The Surprising Truth About Book Piracy: Should Authors **Fight Back?**

info@vistex.com | www.vistex.com

Vistex® | Now it all adds up®

Summary

Unless you're able to run your writing career like bestselling authors James Patterson, Kevin J. Anderson, and Kevin's author wife Rebecca Moesta do—as a true business with an actual staff—there are many spinning plates to steal your attention. Along with plotting the next two books in your series, planning your book's publicity campaign, doing social media engagement, buying digital advertising, updating your website, travel planning, book signings, publicity interviews, and public speaking appearances, there's yet another mountain to climb: fighting the lost royalties from book piracy.

This eBook will explore how top authors view the costly issue of book piracy and lost royalties. It also provides keen insights into the foremost strategies today's authors are using to fight book piracy, ensuring you know how to fight it if this is the unfortunate hand you are dealt.

The Situation Room

Authors, graphic novel creators, and publishers worldwide alternately feel helpless and frustrated to find that within days of their new books' releases, they are already available as free, downloadable PDFs on book piracy sites. The first two weeks of any book launch are critical to sales and could determine if the second book (say, if in a series of three books) ever gets published. Book piracy is a financial hit job. More than $300 million in publisher income is lost annually in online piracy, per the Authors Guild's presentation last summer at Book Expo. The UK Intellectual Property Office's latest study showed 17% of eBooks read online were pirated—about 4 million books.

A quick Google search for "top book piracy sites" brought up more than 25 million results. Reddit, with its vast array of Subreddits rife with legally questionable shortcuts, has innumerable book torrent recommendations. An estimated 98.8% of the data transferred via Person-to-Person (P2P) networks is copyrighted, probably because attitudes and moral compasses have changed. Seventy percent of online users surveyed found nothing wrong with performing online piracy. You might be surprised to learn that Digimarc and Nielsen did a study finding that 47% of book pirates are aged 33 to 44, and 13% are 45 and up. Most pirates have incomes ranging from $60,000 to $99,000.

In 2011 when Eric Schmidt was still Google's executive chairman, he told London journalists that Google would defy attempts to restrict access to Pirate Bay and other cyberlocker sites that encouraged illegal downloading. Said Schmidt:

> "If there is a law that requires DNSs to do X and it's passed by both houses of Congress and signed by the President of the United States and we disagree with it, than we would still fight it. If it's a request, the answer is, we wouldn't do it; if it's a discussion, we wouldn't do it."

How Bestselling Authors View Book Piracy: Criminal Act, or Marketing Opportunity?

New York Times bestselling romance author Alessandra Torre wrote a blog about piracy in which she estimated it would cost a professional $750 to $2,000+ to erase an author's books from 99% of the pirate sites, plus an ongoing fee after that. Torre used Blasty.com in the past to fight book piracy, but that service ended in May of 2019. However, she is ambivalent. "I'm fairly laid back about pirates. I don't believe that readers who pirate are going to buy books. They aren't going to do it. If they don't find your books on their sites, they'll hunt harder, then they'll read something else. They don't give up on piracy and decide to start paying for books. So, pirates are already 'lost' to me in terms of income potential. With that said...there's the possibility that one of them will read my books and recommend them to a paying customer. And a pirate may leave a review on Goodreads, which might convince a paying customer to purchase it. Those two possibilities have helped me bury my head in the sand and pretend pirates don't exist."

Science fiction and fantasy New York Times bestselling author Kevin J. Anderson mirrors Torre's feelings on the matter. "I dislike the pirates on principle, and early on I spent a lot of time and energy playing whack-a-mole to take down unauthorized bit-torrent sites. But I only have so much time and energy, and I realized that any reader who would go hunting for an illegal, sloppily scanned copy of my novel on a pirate site is a reader who would NEVER pay for the book anyway, so it's not as if I'm actually losing sales. Readers who get their reading material from used bookstores or libraries don't generate any royalty income for the author either. Should I also rail against used bookstores and libraries? In the bigger picture, I can always hope that I gain more readers that way, and they might tell a friend or spread the word. My focus should be on writing new books to the best of my ability."

One Bestselling Author's Cautionary Tale

Bestselling American fantasy author Maggie Stiefvater was adamant that she lost significant income when the eARC (electronic advanced release copy) of the third book in her four-part Raven Cycle novel series went viral online. But Maggie was clever enough to play detective and take it one step further to demonstrate proof of her losses. To quantify her lost sales, she and her brother set an ingenious trap, which became the talk of the publishing industry. Together, they created an incomplete eARC that had the first four chapters repeated over and over again, with a message discouraging book piracy. They populated sites and forums with it. Stiefvater recalled, "The effects were instant. The forums and sites exploded with bewildered activity. And asked if anyone had managed to find a link to a legit PDF. Dozens of posts appeared saying that since they hadn't been able to find a PDF, they'd been forced to hit up Amazon and buy the book. And we sold out of the first printing in two days."

But the final chapter to Stiefvater's story doesn't have the classic happily ever after. Sadly, due to the leaked eARC from her third book, sales on the third book were less than half. This resulted in the cancellation of the planned ***Raven Cycle*** hardcover box set.

