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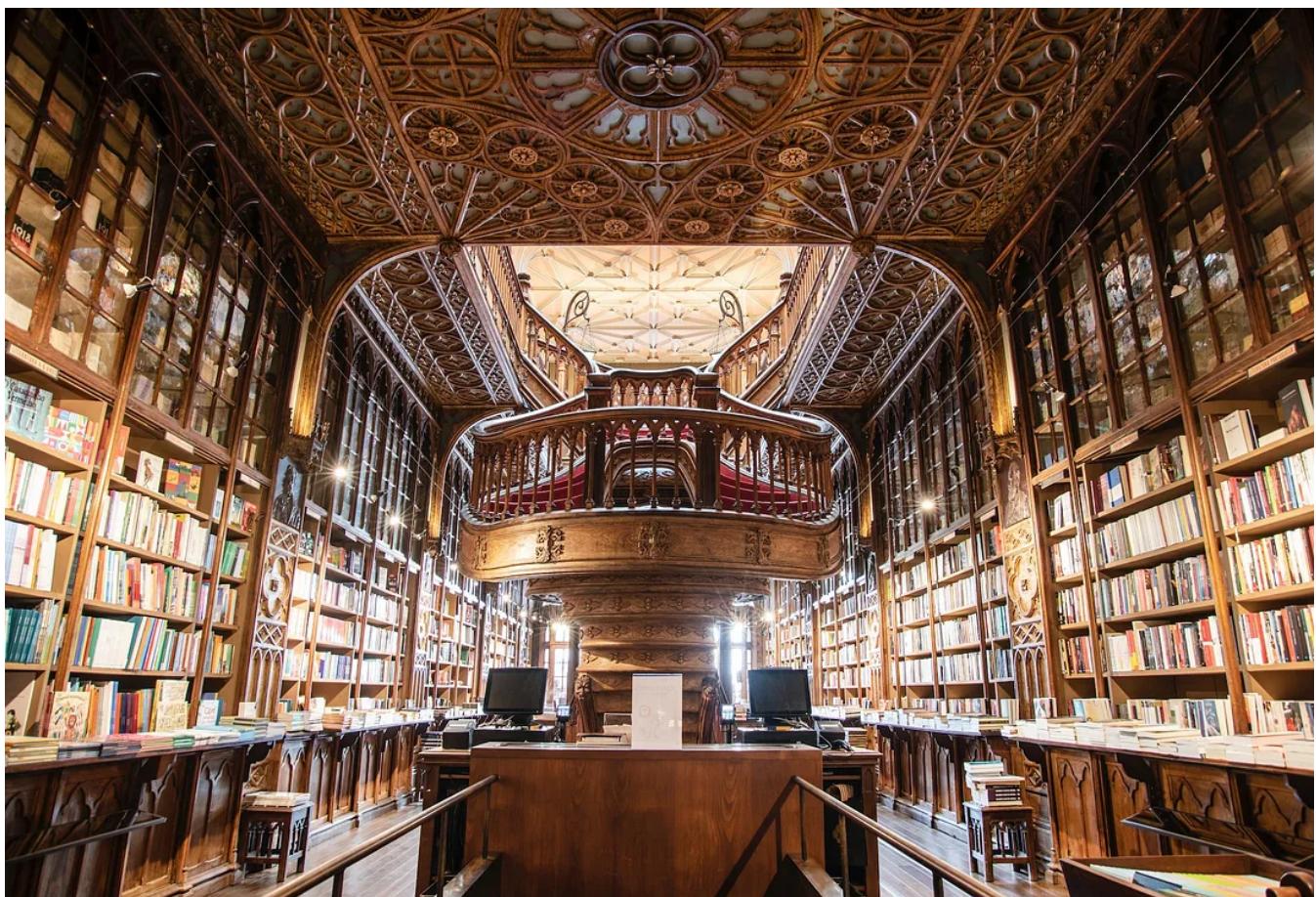
Hidden Books on the Internet



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Welcome to the world of Shadow Libraries

