



## Copyright Literacy – a Component of the Information and Media Literacy

Tania Todorova<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

*The report positions the meaning of copyright literacy in the broader framework of media and information literacy. Based on a review of scientific literature, the meaning of the term “copyright literacy” is clarified and its characteristics are presented to be used in updating the educational content and methodology of teaching in academic education and continuing professional development training programs. The proposed characteristics of copyright literacy are presented as an addition to the characteristics of media and information literacy (MIL) set out in the handbook prepared by experts of UNESCO, i.e. Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Teachers.*

*The need of development of copyright competence of specialists in library and information and cultural sector is addressed in the context of academic and continuing education on LIS, and it is understood as a set of knowledge and skills for development and implementation of an institutional copyright policy and for acting of users as consultants and/or trainers in copyright literacy.*

*The proposed summaries and conclusions are based on findings from a multinational survey on copyright literacy of specialists from libraries and other cultural institutions.*

**Keywords:** *copyright literacy, information literacy, media literacy, library and information science and education, copyright policy*

### 1. Introduction. Information literacy as a theoretical and applied issue

The topic of information literacy (IL) is a significant theoretical research and applied direction in library and information science. Different participants interact in the field of information literacy: institutions and organizations funding various programs; beneficiaries, those who implement them – educators (universities, libraries, information centers and a number of others) and those who benefit from the programs for the development of their IL – participants in training. The attention and interest in defining the term ‘*information literacy*’ and in IL programs has been increasing over the last 40 years on the part of the library community. This is in line with the deployment in the education sector of the opportunities for lifelong learning in response to public needs of citizens with multifaceted competences. Experts and organizations from around the world share the utmost importance of IL programs as an irrevocable component of the knowledge society. It is a priority activity of International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) and of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The body of literature on IL issues within the LIS and cultural sector is substantial and here we will highlight some of the recognised authors in the field, such as Anna Maria Tammaro, K. Basili, K. Doyle, J. Lau, P. G. Zurkowski, S. Kurbanoglu, S. Virkus and many others. Since 2013, the scientific forum European Conference on Information Literacy (ECIL), carried out under the auspices of UNESCO and the Information Literacy Section of IFLA, is an annual platform for the development of this problematics in theoretical and applied aspect. Basic and specialized topics of the conference are addressed to the current theoretical and practical aspects of information literacy in the contemporary world [5].

### 2. Copyright Literacy into a Framework of Information and Media Literacy

Today, information specialists are faced with increasingly complex issues related to intellectual property, in particular copyright and related rights, as compared to the recent and distant past. This results from new challenges facing the profession: application of information and communications technologies (ICT); working with diverse formats and new intellectual property objects (databases, multimedia products, computer software, sound recordings, etc.); transition to consortia acquisition, sharing and provision of access to electronic information resources; creation of digital collections; cooperation in respect of remote and mobile learning and for the creation of institutional repositories; provision of opportunities for open access to various works of intellectual work and a number of others. Specific manifestations of interaction between creators of digitized information (libraries, universities, museums, archives and other institutions), their role as portals to digitized information, as most

---

<sup>1</sup> University of Library Studies and Information Technologies (ULSIT), Bulgaria



democratic institutions providing access to knowledge, information and culture to society, and for overcoming the digital division and isolation, and the need for this to be subject to compliance with copyright and related rights – outline *the importance to position the meaning of copyright literacy in the broader framework of the media and information literacy*. The evolution and complexity of the concept of “*information literacy*” as from 2011, supplemented with the concept of “*media literacy*” (UNESCO and IFLA - Declarations of Media and Information Literacy from the city of Fez, Morocco (15-17 June 2011) and from the city of Moscow (24-28 June 2012), in the global information environment has to be upgraded with “*copyright literacy*”.

The term “*copyright literacy*” is established as a part of a broad understanding that there is a need for increasing range of knowledge, skills and experience required from people when using a content protected by copyright in a digital environment. According to Harris (2015) and Frederiksen (2016) copyright literacy can be defined as the ability to identify copyright-protected materials; to be familiar with exceptions and limitations provided for by national copyright legislation; to obtain permission or to negotiate the use of works when necessary; to recognize the risks of infringement of copyright law and to promote the ethical use of copyright-protected works. A person, who is literate in terms of copyright, knows how to find, use and recommend alternative freely accessible information resources [7, 6]. Morrison and Secker define it as the “increasing range of knowledge, skills and behaviours that individuals require when working with copyright content in the digital age”. Arguably, a copyright-literate person also understands the wider policy debate around copyright, and whilst not necessarily engaging directly in copyright advocacy is able to relate their own approach to the history and development of copyright laws. This involves an awareness of the inherent tensions between the various stakeholders [10].

