

Copyright Management Information in Electronic Forms: User Compliance and Modes of Delivery

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Abstract

Studies have indicated that various groups of intellectual property users are unaware of many aspects of copyright law and often do not understand that it applies to works in electronic forms, or are unconcerned with copyright restrictions. It is hypothesized that users would be more likely to conform to copyright law if a process could be developed that make it easier to access copyright management information on the Internet and in other electronic media. Before designing such a mechanism, the following research questions need to be addressed: 1) To what extent are users clear or concerned with obeying copyright law in the use of materials available in electronic formats? 2) Will users be more willing to comply with copyright law if copyright information is incorporated within electronic forms in a format that makes it easier to understand or easier to locate? 3) What amount of time are users willing to devote to locating copyright management information? and 4) What methods would users prefer to utilize in locating copyright management information? To address these questions a research instrument was developed and tested in a pilot study in which sixty students from two large higher public education institutions participated, 30 from New York City and 30 from Wisconsin. The instrument ascertained each participant's experience with electronic forms, the frequency with which they downloaded copyright materials, their level of concern regarding compliance with copyright law and their willingness to comply with copyright law if copyright management information was more effectively available. They were also asked to rank possible methods for locating copyright management information. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed to analyze the data. The results suggest that the participants would be more willing to comply with copyright law if copyright management information was easier to locate or to understand. The results also show that few users are willing to devote more than ten minutes to locating copyright management information. The study points to a need for an easy and rapid method to locate copyright management information within electronic forms and for increased user education about copyright law.

INTRODUCTION

This paper reports the results of a pilot study conducted to determine the level of information and concern that end users possess about copyright in electronic resources and to ascertain what methods end users would prefer to use to obtain copyright management information in electronic resources. This study was prompted by the generally recognized need to develop a standard methodology to easily identify specific electronic works, or portions or versions of the work, and the owner of the intellectual property elements within the work (Heery, 1996; Lyons, 1998). Despite the agreement on a need for a standard system there is still much debate regarding which methodology and technology to utilize (Heery, 1996). Proposed schemes for supplying this information range from the metadata tags of Digital Object Identifiers, the Dublin Core and USMARC (Heery, 1996) to proposals for watermarking and digital envelopes (Lyons, 1998). There is also debate as to whether rights management information and permissions should be administered by the rights owners or via a central source (Morris, 1999). While some electronic rights management methods would demand user authentication and/or licensing before the desired intellectual property object can be accessed, others would make copyright management information available to users and hope for voluntary compliance with copyright laws (Bide & Hing, 1998). The latter method more closely parallels the methodology used in print and would satisfy the concerns of information intermediaries who want free permissions and fair use to be a viable right in an electronic context (ALA, 1997; Bide, 1998). But to what extent can user satisfaction and voluntary compliance be expected? The ease of compliance and a wide spread recognition of the need for compliance has been found to be a major factor in respect to many laws, and it has been recommended that policies regarding the use of intellectual property in electronic resources utilize simple methodologies (Shattuck, 1985)

A number of studies have been conducted to ascertain the attitudes of publishers and information intermediaries toward electronic rights management systems but the desires of end users have been assumed (Barwick & Cornish, 1993; Bide, 1998). Some studies, like Morley's, assume that the views of librarians represent the views of end users. However it is possible that librarians, who are trained in the application of copyright law and understand institutional liability, would be more likely to comply with intellectual property laws than end users, yet librarians are often at odds with publishers on how copyright permissions should be handled in electronic forms (Muri, 1998). The major difference in opinion between rights owners and librarians on intellectual property can perhaps best be grasped in the statement by a clearance house official who said that information professionals tend to believe "that information should always be free at the point of use – a heinous iniquity reflecting values knocked into them at library school" and that role of a collecting agency "is to maximize the money value of information in support of rights holders" (Sylge, 1996). Given this spread of opinion between informed participants, the increasingly commercial nature of the Internet (Evans, 1997), and the increased civil and criminal penalties for copyright infringement in electronic forms (No Electronic Piracy Act of 1997), it seems important that whatever rights methodology is ultimately adopted that it be one that is widely supported and understood by end users.

