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The electronic book in renaissance studies

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"The electronic book in Renaissance studies" by Gabriel Egan

The term 'electronic book' has a wide range of meanings, including things that are digital when they are first made (the so-called 'born digital') and things that were first printed and later digitized. For my purposes, I shall make no such distinction: when I say 'electronic book' I mean simply any electronic text of any kind (pure ASCII, or complexly tagged, or indeed mere digital pictures of the pages of a printed book) that may be disseminated digitally and that is longer than the longest academic article, let us anything from 30,000 to half a million words. I propose to say nothing about the technologies and politics of electronic book creation--a subject on which I would always defer to the expert on my right, Ray Siemens--and confine myself entirely to matters of dissemination.

In relation to dissemination, then, the obvious new and central idea is the new concept of Open Access. [SLIDE] Since the [Budapest Initiative](#) in 2002, the [Bethesda Statement](#) in 2003, and the [Berlin Declaration](#) in 2003, the idea that the results of scholarly research should be given away freely over the Internet--the Open Access principle--has gained many adherents. The United Kingdom government's Science and Technology Committee considered the matter and in its [10th Report](#) (7 July 2004) it declared itself in favour of Open Access, endorsing to differing extents each of Open Access's three routes [SLIDE]:

- 1) the creation of Institutional Repositories (IRs) to hold and preserve research outputs from particular institutions (primarily universities)
- 2) self-archiving (web-based dissemination) by individual academics
- 3) Open Access publishing (author-pays versus the current subscriber-pays model)

Much of the work on Open Access has been driven by the journal-centric sciences and in a number of reports one sees 'journal article' and 'research output' used as synonyms, interchangeably. Unlike the sciences, our disciplines place at least as much importance on the book as the journal article. There may be book-specific barriers to Open Access in Renaissance studies, and although major academic publishers (such as Elsevier and Taylor & Francis) have declared their acceptance of some Open Access principles in respect of journal articles (limited dissemination and deposit of pre-print articles) the picture with monographs and critical editions is far from clear.

The arguments in favour of Open Access are well made in the initiatives I have mentioned, and in the UK and US at least university libraries have begun creating Institutional Repositories with enthusiasm. The idea of an Institutional Repository is that each university builds an online store of the research outputs created at that institution and makes it available for no cost over the Internet. Just how the materials get into the repository--whether academic authors are to be compelled or merely encouraged to make deposits--is yet to emerge clearly. Even on a voluntary basis, as they are now, the Institutional Repositories have taken off, and my own institution's recently accepted its 1000th deposit. This is a tiny number compared to the number of items in the university library, but it has been achieved at virtually no cost in terms of labour or storage space

For library managers who have for the past 20 years, since the rise of CD-ROM and online materials, been unsure just what the long-term future of the university was to be, the Institutional Repository provides a clear and optimistic vision. However, since its virtually cost-free to run an Institutional Repository, those who work in libraries might worry about their long-term job prospects. And although this is not the librarians' primary concern, the Institutional Repository represents a substantial shift of power away from publishers and back to academic authors and their employing universities. To put this shift in the widest intellectual context, I'd like to grossly generalize about what the world was like before there were publishers.

When I was an undergraduate student in London in the early 1990s I lived at the top of a 14-floor tower block of what is called in Britain council housing in the East London suburb of Barking. This is one of London's most dangerous and depressed suburbs, notorious for its unemployment poverty and the concomitant evils of violent crime and drug addiction, [SLIDE] but the sight from my window made up for that, as I had an aerial view of the ruins of Barking Abbey. [SLIDE] For my BA I was studying Anglo-Saxon culture and I knew just how different the Barking at the end of the first millennium was from the Barking at the end of the second, my Barking, and I knew that the reason for the difference was the abbey [SLIDE]. Barking Abbey which was one of beacons of learning in 7th to 10th-century Europe. The nuns who ran it were renowned for their great learning, and when the 8th-century Abbot Aldhelm of Malmesbury, the pioneer of Latin verse among the Anglo-Saxons, addressed his difficult prose book De Virginitate to the abbess Hildelith at Barking [SLIDE] he made it clear that he wrote to an intellectual equal. Aldhelm was not at all condescending to the nuns of Barking, quite the opposite, he admired their intelligence and learning (Fell 1984, 109-11).

