



Publishing Piracy And How To Combat It

Trends in publishing piracy and how
to tackle the issue of IP theft

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This report has been prepared using data collected by MUSO. MUSO is a technology and data company that provides the most complete view of global digital piracy and unlicensed media consumption.

MUSO helps thousands of rights-holders, trade bodies and governments to understand the true picture of digital piracy. MUSO technology can help companies protect content, measure and monetise the piracy audience.

This document focuses on the publishing sector and piracy trends measured across the 12 months to the end of March 2023.

Introduction

With the rise of digital technologies, book publishing has undergone a significant transformation. While this has made books more accessible, it has also exposed them to rampant piracy.

Digital piracy of publishing media, which includes Manga, ebooks, educational books, newspaper and general digital publishing media, has seen exponential growth since 2020. As a sector, publishing has now overtaken film piracy to become the second most popular behind TV content. As of March 2023, twice as many people now visit publishing piracy websites compared to visits to film piracy websites each month (source: MUSO).

Unsurprisingly, piracy has resulted in immeasurable damage and loss to the publishing industry. Estimates vary, but one study from the Association of American Publishers (AAP) reports that the publishing industry in the United States lost approximately \$2.9 billion to piracy in 2020.

In this report we identify the trends in publishing piracy and outline some of the actions that publishers and authors can take to address the issue.

Section 1:

Digital Piracy In The Publishing Industry

Publishing Piracy - A Growing Problem

This report analyses piracy in the year spanning 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023. The data highlighted is taken from MUSO Discover's Piracy by Industry dataset which measures industry-wide demand across a wide range of piracy sites: streaming, torrent, web download and stream-ripping sites.

MUSO measured 220.6 billion visits to piracy websites across all media industries in the twelve months ending March 31st 2023, which is a 14% year-on-year increase when compared to the prior twelve month period.

Drilling down into sector specific data, publishing over-indexes in piracy relative to the rest of the entertainment industry. There were 60.8 billion visits to publishing piracy websites in the period which is a 26.6% YoY increase.

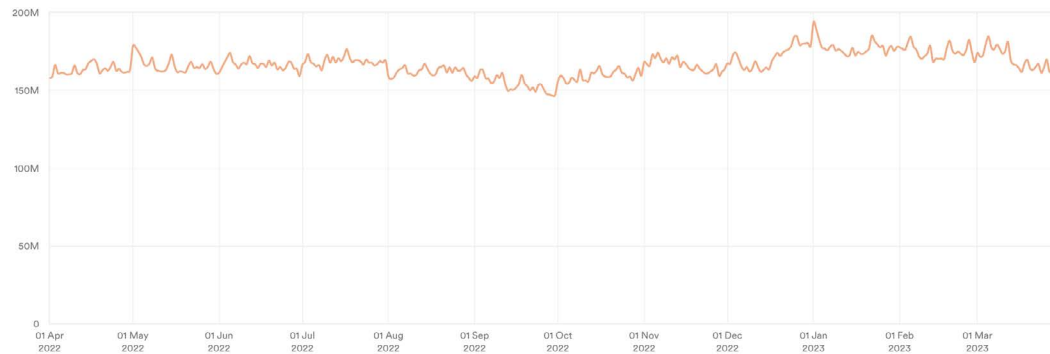


CHART 1: DAILY VISITS TO PIRACY WEBSITES FOR PUBLISHING ACROSS THE 12 MONTHS APR 22 - MAR 23.

60.8 BILLION visits to publishing piracy websites
(1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023)

26.6%

YoY increase in visits to
publishing piracy websites.