Studies conducted for the Office of Technology Assessment in 1984 in reference to the copying of software indicated that the general public is largely ignorant of copyright laws and little concerned with compliance (Policy Planning Group Yankelovich, Skelly & White, 1984A, 1984B). Indeed a survey by the Copyright Licensing Agency (the U.K. equivalent of the Copyright Clearance Center) revealed that it is probable that most lawyers are not familiar with fair dealing, the U.K. equivalent of fair use (Bramwell, 1997). The need for education regarding copyright is assumed in the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) which requires internet service providers (ISPs) to provide educational resources regarding copyright to their subscribers as a condition for receiving an exemption from contributory infringement to copyright violation by subscribers. No research could be located that attempted to determine if the wide spread use of electronic resources and the world wide web has changed either the knowledge level or attitudes of end users since the 1984 studies or what method of delivery copyright management information would be preferred by end users.

This pilot study was undertaken to discover the attitudes of college students in information related courses toward copyright in electronic resources and to test the instrument used to collect the data in regard to four research questions: 1) To what extent are users clear or concerned with obeying copyright law in the use of materials available in electronic formats? 2) Will users be more willing to comply with copyright law if copyright information is incorporated within electronic forms in a format that makes it easier to understand or easier to locate? 3) What amount of time are users willing to devote to locating copyright management information? and 4) What methods would users prefer to utilize in locating copyright management information? It was hypothesized that users would be more likely to conform to copyright law if a process could be developed that makes it easier to access copyright management information in electronic forms.

METHODOLOGY

To address the questions posed above, a research instrument was developed and administered to 60 students from two large higher public education institutions, 30 from New York City and 30 from Wisconsin. The research instrument utilized Likert scales and open ended questions. The distribution of the participants in terms of age was: 15% under 21; 40% 21-30; 28.3% 31-40; 11.7% 41-50, and 3.3% over 50. Sixty-three percent of the subjects were female. The percentage of participants who had Ph.D., masters, bachelors and high school degrees were 1.6%, 16.7%, 53.3% and 26.7% respectively. All participants were active users of electronic materials.

The instrument ascertained each participant's experience with electronic materials, the frequency with which they used copyright materials, their level of concern regarding compliance with copyright law and their willingness to comply with copyright law if copyright management information was easy to understand or to locate. Participants were asked to specify the maximum time they would be willing to spend to locate copyright information for a single source and to rank possible methods for locating copyright management information. Participants were also instructed to elaborate upon the reasons of their preferences. Descriptive analysis was used to summarize the following issues:

- clarity about or concern with obeying copyright law
- knowledge of copyright law

- perception of ease of locating copyright management information
- perception of ease of understanding copyright management information
- maximum amount of time acceptable to locate copyright information
- ranked preferences for the location of copyright management information

Correlation (Pearson r) was employed to analyze the following relationships:

- users' demographic characteristics and their clarity about, knowledge of, and concern with copyright law
- self-rated computer skill by clarity, knowledge and concern
- frequency of use of certain applications by clarity, knowledge and concern
- frequency of specific Internet practices by clarity, knowledge, and concern
- self-rated computer skills correlated with perception of ease of locating and understanding copyright management information
- intercorrelations for clarity, knowledge and concern

Significance level used for reference was $p < .05$. Qualitative methods were applied to categorize participants' stated reasons for their preferences regarding copyright information location.

RESULTS

The results are presented in four sections corresponding to the four research questions: 1) To what extent are users clear or concerned with obeying copyright law in the use of materials available in electronic formats? 2) Will users be more willing to comply with copyright law if copyright information is incorporated within electronic forms in a format that makes it easier to understand or easier to locate? 3) What amount of time are users willing to devote to locating copyright management information? and 4) What methods would users prefer to utilize in locating copyright management information?

