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Level 5 – 31st August 2026

Companies destroying books to train AI models

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<https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2608/260831-destroying-rare-books-5.html>

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Please try Levels 4 and 6. They are (a little) harder.

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THE READING

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2608/260831-destroying-rare-books-5.html>

A trade commission in the US is being asked to investigate AI companies for allegedly destroying rare books. Some consumer groups claim that AI companies are digitizing old books to train their large language models (LLMs). The process includes breaking the spines of the rare books, scanning the pages, and then destroying them. Some books may be among the last surviving copies of the original texts. Critics say such books are historically important and that it is unacceptable to burn them. One critic said: "The rarer a book is, the more carefully we should preserve it."

The bulk buying of books is creating a problem for rare book stores. They are getting large orders for valuable books, but are also questioning the ethics of destroying books. The Wall Street Journal reported that sales of rare books have surged. Booksellers are getting unusually large orders for out-of-print, and sometimes valuable books. Some of these books are apparently being bought not to be read, but to be scanned for AI training. The Washington Post reported that AI companies are spending a fortune on millions of books to help train AI assistants.

Sources: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ftc-ai-companies-destroying-books/>
<https://www.wsj.com/articles/ais-need-for-content-has-put-rare-book-dealers-in-a-bind-1ac5a053>
<https://novaramedia.com/2026/08/21/hidden-airtag-exposes-amazon-destroying-rare-books-in-bulk-to-train-ai/>

PHRASE MATCHING

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2608/260831-destroying-rare-books-5.html>

PARAGRAPH ONE:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. A trade | a. preserve it |
| 2. investigate | b. old books |
| 3. companies are digitizing | c. historically important |
| 4. train their large language | d. AI companies |
| 5. breaking the spines | e. models |
| 6. among the last surviving | f. commission in the US |
| 7. Critics say such books are | g. of the rare books |
| 8. we should | h. copies |

PARAGRAPH TWO:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. The bulk buying | a. large orders |
| 2. creating a problem for | b. of destroying books |
| 3. They are getting large | c. on millions of books |
| 4. the ethics | d. orders |
| 5. sales of rare books | e. of books |
| 6. Booksellers are getting unusually | f. AI training |
| 7. scanned for | g. rare book stores |
| 8. spending a fortune | h. have surged |

LISTEN AND FILL IN THE GAPS

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2608/260831-destroying-rare-books-5.html>

A (1) _____ the US is being asked to investigate AI companies (2) _____ rare books. Some consumer groups claim that AI companies are digitizing old books to train their (3) _____ (LLMs). The process includes (4) _____ of the rare books, scanning the pages, and then destroying them. Some books may be among the last surviving copies of (5) _____. Critics say such books are historically important and that it is unacceptable to burn them. One critic said: "The rarer a book is, the more carefully we (6) _____."

The (7) _____ books is creating a problem for rare book stores. They are getting large (8) _____ books, but are also questioning the (9) _____ books. The Wall Street Journal reported that sales of rare books have surged. Booksellers are getting unusually (10) _____ out-of-print, and sometimes valuable books. Some of these books are apparently being bought not to be read, but (11) _____ for AI training. The Washington Post reported that AI companies are (12) _____ on millions of books to help train AI assistants.

PUT A SLASH (/) WHERE THE SPACES ARE

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BOOKS SURVEY

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2608/260831-destroying-rare-books-4.html>

Write five GOOD questions about books in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.
When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

WRITE QUESTIONS & ASK YOUR PARTNER(S)

Student A: Do not show these to your speaking partner(s).

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____
- d) _____
- e) _____
- f) _____

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WRITE QUESTIONS & ASK YOUR PARTNER(S)

Student B: Do not show these to your speaking partner(s).

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____
- d) _____
- e) _____
- f) _____

WRITING

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2608/260831-destroying-rare-books-5.html>

Write about **books** for 10 minutes. Read and talk about your partner's paper.

[illegible]