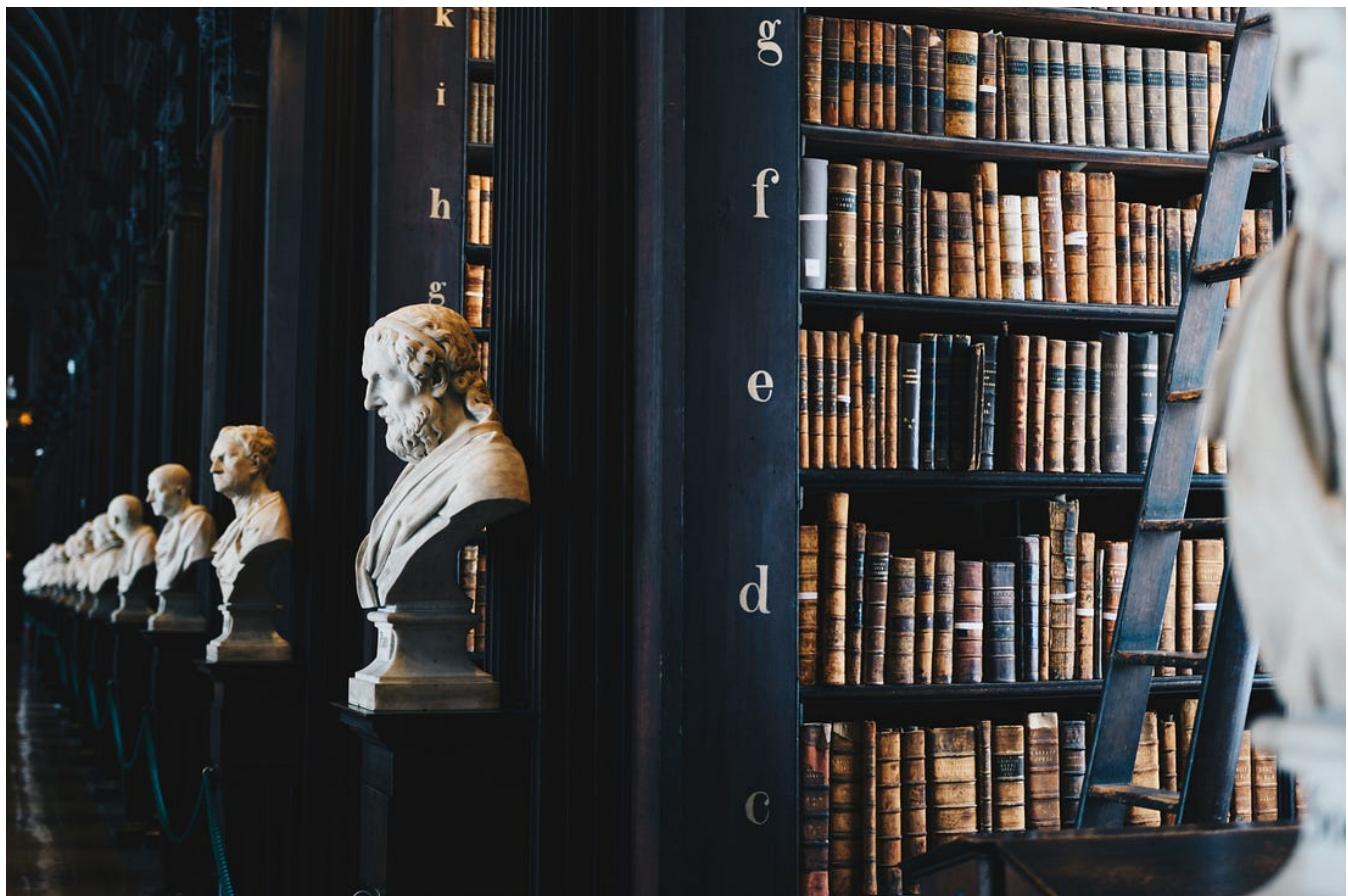
Books come in all shapes and sizes. Some are colourful like comics, some are pretty bland like your average novel, and some are just in between (manga 😞). With the introduction of tech however, large libraries that could fill a mansion could be stored on a flash drive. And what's more? They could all be free.

In this article, the following will be covered

1. What are Shadow libraries?
2. Why are they created?
3. Are they legal?
4. Case Study: Zlibrary
5. Conclusion

Without further ado, let's jump in.

What are Shadow libraries?



Sculptures in the library | Credit: [Giammarco Boscaro](#)

Shadow libraries are a collection of books, scholarly articles and publications of all kinds that are made available on the Internet for free whereas they are usually inaccessible to people due to paywalls, censorship, or other restrictions.

The World Wide Web is huge and much deeper than most people know. It can be divided into 3:

1. Surface Web

2. Deep Web

3. Dark Web

The Surface Web is the section indexed by Google and other search engines. This is where your average Internet user's day starts and ends. YouTube, Twitter, and Meta (Facebook...cough 😊) are easily accessed here. It is also considered to be just about 10% of the entire Internet.

The Deep Web has to be a bit more intentionally accessed. It contains confidential sites and content, critical databases, and other valuable information. They are intentionally created to not be crawled or indexed by search engines and are usually paywalled or require login details. Examples are your Gmail, LinkedIn or Instagram accounts. However, they are prime targets for breaches because of the valuable information they tend to contain.

