

Publisher warms to Scribd store

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FILE - In this Feb. 9, 2009 file photo, author Stephen King reads from his latest book "Ur" with the Kindle 2 electronic reader at a news conference for Amazon.com in New York. (AP Photo/Mark Lennihan, file)

(AP) -- The publisher of Stephen King and Chelsea Handler will be selling books through Scribd, the online document-sharing service that the industry has criticized for enabling the downloading of pirated texts.

Scribd announced Thursday that digital versions of books by King, Handler and thousands of others published by Simon & Schuster can be

purchased through Scribd's online store. In addition, excerpts from thousands of books will be available for viewing and linked to Simon & Schuster's Web site, where a paper edition can be purchased from the publisher or through a wide range of retailers.

Simon & Schuster is the first big New York publisher to make its titles available on Scribd, which started its store last month. Publishers have complained of numerous pirated texts showing up on Scribd, but officials for both Scribd and Simon & Schuster say that Scribd has worked hard to improve its anti-piracy measures and that having the authorized editions in its database will make it easier to track illegal versions.

"It's a way for them, in terms of technology, to match our files against any have been uploaded, to identify those uploaded files and then tell whether they're legitimate," said Ellie Hirschhorn, Simon & Schuster's chief digital officer. "If you're not in their program, the entire onus falls to the publisher, or to the author, or to the agent, for finding a pirated book. And now it's a shared responsibility."

"This is a major public endorsement by a major force in the publishing industry," said Trip Adler, Scribd's co-founder. "This is a great way for Simon & Schuster to protect its copyright and to sell to the online community."

A leading critic of Scribd, the Hachette Book Group, also may sell works through the online store.

"Because Scribd has been responsive to our concerns, we're open to selling our e-books on Scribd," said Sophie Cottrell, a vice president with Hachette, which in May singled out the company for having "an alarming number of unauthorized book titles on its site."

Thursday's announcement comes as the industry worries about piracy in the online era and also debates the extent, and the impact of piracy. Authors such as financial adviser Suze Orman and novelist Cory Doctorow have made a point of allowing their work to be available for free on the Internet, saying it raises awareness and can help sales. Last year, Random House Inc. offered free downloads of Charles Bock's acclaimed debut novel, "Beautiful Children."

But publishers say they want control of what's made available and say that they're especially concerned that the improving quality of e-book devices makes piracy easier and more appealing.

At the same time, piracy is a problem more in theory than in reality. Hirschhorn could not identify a specific book for which sales were harmed because of an unauthorized edition. Neither could a HarperCollins official, Carolyn Pittis, who said that the publisher is thinking about offering books on Scribd's store.

"But we're still concerned (about piracy)," said Pittis, HarperCollins' senior vice president for global marketing, strategy and operations. "Theoretically, it sounds great that technology can, in real time, alert Scribd about a pirated copy and prevent someone from actually uploading it. But I don't know how sophisticated that system is and whether it can work on a large scale."

Pittis said that piracy is "probably pretty low in this country," but worries about it more overseas, where millions of [Scribd](#) users live and where "there's such a culture of piracy." Asked to identify a book damaged commercially by piracy in another country, Pittis said she couldn't, but added, "I don't want a HarperCollins title to be the test case."

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