I offer this example of how intellectual culture operated a 1000 years ago because it is so counter-intuitive, it is so not the Barking that Britons know of now. The difference between then and now was those nuns and their books at Barking, and we should notice that they existed as part of a defence establishment: defending an outpost of the new ideology, Christianity, that had swept Europe. Their books were not simply copies of holy writing, but also arguments about, reflections upon, and philosophical defences, of a belief system. Europe's centres of learning were a defence network against opposed ideas.

In written culture, of course, the most importance difference between the time before the Renaissance and the time after it is the development of the printing press, which we think of as having a strongly positive force. In the literary culture of the Anglo-Saxon nunneries and the medieval monasteries, libraries held precious written artefacts that could be reproduced only by considerable expenditure of physical effort in the scriptorium. The printing press largely destroyed the art of book illustration as it had hitherto flourished, but it gave writing two new and extraordinary characteristics: easy reproduceability and cheapness. The cheapness was not always seen as necessarily a good thing, since it allowed things to be reproduced that would not have been thought important enough in the days when reproduction was expensive. In a letter to his librarian in 1612, the founder of the Bodleian library in Oxford, Thomas Bodley wrote [SLIDE]:

I can see no good reason to alter my opinion, for excluding such books as almanacs, plays, and an infinite number that are daily printed of very unworthy matters and handling, such as, methinks, both the Keeper and Underkeeper should disdain to seek out to

deliver unto any man. Haply some plays may be worthy the keeping, but hardly one in forty.

In the event, Shakespeare's plays were considered among the one in forty and the Bodleian bought his play quartos when they came out. But when the much more impressive, imposing, and expensive complete works editions of Shakespeare came out later in the seventeenth century, the Bodleian sold off its cheap Shakespeare quartos. This mistake was regretted in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the Bodleian went to considerable trouble and expense buying them back. This goes to the heart of the issue about the cost of the medium and the perceived quality of the message, for in Bodley's view [SLIDE]:

. . . some little profit might be reaped (which God knows is very little) out of some of our playbooks, the benefit thereof will nothing near countervail the harm that the scandal will bring unto the Library, when it shall be given out that we stuff it full of baggage books. . . . This is my opinion, wherein, if I err, I think I shall err with infinite others; and the more I think upon it, the more it doth distaste me that such kind of books should be vouchsafed a room in so noble a Library.

If Bodley's librarian had bought any of the the quartos of Christopher Marlowe's play Doctor Faustus available at the time, its title-page would have been unadorned. [SLIDE] The next edition, though, in 1619 had a title-page picture that illustrated one of the play's key moments, when Faustus, seeker-out of knowledge at Wittenberg University, stands book in hand with the devil he has conjured. Faustus rejects the knowledge he finds in books and turns to magic to know more, and to Mephistophiles he pitches his questions about the elements of which the universe is composed and about the movements of the bodies in the heavens. The answers he gets from the devil are, of course, precisely the ones given by his books [SLIDE]:

FAUSTUS

These slender questions Wagner can decide:
Hath Mephastophilis no greater skill?
Who knows not the double motion of the planets?
The first is finish'd in a natural day,
The second thus: Saturn in thirty year,
Jupiter in twelve, Mars in four, the Sun, Venus, and Mer-
cury in a year, the moon in twenty-eight days. Tush, these
are freshman's suppositions!
(Marlowe Doctor Faustus 2.3.50-7)

Ironically, then, Faustus's selling of his soul to the devil to acquire new knowledge was pointless: he already had it from his university's library books, and any freshman can get the same.

Over the next several hundred years books got cheaper and cheaper, and yet the business remained from our point of view the same. [SLIDE] Put crudely, the publishers' economic model was founded on two bases: i) the accumulation of capital in the form of expensive printing presses and distribution networks, and ii) the possession of exclusive rights to reproduce certain content. Even in the early days of the London printing industry,

in the late-sixteenth century before our modern notions of copyright came into being, the Stationers' Company existed to protect the rights of exclusivity of publishers.

I mentioned that the medieval religious centres of learning were part of a defence network, and of course since the late 1960s a new defence network, the US government's Defense Advance Research Projects Agency Network (DARPANET) has created a new distribution channel that, once it became the Internet in 1983, began to challenge the publishers' monopoly of the dissemination of the scholarly written word. With the addition of the HyperText Transmission Protocol and HyperText Markup Language around 1990, the Internet offered a real alternative to the printed word as a means of research communication, and it is now hard to see just how publishers can sustain the dominance of this field that they have enjoyed for a few hundred years.

