This study examines copyright knowledge among school librarians in the U.S. and the factors that contribute to their knowledge and comfort with copyright in K-12 school settings. A review of the literature reveals that school librarians are seen to have a role in complying with and teaching copyright law in schools; however, little research has been done on knowledge of copyright among school librarians. This study used a web-based survey to gather data from school librarians; 245 survey responses were usable. Results indicate that fewer than half of respondents were comfortable with their knowledge of copyright law. In addition, the relationship between self-led research and copyright knowledge was found to be statistically significant. This study may be of interest to school librarians, K-12 administrators, educators of librarians, and those assessing MLS curriculum.

Headings:

Copyright -- Teaching

Surveys -- Copyright

Surveys -- School librarians

School librarians -- Training of

School libraries -- United States
COPYRIGHT EDUCATION:
THE IMPACT OF TRAINING FOR SCHOOL LIBRARIANS

by
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A Master’s paper submitted to the faculty of the School of Information and Library Science of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Library Science.

Chapel Hill, North Carolina
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Approved by

_____________________
Sandra Hughes-Hassell
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Introduction

The challenge of understanding and teaching copyright in K-12 schools often falls to the school librarian. However, copyright law is complex, even more so because of new technologies and information uses. Furthermore, there is often only one librarian per school, meaning there is only one campus resource for questions about copyright. School librarians need a full understanding of copyright, not just because of the possibility of litigation against the school if copyright is infringed, but primarily because overcompliance will ultimately limit the information rights of students and teachers. In addition, school librarians need to be able to teach and model ethical and responsible information and technology use to students.

In light of these issues, how does the school librarian become informed about copyright? The purpose of this study is to ascertain copyright knowledge of school librarians and to determine the factors that lead to greater knowledge and understanding of this topic. This study investigated the hypothesis that school librarians who have received formal copyright training have more knowledge of how to operate within copyright law in their workplace in order to be able to make recommendations that will increase understanding of copyright among school librarians.

In 2010, Carriere carried out a study of the impact of formal copyright training for special librarians. This study replicates her study, with some modifications, and, like Carriere’s, hopes to answer the following research questions:
I. Is the type or amount of formal training received by a librarian reflected in a higher score on an objective test of general U.S. copyright law?

II. What kind of barriers to copyright education and enforcement are perceived by school librarians?

III. Does institutional policy and enforcement have an impact in the level of copyright knowledge of an individual librarian?

Review of the Literature

According to the U.S. Constitution, the purpose of copyright law is to “encourage the creation and dissemination of original, creative works that benefit the public” (Russell, 2012, p. 2). However, Russell (2012) found that a majority of school librarians believe the purpose of copyright law is to ensure author and/or creator compensation. By accepting this restrictive rather than permissive view of copyright, school librarians are limiting valuable learning opportunities. K-12 schools, as non-profit educational institutions, benefit from numerous copyright exemptions as well as freedoms under the terms of fair use – lack of understanding of these exemptions and limitations to rights holders leads to overly strict institutional policies. On the other hand, disregard for legal and ethical use of creative works can lead to litigation against the school.

Furthermore, the AASL Standards for the 21st-Century Learner in Action (2009) emphasize ethical behavior in the use of information, one aspect of which is compliance with copyright law:

1.3.1 Respect copyright/intellectual property rights of creators and producers.

1.3.3 Follow ethical and legal guidelines in gathering and using information.
3.1.6 Use information and technology ethically and responsibly.

4.3.4 Practice safe and ethical behaviors in personal electronic communication and interaction.

Thus, school librarians are tasked with making sure that students understand both the importance and the mechanics of copyright compliance inside and outside of the educational environment.

Barron (2002) argues that the role of the school librarian is to lead the school in protecting the rights of the authors/creators of works while also ensuring that those who need resources are able to access them. By becoming informed and informing others, school librarians can embrace the tension between legal compliance and access to information, while avoiding becoming the “Copyright Police” of the school (Barron, 2002).

This is no small task for the school librarian; however, copyright is not thoroughly taught in schools and employers rarely require further training and professional development in copyright issues (Russell, 2012). Much training ends up being what librarians do for themselves. Most of the literature regarding copyright in K-12 schools, in both periodical and monograph form, serves as informational resources for school librarians; however, the level of copyright knowledge among school librarians has not been thoroughly examined.

The most relevant study regarding school librarians and copyright was done by Cox (1998) as a survey sent to teachers, principals, and school librarians at elementary schools in Missouri in order to measure both knowledge of fair use of each group as well
as perceptions of copyright knowledge among groups. Cox found that school librarians had the highest knowledge of fair use, while principals had the second highest.

Most of the studies of copyright knowledge and education focus on students and faculty in academic institutions. Smith et al. (2006) studied the copyright knowledge of faculty at two academic health science institutions. The researchers found that both sets of faculty responded similarly to a survey that measured their knowledge of copyright, despite the fact that one institution had implemented a copyright education program.