Users' Clarity, Knowledge and Concern

To answer question 1, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they thought they were clear about how copyright law applies to material on the Internet and in other electronic resources (1= not at all, 3= some and 5 = extremely). They were also instructed to indicate their level of concern with copyright when they made copies of materials from the Internet or other electronic resources (1= never, 3= sometimes and 5= always) and to indicate the uses to which they thought copyright law applied: for-profit use, any use involving payment, all uses (except those by students and educators), all uses (except those by students, educators and libraries), and all uses.

Table 1 presents users' clarity about and concern with copyright law in the use of materials in electronic formats. More than half of the participants (53%) stated they were not clear about copyright law while only 13% of the participants stated they were more than somewhat concerned about copyright law in regard to electronic materials. More than half of participants (53%) expressed little concern for copyright law. Only 17% of the participants were more than somewhat concerned with the copyright law in the use of electronic resources. These results indicate that the majority of the respondents were not clear about or concerned with copyright law in the use of materials in electronic formats.

Table 1. Clarity about or Concern With Obeying Copyright Law

	Not at all 1	2	Somewhat 3	4	Extremely 5
Clear about Copyright Law	25% 15	28% 17	33% 20	10% 6	3% 2
Concerned with Copyright Law	23% 14	30% 18	28% 17	10% 6	7% 4

The participants' replies to the question about their knowledge of copyright law (not shown in the table) reveal that 37% of the participants did not know that copyright law applies to all uses.

To investigate whether the level of clarity about, knowledge of, and concern with copyright law in reference to electronic forms was related to age or gender or educational level, these variables were correlated and the results are presented in Table 2. No significant relationship was found between any of these demographic factors and users' clarity about, knowledge of, and concern with copyright law.

Table 2. The Relationships between Users' Demographic Characteristics and Their Clarity About, Knowledge of, and Concern with Copyright Law

	Clear	Knowledge	Concerned
Age	-0.090 p=.496	0.183 p=.163	-0.008 p=.954
Gender	0.188 p=.150	0.080 p=.543	0.085 p=.519
Highest Degree Obtained	-0.070 p=.594	0.184 p=.159	0.075 p=.570

Having found that users' demographic characteristics are not correlated to their clarity about, knowledge of, and concern with the copyright law in reference to electronic materials, the study then turned to exploring whether users' computer skills, their experience on the web and their uses of electronic sources are related to their clarity about, knowledge of, and concern with copyright law in accessing electronic information.

Table 3 presents the correlation of self-rated computer skills by clarity about, knowledge of, and concern with copyright law. The results show that there is a strong statistically significant relationship between users' self-rating of their computer skills and their self-rating as to their clarity about copyright law ($r=0.331$, $p=0.01$); but no significant relationship was found between users' self-rated computer skills and their concern with copyright law or actual knowledge of copyright law. In other words, those who rated themselves as having higher computer skill also rate themselves as being more clear about copyright law, while those who rated themselves as having lower computer skill also rated themselves as being less clear about copyright law. At the same time, self-rated computer skills were found not to be related to users' knowledge of, and concern with copyright law.

Table 3. Self-Rating Computer Skill by Clarity, Knowledge and Concern

	Clear	Knowledge	Concerned
SELF-RATING	0.331 p=.010	0.040 p=.762	-0.001 p=.994

Table 4 presents the correlation of the frequency of use of certain applications with clarity, knowledge and concern. Table 5 presents the correlation of frequency of specific Internet practices with clarity, knowledge and concern. The results show no significant relationship between users' frequency of use of certain applications or frequency of specific Internet practices and users' clarity about, knowledge of, and concern with copyright law. The results imply that more use does not mean more clarity, or more knowledge or more concern with copyright law.