The point of this whistle-stop tour has been to survey ground that I imagine we are all in agreement upon, although there are of course many people (probably in this room) who could present a much more nuanced history of 1000 of knowledge dissemination. The key points I would pick out are that, and a Marxist like me would of course say this, technology has been the driver in these historical processes, and that the associated ideas--especially such notions as copyright--arose after technological change in order to try to accommodate the new technology's impact within the wider economy. In Marxist terms, copyright is a superstructural form that emerges from the economic structure. I shall return later to this point in order to argue that we ought not to feel ourselves morally bound to the existing principles of copyright. [BLANK SLIDE]

We can say a bit more about the economics of current Renaissance studies book publishing. Academics, whose salaries are in most cases paid by the state, produce knowledge and write it up in articles, essays, and books. These they give free of charge to publishers, who (controlling the means of knowledge distribution) disseminate this knowledge through the world in the form of printings that are sold on the open market. For most research monographs, these printings are bought by a very few individuals and by the university libraries of the world who store them in vast collections. What distinguishes the most prestigious and useful research libraries is the completeness of their collections: one goes to the Bodleian in Oxford or the Library of Congress in Washington or the Huntington in Pasadena in the hope that wherever one's reading takes one--whichever footnote one wishes to follow up--there will be a copy of the work in that library that can be fetched in minutes.

You do not have to be a Marxist to see that this model of knowledge dissemination--in which people travel to visit one of the many identical copies of a book that are stored in the libraries of the world--is peculiarly archaic. It is not only strange, it is unsustainable in terms of sheer numbers of books sold. I confess here that my knowledge of books is for the most part limited to my field, Shakespeare studies, and my knowledge of how book authoring relates to the career development of academics is largely limited to the British university system. Indeed I would be interested to widen that perspective by hearing from, and being corrected by, Americans in the question and answer part of this talk. As a preliminary step towards widening my perspective I took a look at the research monographs on sale in the book displays at this conference. Sampling at random, I made quick counts of the numbers of people thanked in the acknowledgements sections of 15 books. I looked at 15 books (an admittedly small sample) and the number of people personally thanked ranged from 20 to 80, with an average of 42. That's a lot of people,

and in quite a lot of cases the higher end of that scale, 80, comes close to the total world sales for a new research monograph in our fields.

In other words, as a means of disseminating one's research outcomes to a group of interested fellow researchers, the print monograph fundamentally fails. Rather than publish a book, an author would be better off going around to each of the people she mentions in her acknowledgements and simply telling them her findings. She would, by that means, in some cases reach more people than buy the book. Of course, a book bought by a library potentially reaches more than one person, but if anyone who wants to get a sense of how often each research monograph in a library is borrowed, most library catalogue systems can supply this information. I advise asking in respect of an academic rival's books rather than your own, as the numbers are shockingly low. For older books there is an even simpler test. I recently had cause to read the introductions to the first volumes in the Arden Shakespeare's first series of play-texts, published from 1899 to 1905. I used the copies in the specialist Shakespeare Institute research library in Stratford-upon-Avon, where one would expect the usage of these books to be considerable. In fact in several cases I had to borrow the librarian's book-knife to cut open the folded edges of the sheets of paper. Having lain on the shelf for 100 years, the introductions to these books were unread until I looked at them.

To return to my main theme, from the point of view of disseminating knowledge the printed research monograph does not work very well. Another reason to reject this means of scholarly communication is that it is based on a decidedly unfair economic model. Why should universities give their research to publishers only to have those publishers sell it back to them? It remains to be seen whether publishers can retain control of journal-article dissemination. It is a big market, so they will try. On the moral issue, though, the case is unanswerable: since knowledge is generated in the universities and we have the technical means to preserve it and to disseminate it, we ought to simply give away our work via Institutional Repositories. We are already effectively giving it away to publishers, and it is hard to see why we still do so now that the means of production and distribution have been radical overhauled by technology.

[SLIDE] The nuns of Barking Abbey were custodians and generators of knowledge in 8th-century Europe, and with relatively few books they were of course eager to receive Aldhelm's text. With their technology, before easy copying by print, consulting the knowledge meant going to one of these centres of learning. Print technology replaced this model of knowledge dissemination with one in which multiple identical copies of a book were lodged at key sites across the world, and that model served us well for a few hundred years. We now have the capacity for a new model, in which the knowledge again is lodged where it's created--in the centre of learning--and identical copies sent out virtually instantaneously to wherever in the world they are wanted. This can only be a good thing. [SLIDE]