Olaka and Adkins (2012) studied the impact that education level had on academic librarians in Kenya. Using a survey to test copyright knowledge, the researchers found that there was a statistically significant difference between educational level and tested knowledge, however, the actual differences in tested knowledge were small and overall knowledge was low.

Of most relevance to this study is Carriere (2010), who studied the impact of formal training on the copyright knowledge of U.S. special librarians. Carriere used a survey, which included a six-question quiz, in order to measure the copyright knowledge of special librarians and to compare that knowledge to formal training, comfort level, and institutional enforcement. She found that participants who reported higher comfort levels of copyright knowledge were more likely to have had their MLS for longer, scored higher on the quiz, and reported a higher knowledge of their institution’s policy. However, Carriere was not able to generalize her results to make a statement about the overall effect of copyright training on copyright knowledge, in part because her population (special librarians) was broad and contained many differences. By replicating her study with certain modifications (limiting the population to school librarians in K-12 schools
and modifying the survey in order to reflect the population), this study examines the
connection between formal training and copyright knowledge.

**Methodology & Analytic Techniques**

This study used Qualtrics, a web-based survey tool in order to collect both
quantitative and qualitative data on the copyright knowledge of school librarians who
subscribe to relevant listservs. A recruitment email (See Appendix A) was posted to the
following four listservs: AASL (American Association of School Librarians) Forum, ISS
(Independent School Section) discussion list, LM-NET, and the WakeMedia listserv
(Wake County Public School System). There are definite advantages to using listservs to
distribute web-based surveys: wide distribution allows for a large sample population,
web-based surveys are cost-efficient and simple to return to the investigator, and web-
based surveys allow for relatively easy data coding and analysis. In order to protect the
privacy and anonymity of participants, questions did not collect personally identifying
data. Furthermore, IP addresses collected by Qualtrics were discarded and not included in
data analysis.

For the purposes of this study, the term *school librarian* refers to a person who is
working full-time or part-time in a school library or media center in a public or private
school that serves any grades from kindergarten to 12th in the United States. *Copyright*
refers to a “set of exclusive rights awarded to a copyright holder for an original and
creative work of authorship fixed in a tangible medium of expression” (Russell, 2012, p.
102). *Copyright law* refers to the Copyright Act of 1976 and any following amendments.
The survey (see Appendix B), which was built through Qualtrics software, is modeled after the survey used in Carriere’s (2010) study of special librarians. Part I asks for relevant demographic information, such as number of years since obtaining an MLS degree and level of school (elementary, middle, or high) the participant works in. Part II consists of a 6-question quiz to measure the copyright knowledge of the participant. Part III measures the participant’s self-reported comfort level with copyright law as well as knowledge of their institution’s copyright policy. Most importantly, Part III asks participants to report the types of copyright training they have received or participated in.

The survey includes two questions from Carriere’s survey of special librarians. The first question pertains to fair use, which is a very relevant topic for school librarians. This question asks the participant to identify the option that is not one of the four factors used to determine fair use. The correct answer (the answer that is not one of the four factors) is “the number of copies made.” The other four options (the four factors for determining fair use) are taken from Section 107 of the U.S. Copyright Act.

The second question taken from Carriere’s survey pertains to the nature of works that can be copyrighted and the nature of works that cannot. The statement is true. An important distinction is that “processes, systems, methods of operation, concepts, or principles” may be protected under patent or trademark law, though they cannot be copyrighted. This question was retained in the modified survey because it is a basic question of copyright knowledge.

The third question asks the participant to identify the purpose of copyright. The correct answer is “To encourage the creation and distribution of works to benefit the public.” According to the U.S. Constitution, art 1, Section 8, “The Congress shall have
the power... to promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited
Times to Authors and Inventors exclusive Right to their respective Writings and
Discoveries." This question and the possible answers were adapted from Russell (2012).

The fourth question addresses the question of copyright holders of lesson plans. The question gives the participant the scenario of Teacher A, who created a lesson plan for his/her class. The participant is asked to identify the copyright holder from three options: “Teacher A”, “The school where Teacher A works”, or “Neither, the lesson plan is in the public domain.” The correct answer is “The school where Teacher A works” because, in most cases, creating a lesson plan is considered work done as a condition for employment, which grants copyright to the employer (Russell, 2012). A school or school district can explicitly grant copyright ownership to teachers; however, this is not currently automatic.

The fifth question asks participants to identify a statement as true or false. The statement (false) asserts that copyright law takes precedence over contract law. In other words, the statement falsely asserts that the terms of use of a particular license do not affect user rights as stated by copyright law. In fact, users can limit or expand their rights as enumerated through the U.S. Copyright Act by signing a license agreement (Russell, 2012).

