary

Spin-off (line 4) - a separate and partly independent company that is formed from parts of an existing company

Tome (line 5) – a large heavy book

Fuzzier (line 19) – less clear

Refrain (line 24) - to not do something that you want to do

The odds of this happening are long (lines 27,28) – it is not very likely to happen

Painstakingly (line 32) – with a lot of problems and effort

You can find additional explanation and more examples to help you understand and use English words and phrases at <http://dictionary.reference.com>, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/> or <http://www.ldoceonline.com/>

Přejeme Vám mnoho studijních úspěchů.

Tým jazykové skupiny Spěváček:

