Copyright Awareness, Partnerships, and Training Issues in Academic Libraries

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ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

This article reports on the results of a national survey of academic librarians and library staff (N = 226) in the United States about their awareness of various copyright policies, partnerships with campus groups to address copyright issues, and training needs. A majority of the survey respondents reported that they have answered copyright-related questions in the workplace, yet only 49% (n = 98) of the respondents perceived they were prepared to provide copyright information to library users. Awareness of various copyright policies among librarians and staff members varied, including a reported minimal awareness of the T.E.A.C.H. Act. In addition, survey respondents expressed the desire for more copyright-related training. In light of these findings, the present study extends the existing literature and offers recommendations to help better prepare a "copyright confident" or "copyright responsive" academic library workforce.

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Academic libraries are becoming increasingly involved in copyright issues, such as through work with course reserves, licensed library resources, and assisting faculty authors with negotiating copyright agreements with publishers. Copyright is a form of protection provided by the laws of the United States to creators of original works of authorship or expression (Title 17, U.S. Code, 1976). A recent report from the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) provides context for accelerating the awareness of copyright and scholarly communication issues in the academic setting (Davis-Kahl & Hensley, 2013). Given the wide-ranging changes in scholarship, this report states that academic librarians must add knowledge of copyright law and other intellectual property issues to their "current repertoire of literacies" in order to provide guidance to their users (Davis-Kahl & Hensley, 2013, p. viii).

Albitz (2013) further states as the importance of copyright education grows, it is critical to ensure that "the people assigned this responsibility have the resources and support to perform their responsibilities in the most effective and efficient way possible" (p. 435). In another copyright realm, a report from Educause (2013) declares there is a heightened need for copyright education on campus with regards to copyright challenges and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCS). Taken together, it becomes evident that copyright issues and opportunities permeate the higher education landscape.

Indeed, these reports help to illustrate the "pervasiveness of copyright in service issues that libraries confront daily" (Horava, 2010, p. 21). Clearly, copyright and related intellectual property laws are "woven into the fabric of academic culture" and thus have a substantial impact on the nature of services academic libraries provide to their user communities (Horava, 2010, p. 4). While academic librarians interact with library users and assist with issues related to copyright matters, the opinions of those working in academic libraries regarding how prepared they feel to handle copyright questions and their training needs have not been documented.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the general copyright literature, much has been written about copyright and "its interpretation and application to higher education" (Albitz, 2013, p. 430). Intellectual property issues have dominated the higher education literature and three key areas in particular that have been prominent among these discussions are "plagiarism, technology transfer, and illegal music downloading" (Albitz, 2013, p. 429). In the academic library context, published studies have included "major attempts to inventory how universities and their libraries deal with intellectual property rights among students, faculty, libraries, and rights holders outside the university" (Hansen, Cross, & Edward, 2013, p. 71). These studies have tended to describe copyright policies that universities have crafted to address the ownership and use of copyrighted works (Hansen et al., 2013; Kelley, 2002).

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A related theme emerging from previous research is in the area of electronic reserves or e-reserves. In this particular arena, it has been noted that a substantial portion of the existing literature discusses "rights analysis and copyright policies as a component of an individual library's implementation of a particular e-reserves system" (Hansen et al., 2013, p. 71–72). For example, Gould, Lipinski, and Buchanan (2005) examine library policies regarding the application and interpretation of copyright law to reserves and electronic reserves. Another report from the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) found those working in academic libraries regularly encountered fair use questions in making materials available for coursework (ARL, 2010). While this literature is helpful for understanding copyright and licensing practices related to e-reserves, research that further examines library staff and their familiarity with such copyright policies is warranted to help build a more complete picture of the copyright landscape within academic library environments.

On an international scope, a study by Olaka and Adkins (2012) found that academic librarians in Kenya were "only moderately knowledgeable about copyright issues" (p. 46). Olaka and Adkins (2012) concluded it was imperative to increase academic librarians' knowledge of copyright laws. Similar findings were reported in the United Kingdom in which respondents from academic libraries felt they needed more training in copyright matters (Oppenheim & Woodward, 2004).

