

Google to scan 400,000 Austrian library books

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Johanna Rachinger, the head of the ONB library, hailed what she called an "important step," arguing at a news conference that "there are few projects on such a scale elsewhere in Europe."

The Austrian library project concerns one of the world's five biggest collections of 16th- to 19th-century literature, totalling some 120 million pages, the ONB said in a statement.

Under the deal, [Google](#) will cover the costs of digitising the collection -- set at around 50 to 100 euros (60 to 120 dollars) per book -- a sum the library says it was unable to raise without external funding.

The ONB will pay to prepare the books for scanning, store the book data, and provide public access to it.

Scanning work is to begin in 2011 in Bavaria in southern Germany, and is expected to last around six years.

Rachinger said the library hopes the process will help preserve its original works, as well as providing digital back-up copies in case of a disaster.

Google will not have exclusive use of the scanned books, which will be accessible on the ONB's website www.onb.ac.at, the Google Books library at books.google.fr and its European counterpart www.europeana.eu, Rachinger said.

The US giant has been scanning millions of books to create a digital library and electronic bookstore but the project has been dogged by controversy because of copyright, anti-trust and privacy issues.

Google has so far digitised some 12 million [books](#), drawn from more than 40 [libraries](#) including those of Stanford and Harvard universities, with a similar deal struck in March with Rome and Florence universities in Italy.

But opponents have challenged its book-scanning activities in court, with US lawsuits filed by authors and publishers and more recently by photographers, and similar action under way in France.

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