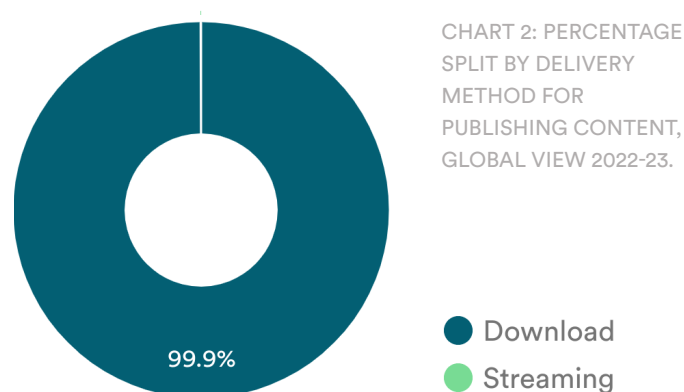
How Pirated Content Is Being Consumed

PIRACY DELIVERY METHODS

Accessing illegal publishing content has become increasingly prevalent, facilitated by various channels and platforms. While the specific channels may vary, file sharing websites and streaming platforms are among the most widely used channels for accessing illegal publishing content due to their ease of use and extensive libraries of unauthorised material.

Torrent websites are one of the most common methods, which operate by allowing users to access and share files through peer-to-peer networks. Additionally, file-sharing platforms, such as direct download sites or cyberlockers, enable users to store and share files, often including copyrighted content.

For publishing content, 99.9% of site traffic is for web download sites, which include reading sites.

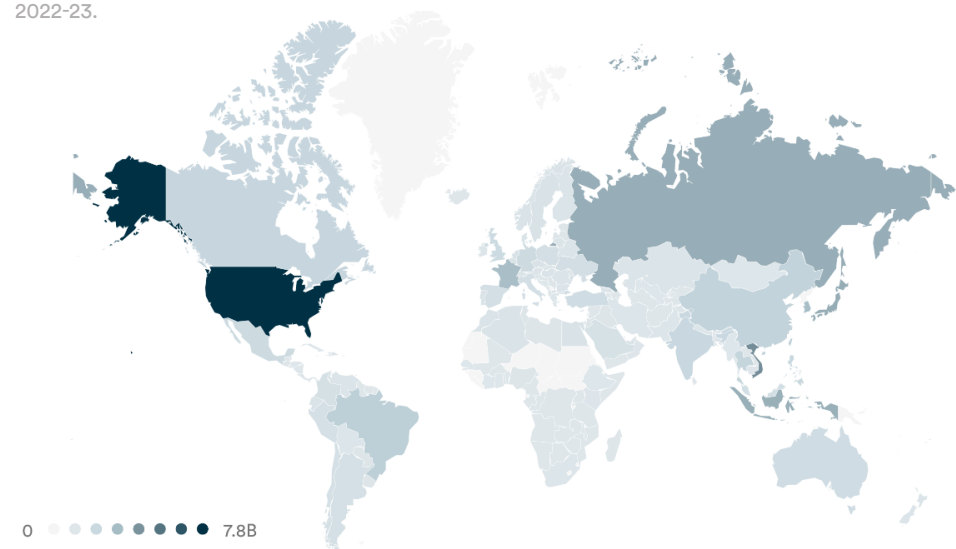


GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Geographically, the United States provides the highest audience demand for publishing piracy accounting for 12.8% of the traffic, followed by Vietnam at 6.8% and Japan and the Russian Federation at 5.1%.

Rank	Country	Visits	Percentage
1.	The United States of America	7,812,035,593	12.84%
2.	Viet Nam	4,121,887,078	6.78%
3.	Japan	3,099,652,216	5.10%
4.	The Russian Federation	3,077,771,380	5.06%
5.	Indonesia	2,997,362,754	4.93%
6.	South Korea	2,549,784,213	4.19%
7.	France	2,537,820,257	4.17%
8.	Taiwan, Republic of China	1,853,889,241	3.05%
9.	Brazil	1,776,131,914	2.92%
10.	China	1,562,381,377	2.57%
11.	Thailand	1,503,532,191	2.47%
12.	Canada	1,425,092,066	2.34%
13.	Philippines	1,354,996,170	2.23%
14.	India	1,327,016,531	2.18%
15.	The United Kingdom	1,141,583,928	1.88%

CHART 3: DEMAND SPLIT BY COUNTRY FOR PUBLISHING CONTENT 2022-23.