The last question asks participants to identify a summary of Section 110(1) of the U.S. Copyright Act as true or false. This statement (“Section 110(1) of the Copyright Act states that instructors or pupils in non-profit educational institutions may perform or display legally acquired works in the course of face-to-face teaching activities”) is true - regardless of a fair use determination, works used in the classroom are exempt from
copyright descriptions. It should be noted that this exemption does not apply to distribution of works.

The Director of Copyright and Digital Scholarship at a local university reviewed the quiz portion of the survey for accuracy and clarity.

Part III of the survey is modeled directly on Carriere’s survey in order to ascertain the type(s) of copyright training, comfort level with copyright information, and perceived barriers to copyright knowledge. Finally, the survey asks participants to rate their knowledge of their institution’s policy (if one exists) as well as their institution’s “strictness” in enforcing copyright. The key question in this section is the question about copyright training, since data gathered from the quiz and this question will determine the validity of the hypothesis. Finally, participants are given a chance to make relevant comments.

Data gathered from this survey were analyzed using JMP statistical discovery software. Chi square tests and t-test were used to generate measures of association. Open-ended questions were examined using content analysis.

**Results**

As of February 11, 2013, the survey had yielded 298 responses. 245 of those were usable for data analysis. Of the 54 survey responses that were not usable, some did not meet the population sample criteria (school librarian in the U.S.) and the rest did not have sufficient data to analyze. It is possible that this latter group began the survey, but decided not to complete it before answering the questions. Because the survey was distributed over four different listservs, it is difficult to estimate the response rate.
The highest number of respondents came from high school libraries (n=82, 33%), followed by elementary (n=75, 31%), middle school (n=37, 15%), and other (n=49, 20%), which consisted of librarians who work at multiple levels (e.g. K-12, middle and high, or elementary and middle). Only 2 respondents (1%) reported that they do not currently work in a school library, either because of retirement or loss of job. Figure 1 shows the distribution of respondents by workplace.

![Figure 1: Number of Respondents by Type of School Library](image)

Respondents reported a range of years since receiving an MLS Degree. Of the 244 who responded to this question, 203 currently have an MLS, 34 do not have an MLS, and 7 respondents are currently enrolled in an MLS program. Figure 2 shows the distribution of respondents with an MLS degree by years since receiving the degree. The range of years since completing an MLS degree is 1 to 40. Including those respondents who do not currently have an MLS degree, the mean value for years since completing the MLS degree is 10.44, the median value is 8.5, and the mode is 0 (do not have an MLS degree).
Of those who do currently have an MLS degree, the mean value for years since completing the MLS degree is 12.54, the median value is 11, and the mode is 2. Despite the wide range of years represented, 16.73% of respondents do not have an MLS degree, and 39% of respondents have had an MLS degree for less than 10 years.

**Figure 2**

Number of Respondents by Years Since Completing MLS

Quiz Results

Of the 245 survey respondents, 228 answered all six questions of the copyright quiz. Excluding the 17 who did not finish the quiz, the average score was 50.52% correct. Figure 3 demonstrates that the median and mode scores are 50% correct.
The questions that received the highest number of correct responses by far was question 6 regarding copyright in the classroom with a 90.61% correct response rate. The lowest scoring question was the question regarding the purpose of copyright law with a correct response rate of 25.31%. Question 5 regarding copyright law versus contract law received the lowest response rate, possibly because participants did not understand the question or did not know the answer. Table 1 shows the distribution of responses to each quiz question.

**Table 1: Distribution of Copyright Quiz Answers by Question**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Copyright Quiz Questions</th>
<th>Correct</th>
<th>Incorrect</th>
<th>Did Not Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Fair Use Factors</td>
<td>117 (47.76%)</td>
<td>128 (52.24%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Scope of Copyright</td>
<td>113 (46.13%)</td>
<td>126 (51.43%)</td>
<td>6 (2.44%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Purpose of Copyright</td>
<td>62 (25.31%)</td>
<td>183 (74.69%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Copyright of Lesson Plan</td>
<td>131 (53.47%)</td>
<td>103 (42.04%)</td>
<td>11 (4.49%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Copyright vs. Contract Law</td>
<td>71 (28.98%)</td>
<td>161 (65.71%)</td>
<td>13 (5.31%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Copyright in the Classroom</td>
<td>222 (90.61%)</td>
<td>12 (4.9%)</td>
<td>11 (4.49%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The final section of the survey asked participants questions regarding type(s) of copyright training, comfort level with copyright information, perceived barriers to copyright knowledge, and knowledge of their institution’s copyright policies. Six participants (2.45%) indicated in the “Other” option that they had no formal copyright training and 14 (5.71%) did not respond in any way to this question. The most common form of copyright training was courses in an MLS program (n=128, 52.25%) and the least common form was university courses outside of the MLS curriculum (n=19, 7.76%). In the “Other” category, 22 participants indicated activities that were coded as self-led research, such as reading books, articles, etc. on the topic. Other forms of training cited were “National Board Certification” (n=1), mentions of copyright in other courses not specifically dedicated to copyright (n=3), and membership in professional associations (n=5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Training</th>
<th>Have Received</th>
<th>Have Not Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Courses in an MLS program</td>
<td>128 (52.245%)</td>
<td>117 (47.755%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University courses outside of the MLS curriculum</td>
<td>19 (7.755%)</td>
<td>226 (92.245%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses through a library or professional organization</td>
<td>53 (21.633%)</td>
<td>192 (78.367%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online tutorials or webinars</td>
<td>73 (29.796%)</td>
<td>172 (70.204%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshops offered through a professional organization or workplace</td>
<td>99 (40.408%)</td>
<td>146 (59.592%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-the-job training administered by an expert</td>
<td>21 (8.571%)</td>
<td>224 (91.429%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Almost half of respondents (n=116, 47.35%) reported multiple types of formal training. Figure 4 illustrates the distribution of multiple types of formal training among participants.
When asked to report self-led research on copyright, 188 (76.63%) indicated that they had conducted their own research on the topic, 43 indicated that they had not, and 14 did not respond to the question. Of the 43 participants who said they had not conducted self-led research, 37 had some form of formal training.

