Controlled Digital Lending (CDL):
An appeal to readers and librarians from the victims of CDL

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As working writers, translators, photographers, and graphic artists; as unions, organizations, and federations representing the creators of works included in published books; as book publishers; and as reproduction rights and public lending rights organizations; we oppose so-called “Controlled Digital Lending” (CDL) as a flagrant violation of copyright and authors’ rights.

The copyright infringement inherent in CDL is not a victimless crime. As the victims of CDL, we want librarians, archivists, and readers to understand how they are harming the authors of the books they love by participating in CDL projects, even if they have the best of intentions.

The attached FAQ was written to explain to authors, publishers, readers, librarians, and archivists what CDL is, how it differs from traditional and legitimate new forms of library lending, how it violates the economic and moral rights of authors, and how it makes it even harder for authors to try to make a living from writing or to afford to devote time to writing.

When writers can’t make a living, they can’t afford to keep writing, and readers lose too.

Well-meaning librarians, archivists, and readers, who don’t intend to deprive authors of their livelihoods, are being misled by false claims from proponents of CDL.

Under CDL, printed books are being scanned and distributed online to readers worldwide by the Internet Archive and U.S. and Canadian libraries.

CDL is not comparable to lending of physical books by libraries. CDL is not “fair use” as defined in U.S. copyright law, and an exception to or limitation of copyright to allow CDL without permission or remuneration would not be permitted by the Berne Convention on Copyright. CDL interferes with many of the normal ways, including new ways largely unnoticed by librarians, that authors are earning money from written and graphic works included in so-called “out of print” books. There is no basis for a good-faith belief that CDL is legal under either U.S. or international law.

We appeal for a dialogue among writers, authors, publishers, and librarians on how to enable and create the digital libraries we all want, in ways that fully respect authors’ rights.
National Writers Union (UAW Local 1981, AFL-CIO)
https://nwu.org

Novelists, Inc.
https://ninc.com

Authors Guild
https://www.authorsguild.org

American Society of Journalists and Authors (ASJA)
https://asja.org

Textbook & Academic Authors Association (TAA)
https://www.taaonline.net

National Association of Science Writers (NASW)
https://www.nasw.org

Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI)
https://www.scbwi.org

Graphic Artists Guild
https://graphicartistsguild.org

American Society of Media Photographers (ASMP)
https://www.asmp.org

National Press Photographers Association (NPPA)
https://nppa.org

American Society for Collective Rights Licensing (ASCRL)
http://www.ascrl.org
Copibec
https://www.copibec.ca

Society of Authors
https://societyofauthors.org

Association of Authors’ Agents (AAA)
http://www.agentsassoc.co.uk

Sanasto
https://www_sanasto.fi

International Authors Forum (IAF)
https://www.internationalauthors.org

International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)
https://www.ifj.org

European Federation of Journalists (EFJ)
https://europeanjournalists.org

European Writers’ Council (EWC)
http://europeanwriterscouncil.eu

CEATL – European Council of Literary Translators’ Associations
https://www.ceatl.eu

European Visual Artists (EVA)
https://www.evartists.org

Federation of European Publishers (FEP)
https://fep-fee.eu
International Publishers Association (IPA)
https://internationalpublishers.org

STM
https://www.stm-assoc.org

International Federation of Reproduction Rights Organisations (IFRRO)
https://ifrro.org

Public Lending Right International
https://plrinternational.com

Mystery Writers of America (MWA)
https://mysterywriters.org

Canadian Authors Association (CAA)
https://canadianauthors.org

The Copyright Alliance
https://copyrightalliance.org

Romance Writers of America (RWA)
https://rwa.org