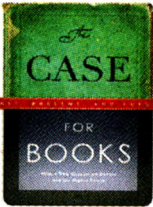


Public Affairs has the special history of the copyright statute, and the importance of the digitisation of the history of a country. (Public Affairs, St. Paul, 2007)

**The Case for Books:
Past, Present
and Future, by
Robert Darnton
(PublicAffairs, £9.99)**



ROBERT DARNTON

The first copyright statute was published in this country 300 years ago this year. Some authors regard Google's plan to digitise millions of books and to make them searchable online as a gross infringement of copyright. So far Google has scanned about 10m books, and a judgment is awaited in the US courts about whether the company will be allowed to create the biggest library in history (the Library of Congress contains some 24m books). The case is hugely important not just for writers, but for readers too. Should one company - even one that claims to "do no evil" - be allowed a monopoly on the world's books? Robert Darnton is an authority on the history of books and director of Harvard University Library, whose books are being scanned by Google. He is not opposed to the idea of a digital library: "Yes, we must digitise. But more important, we must democratise." In this lucid and erudite collection of essays, Darnton argues that new technology should be used in the spirit of the Enlightenment - to encourage wider access to knowledge - and not just to enrich one company. **PDS**