



Where does a book go when its copyright has expired?

The internet, specifically, www.gutenberg.net. Project Gutenberg has been creating a digital library one book at a time since 1971 when Michael Hart first published the American Declaration of Independence. Since then all manner of works that are now in the public domain have been re-typed, scanned, proof read and stored on Gutenberg. The current rate of additions is one a day.

You may be thinking that if it is out of copyright then the type of literary works on Gutenberg are from authors such as Homer, Shakespeare, Tolstoy, and Austen. You would be right. These and other notable authors are certainly features on the site, however these would fall into the category of 'Heavy Literature' which also includes the Bible. Gutenberg, however, contains two other categories, 'Light Literature' and 'Reference'. Light Literature contains classics such as Alice in Wonderland, Peter Pan, Sherlock Holmes, Adventures of Pinocchio, The Wizard of Oz, and 20,000 Leagues



Under the Sea. The Reference category contains works such as Webster's Unabridged Dictionary.

Free books, so what's the catch? Well, to be on Gutenberg a literary work has to be in the public domain, that is to say, copyright must have expired. This is by no means easy to determine in every situation, as the laws in different countries have different time limits. The rule of thumb suggested on the site is 75 years and recommends determining the copyright status in your country and provides information about copyright with every work published on the site. So, I guess age is the first catch. You will definitely not find the latest John Grisham on Gutenberg.

The other catch is the form in which

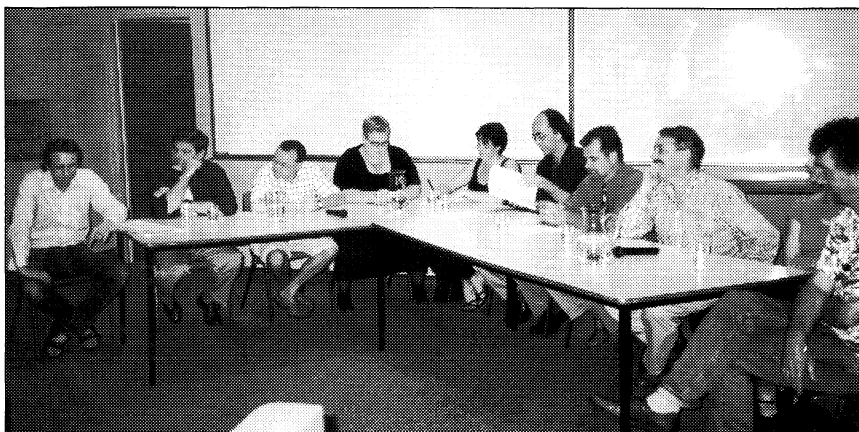
the work is published. You are not getting a "physical" copy of the work. The format is called Etext, that is to say, the works are created in Plain Vanilla ASCII, as the site explains. The reason for this is to make the works accessible to everyone, regardless of operating system and technological development. This means that to read a work downloaded from Gutenberg, you will need to either read it on screen or print it - some of these works are quite substantial! I have found that another solution is very simple and effective. For those with a Palm computer or other handheld device, you can easily store the etext and carry it around. When you have a few spare moments you can pick up where you left off. If the work is too large for your handheld device, you can use software tools to divide the document and make it easier to manage.

Gutenberg offers a huge collection of material for e-reading and has made some of the best literary works in history available to almost everyone at almost no cost. In terms of my bookmark list, this has to rate in the top 10!

THE BARRISTER, THE RASTAMAN & THE RAT: NTU LAW FACULTY'S LAW WEEK HYPOTHETICAL

A plane accident in the desert sparked a journey raising native title, copyright and mandatory sentencing issues for the audience of sixty guests at the Law Week hypothetical hosted by the NTU Law Faculty.

It was a tale of twists and turns taking the audience from a remote community in Central Australia to the homes of lawyers and youth in Darwin. Written and directed by NTU lecturer and Vogel Literary prize winner Mr Stephen Gray, the panel of legal practitioners, politicians and media representatives were called on to answer questions and give opinions on a range of legal and social issues. The hypothetical was entertaining and informative, and a credit to all organisers and participants.



From left: David Dalrymple, Peter Adamson (Member for Casuarina), John Lawrence, Merran Short, Heather Stewart (ABC), Ron Levy, John Bailey, Colin McDonald QC, Sharon Burnett and Robert Welfare