

Thieves of the Invisible

www.amazon-noir.com

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We have stolen the invisible.

Amazon, the motherly bookseller, always sensitive to her customer needs like an affectionate friend, was outraged in her own intimate affects. Her most precious resource, an infinitely beautiful body of culture, able to mesmerize your eyes for hours, was somehow deprived and exposed, after we had eluded her copyright protection. Amazon had been a witty advisor to millions of happy customers, and had spent the last decade researching how to improve her service.

She had dedicated all her time and energy to building the best collection of purchasable culture possible. She never wasted her time investing in public mass advertising or in spamming the profiled potential new customer. All she counted on and needed to count on was the grand word of mouth that happy customers passed on one another.

That was a killer application – together with the software platform that made books the center of an interrelated universe. She started then to hyper-contextualize every piece of her inventory, researching the overlaps of tastes her happy customers kind of anonymously displayed. Furthermore, she incited customers to compile lists, review, comment, discuss and tag all books. But all her love was finally expressed in allowing users to peek into the inner side of her treasures: the original texts. She worked hard from the beginning and even if many were skeptical at first, she succeeded in realizing a new model: 'the imagined book', more real than the one you would look at in a physical bookstore. Now the customers got more motivated than ever, seeing their objects of desire not only described by their own technical details, but also by their many external references.

At this very moment, Amazon placed a gamble with the future. She did something no other bookseller had ever done before: She disembodied a substantial part of her books, thus filling a huge database (the literary correspondent of the music 'celestial jukebox'). By doing so, customers were able to text-search whole books ('Search Inside the Book' option, they called it) and then see the search results displayed within the respective paragraphs of the book searched. This provoked a global joy and ecstatic use, but exposed the nudity of the book to too many eyes. We, the Amazon Noir gang, were simply astounded and started to endlessly play with this umpteenth content toy.

So, we couldn't stop until we stole the invisible.

We couldn't resist her beauty. She was a beautiful rich body of culture, continuously unveiling her generous and attractive forms at request, but never saying: "Yes, you can take me away". This free cultural peep show started to drive us crazy. Many others were in the same condition, but reacted differently: crashed their computers and were never again online, or

found another pay-per-view drug. Some of them described it "like being constantly titillated, regularly being asked for money in order to possess one of the too many physical bits". In fact adopted software doesn't give access to the whole content, but only to bits of it. Nevertheless, it is clear and understood to anybody that the whole content was 'there', behind a few mysterious clicks away. A cornucopia of texts, an astonishing amount of knowledge, a compelling body of culture, infinitely put on hold, for marketing reasons. So this virtual interface was a never-ending blinking to the disclosed magnificent beauty sold one bit a time.

Then we definitively stole the invisible.

We hacked the system, we built a malicious mechanism (Amazon Noir) able to stress the server software, getting back the entire books we wanted, at request. It was a question of creating a so-called 'foolingware'. We actually think that in the future we will be remembered as the predecessor of 'foolingware', and now we feel guilty about that. So we started to collect piece by piece the yearned body of culture with increasing excitement and without a pause.

We wondered. What is the difference between digitally scanning the text of a book of yours, and obtaining it from Amazon Noir? There is no difference. It would be only discussed in terms of the amount of wasted time. We wanted to build our local Amazon, definitively avoiding the confusion of continuous purchasing stimuli.

So we stole the loosing and amusing relation between thoughts. We stole the digital implementation of synapses connections between memory, built by an online giant to amuse and seduce, pushing the user to compulsively consume.

We were thieves of memory (in a McLuhan sense), for the right to remember, to independently and freely construct our own physical memory. We thought we did not want to play forever under the peep-show unfavorable rules.

But we failed.

We failed and we were in the end corrupted, and we had to surrender to the copyright guardians.

We failed breaking into the protectionist economy.

We failed, because we wanted to share and give away.

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