The question about perceived barriers to copyright education revealed that the most prominent perceived barrier is that “library patrons do not care about copyright” (n=117, 47.76%). This barrier was followed by “lack of institutional emphasis” (n=93, 37.96%) and lastly “lack of resources” (n=75, 30.60%). Only 3 (1.22%) participants responded that copyright was not relevant to their position. Of the 36 who responded to the “Other” prompt, 2 responses fell under the category of library patrons not caring about copyright and 1 response fell under the category of a lack of resources. Three participants indicated that they perceived no barriers to copyright education. Lack of time to conduct research or attend training was cited 10 times (4.1%); the difficulty of keeping
up with changing technology and legislation was cited 5 times (2.1%); and four participants (1.6%) cited the difficulty of finding clear and absolute answers to their copyright questions as a barrier. Thirty-three participants did not respond to this question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3</th>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Not Present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of institutional emphasis</td>
<td>93 (37.96%)</td>
<td>152 (62.04%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library patrons do not care about copyright</td>
<td>117 (47.76%)</td>
<td>128 (52.25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of resources</td>
<td>75 (30.61%)</td>
<td>170 (69.39%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked about comfort level with copyright knowledge, 105 (42.86%) responded that yes, they are comfortable with their level, while 125 (51.02%) responded that they were not, and 15 did not respond.

The last three questions of the survey asked participants to relate information about copyright in their institution. For the question regarding how strictly the institution enforces copyright, the majority of respondents indicated that their institution is “not very strict” (n=96, 39.18%) or “somewhat strict” (n=95, 38.76%). Thirty-one (12.65%) responded that their institution is “strict;” only 6 (2.45%) responded that their institution is “very strict;” and 17 gave no response.

When asked whether they were aware of an institutional copyright policy, the majority of respondents (n=123, 50.3%) stated that yes, they were aware of a policy; 88 (35.92%) were not aware of a policy; 19 (7.76%) were sure that their institution does not have a policy; and 15 did not respond. On the last question, respondents were asked to rate their knowledge (1= least knowledgeable and 5= most knowledgeable) of their institution’s policy. Of the 203 participants who responded, the mean rating was 3.66. Of the 124 participants who responded that they were aware of an institutional policy, the mean rating was 4.19.
Measures of Association:

T-tests were used to measure statistical significance between variables. Tests were run using JMP statistical discovery software at the 0.05 value; results reflect probability values at a 95% confidence level. The first set of tests was run to compare the presence or absence of comfort with copyright knowledge and continuous variables: years since completing an MLS degree, the score on the copyright quiz, and rating of knowledge of institutional copyright policy. Statistical significance was found between comfort level and score on the quiz as well as comfort level and knowledge of policy. Significance was not found between comfort level and years since MLS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comfort Level vs.</th>
<th>Probability (P)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Score on Quiz</td>
<td>Probability &gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Policy</td>
<td>Probability &gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Likewise, tests were run comparing the presence or absence of formal training to years since completing an MLS degree, the score on the copyright quiz, and rating of knowledge of institutional copyright policy; however, these comparisons generated no statistical significance. The various forms of formal training were compared to the score on the copyright quiz, but no statistical significance was found.

