



IDRC increases visibility and sales by making its titles 100% viewable

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Bill Carman
IDRC Publisher



ABOUT GOOGLE BOOK SEARCH

Google Book Search enables publishers to promote their books on Google. Google scans the full text of participating publishers’ titles so that Google users can see books that match the topics they are searching on. When users click on a book search result, they’re taken to a Google hosted web page displaying a scanned image of the relevant page from the book. Each page also contains multiple “Buy this Book” links, which enable users to purchase the book from online retailers. Users may also see contextually targeted Google AdWords ads on these pages. Publishers will receive a share of the revenue generated from ads appearing on their content.

For more information, visit <http://books.google.com>

The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) is a public corporation created by the Parliament of Canada in 1970 to help developing countries use science and technology to find practical, long-term solutions to the social, economic and environmental problems they face. Part of its mission is to maximize the reach of IDRC-supported research on a global scale to increase its impact on development and people’s lives. IDRC is headquartered in Ottawa, Canada and has offices in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. IDRC publishes books both online and in print, in English, French and Spanish, and licenses translations in multiple languages.

Challenge

IDRC’s primary mission is to enhance the visibility and availability of the supported research by reaching researchers, academics, professionals and practitioners, in development and in various levels of government worldwide. “We’re trying to get our content to the people who can use it to make a positive difference,” says Bill Carman, IDRC Publisher. “That means disseminating it as widely as possible.”

In keeping with this mission, IDRC has long made many of its print publications available online for free. The group is also interested in increasing sales to support its publishing activities. “As a nonprofit publisher, any money we make gets channeled right back into the organization, enabling us to continue publishing and potentially expand our reach,” says Carman.

“We have no intention of letting up on this – every new book we publish, we’ll send to Google. Google is where a lot of people go to get their information online...We think it’s good for the accessibility and availability of information, and we’ll continue to push on the digital side of publishing”

Solution

After hearing about Google Book Search in 2004 through an IDRC employee who was an “in-house leader” for developing online strategy, IDRC joined the program to increase exposure for its books and boost sales.

“For us it was a no-brainer,” explains Carman. “Given the number of people around the world who use Google as their primary search engine, and the amount of traffic we could generate for our site, it simply made sense for us to participate. There was no loser there.”

To increase visibility for its titles, IDRC chose to make all its book 100% viewable in Google Book Search, the Centre has been pleased with the results. “We’re very happy with the traffic and the numbers we’re seeing on the reports for ‘buy this book’ clicks,” reports Carman. “We haven’t seen any drop in print sales. In fact, our number one book in Google, Evaluacion Organizacional, we’ve had to reprint – basically because we ran out.”

According to Carman, IDRC has so far seen little evidence that making books available online cannibalizes print sales. “These same books are 100% viewable on our site, so it made sense for us to do it this way,” he says. “When we began making our content fully accessible on our site in the mid ‘90s, we saw an increase in print sales for books with a relatively narrow audience. When we were selling them via print only, we could expect to sell 100 copies a year. But when we put them online fully viewable, sales went to 500-700 copies a year.”

Currently, IDRC has 219 titles in Google Book Search, and plans to continue “full steam ahead” with the program.

“We have no intention of letting up on any of this – every new book we publish, we’ll send to Google,” says Carman. “Google is where a lot of people go to get their information online. Google is an important partner. We think it’s good for the accessibility and availability of information, and we’ll continue to push on the digital side of publishing.”

