

Social Publishing

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Copyright protection is typically assumed to be both necessary and sufficient to produce a vibrant book publishing industry. A new trend in social enterprise challenges that assumption. These not-for-profit organizations are developing new business models to serve readers that might otherwise be neglected by for-profit publishers because they are too poor, too remote, do not speak the dominant language, or have other niche needs in terms of content or format. “Social publishers” are driven by a mission to serve these neglected audiences, and typically give their content away for free or at cost. Many social publishers also host their content in the cloud, rely on digitally enabled community co-production, or rely on alternative copyright arrangements, such as open licenses or statutory exceptions and limitations. The social publishing trend holds the promise to bring books to “the next billion” of would-be readers, challenges for-profit publishers to adapt and expand, and calls for a fundamental rethinking of the role of copyright in supporting the publishing enterprise.