

Talk for EBLIDA  
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## PART I: PIRATES

There is a group of powerful anti-copyright activists out there who are trying to destroy the book

- \* Pirates who would destroy copyright and have no respect for our property

Oh, they dress this up in high-minded rhetoric about how they are the true defenders and inheritors of creativity

- \* They have sold this claim around the world, even to regulators

- \* They've even elected members of parliament, congresspeople

\* They say that they want to preserve the way it's always been, claiming that their radical agenda is somehow \*conservative\*

But what they \*really\* see is a future in which the ebook market grows by leaps and bounds, and they will get to be at the center of it.

\* They claim that this is ethics, but anyone who thinks about it for a minute can see that it's about \*profit\*

These pirates are not kids who download ebooks without paying for them

- \* They're the publishers, whose extreme copyright position threatens the book itself

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## PART II: PEOPLE OF THE BOOK

We are people of the book

- \* We love our books

- \* We fill our houses with our books

- \* We treasure the books we inherited from our parents

- \* We cherish the idea of passing on our books to our children

- \* We force worthy books on our friends, \*insisting\* that they read them

- \* We feel a weird sort of kinship to people we see on busses and airplanes reading the books that we love

\* And if anyone tried to take away our books, a repressive government; some mad, prudish censor; a burglar, we'd defend them with everything we have

\* We know our tribespeople because they inhabit homes given over to books; books that line the walls, piled on the stairs and next to the bed, even damp-swollen paperbacks in the bathroom

\* Our books are \*us\*, outboard memory-banks containing the moral and intellectual and imaginative influences that made us the people we are today

And copyright \*recognizes\* this

\* It says that once you buy a book, it belongs to you

\* It is yours to give away, to keep, to lend or to borrow, to inherit or to include in your estate

For centuries, copyright has acknowledged the sacred connection between readers and their books

\* Books are OLDER than copyright

\* than publishing

\* than printing

\* Books are older than records or video games or DVDs

But the anti-copyright activists have no respect for our property

\* They say that when you buy an ebook or a digital audiobook, you are demoted from an owner to a licensor, from a reader to a user

\* These thieves deliver our digital books and audiobooks wrapped in license agreements and proprietary technologies that might as well be designed to destroy the emotional bond between a reader and a book

\* Licenses that run to thousands of words

\* 26,000 words of EULA to buy an audiobook with an iPhone from the iTunes store!

\* Licenses whose premise is, "Forget copyright. Forget the law that was written by congress or parliament. From now on, \*we're\* making the rules"

\* Licenses filled with unenforceable clauses, backstopped with more clauses like, "In the event that some of this license is held to be invalid, the balance remains in force"

\* Translation: Copyright is nonsense. The words printed here have no relationship to copyright. We have made up a farcical wishlist of abusive ways of getting money out of you, and we haven't even bothered to stick to what is likely to get past a judge

\* On top of the licenses: DRM

\* DRM that has never stopped a book from escaping onto the Internet

\* Behold, the typist!

\* DRM that, instead, makes it illegal for someone else to create a reader that can display the book or play the audiobook

\* If Amazon had a deal with IKEA to be the exclusive suppliers of reading chairs and shelves and lightbulbs for its books, and claimed the right to sue anyone else who made a chair or shelf or lightbulb that worked with its books, we'd laugh

\* And if they were serious, publishers would withdraw their wares from their stores

\* Because it is *\*not\** in writers, publishers or the public interest for readers to be held hostage by mere distributors, who, if they gain enough power, can use that lock-in to dictate terms to us as the iTunes Store uses lock-in to dictate pricing and terms to the record industry

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### PART III: SAVING THE BOOK

After years of talking and writing and thinking about books, I've come to a simple and important realization:

\* I love books

Not just reading them or owning them

\* I have a deeply sentimental attachment to the *\*idea\** of books

Not just me, society wide

\* Burning book is a symbol of tyranny

\* Libraries are the pinnacle of civilization

\* Any time you want to make a character sympathetic, just make him a reader who loves library -- oozes virtue

Think of the penumbra of virtue that surrounds books

\* Stripping books and recycling phone books is physically painful

What a fine place to be!

\* We pay high-priced marketing people millions to design electronic "experiences" for our businesses

\* The experience of consuming and discussing and all of it

The second half of my realization

\* The most important part of the \*experience\* of the book is the emotional bond that comes from \*owning\* it

\* Knowing your children can inherit it

\* Knowing it came from your parents

\* Knowing it can be archived, lent, borrowed

\* Knowing that the magazines you subscribe to belong to you, even if you stop subscribing to them

\* Having it there, like an old friend, following you from house to house, for all your days and nights

This is a literally invaluable asset

\* But we have set out to convince readers that they have no business treating books as property

\* That they shouldn't get attached to them

\* The worst thing is, we might succeed

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#### PART IV: RESPECT COPYRIGHT

People keep showing me ereaders that try to "recreate the book experience" with cute animations showing turning pages

\* But if you want to re-create the important part of the "book experience" - the part that keeps people buying books for their whole lives, filling their walls with treasured friends they wouldn't part with for love or money

\* Then you need to restore ownership to books

If I buy a book, it's mine. There is no mechanism, not even in the face of a court order, whereby the retailer can take it away from me once I take it home

\* Designing ebooks that can delete books without their owners' permission is insane

If I buy an audiobook on CD, it's \*mine\*. I can rip that book to WMA or AAC or MP3. I can play it on any player I own today and any player I buy tomorrow

\* No license or DRM prohibits me from doing this

We love our books because they belong to us. They are our outboard intellectual co-processors and memory units, in which we store our inspiration and our fantasies and our aspirations

Anyone who claims that readers can't and won't and shouldn't own those books is bent on the destruction of the book, the destruction of publishing, and the destruction of authorship

We must stop them and we have it in our power to do so

- \* The library of tomorrow should be better than the library of today, not worse

- \* We all know this

- \* It's time we stopped pretending that the pirates are right

- \* These people were all readers before we were publishers, before we were writers, before we were agents or salespeople or marketers

- \* We are the people of the book

- \* It's time we started acting like it

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I have a simple, but radical proposal for you:

- \* Stop buying ebooks with DRM on them

  - \* Period

- \* Oh, it's not easy

  - \* Librarianship isn't easy.

    - \* You are the specialists who safeguard information in the information age

  - \* But you wouldn't accept a publisher's demand that his representatives could put hidden cameras in your collection to discover who was reading and how

  - \* You wouldn't accept a publisher's demand for access to your circulation records

  - \* You wouldn't accept a journal publisher who said that your physical copies had to be burned when you stopped subscribing

- \* The digital equivalents are not any more acceptable than the physical ones are

  - \* It's not complicated

    - \* It's hard

  - \* But it's not complicated

    - \* Period