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# Russian Publishers to 'Retell' Western Bestsellers After Losing Licensing

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**Pelagia Tikhonova / Moskva News Agency**

Russian publishers plan to "retell" foreign bestsellers that will not hit bookstores due to Western companies halting work with their Russian counterparts over the war in Ukraine, the Kommersant business daily reported Wednesday.

Russia's largest publisher, Eksmo-AST, will release 3,000 copies of Prince Harry's memoir "Spare" on Thursday as a "summary, which involves the retelling of its main theses."

Another publisher, Smart Reading, will release an audiobook summary of "Spare" on the Russian e-book library LitRes this Wednesday.

"The summary will reflect the key ideas of the book without using excerpts from it," Yevgeny Kapyev, CEO of Eksmo, told Kommersant.

"The summary's author read the book in English and retold it in her own language," Kapyev said.

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Maria Kopachevskaya, editor-in-chief of Smart Reading, told Kommersant the publisher has been specializing in such "summaries" for at least 10 years.

"We try to focus on what's not available to Russian-speaking readers," Kopachevskaya said.

Eksmo-AST considers the project a "startup that will help partially solve the problem of unavailable non-fiction novels" and an "alternative to a compulsory license."

Other Russian publishing houses opposed the summary format on legal and ethical grounds.

"Allowing piracy in one form or another — and summaries can be considered veiled piracy — throws the Russian market of legal content back a few years," Kommersant quoted an unnamed Russian publishing house spokesperson as saying.

Russian law allows citations for scientific, educational and critical purposes.

If brought to court, Russian publishers would be forced to prove that they retold an unlicensed book for purposes that do not include entertainment.

Russian law firms say publishers risk being hit by lawsuits and fined double the value of books sold if their summaries hew too close to the original text.

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