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In the sciences, this has already come to pass. In electronics engineering, new knowledge disseminated in print form is by the very fact of being in that form necessarily too old to be interesting: all discoveries circulate in electronic form only. This is because in the sciences research is disseminated in journal articles, and these have already made the transition to the new media. In Arts and Humanities journal publishing, the transition is

happening right now and in their defence the publishers' attitudes are changing rapidly. I am one of the editors of a new journal called Shakespeare published by Routledge, which is part of Taylor and Francis, and early in the life of the new publication we editors received a set of documents from Taylor and Francis outlining their legal department's attitudes towards contributor copyright. One of the core assumptions was the contributors would author their material in Microsoft Word format and that anything else such as HTML and XML versions were the exclusive province of the publisher, would be generated by them, and would not go back to the contributors. The thinking was clear: Taylor and Francis did not mind the contributors putting into their university's Institutional Repositories their pre-print Word versions of the essays to be published, but value-added versions in HTML and XML were off-limits. As editors we pointed out that although the details of how academic Institutional Repositories would work were far from clear, it was not unlikely that they would exploit these very formats HTML and XML

Indeed the editorial processes we undertake in preparation of the journal currently uses HTML extensively, so we would not want a blanket ban on contributors using these technologies in the versions of their own work that they submit to their repositories. Rather, we argued, it was a matter of contributors not owning versions of their own work, in any format, that included value added by Taylor and Francis. To give a concrete example, we agreed that it would not do for a contributor to get hold of an HTML version of their contribution from the Taylor and Francis website, turn it back into a Word document, and to submit that to their institutional repository. Such a version would not be HTML or XML, but it would include content that Taylor and Francis could reasonably want to keep to itself.

As editors we were glad that Taylor and Francis had chosen not to insist that contributors sign their copyright over to the publisher as a condition of publication: they were willing to accept receiving only an exclusive licence to publish. Of course, we would prefer that they accept only a non-exclusive right to publish, but one step at a time. On the other hand, we deplored Taylor and Francis's attempts to pretend that what they added to the contributions was technically complex and thus far beyond the wit of mere academics to do for themselves. For example, Taylor and Francis bragged that they took responsibility for the registering of a Digital Object Identifier (DOI) "to assure digital copyright protection". A DOI has no bearing upon copyright status nor upon protection, and the real point here was to reassure academics that Taylor and Francis would handle the gory technical details and we need not worry our heads about them.

Just to continue this digression about Taylor and Francis's attitudes a little further, it became clear that they regretted their initial openness to idea that contributors might retain their copyright, especially when the editors made it plain that we would routinely give contributors the 'exclusive licence to publish' contract and would not show them the 'copyright assignment' form unless they asked for it. In meetings Taylor and Francis tried without success to get the journal editors to accept the transfer of copyright as the 'default' setting for our dealings with contributors, and to their credit they accepted our position. However, in marketing materials such their company website page for our journal they continued to tell contributors that they had to hand over their copyright. Again to their credit, after a series of awkward exchanges that made it plain that this matter was a deal-breaker--at least one of the editors, me, would resign over it--Taylor and Francis agreed to change their wording to accept that authors retaining their copyright is the normal state of affairs.

I imagine things will become considerably more tense when we start to argue that authors ought to give the publisher only a non-exclusive right to publish. I anticipate this coming because the lead is being taken by universities as employers of academics. Over the past few years the drive in Britain for academics to retain their copyright has been given a great boost by universities advising their academics to take this line with publishers, and indeed by universities providing academics with a standard wording of the necessary 'exclusive licence to publish' with which academics could confront publishers who claimed to have no idea what we are talking about, or claimed to have no appropriate forms to handle this allegedly awkward reluctance to hand over copyright. Now that Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) has taken the logical next step and advises its academics to give publishers only a non-exclusive licence to publish, and provides the necessary standard wording that can be appended to any contract to achieve that end, I think British universities will follow suit.

Speaking on the subject of academic publishing last month at the Institute of English Studies in London, Josie Dixon, formerly publishing director for Palgrave Macmillan's academic division, gave the opinion that MIT's position was morally indefensible. She called it a "flagrant undermining of publishers core business" (Dixon 2007). So it is, but it is not clear why we should find that morally indefensible. After all, MIT's development work on the transistor in the 1950s flagrantly undermined the core business of the manufacturers of vacuum tubes, but that is the nature of progress. Actually, speaking as she was to an impressionable group of research students thinking about the publication of their PhD theses, Dixon rather naughtily claimed that MIT now insists that its academics give publishers only non-exclusive rights to publish, which claim is contradicted by the MIT webpages on the subject and by my personal communication with Shankar Raman, a Shakespearian scholar who works there.