Table 4. Frequency of Use of Certain Applications by Clarity, Knowledge and Concern

	Clear	Knowledge	Concerned
Electronic Discussion Group	-0.022 p=.865	0.129 p=.328	0.048 p=.715
Email	0.048 p=.718	0.066 p=.617	-0.135 p=.302
Browser	0.202 p=.122	0.050 p=.705	0.202 p=.122
Web Design	0.155 p=.236	0.185 p=.157	0.103 p=.435

Table 5. Frequency of Specific Internet Practices by Clarity, Concern and Knowledge

	Clear	Knowledge	Concerned
Download Web graphics	0.152 p=.247	-0.045 p=.735	-0.025 p=.850
Download and print Web pages	0.188 p=.150	-0.071 p=.588	-0.073 p=.581
Make Multiple Copies	0.112 p=.395	-0.167 p=.201	-0.143 p=.277
Send Electronic Copy of Article to Friends or Discussion Group	0.039 p=.770	0.134 p=.309	-0.042 p=.749

Relationships Between Ease of Location and Understanding of Copyright Management Information and Concern

The results indicate that the participants were neither clear about nor concerned with copyright law when using electronic materials. In order to investigate possible reasons affecting their concern with copyright law, participants were first asked to rate the extent to which copyright statements provided on the Internet and in other electronic resources were easy to understand and easy to locate (1= not at all, 3= some and 5 = extremely). To further judge the impact of copyright statements being easy to understand or to locate on users compliance with copyright law, participants were then instructed to indicate to what extent they would be more concerned with being in accord with copyright law if copyright information in electronic resources was easier to understand or to locate (1= not at all, 3= some and 5 = extremely).

Table 6 presents users views on whether copyright management information in electronic forms is currently easy to understand or to locate. The results show that very few people thought that copyright information in electronic resources is more than somewhat easy to understand (15%) or to locate (13%), while almost half of the participants thought that copyright information in electronic resources is less than somewhat easy to understand (40%) or to locate (50%). Also presented in Table 6 is the extent to which users would be more concerned about copyright law if copyright information was easier to understand or to locate. The results provides mild support for the hypothesis that many people would be substantially more concerned with copyright law when using electronic information if it was easier to understand (42%) or to locate (33%).

Table 6. Perception of Understanding, Ease of Location and Concern about Copyright

	Not at all 1	2	Somewhat 3	4	Extremely 5
Easy to Understand	20% 12	20% 16	31% 19	10% 6	5% 3
Easy to Locate	20% 12	30% 18	30% 18	8% 5	5% 3
More Concerned if Easier to Understand	17% 10	7% 4	32% 19	30% 18	12% 7
More Concerned if Easier to Locate	17% 10	8% 5	37% 22	20% 12	13% 8

Another area investigated was the relationship between users' self-rating as a computer user, their use of a world wide web browser and their characterization of copyright information as easy to understand or to locate in electronic forms. As shown in table 7, there is a moderately strong statistically significant **inverse** relationship between users' self-rating as to computer skills and their finding copyright management information easy to understand ($r=-0.309$, $p=0.016$) or easy to locate ($r=-0.253$, $p=0.05$). There is no significant relationship between browser use and finding copyright management information easy to understand or to locate. In other words, the higher the users' self-rating of their computer skills, the more difficult they thought it was to understand or to locate copyright information in electronic resources. At the same time, the frequency of browser use is not related to users' characterization of copyright information as either easy to understand or to locate in electronic resources.

Table 7. Computer Skills Correlated with Perception of Ease of Location and Understanding

	Easy to Understand	Easy to Locate
SELF-RATING	-0.309 $p=.016$	-0.253 $p=.051$
Browser Use	-0.206 $p=.114$	-0.188 $p=.151$

It seems users' concern with copyright law is also highly related to their clarity about and knowledge of copyright law. As shown in table 8, there is strong statistically significant relationship between users' concern with copyright law and their self-rated clarity of copyright law ($r=0.419$, $p=0.001$). Also there is strong statistically significant relationship between users' concern with copyright law and their knowledge of copyright law ($r=0.353$, $p=0.006$). In other words, the users who state they are clearer about copyright law, or who demonstrated more knowledge of copyright law, are also more concerned with copyright law.

