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Book Review: Copyright Conversations: Rights Literacy in a Digital World¹

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Abstract

The topic of copyright is rarely far from a librarian's mind. Practitioners must navigate creator and user rights within the constraints of complex license and contract agreements in digital environments. Librarians have to understand, explain, educate, and apply copyright law on a regular basis, often without formal training. *Copyright Conversations: Rights Literacy in a Digital World* is a notable work that endeavors to summarize, explain, and comment on many of the complicated copyright-related topics that librarians encounter in the digital realm.

Keywords: copyright, rights literacy, digital environments, copyright education, instruction

¹ Members of the JCEL editorial staff and editorial board were involved with the publication of this title. To ensure an objective review and to avoid conflicts of interest, these individuals had no contact with the author of this review about the work. These individuals were also not involved with the editorial review of the manuscript and had no influence in the acceptance decision. Questions about this can be directed to Tucker Taylor, who served as the Editor for this manuscript: tucky@mailbox.sc.edu.

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The topic of copyright is rarely far from a librarian's mind. Practitioners must navigate creator and user rights within the constraints of complex license and contract agreements in digital environments. Librarians have to understand, explain, educate, and apply copyright law on a regular basis, often without formal training. [*Copyright Conversations: Rights Literacy in a Digital World*](#) is a notable work that endeavors to summarize, explain, and comment on many of the complicated copyright-related topics that librarians encounter in the digital realm. Available for \$88 on the ALA website as of January 2, 2020 this title offers an abundance of quality content for a reasonable cost. Many chapters are available under Creative Commons licenses and have been shared online through institutional repositories.

Many of the chapters are authored by familiar names in the field of copyright librarianship, yet the content is approachable and understandable for both copyright experts and non-experts alike. Primarily intended for those employed in academic institutions, this publication is focused towards copyright librarians or for those with significant rights responsibilities built into their positions. However, any practicing librarian will find applicable content within the book. For example, information literacy or research librarians will benefit from the chapters in Section II that intertwine copyright with the *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*, while digital and special collections librarians will find Pia M. Hunter's chapter on orphan works pertinent.

The book is logically ordered into four sections. The first, *Copyright Librarians' Role and Advocacy*, is directed towards librarians with copyright responsibilities written into their position descriptions. Chapter authors explore user knowledge and habits, provide useful advice for educating library staff and institutional personnel, and extoll the value of rights advocacy.

The second section, *Education*, provides thoughtful insights to librarians who are responsible for helping students build connections between their everyday lives and their consumption and creation of copyrighted content. Authors in this section weave copyright instruction into the *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*, offer best practices for allowing students to understand and respect the value of information, and closely examine the many roles that librarians take while interpreting copyright in a digital teaching environment.

In *Research and Policy*, the third section of the book, chapter authors discuss librarian involvement in the development, implementation, and education for copyright as well as contract and licensing policies. In these chapters, copyright policies and contracts are not merely pedantic topics to be elucidated but are more so tools to effect change and further meaningful discussions and practices.

The fourth and final section, *International Issues*, contains three well-developed chapters on issues both broad and narrow in scope. The first chapter in the section, *The International Copyright Regime—Just Enough to Make You Cringe* provides a comprehensive and broad overview of the current state of international copyright protection. The chapter summarizes international treaties and conventions to which the United States belongs. This chapter also provides the reader with insights into obtaining international copyright protections and details the limitations for US copyright users operating internationally. The final two chapters discuss aspects of copyright in Canada and Italy. While both these chapters are informative and of value, the scope of this section leaves the reader seeking additional perspectives from a wider variety of countries. If there is one limitation of this collection, it is that the final section would benefit from additional and more diverse international commentary, or perhaps a more intentional selection of national copyright laws.

Of particular strength throughout the book is the ability of the authors to blend the theoretical and practical. These readings provide librarians with firm historical and philosophical foundations, while giving practical suggestions for educational programs, best practices, and workflows. For example, in Chapter 9, *An Active Learning Approach to Teaching Copyright Essentials*, Malina Thiede and Jennifer Zerkee offer an exemplary pedagogical approach for delivering effective copyright instruction to students, providing readers with a full curriculum and resources for a one-shot instruction session.

Whether a librarian prefers to read the title cover-to-cover for a deep dive into copyright in a digital environment, or selects chapters based on relevance and need, *Copyright Conversations* is a strongly recommended resource for any librarian seeking to enhance her knowledge on the subject.

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