

## **The challenges of copyright education and the Covid-19 pandemic as a catalyst for change**

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### ***The challenge***

The enduring challenge of copyright education for UK universities includes who is responsible, how best to engage staff, and what content should be explored (Morrison, 2018), with academic staff described as a potentially 'challenging audience' (Secker and Morrison, 2016, p.222) The nature of copyright education is that, '[f]or many academic staff, getting to grips with a complex beast such as the CLA [Copyright Licensing Agency] Licence and all the rules and regulations related to scanning material is anathema' (Secker and Bell, 2010, p.166). Academic colleagues may perceive copyright as a barrier and have concern with infringing rules and the search for definitive answers, which can lead to a focus on training in copyright education.

The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated such challenges. The UK lockdown in spring 2020 and the closure of our University of Greenwich (UoG) campuses, saw a move to online and blended delivery dependent on enhanced use of our Moodle-based virtual learning environment (VLE). In our traditional campus-based model of teaching and learning, use of the VLE typically mirrored practice not uncommon in many universities: a repository of module information, lecture recordings, and lecture notes (Farrelly, Raftery and Harding, 2018). Within a blended model, we anticipated Moodle's use as a site for asynchronous and synchronous learning, with academics responsible for designing learning and content creation and curation. This is contingent on developed digital literacies, including copyright

literacy (Todorova et al., 2014, cited Secker, Morrison and Nilsson, 2019), particularly given evidence that suggests it may be 'far easier to infringe copyright in the online environment' (Secker and Morrison, 2016, p.211). This position was echoed in a 2017 UoG survey of academic staff (Chauhan and Willett, 2019).

Through summer to autumn 2020, teaching colleagues requested support in using online conferencing technology, Moodle, and Third-Party Content in online teaching. The implications for copyright fuelled a need to support staff copyright literacies in the context of blended learning and questions of best approach.

### ***The response***

In supporting teaching colleagues to prepare for the 2020-21 academic year, Alison Gilmour conceptualised a package of support – Adjusting to Blended Learning Environments (ABLE) – including a Moodle self-paced course and associated workshops. Developing ABLE in eight weeks necessitated: a) integrating varied support for teaching practice, including copyright literacy; and b) different expertise informing ABLE design and delivery including learning and teaching enhancement academics and academic-related colleagues from student wellbeing, information technology, and library services.

As we were then Lecturer in Higher Education Learning and Teaching (academic enhancement) and Collaborations, Compliance and Copyright Manager (library services), respectively, our roles typically involved supporting academics but in separate departments. Our expertise was perceived as distinct, with learning and teaching support characterised as 'developmental' and copyright education as more 'training' oriented. Our openness to collaborate through ABLE, resulted in conversations revealing a shared goal to integrate copyright education into learning and teaching support.

We co-authored online content for the ABLE self-paced Moodle course for teaching staff and focused on making digital content available, including supporting use of online sources and e-books when developing reading lists, utilising the university's scanning service, and raising awareness of copyright when using Third-Party Content online.

We came to recognise our shared ethos that support should not take a training-oriented approach focused on top-down copyright compliance. Instead, a developmental approach focused on personal and professional judgement aligned with learning and teaching ambitions may better engage colleagues in interpreting, translating, and applying copyright legislation and good practice. We therefore co-designed workshops informed by our mix of copyright and learning and teaching expertise.

The workshops focused on introducing colleagues to central aspects of copyright legislation and practice through discussion of learning and teaching scenarios in a blended context. A central aim was encouraging teaching staff to think about their ambitions – relative to learning design and use of their course Moodle site – and supporting staff to negotiate ‘risks’ (Secker, Morrison and Nilsson, 2019) associated with copyright in their professional context. It was crucial to explore existing licenses and the possible use of exceptions in the UK Copyright Act to support colleagues in exerting professional judgement in the use of Third-Party Content online, and to encourage them to think about use of materials such as open educational resources (OERs).

The workshop design was participative; discussion-based activities, focused on authentic scenarios in moving teaching to online and blended contexts, were combined with open discussion. Emerging questions during the open discussions revealed the strength in co-design and combined expertise facilitating, as copyright and pedagogical issues came together. Asking ‘how do I locate OERs?’ led to discussion about ‘why OERs?’, ‘for what purpose?’, and ‘what does this mean for your students’ learning?’. Such conversations went beyond supporting colleagues with copyright ‘information’ or ‘training’, through situating digital literacies within exploration of pedagogical practice. There was richness in participants recognising the importance and potential of copyright relevant to their pedagogical ambitions in a blended context. As well as the quality of discussions and feedback, the workshops had significantly higher levels of participation than pre-pandemic copyright-focused workshops.

## ***Recommendations***

Our approach to copyright education for academics who teach has altered as a result of the pandemic; in terms of *how* you engage staff with copyright education, and *who* is

responsible for such support. Our approach was strengthened by collaborative expertise in terms of focus, design, and quality of engagement. For universities grappling with copyright education, we would recommend:

- 1) Responsibility for digital capabilities and copyright education specifically, should not be seen as the sole preserve of information technology or library services colleagues. Embedding elements of copyright education in teaching and learning professional development activities and contexts (including programmes such as Postgraduate Certificates in Higher Education, practical teaching courses or professional development workshops) is important to emphasise the relevance and connection between learning design, pedagogy, and copyright.
- 2) Co-designing participatory sessions exploring relevant copyright legislation and possible educational exceptions, in the context of meaningful decisions academics are making regarding teaching and learning, strengthens engagement and encourages colleagues to exhibit professional judgement in making decisions about copyright relevant to their context.
- 3) Utilising opportunities to model the embedded nature of copyright and digital skills and literacies more broadly. Through co-designing the support offered we modelled that issues of pedagogy are not distinct from copyright education. Additionally, within workshops, we used examples from our ABLE Moodle course to discuss our decision-making as educators with regards learning design, content, and copyright.

Our collaboration during the Covid-19 pandemic was a catalyst, facilitating a different institutional approach to copyright education. Exploring the legality and exceptions in the law in educational contexts remained but was integrated with supported reflection on desired pedagogy in a blended context. In doing so we pushed away from narrow conceptions of information literacy skills development and compliance-driven copyright training towards more integrated approaches to teaching development in an increasingly digital world.

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