The Long-Term View

MUSO's Piracy By Industry dataset allows a view of piracy demand back to Jan 2017.

In the chart 4 we can see that publishing piracy has seen a dramatic increase in demand since 2017 with the sharpest growth happening since 2020 driven by pandemic lockdowns. If we compare over a five year view from April 2017 to March 2023, MUSO has measured a 189% increase in demand for publishing piracy.

Significantly, in 2020 publishing overtook film as the second most in-demand media sector for digital piracy.

189%
increase
in demand for
publishing piracy
2017 vs 2023

CHART 4: 5-YEAR VIEW OF PIRACY DEMAND FOR PUBLISHING CONTENT FROM 2017 TO 2023.

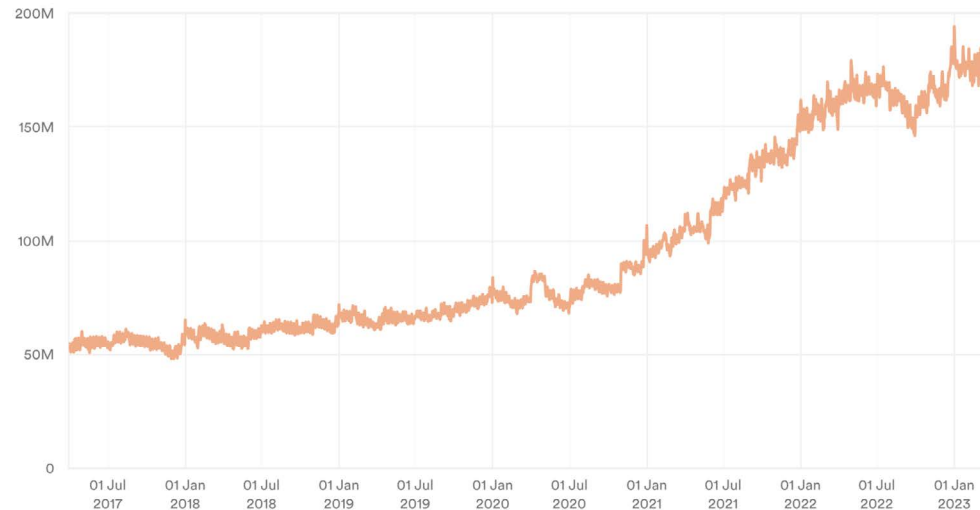
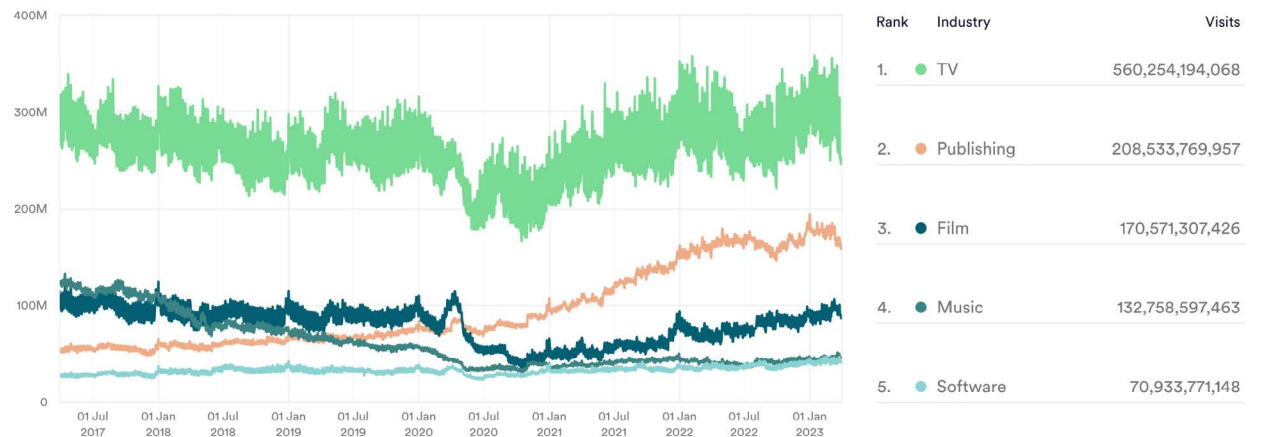