> "In short, piracy hurt the fans, the publisher, the printer and the author."

A Technology Solution: Tilting at Windmills, or the Last Bastion of Hope?

However, there is still one service out there that authors are using to fight back. The now-defunct Blasty.com's last remaining competitor is PageAngels.com, which describes their service as an "anti-piracy personal assistant," promising users to "kill illegal book links."

For the mission-critical first two weeks of a book release, PageAngels.com charges $150 to act on behalf of the author as their DMCA (Digital Millennium Copyright Act) agent, issuing takedown notices/requests on the author's behalf and finding the active piracy sites stealing the author's copyright. To protect an author's book series back list, PageAngels.com offers 3-month plans for eight titles at $750, up to protection for 24 back titles at $1,750.

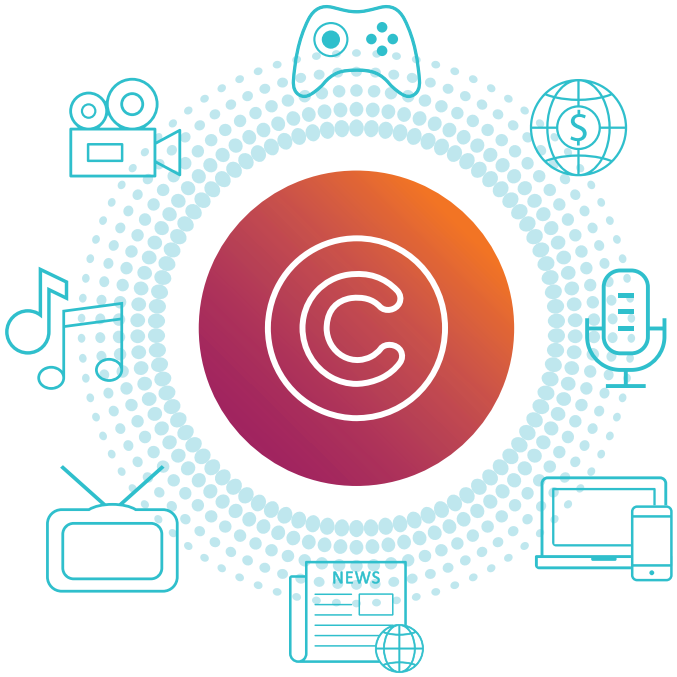
For authors in situations like Maggie Stiefvater, where the question of the third book getting published in a collection is dependent upon the second book's sales, PageAngels.com's protection would grant an author ROI that cannot be ignored.

Conclusion

In conclusion, if you are a publishing house or an author struggling with the threat of piracy, we hope these solutions will turn your issues into a minor blip on the radar, rather than a catastrophic wallop to your royalty statement. By planning ahead, you can stamp out the level of piracy during your next book launch and maintain control of your copyrighted work.

The Critical Role of Software

The collaborative nature of publishers and authors requires trust and visibility into the business data to ensure outbound and inbound royalty payment accuracy. And that requires software that can handle millions of data inputs a minute and accurately organize them into book, chapter, and verse granularity to provide precision reporting and one financial truth. Recognized as the industry software standard for more than 30 years, Vistex solutions serve the needs of book publishers, music publishers, record labels, streaming providers, film, TV, computer games, and licensing and consumer products.



About The Author

Tom Anthony is the Senior Product Manager for Content and Licensing at Vistex. Tom joined Vistex in 2015 with more than 25 years' experience in the software industry, specifically rights and royalty management solutions for Media, Publishing, Interactive Entertainment, Stock Photography, and more. In Tom's free time, he enjoys photography and hiking trails, wherever he can find them in his travels.

How Vistex Adds Value

Faced with tightening margins and increased pressure to get products out to market faster and across varied channels, platforms and territories, licensors and their licensing partners require tools to efficiently streamline the entire licensing process. With optimized licensing business intelligence, Vistex users track contract compliance, improve outbound and inbound royalty and payment accuracy, and gain real-time visibility into brand performance. This allows for more informed decisions that save time, money and relationships, protecting brand integrity.

About Vistex®

Vistex solutions help businesses take control of their mission-critical processes. With a multitude of programs covering pricing, trade, royalties and incentives, it can be complicated to see where all the money is flowing, let alone how much difference it makes to the topline and the bottomline. With Vistex, business stakeholders can see the numbers, see what really works, and see what to do next – so they can make sure every dollar spent or earned is really driving growth, and not just additional costs. The world's leading enterprises across a spectrum of industries rely on Vistex every day to propel their businesses.

Vistex®, Go-to-Market Suite®, and other Vistex, Inc. graphics, logos, and service names are trademarks, registered trademarks or trade dress of Vistex, Inc. in the United States and/or other countries. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or for any purpose without the expressed written permission of Vistex, Inc. The information contained herein may be changed without prior notice.

© Copyright 2020 Vistex, Inc. All rights reserved.

info@vistex.com | www.vistex.com

Vistex® Now it all adds up®