

Microsoft kills off the book store you probably didn't know it had

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For reasons that were never entirely clear, Microsoft released a book store for Windows 10 back in 2017. The Edge browser was given support for EPUB books, and the Microsoft Store had a book category, offering a range of free and non-free books. No longer: yesterday the company ended book sales entirely.

We can't imagine the book store was ever a major business. Combined with the decision to abandon its Edge browser and switch to Chromium, it's not altogether surprising that maintaining support for electronic books was more effort than Microsoft wanted to make.

Those scarce few of you who have bought books will have until July to read them, at which point you'll be given a full refund. All books ordered through the service are being destroyed, including free ones.

This marks the second major media area that Microsoft has given up on, after ditching the music business in 2017. This leaves the Xbox, with games, films, and TV shows, as the only remaining outlet for buying digital media from Microsoft. The game business is healthy—indeed, Microsoft is believed to be about to release a new Xbox that only supports digital

downloads—and the TV and film section seems to get new titles regularly, so one assumes it's going to stick around.

The loss of first music and then books underscores in many ways Microsoft's inability to produce a mass-market mobile platform. An online music store and book store are table stakes for a smartphone platform; they're bare-minimum offerings that need to be both present and integrated, because every other mobile platform has them. Music integration is also an important element for home digital assistant devices like the Amazon Echo; this represents another space where Microsoft has made some fumbled efforts, before retreating.

With Microsoft having neither a mobile platform nor any continued interest in the digital assistant market, the justification for the continued existence of these media services evaporates. Tight integration of these services is arguably less important in the desktop operating system world, so falling back on third-party options to fill the gap is a viable option.

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