CHART 5: 5-YEAR VIEW OF PIRACY DEMAND FOR ALL MEDIA SECTORS FROM 2017 TO 2023



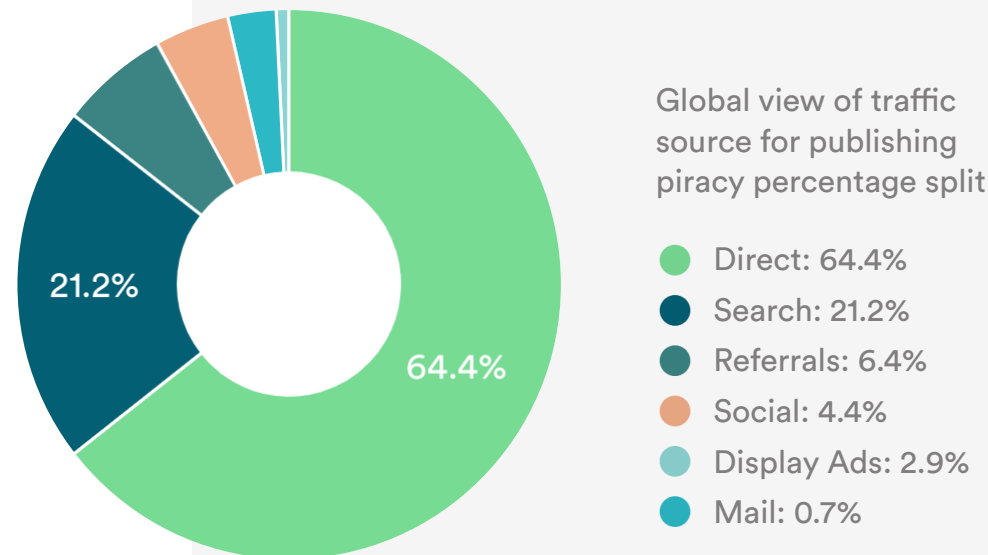
Traffic Sources

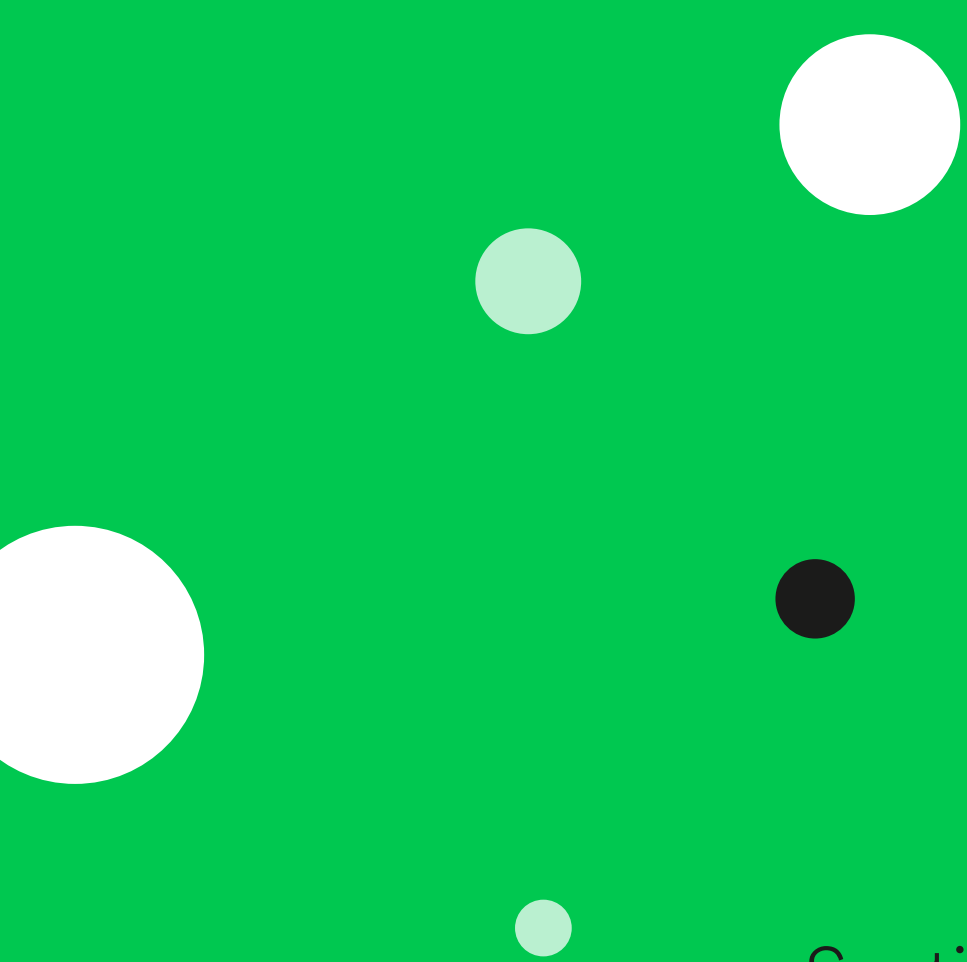
The discovery of illegal publishing content occurs through various channels, including direct website access, search engines, referrals, and social media sites.