The final t-tests were run comparing the presence or absence of self-led research to years since completing an MLS degree, the score on the copyright quiz, and rating of knowledge of institutional copyright policy. All three tests indicated statistical significance.
Table 5: Continuous Variables Significantly Associated with Self-Led Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Probability (P)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years Since MLS</td>
<td>Probability &gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score on Quiz</td>
<td>Probability &gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Policy</td>
<td>Probability &gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further data analysis was performed using Chi Square tests (at the 0.05 level) to measure associations between binary variables. First, the presence or absence of comfort with copyright knowledge was compared to each of the 6 quiz question responses and whether or not the participant had an MLS degree. Statistical significance was found between comfort level and the question regarding Fair Use Factors (probability >Chi Square 0.0027) as well as comfort level and the Purpose of Copyright Law question (probability >Chi Square 0.0219). The comparisons against the other 4 questions did not find statistical significance, nor did the comparison of comfort level with presence of an MLS degree.

Though the quiz question regarding the copyright of the lesson plan did not return an indication of statistical significance, participants who answered correctly were more likely to be comfortable with their level of copyright knowledge. For all questions, participants who answered incorrectly were more likely to be uncomfortable with their level of copyright knowledge.

Table 6: Responses to Quiz Questions Significantly Associated with Comfort Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comfort Level vs.</th>
<th>Probability (P)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fair Use Factors</td>
<td>Probability &gt;ChiSq 0.0027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of Copyright</td>
<td>Probability &gt;ChiSq 0.0219</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further tests were run to compare the presence or absence of formal training with each of the quiz question responses as well as presence of an MLS degree. Statistical
significance was found only with the quiz question regarding copyright in the classroom (probability \(>\text{Chi Square } 0.0291\)) and the presence/absence of an MLS degree (probability \(>\text{Chi Square } 0.0297\)). In every case, those who gave the correct answer were more likely to have received formal training.

**Table 7: Variables Significantly Associated with Formal Training**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal Training vs.</th>
<th>Probability (P)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Copyright in the Classroom</td>
<td>Probability &gt;ChiSq 0.0291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLS yes/no</td>
<td>Probability &gt;ChiSq 0.0297</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, tests were run to compare the presence or absence of self-led research with each of the answers to the copyright quiz in addition to the presence or absence of an MLS degree. Statistical significance was found between self-led research and the question concerning the purpose of copyright law (probability \(>\text{Chi Square } 0.0024\)) and the question concerning the copyright of the lesson plan (probability \(>\text{Chi Square } 0.0006\)). Though not necessarily statistically significant, in every case, those who gave the correct answer were more likely to have conducted self-led research.

**Table 8: Variables Significantly Associated with Self-Led Research**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Led Research vs.</th>
<th>Probability (P)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of Copyright</td>
<td>Probability &gt;ChiSq 0.0024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copyright of Lesson Plan</td>
<td>Probability &gt;ChiSq 0.0006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contrary to this study’s hypothesis, there was no statistically significant relationship between formal training and score on the quiz or comfort level with copyright law. In contrast, score on the quiz was significantly related to self-led copyright research, although comfort level was not. While the lack of statistical significance does not preclude a relationship among the variables, the difference between formal training
and self-led research is one that deserves further study. Self-led training may be more effective, since school librarians can search for information specific to the questions they have or situations they face at work (Carriere, 2010). Moreover, since the most common type of formal training reported by participants is courses in an MLS program, it is possible that information from those courses is not specific to the school library workplace.

Other Responses

In the last section of the survey, participants were asked to share any additional responses, including relevant personal experiences. The 78 responses to this question were analyzed using content analysis methods to identify common themes. Several common themes were identified, with some comments reflecting more than one theme. One of the most common themes, expressed by 17 respondents, was the difficulty school librarians had communicating about copyright to students, teachers, and administration. Participants stated, “Kids are bored by copyright information…” “It doesn't seem to matter the administration so it is difficult to promote to the rest of the building.” and “Lots of teachers just ignore it.”

Within this theme, librarians commented on the difficulty of giving clear copyright instructions (“It is hard to understand, grey, not black and white.”) as well as the difficulty of convincing patrons of the importance of knowledge of and compliance with copyright law:

Unfortunately, I have found that teachers and students do not feel that copyright laws are important enough to follow. They are hard to manage because there is no real consequence for not following them, other than an ethical dilemma, although I know it is possible to be sued for copyright infringement, this concept seems foreign to our students and staff.
Another common theme, expressed by 13 respondents, reflected the opinion that librarians do not need a detailed and comprehensive knowledge of copyright law because they have the skills and resources to find answers as needed. For example, one participant stated, “My knowledge is limited in areas that have not come up as issues at our school; however, I know where to turn (and have turned there before!) when I need guidance.” Likewise, another respondent said, “I am never comfortable with my knowledge, but I know where the resources are and I keep reading.”

Thirteen participants commented on their current practice, including what they do to educate the school community about copyright and keep track of copyright law and guidelines, and copyright issues they deal with on a regular basis. Several librarians have strategies for keeping up with and communicating copyright issues in the school: “I always had copyright books on my shelf at school to look up issues that faculty and students asked about. I always gave copyright information to students as part of their orientation to the library.” Likewise, another participant stated, “I have a brief Copyright Cheat sheet made for teachers on the most common ways copyright law is broken and the LEGAL way to do it or use the sources.”