Table 8. Intercorrelations for Clarity, Concern and Knowledge

	Clear	Concerned	Knowledge
Clear	1.00 $p=---$		
Concerned	0.419 $p=.001$	1.00 $p=---$	
Knowledge	0.241 $p=.063$	0.353 $p=.006$	1.00 $p=---$

Maximum Acceptable Time to Locate Copyright Information

Table 9 presents the maximum acceptable time participants were willing to spend to locate copyright information in an electronic resource. It seems that participants do not wish to devote much time to locating copyright information. Half of the participants (50%) would only be willing to spend 3 minutes maximum locating copyright information, and more than eighty percent of the participants (86%) would be willing to devote no more than 10 minutes to locate copyright information.

Table 9. Maximum Acceptable Time to Locate Copyright Information

Maximum Acceptable Time to Locate Copyright	3 min 1	5 min 2	10 min 3	15 min 4	20 min 5	25 min 6	30 min 7	30+ min 8
%	50%	28%	8%	2%	2%	0%	2%	8%
No.	30	17	5	1	1	0	1	5

Methods Best Facilitating the Use of Copyright Information

In order to effectively help users find copyright information, we need to know their preferences as to where copyright management information should be located in electronic forms. For this question, participants were asked to rank each of the following methods of providing copyright information in the order in which they would prefer to be able to access such information:

- _____ A clear statement be provided on the **first page** of all electronic resources
- _____ Separate information be provided for **each element** of an electronic resource on the **same page** as that element
- _____ Separate information be provided for **each element** of an electronic resource **via a link** to a copyright information page
- _____ All copyright information would be available by a **central database** that could be accessed via the world wide web
- _____ Other: (please specify by what other method you would like to access copyright information)

Table 10 presents ranked preferences for copyright statement locations. Participants' first preferences for methods of access to copyright management information are: first page (57%), separate information for each element via link (20%), central database (10%), separate information for each element on same page as the element (5%), and other options (3%). After combining users' first and second preferences, the favored means to access copyright information are: first page (72%), separate information for each element via link (46%), separate information for each element on same page as the element (40%), central database (25%) and other options (3%).

Those participants who ranked in first place "having copyright information provided on the first page" stated the following reasons for their choice: 1) It would make them aware of the copyright information, 2) Copyright information would be easy to find, 3) It would avoid confusion, and 4) It would save time. Participants who chose "separate information for each element via a link" indicated that this was their preference because this method is easy to access and not intrusive. Participants who liked the idea of a "central database" thought it would make the process easier, would not be intrusive, that the information could be organized more effectively, and it would not require familiarity with the web. Immediate access was the main reason that people preferred the "separate information for each element on same page as the element". To sum up, easy access and non-intrusiveness are the basic requirements for the provision of copyright management information that were voiced by the participants. The authors plan further studies to examine users' preference on the integration or combination of two or more methods to facilitate effective location of copyright management information.

Table 10. Ranked Preferences for Copyright Information Locations

Preference Rankings	1st Pref	2nd Pref	3rd Pref	4th Pref	5th Pref	Missing Data
First Page	57% 34	15% 9	10% 6	8% 5	5% 3	5% 3
Separate Info for Each Element on Same Page as the Element	5% 3	35% 21	32% 19	23% 14	0% 0	5% 3
Separate Info for Each Element Via Link	20% 12	26% 16	30% 18	10% 10	1.7% 1	5% 3
Central Database	10% 6	15% 9	18% 11	48% 29	2% 1	7% 4
Other (optional)	3% 2	0% 0	3% 2	0% 0	7% 4	87% 52