- Direct access involves users directly visiting websites known for hosting unauthorised content, either through word-of-mouth recommendations or prior knowledge.
- Search engines also play a significant role, as users often conduct specific queries to find unauthorised content.
- Referrals are another channel, where users receive recommendations or links from friends, online forums, or other platforms, guiding them towards sources of illegal publishing content.
- Social media sites also contribute to the discovery of unauthorised content, as users share links, posts, or references to websites or platforms where such content can be accessed.

MUSO data shows that globally 64.4% of traffic for publishing piracy is direct to site and only 21.2% is from search engines, suggesting that almost two-thirds of the audience either already know the sites they want to use, or have them recommended by word of mouth.

CHART 6: TRAFFIC SOURCE FOR PUBLISHING PIRACY IN THE YEAR ENDING Q1 2023



A green rectangular area containing several circles of different sizes and colors: a large white circle on the left, a medium light green circle in the upper left, a large white circle in the upper right, a small dark grey circle in the center, and a small light green circle in the lower left.

Section 2:

Tackling The Problem

Piracy: A Complex Issue

Piracy in publishing is a complex and multi-faceted issue. By understanding the nature of piracy and employing a combination of technological, legal, collaborative, and educational approaches, publishers can actively address piracy and protect their intellectual property rights.

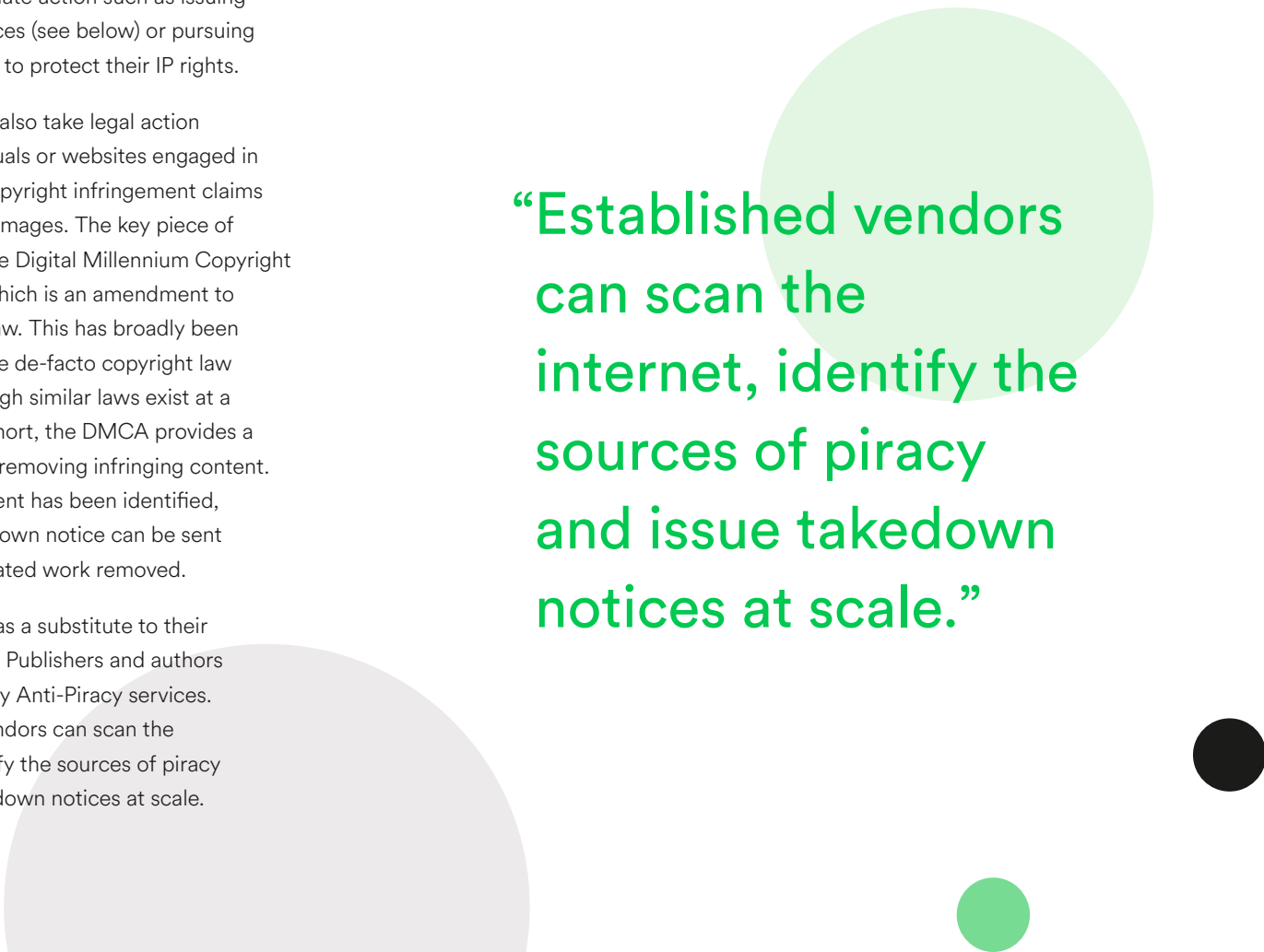
