

THE HARRY POTTER CASE or What are you going to do? Cast a Spell?

10-mn pound security to shield Potter secret

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http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/News/International__Business/10-mn_pound_security_to_shield_Potter_secret/articleshow/msid-2206188,curpg-1.cms16

LONDON: A £10 million security operation featuring an army of guards, satellite tracking systems and draconian legal contracts has swung into action to prevent any leak of details of the seventh and final book about the tales of boy wizard Harry Potter. As millions around the world eagerly await the release of Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows on Saturday midnight, only its author J K Rowling and some 20 other people, including the book's editors and illustrators know Harry's fate. When the finished manuscript was taken by hand from London to New York, the lawyer for the American publisher, Scholastic, sat on it during the flight.

With each successive Potter book, security has grown. Nothing has come close, however, to the arrangements for the finale, the Sunday Telegraph observed on Sunday. London-based Bloomsbury, which publishes the Potter books in Britain, has hired secure sites across the country to house the book prior to distribution early this week. Several dozen security teams will protect the sites round the clock. Experts say security staff will earn up to £30 an hour with a guard dog, up to £20 without.

Print factory workers in Britain have been threatened with the sack if they leak any details, while German publishers banned mobiles and even packed lunches in the printing plant. Some employees reportedly had to work in near-darkness to prevent them reading the book. It is from Tuesday, however, when copies begin to be sent out to retailers, that the most crucial part of the security operation will come into effect.

The trucks Bloomsbury will use are fitted with satellite tracking systems costing up to £1,000 pounds, which will reveal whether any of the vehicles deviate from their intended route. The books are on sealed pallets fitted with alarms to prevent tampering. At one of the world's biggest booksellers, Barnes and Noble in America, the books are being kept in padlocked trucks at the insistence of Scholastic. Amazon, the online retailer, has cordoned off special sections of its warehouse to ensure restricted access.

All retailers have had to sign a legal embargo preventing them from divulging any of the book's content or selling copies before the release time. A spokesman for Bloomsbury said: "we have a litigation specialist poised 24 hours a day, seven days a week to deal with any breaches. It is our intention to enforce the embargo vigorously and seek an immediate injunction if required." While experts put the cost of all this at £10 million, the lengths to which publishers have gone are not surprising.

Four years ago, Donald Parfitt, a fork-lift driver from Suffolk, was ordered to do 180 hours community service after he admitted stealing pages from Harry Potter and the Order of The Phoenix from the printing plant where he worked. Last year, one Aaron Lambert was jailed for 4 1/2 years for stealing copies of Harry Potter and The Half-Blood Prince and trying to sell them. Rowling has reportedly received letters from people asking her to reveal the ending of the seventh book because their terminally-ill relative may not live until Saturday.

Scholastic's Intricate Plan to Guard HP 7 Apparently Undone By Upstart E-Tailer

By Karen Holt -- Publishers Weekly, 7/18/2007 10:40:00 AM

As Harry Potter fans go, [Will Collier](#) is not particularly passionate. But he said he "got caught up in the hype" and decided to buy a copy of HP 7 from DeepDiscount.com.

"I placed an order a couple of weeks ago," said Collier, a metro Atlanta-based aerospace contractor. "I got home from work yesterday (July 17) and it was on my doorstep." Collier may be one of hundreds of DeepDiscount customers who had a similar experience.

Scholastic is accusing [DeepDiscount.com](#) and its distributor Levy Home Entertainment of breaching on-sale agreements and shipping copies of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* early, with some individuals receiving them yesterday. Levy had no comment, but Andrew Moscrip, VP of Infinity Resources, DeepDiscount's parent company, told *PW*, "We're taking the matter very seriously and conducting an investigation."

If Scholastic's accusations are true, its meticulously orchestrated strategy to keep the book out of customers' hands until July 21 has been undone by an upstart Web site that only began selling books in February.

In a statement released yesterday, the publisher said, "We are taking immediate legal action against DeepDiscount.com and Levy Home Entertainment. The number of copies shipped is around one one-hundredth of one percent of the total U.S. copies to go on sale at 12:01 am on July 21st." Based on a 12 million-copy first printing, around 1,200 may already have made their way into readers' hands.

While the more avid fans among those readers likely began devouring the book right away, Collier put his copy up for sale on ebay without reading it--or even peeking at the end of the book to find out whether Harry lives or dies. He said he'd rather take his time reading the book. And though he sold the book, he doesn't have much use for anyone who would reveal its contents. "I think that's pretty rotten," he said. "When I was a teenager, I wouldn't have wanted anyone coming out of a movie theater telling me, "Darth Vader is Luke's father."

That's just the kind of thinking Scholastic hopes others have. In its statement, it said, "We are also making a direct appeal to the Harry Potter fans who bought their books from DeepDiscount.com and may receive copies early requesting that they keep the packages hidden until midnight on July 21st."

Scholastic is especially grateful to the other retailers and distributors for their careful attention to keeping the books secure until the release time and for planning thousands of spectacular midnight parties where fans will celebrate together. And we ask everyone, especially the media, to preserve the fun and excitement for fans everywhere.

The fans themselves have made it abundantly clear that they are looking forward to going to the midnight parties, receiving their very own copy of the book and finally getting to read the book they have so anxiously awaited."

For booksellers who have spent months preparing for the release, the breach raises issues about whether to honor the embargo. Elizabeth Bluemle, co-owner of The Flying Pig Bookstore in Shelburne, Vt, said there is no question what her store will do. "As far as we're concerned, 12:01 am on July 21 is *the* on-sale date. That's just ethical business practice, and even though someone has messed up--to put it mildly--we plan on sticking to the agreed-upon schedule," she said, adding, "If local and online retailers all around us began breaking the embargo, we would be very distressed, and the midnight hour might lose a little of its punch for us, but we'd still abide by our plans."

Heather Doss, children's book buyer for Bookazine, said her company has tried hard to protect the embargo. "All of our accounts signed the affidavits about not putting the books out for sale before midnight. We've been very conscious about shipping the books so that they arrive as close to Friday as we can possibly get them," she said.

On Breaking the Harry Potter Embargo

<http://www.talkleft.com/story/2007/7/22/152451/909>

On CNN's [Reliable Sources](#) this morning, Howard Kurtz and his guests discussed how newspapers and internet sites broke the embargo over the release of the new Harry Potter book. His guests were outraged, calling the leaks "immoral" and "unethical. Who has the ethical and moral right to demand the ending be shielded, the author/series creator or the readers/viewers?...

...An embargo, which is, after all, just a gentleman's agreement.

The way to deal with them is to make sure someone else gets the story next time. There may not be a "next time" for the Sopranos or Harry Potter, but there certainly will be for something else. Journalists like being able to write their stories early so that they're in good shape by deadline. If any reporter violates an embargo, they shouldn't get the privilege next time. Let them sweat the deadline. And if authors and publishers are afraid to snub an embargo-breaking reporter because they'll miss out on a little free advertising, then they are just whining and deserve whatever they get.