On the basis of clarification of the content of the term *copyright literacy*, its characteristics are shown to be used in updating the educational content and methodology of teaching in academic education and in continuing professional development training programs. The proposed *characteristics of copyright literacy* are presented as an addition to the characteristics of *media and information literacy* (MIL), outlined in the manual prepared by experts of UNESCO – “Media and Information Literacy - Curriculum for Teachers” [13].

|   |  |   |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|---|--|---|
| Knowledge, skills and behaviors for the identification of copyright-protected works, incl. in the digital environment, and for their ethical and efficient use. | Understanding of philosophical, historical and economic considerations, which justify the recognition of copyright and related rights, in accordance with the interests of society as a whole and the achieved international understanding. Awareness of the positions of the various stakeholders and the corresponding tension in the broader political debate around copyright. | Knowledge of the national copyright legislation and, in particular, the exceptions and limitations to copyright for certain purposes: educational, scientific, research, etc. | Awareness of granting a right of use, how to obtain a permission or to negotiate the use of works when necessary. | Recognition of the risks of infringement of copyright law and ability to promote the ethical use of copyright-protected works. | Skills for finding, using and recommending alternative freely accessible information resources. |
|---|--|---|---|--|---|

**Table 1.** Characteristics of Copyright Literacy

Over the past few years, in an international context in the scientific literature, it has been observed the establishment of the term *copyright literacy*, used together with other derivative or related terms and phrases such as: “*copyright for librarians*”, “*copyright law for librarians*”, “*copyright library policy*”,



"copyright librarianship", "copyright librarian", "copyright advisor", "copyright officer", "copyright equity" between the rights of authors and users of works in a library environment etc. [2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12].

Research activities and numerous publications of Bulgarian and foreign scientists within the framework of the scientific project "Copyright Policy of Libraries and Cultural Institutions" (2012-2013, funded by Scientific Research Fund of the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science) contributed to the establishment of that scientific terminology [3]. The performed multinational study entitled 'Copyright Literacy of Specialists from Libraries and other Cultural Institutions' has filled an existing gap in Bulgarian and foreign scientific literature with the survey of copyright literacy competencies of LIS (Library and Information Science) professionals and those who work in the cultural heritage sector (archives and museums), conducted in thirteen countries, namely Bulgaria, United Kingdom, Lithuania, Mexico, Norway, Portugal, Romania, United States of America, Turkey, Hungary, France, Finland and Croatia, and the provision of data and summaries in international comparative context. The online-based international research is focused on acquisition of information on the awareness, experience and attitude of specialists in libraries, archives and museum institutions in respect of copyright aspects in their activities, academic and continuing education on this issue, and for the application of a copyright policy at an institutional level. Findings of this multinational study highlight gaps in existing knowledge of copyright, and information about the level of copyright literacy of LIS and cultural sector professionals. Also attitudes towards copyright learning content in academic education and continuing professional development training programs are investigated [11, 12].

### **3. Copyright Literacy Competence of Professionals**

In terms of the modern information environment, it is very important for professionals working in libraries, archives, museums and other cultural institutions to achieve high level of copyright literacy and ability to implement an institutional copyright policy. In the context of academic and continuing education in LIS, is established the need to develop a *copyright competency* of specialists from library and information and cultural sector, understood as a set of knowledge and skills for development and implementation of an institutional copyright policy and for expression as consultants and trainers in copyright literacy of consumers. The term "*copyright competency*" is used to denote the level of awareness, knowledge and experience that librarians and specialists from other cultural institutions must have in the specific area of copyright legislation, to be able to take informed decisions on emerging copyright issues in their daily activities and to effectively exercise their professional tasks. It also refers to the degree of preparation of specialists to apply an institutional copyright policy. Considering the role of library professionals as trainers in IL, they need to be prepared and able to assist people in the process of "converting copyright literacy into life skill needed in the digital age", as proposed by L.E. Harris [7]. Information specialists should orient themselves to specializations and careers as copyright institutional advisors and trainers.