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So, to return to books, I think we can get a sense of how publishers in Arts and Humanities feel about the electronic book from how they have reacted to the electronic journal. They are trying to defend a mechanism for making money that has served well for quite a long time, but there is no reason for us to help them defend it. In the United Kingdom the entire country's Higher Education Information Technology needs are met by a single body called the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) funded directly by central government. JISC has enormous buying power and has managed to secure for British universities some remarkably good deals for access to the large electronic textual corpora such as Early English Books Online, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, and Literature Online. JISC's Electronic Books Working Group has been looking at the future of e-books, but I have to report that its deliberations have been hampered by the fact that although the group has representatives from the university libraries and from the publishers on it, there was until recently no academic on it. The group had not really considered the possibility that the whole game might be up for the publishers, even though the thought must have occurred to the publishers themselves. One can tell that the publishers have had this thought by the simple expedient of asking one of them about their projected business model for making money 10 years from now; in their more candid moments most will admit that they really do not have one.

Where does that leave us as academics, especially those of us who do their primary research in libraries and using books, and who produce research output also in the form

of books. It is a peculiar situation, of course. We are the suppliers of monographs and the consumers. This is not true of trade books, reference books, and text-books, and I leave those aside from these comments. According to Dixon, in the decade 1995-2004 the share of UK's Higher Education library budget spent on monographs dropped from 45% to 35% and yet the number of monographs published doubled. Each title sells fewer copies and libraries--especially those hit by the spiralling costs of serials--cannot afford to buy the same portion of all that gets published. Monograph print runs in 1960s were 5 to 10 times those today, and the big publishers such Macmillan made a lot of money. Some Oxford University Press monographs are produced in runs of just 200, so effectively only the preorders are printed for. In these straitened time we see the consolidation of publishers: Wiley has taken over Blackwells and no longer does monographs, and Routledge had become part of Taylor and Francis. There is no diminution in the writing of books, and in the UK the Research Assessment Exercise--a one-off audit of research output--has produced a massive glut of books that academics had to write for career advancement but that very few people want to buy.

In the UK the university presses have to compete in this market, whereas in the US, so my understanding is--and I expect to hear hoots of derision from you if this is wrong--that the university presses are subsidized because they are part of the tenure system. In the competitive markets, as print runs shorten there have had to be cuts in production costs: less careful copy editing, less careful manual typesetting. One hope for the publishers seems to be print-on-demand, the Just in Time solution to their warehousing costs. This has made works previously impossible now possible, but so far only backlists have been put 'on demand'. Why not front lists? With print-runs as short as Oxford University Press's 200 copies for the preorder market, this is in effect print-on-demand. However, once it becomes clear that publishers are really only possessors of electronic repositories of texts and do not have large amounts of capital tied up in print versions for the speculative market, it will increasingly seem absurd for academics and university libraries to help protect their business. More and more people will start to ask just what, in our electronic world, do the publishers think they are bringing to the party?

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How should we as academics react to all this? One thing I think we could usefully do is ignore copyright restrictions and copy any and all texts that we or our students might want to use. It is no exaggeration to say that the new media are fundamentally altering the nature of property within late industrial capitalism, and that old notions of ownership simply do not apply in the new situations. There is already a reality of mass violation of old copyright laws in the form of users sharing music, films, and software over peer-to-peer (P2P) networks on the Internet and by copying and swapping their CDs and DVDs. This shows how the technology of almost instantaneous and absolutely perfect digital reproduction makes a mockery of laws written in the days when copying was painfully slow and never perfect. If this sounds like reckless talk, it is worth noting that no-one in academia has ever been prosecuted for breaking the old licensing rules using the new media, and I suggest that we ought not allow ourselves to be cowed by legal opinions (for which our employers pay a lot of money) that inhibit our copying of the materials that we use in teaching and research.

In practice, electronic publishers such as ProQuest often allow us to download unlimited amounts from their products and this is just what we should do. A few years ago

ProQuest dropped their 50-page limit per download on EEBO, recognizing, I suspect, that anyone with a little technical knowledge easily join together a collection of 50-page downloads, and that the limit was only serving to frustrate ordinary users. This relaxation is to be applauded, and other publishers should be encouraged to do the same. Less enlightened than ProQuest, however, Thomas Gale still imposes a page limit on downloading from ECCO and the publisher seems impervious to sensible arguments against it. Of course, publishers such as ProQuest and Thomson Gale will point out that if we give our students and colleagues a locally-stored copy of a book from EEBO or ECCO rather than pointing them to the version on the publisher's servers, the users will be missing out on any improvements that the publisher makes to its products. This is true, but it is no different from the familiar situation when a library declines to buy the second edition of a book of which it has the first edition: the sum total of the new edition's improvements has to be great enough to give the user reason to discard the first in favour of the second. I think this is a useful incentive to encourage publishers to improve their wares, and we should not relinquish it.

