

Unglue.it Wants to Make a Creative Commons for E-books

Written by Mashable

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A new platform called Unglue.it wants to make your favorite e-books available to the world for free.

Through a crowdfunding platform inspired by [Kickstarter](#) and the public radio model, [Unglue.it](#) is hosting campaigns to turn individual, already-published books into [Creative Commons](#) licensed e-books. This means that you could legally read and share e-books for free with anyone across the globe.

For any one book, the company works with rights holders to decide on fair compensation for such a license. Through Unglue.it, individuals and institutions can pledge toward that amount. Once the amount is reached, the team collects the pledged funds and pays the rights holders. Then, the rights holders issue a digital edition that is “unglued,” or free to read and use.

Eric Hellman, president of the service’s parent company Gluejar, said it has been designing and building the site since May 2011. A preview opened in January without any campaigns or pledging, and the official launch took place last month.

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Unglue.it has started with five [e-book](#) campaigns and expects to have more soon. In the meantime, the team has been searching for ideal ways to take on certain titles.

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“We have been approaching literary agents and smaller publishers about backlist titles with reverted rights with limited success,” Hellman told *Mashable*. “Most rights holders are hesitant to try something so unproven [as Unglue.it].”

But Unglue.it is on the road to success with one title currently in the process of becoming an ebook — *Oral Literature in Africa* by Ruth Finnegan (Oxford University Press, 1976). It has \$4,280 worth of pledges out of a \$7,500 goal.

The cost of a Creative Commons license varies with every book: “A Creative Commons license could cost nothing if the author wants to give it away,” Hellman said. “A Harry Potter novel would be nine figures. Unglue.it has a id="mce_marker",000 rights minimum, but we’re expecting an average campaign to close around id="mce_marker"0,000.”

The variation in pricing depends on the market value of the book, Hellman explained.

The legality of sharing media is always a hot topic of conversation, and publishing houses and authors are particularly stringent about rights and licensing — for good reason. But according to Unglue.it, e-books are expensive to create but cheap to distribute, so covering their fixed costs and reasonable profit up front can be an appealing system for authors, publishers, readers and libraries.

According to Hellman, Unglue.it has already signed up 1,142 pledging supporters.

“We’re going to work very hard to make all of the campaigns succeed,” he said.

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