### **4. Outcomes and Future Plans**

The problematics in respect of copyright literacy of specialists from information and cultural sector is a complex and significant – committed to the primary mission of libraries and cultural institutions as the most democratic places for access to information, knowledge, education and culture for all citizens. Copyright specialization of professionals is required in response to the current and proposed amendments to national and international law and the specifics of working with new information carriers and new media, digital libraries, cloud structures, online education platforms, streaming services, the possibilities for creating personal digital content, etc. Surveys and analyses of the existing level of information and copyright literacy of professionals that have been made – show unsatisfactory results and reveal a serious problem that is neglected. Conclusions and achievements from research activities underlined the need of targeted training and continuing qualification of specialists in respect of these matters, in order to achieve the required copyright literacy for professional conduct in the conditions of global information environment [11, 12]. Complex solutions must be applied by means of partnership between academic education on LIS, archival studies and cultural heritage science, professional associations and the collegium of library professionals. Copyright literacy becomes increasingly important for specialists from libraries and information and cultural institutions, since the management of copyright-related challenges has a key role in shaping the future of the profession.

In this direction further activities of the established international team of researchers, are currently being formulated and implemented, such as: development of the International Copyright Literacy



Webpage, established in 2016 as a part of the UK Copyright Literacy Website [9]; collaboration on Copyright Literacy Survey of LIS (Library and Information Science) Students (CoLIS) [1]; organization of: an opening panel at IFLA Congress 2017, Offsite Session “Models for Copyright Education in Information Literacy Programs” (23<sup>rd</sup> August 2017); an international symposium “Copyright Literacy and the role of librarians as educators” at European Conference on Information Literacy (ECIL) (18<sup>th</sup> September 2017) [5]; and on-going International Copyright-Literacy Event with Playful Opportunities for Practitioners and Scholars (Icepops, 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2018, LILAC Conference, UK) [8]. Further developments can be followed on an International Copyright Literacy Webpage.

### References

- [1] CoLIS: Copyright Literacy Survey of LIS (Library and Information Science) students, available at Information Literacy Association Website: <<http://inlitas.org/?p=163>> (accessed 4<sup>th</sup> January 2018).
- [2] Copyright for Librarians: The Essential Handbook, Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University (ed), Utrecht, eIFL, 2012, 194 p.
- [3] Copyright Policy of Libraries and Cultural Institutions: Website of a project, available at: <<http://copyrightlib.unibit.bg/>> (accessed 7<sup>th</sup> January 2018).
- [4] Developing a Library Copyright Policy – An eIFL Guide, available at: <<http://www.eifl.net/resources>>, (accessed 8<sup>th</sup> January 2018).
- [5] European Conference on Information Literacy (ECIL), <<http://ecil2017.ilconf.org/>> (accessed 4<sup>th</sup> January 2018).
- [6] Frederiksen, L. “The Copyright Librarian: A Practical Handbook”, Amsterdam, Chandos Publishing, 2016, 148 p.
- [7] Harris, L. E. “Copyright literacy and translating copyright to a life skill”, in About copyrightlaws.com, 6 April 2015, available at: <<http://www.copyrightlaws.com/libraries/copyright-literacy-copyright-life-skill/>>, (accessed 6<sup>th</sup> December 2017).
- [8] Icepops: International Copyright-Literacy Event with Playful Opportunities for Practitioners and Scholars, available at: <<https://copyrightliteracy.org/upcoming-events/icepops-international-copyright-literacy-event-with-playful-opportunities-for-practitioners-and-scholars/>>, (accessed 6<sup>th</sup> January 2018).
- [9] International Copyright Literacy Webpage, available at: <<https://copyrightliteracy.org/about-2/international-copyright-literacy/>> (accessed 6<sup>th</sup> January 2018).
- [10] Morrison, C. and Secker, J. “Copyright Literacy in the UK: a survey of librarians and other cultural heritage sector professionals”, Journal of Library and Information Research, 2015, Vol. 39, Number 121, pp. 75-97. [Suppl. File Survey instrument, S5-S10.]
- [11] Todorova, Tania et al. “A Multinational Study on Copyright Literacy Competencies of LIS Professionals”, in Kurbanoglu, S. et al. (eds.) Information Literacy : Lifelong Learning and Digital Citizenship in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century : 2<sup>nd</sup> European Conference on Information Literacy (ECIL): Revised Selected Papers, ECIL, Dubrovnik, 2014, CCIS, Vol. 492, Springer-Verlag, Heidelberg, pp. 138-148.
- [12] Todorova, T. et al. Information Professionals and Copyright Literacy: A Multinational Study, Library Management Journal, Special Issue ‘Future Roles of Librarians’, August 2017, Vol. 38, No 6/7, pp. 323-344.
- [13] Wilson, C. et al. “Media and Information literacy curriculum for teachers”. Paris, UNESCO, 2011, p. 192.