Moreover, even without this reason, the very impermanence of online resources puts us under a moral obligation to pirate as much as possible, because we cannot rely on the materials surviving any other way. To see why not, take the example of the British Broadcasting Corporation's (the BBC's) splendid LaserDisc project in the 1980s, which aimed to create a new digital Domesday book recording life in the United Kingdom 900 years after the first Domesday Book. The resources assembled for this project are effectively lost to us all because as a standard for dissemination the LaserDisc and its associated home computer, the Acorn/BBC micro, are incompatible with the standard computer systems in use today. If piracy of materials from the project had been widespread--that is, if users had possessed the technical means to violate their licence conditions by copying what they wanted--most or all of the raw material of the project would be available to us in some form.

This is not wishful thinking on my part: we have a clear precedent for it. As is well known, the BBC routinely wiped and reused tapes of radio and television programmes from the 1950s and 1960s, and in many cases the only surviving copies are illegal pirated recordings made off-the-air by listeners and viewers and stored at home. The BBC is now grateful to receive copies of these illegal recordings to fill the extensive gaps in its broadcasting archive. On a personal level, I'm sure I'm not the only person here whose list of publications includes an article commissioned for an academic website that no longer exists. In my case, the I only hope that (contrary to the terms of use published on the site) people did copy material from the Arden Shakespeare's now defunct ArdenNet website, else I'm the sole possessor of a text that was once widely available and that has been cited in more than one printed book.

In a world in which Google is routinely scanning books without their authors' permission--anybody who has not yet looked might be surprised to find out how much of their own stuff Google already has in digital form--and in which universities are seeking to put publishers out of business and make themselves repositories of knowledge in electronic form and in which large public institutions have shown themselves to be unreliable custodians of data, it would be an absurdly self-denying gesture for academics, the source of all this knowledge, to pause before copying materials and ponder the copyright position of their acts.

I recently raised some of these points on an email discussion list for Shakespeare studies called SHAKSPER, and to my surprise was accused of promoting theft. Even quite sophisticated thinkers seemingly overlook the fact that the key defining attribute of a theft is that it deprives the rightful owner of property her use of it. To copy a CD or DVD or downloaded digital file brings into existence a new object and leaves the original unchanged, so unlike the theft of a object the 'victim' is in no worse a position than she was before the crime was committed. This is not theft. Ordinary property has a tangible existence in the world and cultures across the world have for millennia enforced rules about its ownership. Intellectual Property is a relatively recent invention, is entirely intangible, and emerges from the particular configuration of the technologies of reproduction at a particular moment in history. In truth, Intellectual Property is not actually property at all, precisely because it cannot be stolen. Any sense of injustice we feel when we hear of ideas being stolen are really qualms about the failure to acknowledge the source for a copy, which of course is why we teach students who to reference their sources properly.

I do not suppose that I will be able to convince many people to simply stop worrying about copyright. I do, however, see some straws in the wind that make me optimistic. Insitutional Repositories are one such straw. Another came to me entirely by surprise the other day. [SLIDE] I mentioned self-archiving as one of the routes to Open Access, and a few years ago I started to put on my personal website copies of everything I had published, with the exception of the very latest book, chapter, or article about which a publisher might complain that I was hurting their business. As I have explained, I now see less reason to worry so much about publishers' income, but of course like everyone else I cannot, in this transitional phase, afford to alienate publishers since my career progression depends on them.

But out of a blue the other day a colleague, Julian Wolfreys, sent me the PDF of the entire text of his next book and asked me to make it available on the university's virtual learning environment so that all our students could read it ahead of publication. He put no provisos, no qualifications, on this: he just wanted every student to have a copy. Now, Julian has written an awful lot of books and I dare say that his career progression is secure without this one. [SLIDE] What struck me was his simple act of generosity: he just wanted people to read his stuff and had no thought for potential barriers. I hope that that spirit, the spirit also of Aldhelm giving his book to the nuns at Barking, will prevail in the future of the electronic book in Renaissance studies.

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