On the other hand, some librarians expressed a more hands-off approach:

Once you are within the walls of the school, you just want your (overworked, stressed out) teachers to have access - throwing up walls to the use of information and images etc. rarely comes up because in most cases I am thinking (assuming) it is fair use. I would of course advise them if they were stepping hugely outside Fair Use but that rarely rarely happens in our school.

Other librarians cited specific examples of copyright issues they face:

One issue I struggle with is the use of book jacket covers in promotional materials for school libraries. I frequently use the artwork from book jackets in presentations, posters, blog postings, etc, and am pretty sure that it violates copyright, but don't know how else to promote a specific title.
A similar theme, expressed by 12 participants, emerged regarding the perceived role of librarians in the school regarding copyright issues. Many participants expressed that they did not want to be the “copyright police” in their school. Multiple participants expressed frustration with the “adversarial position” that such a role creates between the librarian and teachers. Other librarians expressed that though they do not feel like they are copyright “experts,” they are the one person in the school who cares about copyright issues and who is expected to understand them.

Nine respondents commented on the difficulty of keeping up with quickly changing digital tools and environments as well as quickly changing laws and policies. Commenting on the challenges of the digital environment, one participant shared:

I had a fairly good grasp of copyright--and it was easier to explain-- until the Internet came along. The digital shift has changed the whole picture, and both my colleagues (teachers, not librarians) and students are increasingly challenged by the rules of copyright.

Related comments expressed a need for different copyright laws to incorporate new technologies.

Eight participants commented on the types of training they have received and the effectiveness of their copyright training. Two participants commented on a lack of training available, while three others said that they did receive training during their MLS degree or other graduate work, but felt that they could always learn more: “Though this information was covered in at least one of my MLIS courses, I do not feel I have a "handle" on copyright law and fair use.” One issue that came up was that training becomes outdated quickly, and some participants felt that copyright was something they had to consistently keep up with in order to stay informed. Two participants stated that their district or school administration provided copyright training: one participant was
satisfied with the training provided, while the other participant commented on the inconsistency of the training. “Depending on the administration in the school and LEA, some years this training is more emphasized than others.”

Five participants cited instances of blatant disregard for copyright restrictions by students, teachers, or administration. One participant shared that an administrator asked for a photocopy of an entire book. Another participant stated, “Wholesale xeroxing [sic] of consumable workbooks and magazine articles is enormous in every school where I have served. No administrator ever looks at their own policies (or lack there of) to see if there is compliance with the law.”

Finally, a few participants gave some specific suggestions. Two respondents commented on the need for more training or required courses in teacher education programs, not just MLS programs. Likewise, one participant commented on the need to disseminate copyright information to school administration. These comments correspond with those expressing frustration that teachers, students, and administration do not support the school librarian in issues of copyright law. One respondent stated, “It would be wonderful to have a workshop at least every 2 or 3 years to review & revise copyright laws based on the changing digital & web worlds.” Another expressed a desire to have “a good place for teachers and librarians to go to get the latest changes to copyright law.”

Though the comments reflected a variety of attitudes and practices, a general picture emerges. Many of the school librarians surveyed want to know more about copyright law and effectively inform the school community, but feel frustrated by complications inherent in the laws and by a lack of support from colleagues. Their
suggestions for improvement included more training, easy-to-understand resources, and efforts to get teachers and administration interested in copyright issues.

Finally, four participants commented on the survey’s focus on the MLS degree as education for school librarianship, since they came to the field through a Masters of Education degree with a school library teaching license. Two other participants felt that the quiz questions were difficult to understand and did not reflect the real-life situations that librarians have to deal with: “the words in your questions are not what I would use myself or with my students so I’m not sure I understood or answered them correctly. You might get very different [sic] results for your survey using plain languagae [sic] and real life examples.”

Discussion

Limitations of Study

The first limitation of this study lies in the fact that the non-probability convenience sampling studied may not be a representative population. Web-based surveys distributed through listservs have that disadvantage, since the results can only be generalized to the subscribers (Babbie, 2004, p. 274). Similarly, the survey tool, itself, is subject to limitations. Answers to survey questions may not reflect the respondents’ actual thoughts or knowledge (Babbie, 2004, p. 275). Furthermore, because participants are permitted to skip questions or leave the survey at any time, the survey may not collect certain relevant data (Carriere, 2010).

Another limitation is the use of a 6-question quiz to measure copyright knowledge. Copyright issues in K-12 education are often complex and context-
dependent, therefore, the questions that best measure a school librarian’s working knowledge of copyright may not have clear-cut answers. Similarly, since two participants commented on the obscurity of the quiz questions, it is possible that other participants did not understand the question being asked.

