

Google opens e-book store in challenge to Amazon

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN FRANCISCO — Google Inc. is making the leap from digital librarian to merchant in a challenge to Amazon.com Inc. and its Kindle electronic reader.

The long-awaited Internet book store, which is opening Monday in the U.S., draws upon a portion of the 15 million printed books that Google has scanned into its computers during the past six years.

About 4,000 publishers, including CBS Corp.'s Simon & Schuster Inc., Random House Inc. and Pearson PLC's Penguin Group, are also allowing Google to carry many of their recently released books in the new store.

Those publishing deals will ensure that most of the current bestsellers are among the 3 million e-books initially available in Google's store, said Amanda Edmonds, who oversaw the company's partnerships.

Millions more out-of-print titles will appear in Google's store, called eBooks, if the company can gain federal court approval of a proposed class-action settlement with U.S. publishers and authors.

The \$125 million settlement has been under review for more than two years. It faces stiff opposition from rivals, consumer watchdogs, academic experts, literary agents and even foreign governments, which worry that Google would get too much power to control prices in the still-nascent market for electronic books. Amazon.com, which started its business to sell books over the Internet, is among the competitors trying to squelch the settlement. The U.S. Justice Department has advised the judge overseeing the case that the settlement probably would violate antitrust and copyright laws.

Books bought from Google's store can be read on any machine with a Web browser. There are also free applications that can be installed on Apple Inc.'s iPad and iPhone, as well as other devices powered by Google's own mobile operating system, Android.

But Google's eBooks can't be loaded on to the Kindle.

Electronic books are expected to generate nearly \$1 billion in U.S. sales this year and climb to \$1.7 billion by 2012 as more people buy electronic readers and computer tablets such as the iPad, according to Forrester Research. The research group expects a total of 15 million e-readers and tablets to have been sold in the U.S. by the end of the year.

Google believes it's already offering the broadest selection of digital titles in the world, and it plans to keep adding to the inventory if it can gain the necessary copyright clearances. The company, based in Mountain View, Calif., believes it eventually will be able to make electronic copies of the estimated 130 million books in the world. It's also planning to start selling books outside the U.S. next year.

Google's eBooks store, originally to be called Editions, has been in the works for more than a year. The company already had been showing books no longer protected under copyright in their entirety and displaying snippets of other titles through its widely used search engine.

The company is trying to position its new sales outlet as an ally to publishers, merchants and consumers looking for alternatives to Amazon's electronic book store, which feeds Amazon's hot-selling Kindle, but not other e-readers, including Barnes & Noble Inc.'s Nook.

Google plans to offer sharp discounts on many of its e-books but it will still pay publishers 52 per cent of the list price for sales made on its site, unless another arrangement has been negotiated with

an outside agency. The formula means that even if Google elects to sell a book with a \$10 list price for \$6, the publisher would still be entitled to \$5.20.

Forrester Research analyst James McQuivey described Google's latest effort as a "game expander" rather than a game changer.

The growing embrace of digital sales by the publishing industry is expected to result in the closure of hundreds more book stores during the next few years,

adding to a media mortuary of music and video merchants killed by electronic distribution.

Google also is allowing independent book stores to sell its inventory through their own sites. Two large book retailers, Powell's in the Portland, Ore. area and online-only merchant Alibris.com, already have agreed to team up with Google.

Opening the door to book merchants who can't afford to invest heavily in

technology could help some of them survive the digital transition, McQuivey said. "At least this gives them a fighting chance."

Although Google expects the lion's share of its eBooks revenue to be funneled to its partners, its portion of the sales could help the company develop another way to make money besides the Internet ads that bring most of its income. The availability of eBooks also could help boost advertising sales by giving

people another reason to come to Google's website.

To allay concerns that it will exploit the dominance of its Internet search engine to spur e-book sales on its own site, Google plans to include links to several other places where people can buy a book mentioned in a search request. And when visitors come to the book section on Google's website, they will be asked if they are interested in buying or just doing general research.



Submitted Photo

EFFORTS RECOGNIZED – The 2010 Long Service Awards recipients are seen Nov. 26. Left to right: Judy Lightening, Ted Baker, RCMP aide-de-camp Alan C. Huble, then-Yukon commissioner Geraldine Van Bibber, Ed Krahn, Education Minister Patrick Rouble and Jeff Hunston. Not present for the photo were Jenny Caesar and Sue Herbrick.

Association salutes members' lengthy service

The Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees recognized long service by school council members from across Yukon on Nov. 26.

Then-commissioner Geraldine Van Bibber and Education Minister Patrick Rouble addressed the gathering and presented certificates to the recipients.

It was Van Bibber's last official event. Successor Doug Phillips will be sworn in Dec. 17.

Six people were formally recognized for reaching their 10 years of service: Judy Lightening (Whitehorse), Ted Baker (Faro), Ed Krahn (Whitehorse), Jeff Hunston (Whitehorse), Jenny Caesar (Ross River) and Sue Herbrick (Whitehorse).

This brings the number of people to 28 who have served 10 years or more on a school council, school board or affiliated association.

Since 1990, when the Yukon Education Act was proclaimed, 968 individuals have served in these roles and have contributed extensively of their time and efforts for their school communities and Yukon education in general, the association said.



Star Photo by VINCE FEDOROFF

SOMBRE GATHERING – The Persephone Singers provided the appropriate music for Monday afternoon's memorial for all the missing and murdered women in the Yukon and beyond. The annual event took place in the Elijah Smith Building.