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Copyright and School Libraries in the Digital Age

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When asked if I would be willing to guest edit a special edition of *Knowledge Quest* focusing on copyright and school libraries, I jumped at the chance. Copyright can be a contentious and nebulous issue, especially in today's digital age. As the copying and sampling of materials, especially via the World Wide Web, becomes easier and easier, school librarians find themselves wearing yet another hat: that of digital copyright guru.

Over the past twenty years, I have written four books and numerous articles on copyright and librarians, including a column for *Knowledge Quest* that ran from 2000 to 2008. During this same time period and up into the present I have offered university classes, professional presentations (including at ALA and AASL conferences), workshops, websites, and more on this subject. Library and education professionals realize the complexity and importance of copyright to themselves and their patrons, and usually come with a myriad of questions.

In 2016 I see what I have seen in the past—that copyright affects us all in our work and personal lives. It cannot be dismissed or put aside with remarks such as “well, everybody copies” or “no one will ever know.” Indeed, as our digital age speeds along, it may become not only simpler than ever before to “borrow” another's intellectual property, but also less complicated to discover who has done so. Thus, as school librarians, we must consider not only our users but also the owners and creators of original works.

This special issue, *Copyright and School Libraries in the Digital Age*, features four articles with copyright information for school librarians.

In my feature, “Copyright Basics and Review: Scenarios for the Practicing School Librarian,” I have focused on a series of subjects of significance to school librarians, including fair use, public domain, permissions, copyright policies and compliancy, and how a user can employ copyright law to his/her advantage.

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In “Copyright Resources for School Librarians” Yvonne M. Johnson and Nicole M. Johnson have gathered information about copyright-related resources of interest to K–12 educators and librarians. Their collection of URLs, supplemented by notes about the websites, is particularly useful as librarians are faced with the plethora of information on copyright law available online. However, not all websites have agency; thus, the user must consider which sites truly present copyright, which are written by those with a specific agenda, and which contain erroneous information. Yvonne and Nicole have done some of this filtering for *KQ* readers.

Wendell G. Johnson’s article, “Copyright Updates for K–12 Librarians,” covers pending legislation, a court case, and regulatory information of interest to school librarians. Media and copyright are ever-evolving, and we must remain current. Wendell identifies two websites librarians can monitor to keep up with copyright legislation.

In “Just Because You Can Doesn’t Mean You Should,” Barbara Fiehn looks at professional organizations’

standards addressing copyright and ways ethical use of digital resources can affect instruction in K–12 schools. Some of the subjects in this feature include file sharing, video streaming, digital photography, webpages, and mashups.

Last but not least, please be aware that this issue’s special edition authors are librarians, educators, and writers; none are copyright lawyers. Thus, the information in this issue does not constitute legal advice; for that, please consult an attorney.

Rebecca P. Butler, PhD, is a retired distinguished teaching professor at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, where she taught school librarianship, instructional technology, and copyright classes. Recent books she has written include *Copyright for Academic Librarians and Professionals (ALA 2014)* and *School Libraries 3.0: Principles and Practices for the Digital Age (Rowman & Littlefield 2015)*. *School Libraries 3.0* is the winner of the *SLC/ARBA 2016 Best of Reference Award for Best Professional Guide for School or Youth Librarians*.