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Creative Common: Copyright Zen

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Abstract

As a photographer, copyright has always been an issue for me—but solely from a creative standpoint. Until I began working as an academic library director, I never thought of copyright from an educational or use viewpoint. When I accepted my current position, I started an OER initiative at Northeastern Technical College and found myself needing to understand the nuances of copyright. My faculty began to incorporate videos, text, artwork, and varied forms of media in online classes. I had to know if they were following copyright and using educational fair use correctly. Quickly copyright became a large part of my workload. Working with OER repositories, I quickly realized Creative Commons was the most important aspect of copyright for myself and my faculty. During the height of COVID, I did the Creative Commons Certification Course and completed an independent study at the University of South Carolina, with Dick Kawooya, on OER and Copyright expert. After gaining this knowledge, my colleague Mark Knockemus presented this information at conferences and webinars. Copyright has become a significant part of my job. I enjoy educating and working with faculty to ensure we are not breaking the law and ensuring our students have class materials.

Keywords: Careers, copyright librarianship



Creative Common: Copyright Zen

Librarianship is my second career; my first career and my passion are landscape photography. Working as a photographer is an illustrious career, but you do not have the nice benefits of insurance and retirement. I have always loved art and history and decided I wanted to enter the museum world as an archivist. This desire led me to the University of South Carolina (USC) and an internship at the Mint Museum of Art in Charlotte, North Carolina. After graduation, I worked as a digital archivist and found copyright and issues of ownership fascinating. I quickly discovered copyright and access control is paramount in both art and librarianship. To artists, copyright is about the protection and control of our work. We want to ensure we hold all reproduction rights for our work. I have always been interested in the provenance of objects and read widely on legal cases of disputed art ownership. Copyright, in the art world, is about ownership and control. I would spend a lot of time on the internet making sure my work was not being used without my consent. Until I entered the library field, this was my preconceived notion of copyright. In 2018, I began working as Head Librarian at Northeastern Technical College in Cheraw, South Carolina. Cheraw, my hometown, struggles economically, and I wanted to alleviate some of my students' financial hardships. I was a recent graduate of the University of South Carolina, School of Information, and I felt the sticker shock of education. What stuck with me from USC was most classes did not require an expensive textbook. Many professors used Open Educational Resources (OERs) or very low-cost learning resources. I only spent \$334.89 on books during my master's program.

In contrast, a first-semester student at NETC paid an average of 700 dollars per semester. I knew that was a lot of money for our students to spend, and I wanted to do something about it. Immediately my mind went to OERs.

To alleviate some of the cost to our students, I began to research OERs and realized they were the best option. Luckily, I had the support of our college president, Dr. Kyle Wagner, to plan and execute an OER revolution. As I started to plan my revolution, I realized I did not know anything about copyright. Learning about copyright is a daunting process. I had to start at square one and move forward. Many days I wanted to give up. Copyright is not an easy or exciting subject, but it is necessary. However, I did discover the most Zen thing of all, Creative Commons.

Since early 2016 I have used Creative Commons for my photography. My work is often used on travel websites to highlight historical buildings, and CC-BY-NC-ND is perfect for this use. Looking at OERs, I began to realize Creative Commons license were attached to 99.9% of OERs. Creative Commons is appropriate for the OER revolution because it began a copyright revolution. Standard copyright allows

creators to retain all rights, and, unless a copyright exception applies, only through written communication can someone sample or reuse works. Creative Commons was a paradigm shift enabling creators to specify how their creations can be reused or remixed to create new material. More importantly, it dispensed with the need to contact a creator and ask permission. Creative Commons opened the world to a more accessible and uniform sharing of information and is perfect for higher education. I realized this was the copyright information my faculty needed. However, I also realized that I needed more education on copyright before I could help my faculty. Spring 2020, I had returned to U of SC to work towards a Graduate Certificate in Advanced Studies in Library and Information Science. I knew Dr. Dick Kawooya was a copyright and OER expert, and I ensured our paths aligned. I completed an independent study with Dr. Kawooya titled: Copyright for Open Educational Resources. Dr. Kawooya helped me explore copyright, specifically copyright relating to OERs. He encouraged me to check out the Creative Commons Certification Process, and my copyright journey began during this process.

The course to become Creative Commons certified is challenging and fast-paced, but it was what I needed. I quickly learned the skills and gained the authority to assist my faculty in selecting OERs. I am not a subject expert; I cannot tell my faculty if OERs fit their course and learning objective. I can teach them how to search for and evaluate OERs, and I was prepared for this. However, until I completed my Creative Commons certification (Academic Librarian Courses, January 2020). I was not prepared to help them wade through copyright and fair use issues. I MUST state that the Creative Commons Certification Program does not legally make me a copyright expert or give my decision any legal standing, but, it was invaluable in helping me understand the nuances of copyright for higher education and impart this knowledge to my faculty. The independent study and certification prepared me to meet and exceed this goal and become a copyright and OER champion for NETC.

Before my arrival, NETC had an OER champion in Mark Knockemus. Mark, who teaches English and Religion, had created OERs for his classes. Knockemus was unsatisfied with textbook quality and costs. Mark began by producing a customized handbook for English 101, saving his students over 100 dollars. After his initial success Mark worked to create more OERs. Now all NETC English and Religion classes use OERs. Mark was my co-OER champion and worked tirelessly with me to bring OERs to NETC. As a NETC dynamic duo, we do copyright and OER presentations at state, nation, and international conferences. Mark and I are prepared and excited to lead the OER revolution for NETC. COVID assisted our revolution and helped me find my way into copyright leadership.

I became certified at the best time; COVID had just begun to force education online. This was an excellent opportunity, as I was able to take my newly obtained



copyright credentials and put them to use. I was able to break down what each Creative Commons license meant and help instructors choose resources based on copyright. Also, I help instructors publish their OERs and choose the correct Creative Commons license for their work. Faculty must decide if they want others to make derivatives of their work, if it can be sold, and if they used a share-alike piece in creating work, they must license their work as share-alike. With the rapid shift to online learning, I was also able to offer workshops on Fair Use, which my faculty needed.

COVID accelerated my path to copyright leadership. My journey to working in the copyright field grew out of a need to help my students. I think I have come full circle with copyright and now use my newfound knowledge to help enrich students' lives.