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Copyright for Schools: A Practical Guide, 4th ed. (review)

Copyright for Schools: A Practical Guide, 4th ed.
By Carol Simpson
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Review

Schools today face the difficulty of complying with increasingly complicated, yet often vague, copyright regulations on multiple material formats and uses. *Copyright for Schools* provides a detailed, systematic overview of concepts, regulations, questions, and practices that affect School Library Media Specialists (SLMS) as they perform their duties. While laying out both restrictions and exceptions, Simpson reminds readers that copyright is not only a legal matter but an ethical one of intellectual property rights, with SLMS

serving as models for both teachers and students.

The first three chapters present a history and functional concept guide to copyright law, the public domain, and fair use, followed by seven chapters detailing the use of specific materials and technologies such as print, audiovisual, music, multimedia, the internet, and computer software. The final six chapters then deal specifically with policies, permissions, exceptions, and management aspects, ending with a number of appendices, including example forms and policies, helpful legal references, further copyright resources links, and a reproducible questions and answers brochure. Most of the chapters themselves are structured using pertinent questions: What typical activities are covered? What rights are affected? What guidelines affect X? A number of helpful side-boxes give specific examples through common topic-related questions and answers, and useful "Resources for understanding" sections provide summaries, mini term glossaries, or resource access/contact information.

Simpson does a nice job of arranging and dividing the many convoluted aspects of copyright into fairly straightforward, comprehensible sections with clear presentation of guidelines. Considering her specific SLMS (and future SLMS) audience, Simpson's tone and detail level are consistent with the goal of providing the

reader with necessary, real-world practitioner's tips and tools, rather than lengthy passages of legal gobbledeygook. The sample forms in the chapters and appendices will also help as references for putting policies into practice. New SLMS will find the text particularly eye-opening to an important area of responsibility they will face, with plenty of advice on working with staff and administrators to keep themselves and their school out of costly legal battles.

The chief value of *Copyright for Schools*, however, will be as one of the continually useful texts that makeup a SLMS' personal reference collection, to be consulted as copyright issues arise. Unfortunately, the 11 page index is not as useful for quick reference of specific details as one would like. In many instances, it is not even clear why a specific page is referenced for that topic, resulting in time wasted on unnecessary reading and chapter-scanning to find the exact information. Nor are the specific page, percentage, and time limits given throughout the various chapters ever compiled in summary chart or table for easy reference and recall.

Also be warned that Simpson advises from a very strong better-safe-than-sorry standpoint, which can lead to such absurdly impractical measures as asking permission for the "public performance or display" of websites/"Web documents" shown/used in classes. Keeping this in mind, most readers will still be able to benefit from the guidance provided in *Copyright for Schools* while using their own judgment on how closely to follow and/or institute the multitude of recommended practices and policies. New SLMS especially should try to read it without becoming overwhelmed and alarmed—focus on the most important, high-risk issues, and differentiate between what aspects you can establish right off the bat on your end and what ultimately come down to larger administration tasks that you should not try to take on during your first few years.

Author's Bio

Laura M Reed is an MLS student with a SLMS concentration at the University at Buffalo, and Treasurer for the Department of Library and Information Studies Graduate Student Association. Her interests include school-age internet use behaviors and related information literacy task performance, user education, changes in information culture, and the law as it affects libraries.