

Court decision good for readers, bad for writers

By Sophia Pearson and Bob Van Voris, Bloomberg

Google Inc.'s project to digitally copy millions of books for online searches doesn't violate copyright law, a federal judge ruled, dismissing an eight-year-old lawsuit against the largest search-engine company.

Google Books provides a public benefit and is a fair use of copyrighted material, Judge Denny Chin in Manhattan ruled today. The project, which has scanned more than 20 million books so far, doesn't harm authors or inventors of original works, Chin said.

"Google Books provides significant public benefits," Chin wrote. "It advances the progress of the arts and sciences, while maintaining respectful consideration for the rights of authors and other creative individuals, and without adversely impacting the rights of copyright holders."

Chin's decision comes more than two years after he rejected a proposed \$125 million settlement in the case filed by The Authors Guild, which represents writers. The group sued in 2005 alleging that Google, owner of the world's most popular search engine, infringed copyrights by scanning and indexing books without writers' permission.

Paul Aiken, the Authors Guild's executive director, said in a statement today that the ruling is a "fundamental challenge" to copyrights and that his group plans to appeal.

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