

Cory Doctorow: Creative Commons Author

Last week, I received the most remarkable letter from Jamie, a US Navy seaman stationed on a ship in the Mediterranean Sea. Because my novels are Creative Commons-licensed, he is able to download them and print them out onboard ship, and pass them around to his comrades. The absence of quality reading material on the ship has turned Creative Commons texts into hot items on the ship:

Just like to thank you, from some undisclosed (for operational security reasons, doncha know) location in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, for keeping my sanity. I'm in the US Navy, and my ship got surge-deployed without warning a couple weeks ago to "help" with the situation in Lebanon. On a ship underway, there's no room to keep books -- unless they're the ancient, creaking John Grisham paperbacks in the ship's library - and no time to get some anyway if you're scrambling around for the couple days of warning you have trying to get your bills set up to pay themselves and telling your landlord you're vanishing for an "open-ended" period of time. So, the ability to download your stuff from craphound has permitted me to feed my addiction to the printed word without having to have someplace to store the physical artifact of the books. Of course, I actually printed out Someone Comes and Down and Out, the two I don't own dead-tree copies of yet, and stuck 'em in a binder, where they've been passed from person to person in my department, helping keep the other sci-fi junkies similarly sane.

[three days later] Thought you might like to know that what started as "Jamie feeds his print addiction" has turned into something else entirely. The sci-fi addicts rapidly finished off the two novels I'd printed out and bindered, and I had the binder with me in the engine room, reading to pass the time, when one of the other guys asked what I was reading. A couple hours later, the only noise in the place was when one of the half-dozen guys sitting around would look up and ask, "Hey, who's got page 41 of Down and Out?" It was... well, I'm not sure I can express how weird it was. These are men who aren't normally readers, much less consumers of slightly wacky science fiction, and they're now getting impatient with each other to finish chapters so they can find out what happens next.

*It's starting to change the very *tone* of where I work on the ship, six hours on and six hours off: instead of the ever-present three B's of talk to pass in the time in the plant -- beer, babes, and bodily functions -- it's discussions of which novel (or short, > since we've now got printouts of every piece of fiction on craphound.com stuffed into a file cabinet) we liked best, and why, and what makes this stuff cool, and where can we get more like it, and even starting to talk about the copyright, and why that's important. I spent about two hours last night as I was reading glancing up > every so often, and grinning like an idiot every time 'cause there > were five guys whose talk usually revolves around how drunk they were this one time head-down in some pretty intense reading. Thank you. This is really something else. >--*

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collection: craphound.com/placenovel: craphound.com/down

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