Copyright Renovation: Creating Informational Web Pages and a Consulting Service for Academic Users

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Abstract

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Originate, Create, Renovate, and Innovate: Leading Revolution in the Academic Library

Copyright Renovation: Creating Informational Web Pages and a Consulting Service for Academic Users

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Abstract

Over the last year K-State Libraries have gone through a major reorganization. A new department, Scholarly Communications & Publishing (SCP) was created and staffed in Spring 2010. In this paper we will discuss the department's planning and development of a new copyright website for the university including the review of numerous university copyright websites, focus groups that were held to get input from various constituencies, and the development and organization of the content. We will also discuss other components of our expanding copyright role including a consultation service and educational/outreach activities.

For many years, the Office of Academic Personnel at Kansas State University maintained a website called the Intellectual Property Center which provided information on copyright, patents, trademarks, K-State logos and more. It served the basic needs of faculty and students until digital technologies and the use of multimedia started to raise more questions about using copyrighted works in the classroom, in presentations and on websites. In addition, the site lacked information for academic authors concerned about protecting and managing their copyrights, and offered no interactive services for those on campus who needed it. In short, the website needed to be updated or replaced and a consulting service needed to be developed.

Over the last year K-State Libraries have undertaken a major reorganization. A new department, Scholarly Communications & Publishing (SCP) was created and staffed in the spring. Meetings involving the Dean of Libraries, Director of the Information Technology Assistance Center, the interim Vice Provost for Information Technology and SCP staff were held and it was determined that the Libraries were now well-positioned to take over the copyright web pages for the university. The approach was to be more comprehensive than what had been offered in the past offering both educational and interactive components. The director of the Office of Academic Personnel and the Provost readily agreed to this change.

Our team of three spent many initial meetings brainstorming about what a more comprehensive approach to copyright might entail. We decided that the four main areas we needed to focus on were:
- redesign of web pages with new content;
- addition of a consulting service where our users could reach us by web form, email or phone (not for legal advice, but to talk through some of the murky, vague areas of copyright);
- outreach and educational activities (plan copyright classes or workshops, work directly with classes and faculty, approach the Graduate Student Council); and
- provision of tools that our users could utilize to make their own determination about fair use, and alternatives (e.g. Creative Commons) when fair use isn't applicable or possible.

When creating web pages, design elements are extremely important to insure that a web site is user friendly and intuitive. Therefore, much time was initially spent consulting with the Web Services Librarian especially as we wire-framed the site. The team looked at several different approaches to presenting information about copyright to our users, such as offering information from the perspective of students versus faculty or from the perspective of managing copyrights versus wanting to use copyrighted materials. We selected the latter approach for our website, augmented with pages on copyright basics, copyright resources, and FAQs. A Fair Use Checklist is also available as a fillable PDF so users can make and retain fair use determinations.

Our search for new content began by looking at other university web pages. We liked components of several university copyright sites especially Columbia, Duke, Michigan, Cornell, and Baylor. With an issue as complex as copyright there is no reason to reinvent the wheel and it is helpful to incorporate content or aspects of a site when allowed with attribution. (We used FAQs created by Baylor University under a Creative Commons license). We also reviewed ALA copyright web pages and Copyright.gov.

As we developed the new site, we felt that it was critical to get input from our potential users about how they approach copyright questions and what information they need from a copyright web site. Focus Groups were arranged with librarians, faculty on the University Library Committee, and IT/instructional design staff (iTAC). The focus groups concentrated on four questions central to the process of redesigning the website:
- What kind of copyright questions do you get from faculty or students?
- How do you respond to questions that you get now?
- Do you use websites to get copyright information?
- What information would you like to see on a website?

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The responses were very similar between the two groups (librarians and iTAC) that work directly with patrons and often get copyright questions. Examples of copyright questions received included "How much video can I use for a clip in class and on K-State Online (K-State's course management software)?", "Can I scan an entire ILL book?", "Can I show a video at a club meeting?", "What constitutes Fair Use?", and "What is the TEACH Act?" Web sites these groups often used for copyright assistance included some our team was using, as well as the Music Library Association Copyright pages, the YouTube copyright site, Stanford University, and the Creative Commons site. Suggestions for what information the groups would like to see on a website included specific "real life" examples, FAQs, videos or tutorials explaining copyright, and a blog to share information and keep updated on copyright news. Another suggestion was that we make a "decision tree" for copyright decisions. One of the revelations of these focus groups is that often the students and/or faculty members who have questions are not so much looking for advice as they are looking for someone to make the decision on copyright or to handle the permission request process for them.

The focus group with the University Library Committee offered a different perspective from the librarian and iTAC focus groups in that the faculty interviewed were those who often themselves had copyright questions. As such, the questions asked in the focus group were rewritten to acknowledge their different outlook on the issue. Some believed that any material could be put in K-State Online since it is an access-controlled class management system. Several mentioned that they would like to see an institutional resource on campus to help with copyright issues and permissions. Other responses were similar to those received in the other focus groups, with copyright questions ranging from what can be used in the classroom to how to obtain copyright permissions.

The assortment of information gleaned from the three focus groups was extremely useful as we began planning the new copyright website, and many suggestions have been incorporated or will be in future updates. A preliminary version of the website is now available, however it is considered a living document and plans are already in place for edits and changes.

In addition to the website, a consultation service was put into place with the transfer of copyright responsibilities to the SCP department. The consultation service and copyright education piece are in many ways the main focus of the new responsibilities. A web form was created so that users can submit copyright questions. A disclaimer on the form very clearly states that we do not offer legal advice. In addition, an alias copyright email address was created (copyright@k-state.edu) that goes to each team member. The team has received, on average, one to two copyright questions per week since the soft rollout of the new website. We are tracking the number and types of questions we receive as well as, our responses. We intend to publicize this service much more in the coming months with help from our liaison librarians and the Office of Communications and Marketing. We also intend to further our copyright knowledge by registering for classes and workshops such as those offered by the University of Maryland Center for Intellectual Property.

Overall, the challenge of redesigning the copyright website and starting a consulting service for the university has been, at times, overwhelming. However, it is a service that faculty and staff on campus repeatedly mention as being necessary and critical to their work. Our team feels that we are definitely filling a need and look forward to expanding on the work that has been done.

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