

ISSUES BRIEF

Copyright Support for Scholarly Communications

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Overview

Every day, copyright impacts institutions of higher education in Canada. Decisions are continuously made around what is eligible to be incorporated into courses; and researchers are anxiously trying to understand publishing agreements, how to meet Open Access (OA) mandates and how best to share their scholarly outputs. Much of this is made more complicated by the challenges associated with copyright in the age of digital publications (e.g. Digital Rights Management (DRM)) and ongoing legal debates between institutions of higher education and Access Copyright.

Copyright and Scholarly Communications librarians and staff help university community members understand and address these issues. Work in these areas includes:

- Providing information / training around Canadian copyright, fair dealing, licensing agreements, public domain, copyright clearance and copyright collectives.
- Supporting open access by providing information around OA journals, publishing agreements, author rights, open licenses, compliance with OA mandates, Open Educational Resources (OERs).
- Providing the infrastructure / training needed to support open access locally (Open Journal System, repositories).
- Consulting on library-publisher contracts to ensure they reflect institutional goals / policies regarding access/usage of content and increasingly, via transformative agreements, make knowledge accessible to all.

What's Happening Locally

University copyright staff go by a variety of titles such as Copyright “Officer,” “Coordinator,” “Librarian,” “Advisor” or “Specialist”. Some institutions employ copyright assistants who work on copyright permissions requests, help answer copyright queries, and provide administrative support.

Because of the significant role copyright plays in the serials crisis, copyright work in universities can ideally include an OA advocacy component. Faculty, graduate students and other members of the university community sometimes have questions about copyright and publishing, which can be an opportune time to discuss the benefits of OA and copyright retention. Additionally, if copyright limits are proving to be an obstacle for an instructor’s course materials, copyright

specialists can sometimes suggest finding (or even creating) alternative openly-licensed materials.

Most copyright staff are part of, or affiliated with, the university library. There is explicit, formal overlap in copyright and scholarly communication responsibilities at a minority of COPPUL institutions. For example, the University of Winnipeg library has a “Scholarly Communications and Copyright” [office](#), and the University of British Columbia [employs](#) two Scholarly Communications and Copyright Services Librarians.

Table 1: Copyright staffing levels at COPPUL institutions (based on institutions’ websites) as of March 1, 2020:

# of Copyright Staff	# of COPPUL Institutions	% of COPPUL Institutions
≤1	14	63.5%
>1 and ≤2	5	23%
3	1	4.5%
4-5	2	9%

Notes: 22 full COPPUL institutions, Rough average FTE students: 14800, Rough average copyright staff numbers: 1.6 FTE copyright staff per institution

What’s Happening Elsewhere

The Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL) created a [guide](#) to author rights to help creators be aware of copyright implications that arise during the publication process. CARL also adapted the [SPARC author addendum to publication agreement](#) for a Canadian context. This form can be used by creators to negotiate their rights with publishers in order to retain some key copyrights and make their works more widely available or to comply with open access requirements. CARL is also developing a series of open [copyright education modules](#) for use by post-secondary institutions. These modules were adapted from the College Libraries Ontario’s [Copyright Literacy for Ontario College Employees](#).

In the US, the ACRL has developed a [Scholarly Communication Toolkit](#) for libraries and librarians. Components of the toolkit include “Scholarly Publishing”, “Access to Research”, “Repositories” and “[Copyright](#)”.

In the UK, the UK Copyright Literacy team has developed a board game called [The Publishing Trap](#). The game focuses on research dissemination and the scholarly communications ecosystem, and is aimed at early career researchers.

Recommendations & Considerations

Copyright plays a role in numerous projects and initiatives in universities and research libraries. An awareness of relevant copyright information, including an understanding of the benefits of OA and OERs, can be useful for library staff to have and can benefit the entire institution. To this end, we offer the following recommendations:

- Invest in building copyright literacy for library staff/librarians to support the development of library expertise. Based on the literature cited in this report, many library staff learn about copyright on the job and self-report that they need more knowledge/skill-building in this area to feel confident in providing information and guidance to their institutions.
- Ensure awareness of copyright, author rights, open scholarship, and OERs to strengthen the library's role in copyright support provision. Specific areas for engagement include education on copyright issues (e.g. workshops), providing relevant and updated resources and information and supporting faculty with understanding copyright requirements.
- Forge partnerships between faculty, research administrators and the library for support with obtaining grants and other funding sources that support the development of open scholarship and OER and practices in teaching and learning.
- Provide feedback or recommendations to library and information science programs regarding copyright courses/training to support new graduates with gaining a foundational understanding of copyright in the scholarly communication landscape.

Learn More

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