5 Things You Should Read about Copyright and Sharing Instructional Materials

The Publication

This is the first in a new series of publications from the ACRL Instruction Section's Research & Scholarship Committee. We've titled this the "5 Things" series. Each publication will focus on a current, under-discussed or otherwise important topic for instruction librarians.

The 5 Things we recommend are intended to be eclectic and thought-provoking. They may be journal articles, blog posts, podcasts, interviews, reports, or just about anything else that we think is important for librarians to read, watch, or hear about this topic.

For its general concept, this series is deeply indebted to the EDUCAUSE "Seven Things You Need to Know About..." reports. (And we highly recommend you read those too!)

The Topic

Open access to information is a core professional value for librarians, and open access to instructional materials makes good practical sense for librarians who teach.

Sharing our instructional materials helps us build on each other's successes, avoids wasted effort, sparks new projects, and affirms our commitment to the free and open transmission of ideas.

But sharing isn't always easy.

Librarians who want to lend may have to overcome institutional opposition and outdated notions about copyright and intellectual property. Librarians who want to borrow may have trouble finding what they need, or modifying it to suit their purposes.

The 5 Things listed here are intended to support librarians in sharing instructional materials.

They are key pieces that will help us articulate why sharing is important and give us concrete examples of successful sharing projects.

Along with these 5 Things, we recommend bookmarking the following websites.

The Cape Town Open Education Declaration (http://www.capetowndeclaration.org/)
A principled statement about why open education is important.

ccLearn (http://learn.creativecommons.org/)
The Creative Commons learning site, devoted to keeping you up to date about how to license your instructional materials flexibly.

ANTS (http://ants.wetpaint.com/
An online repository of animated library tutorials, with best practices for online library instruction.

PRIMO (http://www.ala.org/apps/primo/public/search.cfm)
The Instruction Section's very own best-of-breed collection of online library instruction to emulate and draw from.

We invite you to spend some time with these websites and with the 5 Things below, discuss them with your colleagues and constituents, then go forth and share!

If you have comments or questions about the "5 Things" publications, please contact the current IS Research & Scholarship Committee Chair. (http://www.ala.org/ala/acrlbucket/is/iscommittees/webpages/research/index.cfm)

The 5 Things…

1 Bissell, Ahrash and James Boyle. 2007. Towards a global learning commons: ccLearn. Educational Technology 47 (3): 5-9.

Bissell and Boyle provide background information on open educational resources (OERs) and discuss the "levels of freedom" or "openness" provided by OERs to argue that "[t]ruly open educational resources give the user the freedom not merely to read, but to redistribute and republish, and not merely to copy verbatim but to customize, combine, and modify." In addition, the authors discuss factors limiting participation in OERs (e.g. tenure requirements), as well as ways to encourage the use and creation of OERs. This article will help introduce you to OERs and perhaps encourage you to share your work in this enterprise. Approximate reading time: 15 minutes.

2 Green, Cable. Developing a culture of sharing and receiving: Open educational resources. Bellingham Technical College elearning, Feb 2008. 1 hour, 8 min., 1 sec. Elluminate videoconference, (http://tinyurl.com/6756gx)

This recorded videoconference examines open educational resources from a Web 2.0 angle, suggesting that the true power of open education lies in its relationship to the "long tail" and to the idea of connectivism. Green argues that open education is win/win, because it not only serves social justice, but also creates a larger, deeper, and inherently stronger network of participants. Librarians will take away new ideas about how technological innovation affects our ideas of intellectual property and ownership, and about the effects of sharing educational materials on campus culture and pedagogy. Users who have not participated in Elluminate videoconferences before may be prompted to install the free software. Approximate viewing time: 1 hour.

3 Hobbs, Renee, Peter Jaszi, and Pat Aufderheide. 2007. The cost of copyright confusion for media literacy. Washington, DC: Center for Social Media. http://www.centerforsocialmedia.org/ files/ pdf/Final_CSM_copyright_report.pdf.

This article argues for a critical re-examination of the conventional wisdom on copyright among media literacy educators, using interviews with teachers to reveal how misconceptions about the law and ignorance of the rights afforded by fair use have a chilling effect on learning and innovation in K-16 instruction. You'll gain a clearer understanding of copyright and fair use, and may feel inspired to change the ways you use copyrighted materials to teach. Approximate reading time: 45 minutes.

4 Lehman, Rosemary. 2007. Learning object repositories. New Directions for Adult & Continuing Education 113 (Spring): 57-66.

A must-read primer on learning object repositories— clearinghouses of reusable, digital teaching resources. Lehman defines the types and characteristics of learning objects, discusses the importance of object description (meta-tagging, taxonomies), and offers an overview of relevant metadata initiatives. You'll come away with a better understanding of learning object repositories and the digital rights issues arising from their use. Approximate reading time: 15 minutes.

5 Lessig, Lawrence. How creativity is being strangled by the law. TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design), March 2007. 19 min., 7 sec. MP4, (http://www.ted.com/talks/view/id/187)

In this video, Stanford professor Lawrence Lessig makes an impassioned plea for creative freedom through anecdotes about John Philip Sousa, the regulation of land, and broadcasting under the "ASCAP cartel." Lessig exhorts us to celebrate the "read-write culture," in which users creatively remix digital content, calling it "the literacy of today's generation." You'll learn about the historical role of copyright, and about how today's artists, copyright lawyers and companies can choose to practice common sense and restore democratic access to content. Approximate viewing time: 19 minutes.