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Google ordered to stop scanning French works

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Google has violated French copyright laws and must stop scanning French-language books for its digital library project, a [Paris court ruled](#) today. The ruling covers books and publications in U.S. libraries and overseas.

The search giant must also pay \$429,000 in damages and interest to the publisher that filed the lawsuit, [Editions du Seuil SAS](#).

Google, based in Mountain View, Calif., said it will appeal.

"French readers now face the threat of losing access to a significant body of knowledge and falling behind the rest of Internet users," Philippe Colombet, director of development for Google Books in France, said in an e-mailed statement, [Bloomberg writes](#). "Displaying a limited number of short extracts from books complies with copyright legislation both in France and the U.S. — and improves access to books."

"We are more determined than ever to collaborate with publishers, in France and elsewhere, so that we can find new economic models with them," Colombet said in a conference call afterward, Bloomberg says.

Google has scanned more than 100,000 French works protected by copyrights, according to the Syndicat National de l'Edition, which joined the lawsuit.

The ruling is a setback for the company's [plan to scan](#) out-of-print works that still are protected by copyrights.

Later this month, a Chinese court is [expected to hear](#) a similar copyright-infringement complaint from a Chinese author.

Yesterday, an all-French consortium of technology companies and government-backed IT research labs [announced](#) it was launching "an alternative to Google" to digitize French archives.

The group has studied Google's scanning results, "and we know that we can do better," said a leader of the project, called Polinum, a French acronym for "Operating Platform for Digital Books."

Monday, French President Nicholas Sarkozy announced a \$1 billion project to digitize French works, saying France "could be deprived of our heritage" by Google.

(Posted by Michael Winter)