Libraries Are... Champions for Academic Freedom and Balanced Copyright

The Constitutional purpose of copyright and the mission of higher education are the same: to “promote the Progress of Science and the useful Arts.”

This mission requires balance between the interests of copyright holders and the interests of scholars, faculty, and students.

Research libraries and their partners on campus are champions of that balance.

Commercial actors are increasingly claiming to have the interests of the academy at heart, and offering licensing products and web-based “education” that purport to assist scholars, faculty, and librarians in addressing copyright issues. The message is: “Copyright means every use must be paid for. For a fee, we can provide easy access to a safe selection of licensed content.” This unbalanced view is not surprising; commercial actors exist to maximize their profits, and do not share the core mission of the academy.

Three Academic Freedoms

The Freedom to Research using the widest possible variety of tools and sources, from novels to scholarly journals to data sets, free from unnecessary constraints.

The Freedom to Teach and Learn without unreasonable limits on the use of third-party material as the subject of in-class and out-of-class study and discussion.

The Freedom to Publish the results of academic research, including the ability to quote from and comment upon existing works in appropriate ways.

Freedom to Research is at Stake

UNBALANCED COPYRIGHT COULD THREATEN ACADEMIC FREEDOM

BECAUSE IT WOULD:

- hobble works with contractual restrictions, digital locks, expiring access, and more.
- make knowledge harder to find, as many works quickly go out of print and become commercially unavailable.
- block preservation in more durable formats of film, sound recordings, and books that could disappear
- perpetuate unsustainable publishing models that place journal articles and other academic resources out of reach for some institutions and the general public
- threaten the development of powerful new search tools and the development of research techniques based on text mining.

NEW BOOKS FROM AMAZON WAREHOUSE BY DECADE

BUT RESEARCH LIBRARIES HELP RESTORE THE BALANCE

BECAUSE THEY:

- insist on the broadest possible rights for all library users, and then push back against efforts to place un-reasonable locks on vital resources
- have legal privileges, in addition to broad fair use rights, to preserve items and ensure that these works are continuously available.
- are at the forefront of the movement for open access, including public access to publicly-funded research and open educational resources
- create vital new tools, and join with the full community to defend those tools in court.

Ways To Maintain A Balanced Copyright Ecosystem

1. Make the library a full partner in research, teaching, and publishing. Take advantage of the library and its copyright-savvy staff.

2. Be wary of commercial entities offering to replace the library’s services. Whether it’s copyright “education” or “on demand” document delivery, commercial actors are not acting with the core academic mission as a primary objective.

3. Seek out copyright information from neutral sources.

4. Help improve copyright. Libraries are on the front lines of the copyright debates in Washington, DC, in the US courts, and around the world. Follow these issues and call your representatives in Congress when you see that copyright is becoming unbalanced and academic freedom is at stake.