

HOW MUCH LONGER CAN THE PLUDDITES SURVIVE?

The Death of the Paper Publishers

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This essay asks how much longer the pluddites (paper luddites, i.e. paper publishers) can survive, given that so many millions of people are uploading scanned paper books to file sharing sites, and downloading the e-versions of those books and spreading them electronically for free. A quiet war is going on between the FIMmers (Free Information Movement) members in their hundreds of millions and the pluddites. We live in an era of transition in publishing, in which everyone is asking “Why pay \$50 for a single paper book, when you can download 50,000 e-books for free?” Paper is dying, being killed off by electronic media. The question is “How much longer can the pluddites survive before they go the same way as papyrus and parchment, i.e. to the dustbin of history?”

A quiet war is going on today between the FIMmers (Free Information Movement) members, and the pluddites (paper luddites, aka paper publishers). The pluddites are feeling paranoid, because they sense their industry is dying, and are taking desperate measures to stamp out what they call

piracy, or more technically “copyright infringement” on the part of the FIMmers.

These FIMmers are scanning paper books and converting them into electronic form which can then be spread for free, which is having a huge impact on the dissemination of knowledge. In an attempt to stop this practice, the pluddites are taking “copyright infringers” to court, and forcing them to pay hefty fines, or even sent to prison, and in some extreme cases (e.g. Aaron Schwartz, seen as a martyr by the FIMmers) to suicide. The pluddites hope that harsher penalties will scare the FIMmers into ceasing their destruction of the paper publishing industry.

The FIMmers on the other hand, are growing increasingly hostile towards the pluddites because they see the latter as *“imprisoning knowledge, locking it away behind copyrighted paper books.”* The FIMmers can smell the new scent in the air, of free knowledge and its revolutionary educational and political consequences.

FIMmers argue that free knowledge will soon be readily available to the planet, as a result of planetary saturation of the use of internet phones priced at \$20 and below, which even the poorest Indian or African peasant can afford. Billions of people can then be educated to graduate level for free, simply by using their smart phones and accessing the free education sites on the internet. But of course, this will only be possible if the pluddites can be removed from the educational scene.

The FIMmers see the pluddites as albatrosses, blocking the progress towards a highly educated global culture. In the paper era, pluddites performed a useful service, by packaging and distributing knowledge at a profit. It is a business that still employs millions of people world wide, so of course they do not want to see their industry and hence their livelihoods disappear, but disappear they must if the vision of free global education is to become a reality. The two interests are a zero sum game. Only one of them will win.

It is my view, and of many others, that the pluddites are flogging a dead horse, in their attempts to punish the copyright infringers. The FIMmers want the information locked up in copyrighted paper books freed up and distributed freely. The FIMmers have the weapons and the number of people needed to kill off the pluddites.

The two principal weapons of the FIMmers are the scanner (that costs about \$100) and the file sharing sites on the internet. A FIMmer can scan a paper book, and convert its valuable contents into electronic form, and then upload those contents (now an “e-book”) to a file sharing site, where the rest of the world can download it for free. So many hundreds of millions of people are doing this that the days of the pluddites are numbered. They are doomed.

The FIMmers have recently been given an extra boost in their efforts by the appearance of pro FIMmer ideologies that see the pluddites as criminals, as immoral, as backward, as people who need to be removed to allow a morally

superior world to take shape. This essay is a contribution to this kind of thinking.

The strongest form that this ideology takes, that I can think of, is the following. *“Indirectly, the pluddites keep the world at war!”* This may seem at first sight a bit of a stretch, so let me unwrap it a bit, because it is the bottom line of a chain of reasoning, which goes as follows.

Advanced democracies do not go to war with each other. This is an established empirical fact. The voting populations of advanced democracies simply do not tolerate that their leaders go to war rather than negotiating solutions to their largely economic disputes. So, if all the countries of the world can be converted to advanced democracies, then the planet will be at peace, a noble goal of the FIMmers.

How to achieve this noble goal? Through education, through free education, through free education supplied on the internet, that is available to everyone, so that ANY person on the earth, can educate himself to the limit of his ability. When people become well educated, they join the middle class, acquire property, have political opinions, insist on the rule of law, and demand a vote in choosing their political leaders.

There is a branch of political science called “Transitology” which studies the transitions (switches) from one party dictatorships to multi-party democracies. Over 100

countries have made this switch over the past half century, so at a rate of about 2 countries per year.

