JANUARY 19, 2010

United States Congress
Washington, DC

Dear Member of Congress,

The Open Book Alliance and its partners - representing authors, librarians and academics - all believe in the power of digitizing books.

A comprehensive digital public library will unlock our collective cultural knowledge for a larger audience than ever before possible and ensure that no important works are lost to the dustbin of history. Perhaps most important, it will help to bridge an information divide, enabling growing global access to an international archive of printed works.

The current Google Book Settlement process has failed to deliver on this promise. Fortunately, the resulting debate has been useful in stimulating discussion about the utility of a comprehensive digital public library and now a new, more inclusive process is evolving.

Ultimately, making the promise of book digitization a reality will follow these principles:

- Large scale book digitization efforts must recognize their public utility and foster competitive instead of exclusive markets.
- Long-term benefits for consumers must be prioritized and promoted over isolated commercial interests.
- It must be done in a way that respects authors’ rights and copyright.
- The conception of this promise must be developed in the open and grounded in sound public policy instead of through a private settlement that bypasses the responsibilities of our elected officials.

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The Open Book Alliance and our partners believe a successful digital public library must employ the following tenets:

- **Open Process**: Only an open and deliberative conversation in Congress will appropriately weigh the concerns of all stakeholders and create bright-line laws that apply equally to all consumers, companies and stakeholders.

- **Public Guardian**: To ensure the widest participation by content holders and greatest public benefit, the digital book database should be entrusted to a neutral, civic, not-for-profit organization. Respected librarians, like Harvard’s Robert Darnton, have suggested a public guardian that is a not for profit or public sector library, such as the Library of Congress. In a similar vein, the governments of France and the Netherlands have entrusted public institutions with the administration of digital libraries.

- **Public Interest**: Any successful digitization effort must not be exclusive to a single for-profit company as a result of legal arrangements delivering unfair monopoly. It also must uphold the rights of authors and copyright.

The OBA calls on Google to halt its current strategy, which focuses on fattening its profits and ensuring its continued domination of the Internet search market at the expense of broader social responsibilities.

Instead, Google, and the parties to the proposed settlement, must instead commit to joining this new inclusive process and engage the broad audience of advocates that share a passion for the digitization of books, promoting open competition and access to digital books for the widest number of people.

Thank you for considering our views on the matter. We look forward to working with you in the future to deliver on the promise of a digital public library.

Sincerely,

Peter Brantley  
Co-Founder  
Open Book Alliance

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