Firstly, they can employ a range of technological measures such as digital rights management (DRM) or watermarking to protect their content. These systems can encrypt files or implement access controls, making it more difficult for pirates to share or distribute copyrighted material. While DRM has its drawbacks and limitations - notably on user experience and security - it can act as a deterrent, making it more challenging for individuals to pirate and share copyrighted material.

Monitoring is also an important part of proactively addressing instances of piracy. Publishers can set up customised alerts based on the specific content or keywords related to their content. When a monitoring service detects potential infringing content, it sends real-time alerts to the publishers,

notifying them of the unauthorised use. These alerts enable publishers to swiftly respond to instances of piracy, taking appropriate action such as issuing takedown notices (see below) or pursuing legal measures to protect their IP rights.

Publishers can also take legal action against individuals or websites engaged in piracy, filing copyright infringement claims and seeking damages. The key piece of legislation is the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) which is an amendment to US copyright law. This has broadly been accepted as the de-facto copyright law globally, although similar laws exist at a local level. In short, the DMCA provides a framework for removing infringing content. Once the content has been identified, a DMCA takedown notice can be sent to have the pirated work removed.

In addition, or as a substitute to their own measures, Publishers and authors can also employ Anti-Piracy services. Established vendors can scan the internet, identify the sources of piracy and issue takedown notices at scale.



“Established vendors can scan the internet, identify the sources of piracy and issue takedown notices at scale.”