The whole planet is democratizing. Democratization is an inherent part of modernization. Everyone wants to live an affluent life style, that modern science and technology offers. Two thirds of the 190+ countries today are already democracies, leaving only the more backward communist and African countries trailing in the rear. In about 40 years time, there won't be a single dictatorship left. The world will have been fully "dedictated."

The transition from one party dictatorship to multi-party democracy occurs, empirical study shows, when the standard of living exceeds the "democratic threshold" of \$6000-\$8000 per year per person. Interestingly, China is at the \$6000 level in 2014. So it will probably transition to democracy within a decade.

One can now see the chain of logic. Creating internet phone based free education to the whole planet, will create a world wide educated middle class, which in the dictatorship countries, will create overwhelming pressure on their one party governments to either be pushed out of power by a "people power" movement, as in the Philippines, or, as is more common, force a democratic faction within the ruling dictatorial party to break away and form a new democratic government, which then sets a date for true democratic elections, and brings in all the traditional democratic institutions, such as freedom of speech, the press, assembly, trade unions, rule of law, independent judiciary, etc.

Once the planet has completed this dedication process, the number of wars will reduce drastically, due to the rise of a massive world wide, highly educated middle class, which thinks, is informed, can reason, and most importantly, does not tolerate dictators, who have a horrible tendency to go to war all too readily.

Hence, free education leads to a peaceful world. By not having free education, populations in dictatorship countries remain poorly educated, hence not middle class, so do not push for democratic reform, so the dictators remain in power and continue to make wars.

Where the FIMmers gain their moral high ground is to point out that the continued existence of the pluddites indirectly keeps the world at war, since it is the pluddites who block the world from free education. To the FIMmers, the pluddites are criminals on a massive global scale, which explains why the FIMmers have such contempt for them.

So, the FIMmers are not just scanning papers and books and uploading them to file sharing sites for their own selfish reasons of financial convenience, they are now inspired by feelings of moral indignation against the pluddites and are motivated to play their part in destroying their industry in order to foster the creation of a world at peace, because it would be fully democratic world wide.

So, to get back to the question at the start of this essay, how many more years can the pluddites survive? My

guesstimate is that I would be surprised if most of them have not gone out of business within a decade. There is now so much momentum on the part of the FIMmers, and so much FIMmer moral contempt against the pluddites, that the latter cannot survive much longer. As mentioned above, “Why pay \$50 for a single paper book, when you can download 50,000 e-books and form your own private library, all for free?” Why indeed.

Researchers and professors are now insisting that their academic journals be “open source (i.e. freely viewable)” because they are fed up with the previous paper era system which had the researchers/professors do all the work, i.e. the research itself, the writing up of the research paper, its editing, its correction of the preprints, and then see the paper publishers put copyrights on their work and charge high fees for a paper product, none of which goes to the creators of the knowledge published.

In the electronic age, this system is merely exploitative, actually theft, and the professors/researchers are angry. Many now simply refuse to send their papers to non open source journals out of moral indignation. It has reached the stage in 2014, that pretty well all journal articles now are open source, i.e. freely available, so the FIMmers have won against the paper journal publishers. Those straggler journals that are not open source are being punished by the FIMmers and are dying, as they should.

The next major target of the FIMmers is the paper book publishing industry, and by books, I don't mean the fluff

that is not educational, I mean text books, containing the knowledge taught at universities. The pluddites traditionally had to invest a lot of money in publishing a paper book, so it is their custom to continue this practice by charging high prices, e.g. \$50 per text book or more. But this custom is being undermined by the FIMers, who see it as ridiculous that they have to pay \$50 for a *paper* book, when it should be available free in *electronic* form. FIMers also put moral pressure on researchers and professors to publish their own work electronically, and for free, since in the paper era, they only made a few hundred dollars per technical book they wrote anyway. They would not be losing much by cutting out the pluddite middle man exploiter.

The other main aim of the FIMers, is to reduce the exorbitant cost of today's university education. For example, it costs about \$60,000 a year for undergraduate education at Harvard University. Subjects that were traditionally taught only in class rooms (i.e. no lab work, no periods in hospitals, nor dentist chairs, etc) can now be taught for free on the internet, with professors uploading their courses, filmed either in their traditional class rooms, or (like myself) filmed in their homes, especially by retired professors (again like myself) who have more time to prepare and film such lectures. Retired professors can make a whole new career for themselves by filming their life's knowledge and uploading it to YouTube for free for the world, to educate it, to help create a world wide educated middle class, to help create a war free world.