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The results demonstrate that the participants were not particularly concerned with obeying copyright law in using electronic resources, and considered copyright management information both hard to understand and to locate. This was true among users at all levels of self-rated expertise, and especially so among users who stated that they had higher expertise and made more frequent use of web browsers. A large percentage of users also indicated that they would be more concerned with obeying copyright law when using electronic resources if the copyright management information were easier to locate or understand. It is interesting to note that those who rated themselves as higher level computer users also rated themselves as having a higher level of clarity in regard to copyright law. However, in the question addressing actual knowledge, there was no significant correlation of self-rated computer expertise, self-rated clarity and actual knowledge of the law.

Those who reported that they had a higher level of clarity or exhibited greater knowledge were found to be significantly more concerned with obeying copyright law. However, only 37% of the participants were aware that copyright law applies to all uses of materials. These results seem to indicate that education about the scope of copyright law is necessary, preferably in an easier to understand manner. What this study does not determine is whether concern with obeying copyright law prompted clarity and knowledge, or whether knowledge prompted concern.

Though the participants stated that they would be more concerned with obeying copyright law if copyright management information was easier to understand or easier to locate, they also expressed an unwillingness to devote much time to the process. Copyright management information available in less than 10 minutes was the preference of 80% of the participants. This clearly indicates that whatever method of providing copyright management information in electronic resources becomes the standard it must provide information that is easy to locate and understand, and provide it rapidly.

The clearly preferred method of accessing copyright management information was to have the information provided on the first page of the resource, with the second most preferred method to have separate information for each element via link. Since this study did not differentiate between types of electronic resources, such as textual web pages and structured databases, it is not possible to know what resources the participants considered when providing their responses. The lack of familiarity of over one-third of the participants with the scope of copyright law tends to indicate that the participants were probably not aware that various elements within a resource may have different levels of copyright protection and that there maybe different copyright owners for different elements which might make a first page statement long, complicated and impractical. What is clear is that these end users are not

interested in using copyright clearance agencies or going out of the information source for copyright management information. To most end users, the basic requirements for access to copyright management information are easy access and non-intrusiveness. The large number of users who indicated that they wanted the information on the first page might also point to a desire for a standardized location. However this study did not ask participants what they thought constituted the first page in a resource. Further study that asks copyright management information provision preferences in regard to specific types of references appears necessary. It is quite possible that an integration of two or more methods might provide an approach which will satisfy users' needs.

The results of this pilot study point to a need for more research into end user attitudes before a standardized approach is adopted toward providing copyright management information in electronic resources. The authors intend to conduct similar studies with end-users in business and non-profit settings, as well as among home users. While some studies of attitudes of librarians have already been conducted, further studies that parallel those of other users groups might also prove useful and will be undertaken. Future studies will include focus groups as well as a survey instrument.

Studies also need to be developed to determine whether concern prompts knowledge or knowledge leads to concern. A further area for investigation is whether users would prefer a standard form and location for copyright information in all resources or whether they are they willing to work with a diversity of forms and location. It would probably be useful to develop a test set of electronic resources and provide copyright management information in that test set via different methods and then to test the user satisfaction with each method.

While the participants in this pilot study were few and generalization is probably unwise, the results do imply that even fairly well educated people who make frequent use of electronic resources are unclear about copyright law and that lack of clarity is linked to lack of concern, though the direction of that link is not known. The lack of ease the current ad hoc system of providing copyright management information is made evident by those who indicate the most computer and copyright expertise also being the ones who report copyright management information as being extremely hard to locate and understand. The study also indicates that if copyright management information were to be easier to understand and to locate users would be more concerned with obeying copyright laws, providing that it all could be done rapidly. It seems that those who wish to sell intellectual property via electronic means must keep up with the increasing speed of information access and meet the needs of the user community in much the same way as do vendors of other products. Of course, there is one major difference. Users won't turn to a competitor, but take the product for free.

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