Another theme found within the professional literature focuses on copyright responsibilities. In a study of Canadian academic libraries, Horava (2010) found that responsibility for copyright activities was distributed across library position levels, including library administrators, librarians, and staff within various departments. Interestingly, very few of the libraries in the study sample from Canadian academic libraries reported having an individual located within the library serving as a copyright officer (Horava, 2010). Some institutions may not employ a dedicated copyright officer but rather have staff across several departments working collaboratively with copyright matters (Secker & Bell, 2010). Among institutions in the United States with a designated copyright officer, the location of this position was often within the library rather than another unit on campus (Albitz, 2013). Nevertheless, such studies help to confirm that academic libraries are playing a role in copyright matters in some capacity on their campus.

Despite the wide range of copyright issues present in the literature, few studies have examined the awareness of copyright-related policies in higher education in the Unites States. One study of faculty on two academic health sciences campuses in the U.S. found that faculty had limited knowledge of copyright laws (Smith et al., 2006). Yet, the awareness of various copyright laws among those working in academic libraries in the U.S. remains under-explored.

As noted the literature related to copyright matters is extensive, but research into the awareness of copyright policies, copyright partnerships on campus, and related copyright training needs is very limited. To the best of our knowledge, no published study has assessed the awareness of specific copyright policies and training needs of those working in academic libraries in the United States. The value of this study is that it helps to address this gap in the existing literature. Therefore, the overall purpose of the present study was to ascertain the attitudes of librarians and library staff in academic libraries toward providing copyright services, their awareness of copyright laws, and any training needs.

METHODOLOGY

The data presented was obtained from a national survey conducted in November 2012. As stated above, the overall purpose of this study was to gain insight regarding the experiences of academic librarians and library staff in the U.S. with copyright-related services and to identify any training needs related to providing copyright information. To accomplish this, an online questionnaire was utilized to assess awareness of various copyright policies, copyright partnerships on campus,

and training issues in academic libraries. The survey was developed by the investigators and ethical approval was obtained from Wayne State University. The survey questions were pretested with participants working in academic libraries and their feedback helped to refine the question wording thereby ensuring the reliability of the survey instrument.

The survey was entered into Survey Monkey, a web-based survey tool. In November 2012, librarians and library staff working in an academic library setting in the United States that subscribe to three email discussion lists (*COLLIB-L* College Libraries List, *ULS-L* University Libraries List, and *ILL-L* Interlibrary Loan List) were sent an email message inviting their participation in the research study. These email discussion lists were primarily selected for their ability to disseminate the study invitation at a national level in order to reach the target survey audience (i.e. those working in academic libraries). Recruitment of study participants via e-mail discussion lists has been used in previous research efforts to help elicit participation from professionals within the library field (Attebury & Holder, 2008; Hackenberg, 2000).

Participants were asked to voluntarily participate in the study by clicking on a web link included in the email message that directed participants to the web-based survey. A follow-up reminder about the survey was sent and the survey closed after 30 days of data collection. Responses were anonymous and respondents were prevented from answering the survey more than once.

FINDINGS

A total of 226 individuals currently working in academic libraries (N = 226) in the United States responded to the survey. As seen in Table 1, survey respondents included academic librarians (60.6%, n = 123), library administrators (24.1%, n = 49), and library staff members (13.8%, n = 28). The greatest number of survey responses came from those self-identifying as librarians in academic settings (60.6%, n = 123).

A significant portion of survey respondents (93.3%, n = 209) indicated that their current position involved providing copyright-related information or consisted of copyright duties. While beyond the scope of this study to compare the types of copyright questions library staff members receive, it is clear from the findings that various levels of staff positions in academic libraries report being involved in copyright matters. Additional survey questions examined the comfort level with providing copyright-related information to library users, awareness of various copyright laws, and training desires or needs. The results from this national survey are shared and summarized below. These results may offer insight into how well-equipped or prepared librarians and library staff believe they are for providing copyright-related services.

PERCEIVED COPYRIGHT PREPAREDNESS

Survey respondents were asked how prepared they felt to provide copyright information to library users. From the responses, 49.0% (n = 98) agreed they were prepared to provide copyright information while 17.0% (n = 34) disagreed that they were prepared. Survey respondents were also asked if their university currently had a designated copyright center or expert for the campus community. As shown in Table 2, 40.2% (n = 84) of the respondents indicated there was a

Table 1
Distribution of survey respondents from U.S. Academic Libraries.

Respondents (n = 202[a])	(%, n)
Librarians	60.6% (123)
Library administrators	24.1% (49)
Library staff	13.8% (28)
"Other" (i.e. student assistants)	1.0% (2)

[a] Not all of the respondents answered this question.