The Dark Web is the deepest part of the Internet and is often mixed up with the Deep web. The Dark web is a section only accessible via The Onion Router (TOR), the Invisible Internet Project (I2P) or other similar technologies. It is pretty common to find sites that sell illegal products and services on this section of the Internet.



Parts of the Web | Credit: [Aliqismet Aliyev](#) | Licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0

Shadow libraries are known to be hosted on various sections of the Internet. However, it is more common for them to be hosted on the Dark and Deep web, rather than the Surface Web. This is because there have been known to be crackdowns by law enforcement on Clearnet shadow libraries.

But why have them in the first place?

Why are they created?



A library | Credit: [Susan Q Yin](#)

Shadow libraries are created for the purpose of open access to books and other text information for people that are restricted when it comes to censorship, paywalls or physical restrictions.

In authoritarian countries, certain books, particularly ones that are inclined to move the reader towards thoughts and actions against the government could be restricted or outright banned. In some instances, the books are made available but are paywalled. Due to the economic situation of certain parts of the world, people cannot pay for these books, even the digital versions. Some books are published in physical copies only. In such cases, the book is scanned and a digital version is made and uploaded to the library repository or database.

Are they legal?



A Gavel | Credit: [Sora Shimazaki](#)

Shadow libraries are a grey area when it comes to the law. Even without the law, the ethics involved are a little blurry. Many argue that all human knowledge and information should be freely accessible. Some argue that the authors of content on shadow libraries do not get compensated for their work. Few propose a compromise in which all content should be put up in the library except the author explicitly expresses their displeasure in it.

As a result, many shadow libraries remain untouched and are left to flourish. However, in many countries such as the United States, they infringe copyright laws and as a result, popular sites are taken down.

Some examples of shadow libraries are:

1. Z-library
2. Sci-Hub
3. Library Genesis
4. Anna's Archive

Case Study: Z-library



Your gateway to knowledge and culture. Accessible for everyone.

New post "[Spring Fundraising 2023 results, magic email address and book swap service](#)" in our blog.

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Search for title, author, ISBN, publisher, md5..

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Z-library home page prior to its shutdown | Credit: Z-library

Z-library (formerly called BookFinder), which supposedly began operations in 2009. It contains books, comics, scholarly articles and papers and other digital text. As of 14th April, 2023, the site reports to have 12,374,418 books and 84,837,643 articles.

The site initially began as a mirror of Library Genesis, another shadow library. Books were then added by the maintainers and users of the site as the project evolved. Because of it's large database and number of books and articles, it claims to be 'the world's largest e-book library'.

In November 2022, the United States Department of Justice seized the clearnet domain of the website and users could not access their beloved books. However, Z-library was still accessible on the dark web via the TOR browser. The TOR site was noticeable slow and downloads were more limited for a time.

On the 18th of November, the Z-library team released a post on their blog, apologising for hurting authors by hosting their content, and offering to work with them to bring down their books if they did not want it on the site. The letter also thanked people who supported Z-library and reminded everyone that its purpose remains to give free access to human knowledge and culture to all human beings irrespective of any factor.

A few words about the events of November 2022

Nov 18, 2022 161k views Q 2890 comments

As many of you know, on November 3rd most of our domains were seized and some our servers were suspended by the United States Department of Justice and Federal Bureau of Investigation. In addition, on November 16 the United States Department of Justice published the indictment against two citizens of Russia, Anton and Valeria. They are accused of criminal copyright infringement, wire fraud and money laundering to operate the Z-Library.

