

# Copyright 'not in fact evil'

HARD-PRESSED journalists will have noticed a famously encyclopaedic website, and others, "going dark" for a day in January in protest at the proposed Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) in the US. SOPA triggered a lot of "sky is falling" rhetoric, few objections that make sense – and the amusing finding that sponsor Representative Lamar Smith was stealing photos on his website.

The proposal – now withdrawn – was for court orders ensuring US internet users trying to connect to sites carrying unauthorised works were redirected to web pages telling how bad "piracy" is. Such orders would work by intervening in the "domain name system (DNS)" – this translates names like [www.londonfreelance.org](http://www.londonfreelance.org)

into actual addresses of websites, which look like "217.72.179.7".

This would require the hard work of rewriting a proposal for secure DNS.

And it would tempt people wanting free films to click a virtual button leading to an alternative DNS – likely to be controlled by unsavoury characters seeking to mine people's online bank accounts as well as their viewing habits.

Then came another proposal, to make internet service providers keep records of which subscribers used what internet connection when. Out went the message: this means "tracking all of your financial dealings online". Write your Sena-

tor now! In fact the law would only have allowed (broadly-defined) law enforcement to track internet connections, as in current UK law.

While the signing of the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) provoked thousands to march in Poland on 26 January, we can find nothing in ACTA not already in EU – includes UK and Polish - law. ACTA would strengthen the hand of those accused of copyright infringement.

The sky was still up when we last looked; but the perception that copyright is the domain concern of evil media corporations is not good for those of us who depend on it for our livings.

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## Flipper is a Penguin & DK freelance discussion list

FLIPPER is a new email list for discussion among freelances working for Penguin and for Dorling Kindersley. We have created it following the meeting of freelances at these imprints in November.

Frozen fees at these publishers are the priority of freelances who work for the company. This was the overwhelming view of those who attended a meeting organised by the NUJ Publishing and Freelance departments. One freelance reported she had turned down offers to work for less than "100 per day, and it was claimed there are freelances being paid much lower fees than that.

Freelances also explained that "DK jobs always expand" and no

further payment is offered, so the agreed rate reduces during the course of the job.

The meeting was also attended by members of the NUJ Chapel committee, who offered their support to the freelances.

It was agreed that everyone would provide information on rates paid by other book publishers, for comparison purposes. The NUJ organisers will write to the company seeking information on their current rates and asking by what mechanism increases can be negotiated.

**John Toner**  
Freelance Organiser

● To sign yourself up, go to [www.londonfreelance.org/flipper](http://www.londonfreelance.org/flipper)



Photo: US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

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More soon...