Adhere To The Basic Principles Of Anti-piracy

Irrespective of the approaches taken, MUSO recommends a few principles to adhere to when addressing piracy in order to protect your revenues and reputation.

I). PROTECT YOUR CONTENT AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE

Don't wait until you find pirated copies of your content, be proactive and protect your backlist before you experience piracy. Unlicensed content is often well hidden and is likely to have been on the internet for some time before you discover it. It's important to get ahead of the issue.

II). PROTECT ALL YOUR CONTENT

Your reputation is paramount. Don't just protect your most popular titles, ensure that your entire catalogue is protected. There is value in protecting your backlist as it could open up new revenue opportunities.

III). MAINTAIN RELATIONSHIPS WITH AUTHORS

Authors are passionate about their work and often find infringements themselves on search engines or social media sites. Publishers can take the lead and offer their authors pre-emptive protection as an additional service, saving their authors time and money and building trust and credibility with their authors.

IV). UNDERSTAND PIRACY TERMINOLOGY

It's important to understand the different sources of piracy so that you can address the myriad channels that distribute your content. You should know the difference between content hosted on a blog, forum and a Cyberlocker. It's also important to identify whether pirated content originated from an Indexer or Search Site, a Reading Site or a P2P / Torrent Site. Only then can you apply the right approach to combating the source of the illegal content. Click here [for a glossary](#) of the key terms.

About MUSO

MUSO Protect is a market leading automated content protection system for the publishing industry. The platform scans billions of piracy webpages, monitoring and removing illegal links and infringements at scale, 24/7. MUSO Protect removes piracy across a wide range of websites and search listings and provides reporting so that clients can see what is happening with their titles.

Use Cases

MUSO's anti-piracy system is used by thousands of global rights holders. Within the publishing industry we work directly with authors, publishers, newspaper and magazine groups, educational publishers and manga and manhwa publishers.

• PUBLISHERS:

MUSO's scalable solution enables publishers to protect their content at scale across large and varied catalogues and takes the heavy lifting out of monitoring and protecting their content.

• AUTHORS:

MUSO's Protect service provides authors with an automated cost effective solution to protect one book or all of their books from piracy, so they can get on with being creative.

• PAYWALL:

MUSO enables print and news media organisations to protect their revenues behind paywalls by reducing the availability of unlicensed copies of their daily newspapers and magazines.

• IMPLEMENTING ANTI-PIRACY MEASURES:

MUSO's data driven approach enables customers to implement anti-piracy measures to better protect their content and ensure that it is being distributed and monetized legally.

• TARGETED ENFORCEMENT:

Clearly identifying piracy hotspots allows for a more effective focus of anti-piracy efforts and enforcement activities and creates impactful content protection strategies.

Conclusion

Piracy in the publishing industry continues to be a critical issue for publishers and authors. Visits to publishing piracy websites increased significantly in 2022 and continued into 2023. Over the five year period Apr 2017 to March 2023, publishing piracy grew by 189%.

MUSO's data indicates that piracy demand will continue to increase across 2023, as digital formats continue to proliferate and economic pressures drive users to read or download content via piracy sites illegally.

MUSO would encourage a range of robust anti-piracy strategies to counter the impact of this economic loss. Amongst the range of actions that can be taken to address the issue, technology solutions exist that automate the monitoring and removal of infringing content at scale and shoulder the huge cost and admin burden of this time consuming work.

MUSO Protect enables publishers and independent authors to protect their books and digital media and in a time when demand via piracy is increasing. It is more important than ever to reduce the availability of unlicensed copies of your catalogue, maximise your revenues and, if you are a self published author, drive traffic to legal options like Amazon Kindle.



ABOUT MUSO.com

MUSO is a data company that provides the most complete and trusted view of unlicensed media consumption and global piracy demand. MUSO's unrivalled dataset measures a vast high intent audience that is not influenced by licensing restriction or platform bias. Whether protecting IP or building winning content strategies, MUSO helps companies make better decisions that drive performance, ROI and value. MUSO technology helps rights-owners measure and protect their content from piracy.

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