This is what I do. I call myself an “ARCer” (an After Retirement Careerer) and a “globacator” (global educator). I have a large whiteboard in my living room, a tripod, a camcorder and felt tip pens by the hundreds. I make YouTube lecture videos in graduate level (Masters and PhD) Pure Math, and Math Physics for the planet. I have also made an electronic library in these two subjects, plus philosophy, computer theory, and the brain, that students can use with just a few clicks of their mouse.

Such an e-library allows what I call “resource-rich self-education.” Instead of using just one paper text book as in a traditional class room course, students who use an e-library can have dozens of works to consult, at the click of a mouse, which provides a much richer source of information, and hence a better education. Readers who would like to be given a taste of such resource-rich self-education could try hitting my website at <http://profhugodegaris.wordpress.com>

I would love to put links to the *contents* of *books* that anyone can download for free from the file sharing sites, but I don’t want to be harassed by the pluddites while they are still dying and paranoid, so I link only to uncopyrighted papers and books (e.g. by those authors who never found a pluddite to publish their work, or from authors whose copyright ran out, after 90 years). The rest of the links to (copyrighted) paper books go to amazon.com, which at least has information about the books, which is better than nothing.

I'm hoping that my example of spending the remaining decades of my life devoted to making YouTube lecture videos of my life's knowledge, and making e-libraries, will inspire other retired professors to do the same in their specialties, so that learners around the world can be educated in virtually any subject for free. To get credit for their study, "grading centers" need to be set up that grade the students homeworks and their exams. The cost of such grading would be far less than the \$60,000 a year at Harvard.

As free internet education and free information become increasingly available, traditional teaching universities will go bankrupt, as they lose their fee base. Most teaching professors will be fired and will have to change their career. Parents will be financially relieved to a large extent (depending on the study topic of their child) by having university level education made free and freely available on the internet.

Paper libraries will become ghost towns, as why should anyone have to make the effort to visit a paper library, when they can consult e-libraries in the convenience of their own living rooms.

Getting back to my own case, when it comes to paper books on a given topic, with its link to the book as advertized on amazon.com, I supply the author's name and the book's title. Anyone who knows how to access a file sharing site can take any title and download the contents of the book for free provided that the contents of the book are

available on the file sharing site, of course. But file sharing sites are vast now, containing tens of millions of books, so if a book is not too obscure, it can usually be downloaded (for free.)

Thus anyone can take any bibliography and download any book mentioned in it, by using a file sharing site. More politically active FIMmers, who feel morally scornful of the pluddites, scan books and upload them to the file sharing sites to increase the stock of knowledge to the world, and play their part in driving the pluddites into bankruptcy, since fewer and fewer people are stupid enough to pay \$50 for one paper book, instead of downloading free e-books from file sharing sites.

There are now so many hundreds of millions of people downloading e-books for their own education, that the pluddites have no chance of swatting them all, or even a tiny percentage of them. My advice to pluddites, especially if you are decades away from retirement, is to get out of your dying immoral profession, and do something that is beneficial for humanity, rather than being an albatross that keeps the world ignorant and indirectly at war.

To finish off this essay, I'd like to jump a bit into the future, and try to imagine, what will happen to the world, when 2 billion people, those with IQs capable of benefitting from traditional university education, get it into their heads that the only thing holding them back from pulling themselves out of their economic shithole (assuming they are living in some third world backwater) is the lack of free education,

then these 2 billion “hungry minds” will place enormous pressure on their political leaders to make education free.

They will be unstoppable, a “force of nature” due to their vast numbers. Politicians will be forced to listen and make education free (at least for theoretical subjects, that were traditionally taught exclusively in class rooms.) Free education will come to be seen increasingly as a right, now that scanners, file sharing sites, YouTube lecture videos, and dirt cheap internet phones are making it possible. We will see the rise of “rock star professors” who are the best teachers to the world. Teaching will not be the task of most professors in the future. They will be largely researchers at research universities. Class room teaching will become a relic, and most teaching will be done by the world’s best teachers, teaching millions of students via YouTube lecture videos.