A limitation of the data and data analysis was the inattention to graduate study other than the MLS degree, such as a Masters of Education. Other forms of graduate study may have contributed to participants’ knowledge of copyright issues and accounting for that background may have yielded different results.

**Comparison to Carriere’s Study**

It is possibly helpful to compare the results of this study to those on which the study was modeled. Though Carriere studied a different librarian population and though the survey used in this study was a modified version to reflect the new population, some comparisons can be drawn. Though 4 of the 6 quiz questions were different in the two different surveys, the average score was roughly the same (54.5% for Carriere; 50.52% in this study). The percent of respondents who correctly answered the quiz question about Fair Use factors was almost identical in each study (48%, Carriere; 47.76%, current study). The one other quiz question that remained the same in the current study received a slightly lower correct response rate, however (53%, Carriere; 46.13%, current study).

Carriere found that workshops at the workplace or from a professional organization were the most common type of formal training, whereas the same category came second among school librarian responses. Roughly the same percentage of surveyed school and special librarians reported conducting self-led research (78%, Carriere;
76.63%, current study). Likewise, just over half of each surveyed population reported that they were not comfortable with their level of copyright knowledge.

Furthermore, there are some interesting differences in measures of association. Carriere found statistical significance between comfort level and number of years since completing an MLS, while this study did not. This difference could be because of differing sampling criteria: Carriere did not include participants without an MLS, while this study did. Neither study found statistical significance between formal training and score on the quiz or rated knowledge of the institution’s copyright policy; however both studies found statistical significance between self-led research and score on the quiz as well as rated knowledge of the institution’s copyright policy. Finally, both studies found statistical significance between comfort level and correctly answering the quiz question about Fair Use Factors.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

Because almost 77% of respondents reported having conducted self-led research on copyright issues and 13 respondents specifically commented on their ability to and comfort with looking up answers to their questions as they arise, further study on the information seeking behaviors of school librarians for copyright questions should be conducted. This line of inquiry could generate valuable information on how to best create and disseminate resources for school librarians to use.

Given the limitation of a 6-question quiz to measure copyright knowledge, other research could determine a more reliable form of copyright knowledge assessment. Furthermore, similar studies could be conducted on different librarian populations in order to find differences and commonalities among different library workplaces. Finally,
it would be interesting to do a similar study on K-12 school and district administrators to examine their knowledge and perception of copyright law and institutional policies.

**Significance**

Though the study of the connection between training and copyright knowledge is not conclusive, it is clear from the research that many school librarians perceive gaps in their knowledge as well as gaps in training and professional support in their workplace.

This study directly benefits copyright educators who can gain insights on what works best when educating librarians. It will also benefit school librarians by giving them a way to measure their own knowledge of copyright and by giving them insight into how other school librarians feel about their knowledge of copyright. Furthermore, it will benefit school administrators (K-12) by demonstrating what training and support best prepares school librarians for teaching and modeling legal and ethical copyright practices to students and teachers.

**Summary**

Copyright for K-12 education is a complex topic with few clear boundaries, but school librarians are in a unique position in a school to be information leaders and to teach and model legal and ethical behavior. In addition, schools may have official policies or unofficial attitudes that either disregard legal behavior, thus putting the school at risk for litigation, or place limits on information behavior that go above and beyond what is permitted under the law, thus restricting the rights of students and teachers to access and share information as part of the educational process. As teachers and modelers, school librarians can help create a school atmosphere that respects the law, but
also takes advantage of the freedoms and exceptions given by the law. However, school librarians can only accomplish this when they have a knowledge and understanding of copyright law. One way to examine how school librarians gain this knowledge is to study the links between formal copyright training and level of copyright knowledge. Field research could give further insight into how school librarians deal with specific and relevant situations, but this study is a start to developing the best preparation and development tools possible.
Bibliography


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Appendix A: Recruitment Email

Dear Colleagues,

I am a second year Library Science student at UNC Chapel Hill, and I am conducting research on copyright education among school librarians. The purpose of this research study is to ascertain copyright knowledge of school librarians and to determine the factors that lead to greater knowledge and understanding of this topic. The survey (link below) should take approximately 5 minutes to complete. It is comprised of three short parts, which include demographic questions, a 6-question quiz on basic U.S. copyright law, and questions regarding participants' copyright education/training.

Follow this link to the Survey:

https://unc.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_9M4SuR6n9HSngij

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

https://unc.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_9M4SuR6n9HSngij

Participation in this survey is voluntary. You may withdraw from this study at any time or skip questions you do not wish to answer. If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of approximately 300 participants. You must be 18 or older to participate. There are no known risks associated with participation. You will not benefit personally from being in this research study, but you will be contributing to research that may benefit Library & Information Science professionals, educators, and future researchers. There are no costs to you, other than your time to participate.

