

Top Biz News

Google apologizes to Chinese writers

By Lan Tian and Xie Yu (China Daily)

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Google said its communication with Chinese authors was "not good enough" after it published sections of their work in its online library Google Books without their permission.

Chinese writers accused Google of copyright infringement last October when the search engine used sections of their work online, and without their permission. They asked Google to apologize and have also demanded compensation.

Google's Book Search, for which the world's largest Internet search engine scans hundreds of thousands of books and places part of their content online, has also been met with legal challenges in the US and Europe.

Erik Hartmann, Asia-Pacific manager of Google Books, said in a CCTV report broadcast yesterday that the company was sorry for any unhappiness.

"Google has made Chinese writers feel dissatisfied in terms of their copyright protection. We are apologetic for the unhappiness brought about by this issue," Hartmann said.

"Through the discussions and communications of recent months, it is our understanding that our communications with Chinese writers have not been good enough," AFP quoted Hartmann's written statement as saying.

"Google is willing to apologise to Chinese authors."

The China Written Works Copyright Society, a non-government organization representing writers on copyright issues, said it would meet with Google about the copyright issue for the fourth time on Tuesday.

"Google's apology is made mainly because the company values the Chinese market a lot, as well as due to the domestic media's close attention to the issue," Zhang Hongbo, deputy director of the society, told China Daily.

"They're prepared to issue an official apology to the society on Tuesday," he said. "We expressed appreciation for the act."

Besides an apology, Google also will provide an expanded list of Chinese books it used, and a timetable for resolution of the copyright issue, Zhang said.

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Yang Chengzhi, secretary of the Chinese Writers Association (CWA), told CCTV: "We will have a serious study of the apology and hear the authors' opinions before we decide whether or not to accept Google's apology."

"We hope the apology is sincere, honest and courageous, and the commitment is serious and executable."

Last December, Chinese writer Mian Mian accused Google of copyright infringement and filed a lawsuit

against the company in Beijing.

Google said it had scanned more than 20,000 books under current Chinese copyright

Google said it had scanned more than 20,000 books under current Chinese copyright protection for its library.

In a letter to CWA and published on China National Radio's website, Google said the Chinese books were from US libraries and some were available for public use.

"Chinese writers' dissatisfaction about the issue is due to the different legal systems and understandings between China and the US in terms of copyright protection," the letter read.

Wang Ziqiang, director of the department of copyright management under China's National Copyright Administration, told qq.com in a recent interview, that although Google claims that scanning books and allowing readers to browse them on the Internet is legal, it has never provided the relevant laws that support its argument.

In China, copyright protection lasts 50 years beyond the author's death. In the case of a work by two or more writers, the copyright expires 50 years after the last surviving author's death.

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