

Vast cyberlibrary unveiled by Google (Update)

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Google added to the historical trove of writing available on the Internet Wednesday when it unveiled its digitized collection of books.

The Google Print project debuted a collection of public-domain books from libraries at the University of Michigan, Harvard and Stanford universities and the New York Public Library. This is just the first part of what is an ambitious ongoing project that thus far has scanned works such as U.S. Civil War history books, government documents, the writings of Henry James and other materials.

Google said in a statement that because what it has digitized is out of copyright "these cultural artifacts can be read in their entirety online ... where anyone can search and browse every page. The company added

that the books are fully searchable and users can save individual page images.

"Today we welcome the world to our library," said Mary Sue Coleman, president of the University of Michigan. "As educators we are inspired by the possibility of sharing these important works with people around the globe. Think of the doors it will open for students; geographical distance will no longer hamper research. Anyone with an Internet connection can search the text of and read the compelling narratives, historical accounts and classic works offered today, and in doing so access a world of ideas, knowledge and discovery."

Examples of the public-domain books available on Google Print today include:

- Civil War regimental histories and early American writings from the University of Michigan
- Congressional acts and other government documents from Stanford
- The works of Henry James from Harvard
- Biographies of New York citizens and other collected biographies from the New York Public Library

"Our goal is to make these public domain books and the knowledge within them accessible to the world," said Susan Wojcicki, vice president of product management at Google. "Any researcher or student, whether they're in New York or New Delhi can now research and learn from these books that previously were only available in a library. This underscores the value of Google Print and the work we're undertaking with our library partners."

The company said that the Google Print program was introduced in the fall of 2004 in order to help users search through the oceans of information contained in the world's books and to help authors and publishers promote their books and expand their sales. Google is working directly with publishers through the Google Print Publisher Program and libraries through the Google Print Library Project to digitize the books being added to the company's collection.

Questions remain, however, over portions of the Google Print project which publish portions of copyrighted material. The Authors Guild and the Association of American Publishers have filed copyright-infringement lawsuits against Google.

"The publishing industry is united behind this lawsuit against Google and united in the fight to defend their rights," said AAP President Patricia Schroeder.

Schroeder, a former Colorado Congresswoman, said, "While authors and publishers know how useful Google's search engine can be and think the Print Library could be an excellent resource, the bottom line is that under its current plan Google is seeking to make millions of dollars by freeloading on the talent and property of authors and publishers."

Google has countered that it only publishes excerpts of copyright-protected material.

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