No personally identifying information will be collected during the survey. You will not be offered or receive any special job-related consideration if you take part in this research. If you have any questions about the study, you can contact me (Margaret Granbery – principal investigator) or my advisor, Dr. Sandra Hughes-Hassell (contact information below). If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the University of North Carolina’s Institutional Review Board at 919-966-2112 or IRB_subjects@unc.edu. Please reference study #13-0095.

Follow this link to the Survey:

https://unc.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_9M4SuR6n9HSngij

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

https://unc.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_9M4SuR6n9HSngij

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Appendix B: Survey

The purpose of this research study is to ascertain copyright knowledge of school librarians and to determine the factors that lead to greater knowledge and understanding of this topic. The survey should take approximately 5 minutes to complete. It is comprised of three short parts, which include demographic questions, a 6-question quiz on basic U.S. copyright law, and questions regarding participants' copyright education/training.

Participation in this survey is voluntary. You may withdraw from this study at any time or skip questions you do not wish to answer. If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of approximately 300 participants. You must be 18 or older to participate. There are no known risks associated with participation. You will not benefit personally from being in this research study, but you will be contributing to research that may benefit Library & Information Science professionals, educators, and future researchers. There are no costs to you, other than your time to participate.

No personally identifying information will be collected during the survey. You will not be offered or receive any special job-related consideration if you take part in this research. If you have any questions about the study, you can contact me (Margaret Granbery – principal investigator) or my advisor, Dr. Sandra Hughes-Hassell (contact information below). If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the University of North Carolina's Institutional Review Board at 919-966-2112 or IRB_subjects@unc.edu. Please reference study #13-0095.

Thank you for your participation!

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I have read this page and consent to participate in the survey.

☐ Yes
☐ No

0% [progress bar] 100%
Part 1 of 3: Demographic Information

How many years has it been since your completion of an MLS degree?

- Number of years since completing MLS: (please round to whole number)
- I do not have an MLS degree and I am NOT currently enrolled in an MLS program.
- I do not have an MLS degree and I AM currently enrolled in an MLS program.

Is your place of work in the United States?

- Yes
- No

Where do you currently work as a school librarian?

- Elementary School
- Middle School
- High School
- Other
- I do not currently work in a school.

What is your current or most recent position title?


Part 2 of 3: Quiz of Basic U.S. Copyright Knowledge

Please select the best answer for the following six questions.

Which of the following in NOT one of the four factors that determines fair use?

- The purpose and character of the use, including whether such use is of a commercial nature or is for nonprofit educational purposes
- The nature of the copyrighted work
- The number of copies made
- The amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole
- The effect of the use on the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work

Processes, systems, methods of operation, concepts, or principles cannot be copyrighted regardless of the form in which they are described, explained, illustrated, or embodied in a work.

- True
- False

The purpose of copyright law is:

- To make sure that authors and creators are fairly compensated for their work.
- To give authors and creators property rights over intangible creations.
- To encourage the creation and distribution of works to benefit the public.
Teacher A writes a lesson plan to use with his/her class. In most cases, who holds the copyright for this lesson plan?

- Teacher A
- The school where Teacher A works
- Neither; the lesson plan is in the public domain

Copyright law takes precedence over contract law, i.e. the license for a subscription database cannot limit or expand user rights as stated by copyright law.

- True
- False

Section 110(1) of the Copyright Act states that instructors or pupils in non-profit educational institutions may perform or display legally acquired works in the course of face-to-face teaching activities.

- True
- False

Part 3 of 3: Copyright Education

Please check any of the forms of formal copyright training that you have received:

- Courses in an MLS program
- University courses outside of the MLS curriculum
- Courses through a library or professional organization
- Online tutorials or webinars
- Workshops offered through a professional organization or workplace
- On-the-job training administered by an expert
- Other (please specify)

Have you done any self-researched copyright education?

- Yes
- No
Which, if any, of the following do you find to be barriers to your copyright education:

- My institution/library places little or no emphasis on copyright
- Library patrons do not care about copyright restrictions
- Lack of resources (staff or budget) necessary to allow librarians to participate in copyright training/programs
- I do not feel that knowledge of copyright is relevant to my position
- Other (please specify)

Are you comfortable with your level of copyright knowledge?

- Yes
- No

Please share any additional responses you may have, including relevant personal experiences.
Please answer the following questions about copyright in your institution:

How strict is your library or institution in enforcing copyright?
- Not very strict
- Somewhat strict
- Strict
- Very strict

Are you aware of a written copyright policy for your institution?
- Yes
- No, I am not aware if my institution has a written policy.
- I am sure that my institution does not have a written copyright policy.

On a scale of 1 to 5, please rate your knowledge of your institution's copyright policies.
1 = not very knowledgeable  5 = very knowledgeable

Move the slider.