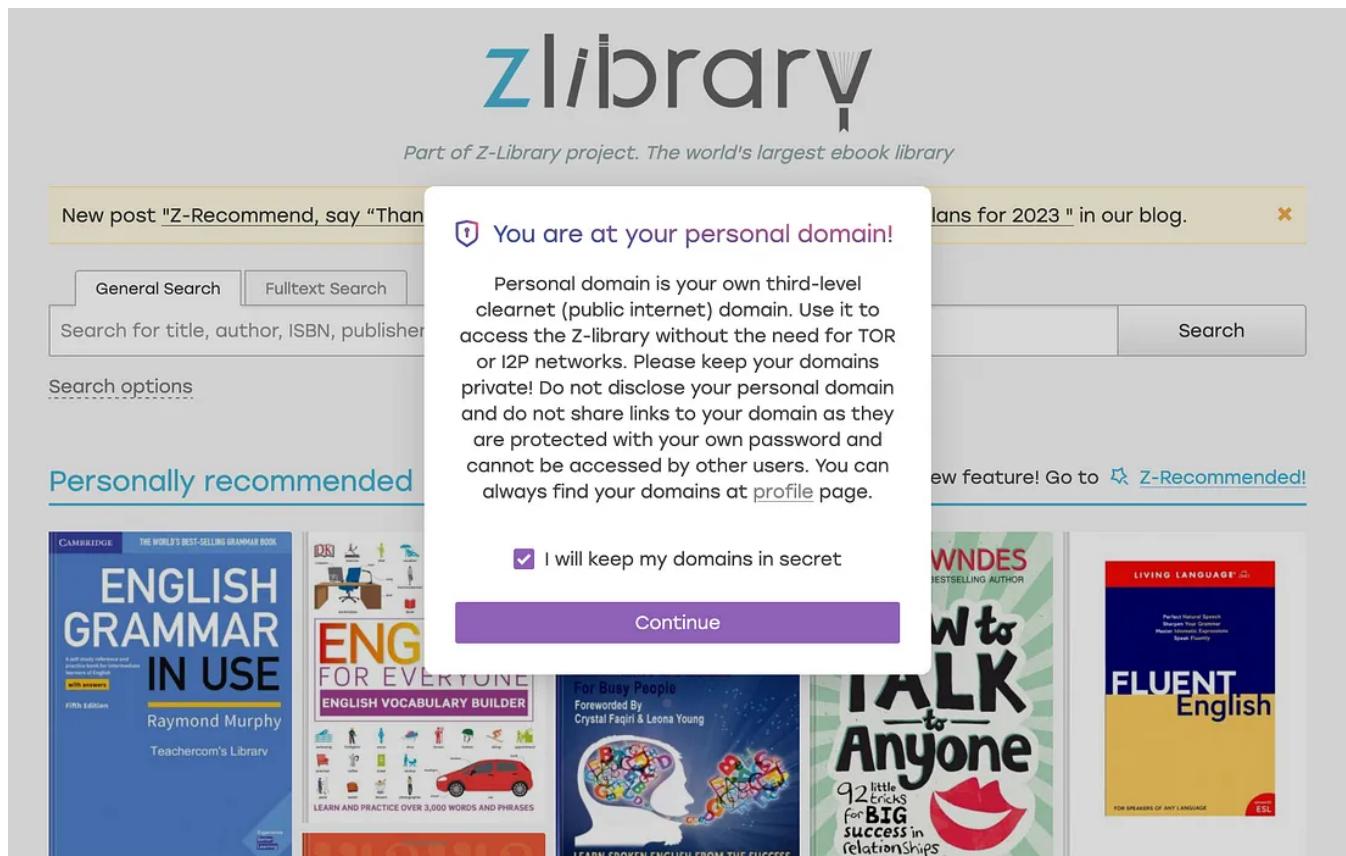
We refrain commenting on the alleged Anton and Valeria involvement in the Z-Library project and the charges against them. We are very sorry they are arrested. We also regret that some authors have suffered because of Z-Library and ask for their forgiveness. We do our best to respond to all complaints about files hosted in our library if it violates author's rights.

We see the resonance recent events caused, we see how many people support and believe in Z-Library. Thank you for your support, it is extremely valuable to us. Thank you for each donation you make. You are the ones who making the existence of the Z-Library possible. We believe the knowledge and cultural heritage of mankind should be accessible to all people around the world, regardless of their wealth, social status, nationality, citizenship, etc. This is the only purpose Z-Library is made for.

*My makeup may be flaking
But my smile still stays on*

The blog post by the Z-library team on its darknet site! Credit: Z-library

On February 11, 2023, Z-library announced private domains for users. This allowed users to sign in and access the resources through one of two third-level domains. Basically, this would allow the library services to be available to users while keeping them safe from law enforcement (We see you FBI 🕵️). As at the time of writing, Z-library is available to anyone in the world.



Z-library on the clearnet temporarily | Credit: Z-library

Conclusion



A library | Credit: [Ann Marie Kennon](#)

Shadow libraries are quite the ethical paradox. On one side, they break copywrite laws and make the original creators of the content a lot of money. On the flipside, they enable the preservation of such content for a long time and enable people without the financial capabilities access to knowledge they normally may not have.

The only thing both sides agree on is that knowledge should be shared to those who desire it. The question is, what is the prerequisite for that knowledge? Money or sheer will?

Acknowledgements

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Written by Daniel Iwugo

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Just another guy fascinated by the world of Hacking, Cybersecurity and the Internet.

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MTN allegedly attacked by Hackers

MTN Nigeria, a telecommunication service has allegedly been a victim of a recent cyberattack by a threat group.

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