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### Aromanian.org: An Online Marketplace for Cultural Works

Ethnic minorities in diaspora face a particular set of problems uncommon amongst other immigrant populations. First, the distinction between diaspora and immigration is as follows: immigrants move from one particular country of origin, while minorities in diaspora have populations which have been historically spread out across many nations. Aromanians (or the Vlach people), a prime example of a diasporic population, have lived in Serbia, Albania, Romania, Macedonia, Bulgaria and Greece for thousands of years. For all its positive impact, the globalization and the free movement of people has resulted in the slow death of the Aromanian language. As Aromanians move from their ancestral settlements and upwardly mobile parents no longer have the time to teach their children the language, fluent speakers become increasingly rare. What's more, Aromanian is taught through oral tradition, so there are very few texts written in the language. All these factors contribute to the gradual loss of the cohesive cultural identity that once held communities together.

A partial solution to this problem would be to make available online the few rare texts that do exist. The goal would be to make a platform similar to [standardebooks.org](http://standardebooks.org), a “fork” of the Gutenberg Project, where out-of-copyright literature is standardized with fonts, spelling and custom formatting. Books on [standardebooks.org](http://standardebooks.org) are available for download for free as epub,

azw and kepub. The extant texts written in Aromanian could be digitized with the NYPL or Archive.org archival scanning services which, when combined with OCR, can convert old works to plain text.

In terms of generating revenue, I would adopt the practice of another open-source project: Elementary OS. Elementary OS is a Linux distribution which is technically free to download, but the interface presents the user with a “Pay what you want” option to solicit donations. The use case of this online “marketplace” is as a singular portal to the cultural works of Aromanians. Young adults who want to learn the Aromanian, parents who aim to teach their children the language and anthropologists or people with idle interest in Aromanian heritage will be able to find resources otherwise unavailable to them online.