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Published 17/06/2011
à 14:14

Last update
17/06/2011
à 14:14

INDIA SEEKS TO SAVE ITS MANUSCRIPTS THANKS TO E-BOOKS



[NEWS] The online bookstore of Indian literature BookGanga invites people to sponsor the digitalisation of manuscripts, aiming to save a part of the Indian literary heritage.

The online bookstore [BookGanga](#) has just become one of the key role players for the digitalisation of the Indian literary heritage. Exclusively dedicated to the sale of Indian literature, BookGanga has decided to implement the principle of crowdfunding, where consumers are asked for contribution – as small as they may be – so that a demanding project can find its funding.

BookGanga's project is simple: choosing digitalisation in order to save pieces of ancient literature (manuscripts in particular) that belong to the free public domain and that are under the threat of deterioration. In an interview he gave to *The Times of India*, Mandar Joglekar, BookGanga's founder, reminded that reconditioning the physical books and manuscripts would be a delicate and, above all, expensive operation, in the case of many texts. This difficulty, both technical and financial, led to the solution of digitalisation.

But there is a huge amount of documents that deserve a second life via digital technics: BookGanga estimates to 40,000 the number of literary pieces that have to be digitalised in the near future, which means non-negligible costs. By implementing crowdfunding, the Indian online bookstore finds a way of financing its initiative by appealing people's patrimonial consciousness. The operation "Adopt an e-book" invites whoever feels connected with literature to donate online, on BookGanga's website, in order to finance – partially or totally – the digitalisation of a book or a manuscript. The donor can freely choose how much he wants to spend on the digitalisation and which text he precisely wants to support. As a counterpart, the donor is given the title of "parent" of the book he supported, a title that will be notified on the webpage dedicated to the book, on BookGanga's website. For the first wave of digitalisation, BookGanga will give priority to texts written in ancient marathi. The original copies of the texts are kept in Pune, India.

India is not the first country to implement crowdfunding as a way of funding the digitalisation of texts which are not attached to intellectual property rights anymore. With its similar operation "[Adopt a book](#)", the [Bibliothèque nationale de France](#) (the French National Library) chose the same weapons as BookGanga. The initiative was announced during the last "Salon du livre de Paris" (Paris Book Fair) in March 2011 and is driven by the "[Association des Amis de la Bibliothèque nationale de France](#)", which is already making lots of donations to the BnF.

In the French case, the principle is slightly different as in the Indian example. The Internet user who decides to adopt a French text has to take the whole amount of the digitalisation at his costs. On the website related to the association "Amis de la BnF", the search tool proposes different maximums and minimums for the donations, making it easy to aim at a book one can afford to adopt. Concerning the book's title, the donor is as free as by BookGanga. The book only has to be on one of the four lists the BnF prepared for the first wave of digitalisation. Each list corresponds to a precise theme: women, the 19th century, natural sciences and important French companies.

Just after a few weeks "Adopt a book" was launched, it was made possible for all users to [suggest](#) directly on the website book titles that should benefit from digitalisation. There is one only condition: the texts must be part of the BnF's catalogue and the choice has to be approved by its competent teams.

There is a symbolic counterpart for the donors: their names will be placed on the webpage dedicated to the book they supported, on the [Gallica](#) website, for a period of ten years. There is also a concrete compensation, since each donor benefits from a tax deduction (66% for private individuals and 60% for firms).

At the beginning of June 2011, 57 texts had found the complete funding for their digitalisation thanks to "Adopt a book". The operation still has to make its proofs, if we consider the 7.5 million visits the website made during the year 2010.