Throughout her working life, but the production to maintain these Web pages is accompanied by numerous illustrations, including screen shots, and author and subject indexes are included.—John Hostage (hostage@law.harvard.edu), Harvard Law School Library, Cambridge, Mass.


Recent changes in the copyright laws intended to accommodate the ongoing proliferation of electronic resources require that librarians reeducate themselves in this important area to appreciate its impact on the delivery of library services. The author, who has experience as a reference librarian as well as a recently earned law degree, is associated with a large law firm with a significant intellectual-property practice. She approaches the problems to be considered by developing what is essentially a reference work, using the popular question-and-answer format typical of works on law-related subjects intended for the layman or the occasional legal practitioner. While the overall arrangement of the book is intended to allow use as a quick reference on specific topics, it is written in a style that is also adapted to cover-to-cover reading.

Hoffmann does an excellent job of answering questions that are likely to be uppermost in librarians’ minds concerning application of the copyright laws to online information, specifically the fair-use concept and liability for Web content. She also considers in some depth the difficulties posed by interlibrary loan and other forms of resource sharing, including downloading from the Web, printing rights, problems presented by hyperlinks on local Web pages, and the public display and performance of audio and video on the Internet. Hoffmann also examines trademark law and the use of words and symbols as logos, links, and in metatags on Web sites.

The question-and-answer format works best for specific answers to fairly narrow inquiries—that is, when one wants a quick reference guide rather than a comprehensive, detailed treatise. Much of Hoffmann’s subject fits this format well; however, the limitations of the method become apparent in expository passages on the origins and nature of copyright where a general question is used to introduce a wealth of specific material that might not be expected to flow from the question. Frequently, in situations where a fairly lengthy text answer to a general question is presented, Hoffmann provides special Q&A boxes to address subquestions suggested by the main question. These questions within a question are helpful and are usually specifically library-oriented inquiries with practical and understandable answers. This approach does not completely make up for the book’s only major shortcoming, the overly general nature of its index. As it is for any reference work, the key to its usefulness is the reader’s ability to go quickly to exactly what he or she is seeking. The table of contents is very good, including each main question and numerous subheadings from the answers, but a more comprehensive index, given the generalized nature of a fair number of the questions, would have been helpful in ensuring efficient usefulness of the book.

The first part of the book contains an excellent short history of copyright laws in the United States with reference to the British legal tradition from which United States copyright was developed. From there Hoffmann moves to an overview of...
basic copyright concepts, including those surrounding the key fair-use principle, and then proceeds to the basics of how information is provided through the Internet as well as a summary of recent copyright legislation. This section provides a good foundation for understanding many of the complex issues presented in the remainder of the work, where some of the more pressing issues involving copyright from a librarian’s point of view are addressed. The comprehensive detail in this section alone is sufficient to warrant having this book on your personal reference shelf.

Part 2 of the work provides more specific discussion of the application of the copyright principle to cyberspace, describing in detail the major issues that result from the application of copyright concepts to electronic materials, a different problem from those previously involved with print sources. Especially interesting are those portions dealing with potential legal liabilities that librarians may face when simply “doing their jobs,” providing information to readers. No one wants to go to jail, and everyone wants to know the best path to follow in order to avoid it. Here Hoffmann, like any good lawyer, notes that there are few absolutes and that existing legal precedents may be problematic as analogies to the librarian’s cyberspace-related copyright dilemmas. She does help allay fears in this regard, however, and endeavors to make clear that a draconian enforcement of the letter of copyright law is not a matter within the purview of the librarian.

In part 3, Hoffmann moves on to a number of specific applications of copyright in the cyberspace environment, among them interlibrary loan, electronic-reserve systems, and distance education. She provides numerous helpful hints, but sometimes where the librarian would hope for specific solutions to knotty problems, Hoffmann frankly notes that they are just not always available at the present time. With little relevant case law, we have to fall back on sometimes all too opaque statutory language, language that was usually derived from the print context and has to be analogized. But all is not lost—or should not be—and Hoffmann’s forthright stand for librarian involvement in revising the laws to reflect the electronic realities suggests the most rational and principled way out of the confusion. Whether working on the front lines of the UCITA (Uniform Computer Information Transactions Act) battles in each state, promoting a revision of the Federal copyright law more fair to users, or simply standing up for the rights of local information users exercising their fair-use rights, librarians serve their profession best today, as they always have, by continuing to ensure the right of their readers to know. The cyberspace environment does not change that obligation.

Overall, Copyright in Cyberspace is a valuable contribution to the literature in the field and is fairly unique in that the insights of the reference librarian and the lawyer are combined, much to the reader’s benefit. The lawyer’s preference for authoritative-ness does give rise to one potential quibble, however. The fourth section of the book is really an appendix containing a selection of primary legal resources dealing with copyright, most of which are referred to in the preceding sections of the work. These sources take up 105 pages of a 264-page work, and their ready availability elsewhere, especially on the Web, suggests that it might have been better simply to provide appropriate references or URLs to many of the materials in question rather than reproduce them all in this book, especially in view of the fact that each chapter contains its own bibliography. Certainly the librarians for whom the work is intended will be able to locate copies of these materials from their citations. On the other hand, their inclusion does make ready reference to them considerably more convenient than might otherwise be the case, especially when a cross-reference is included in the main text.—Vicki L. Gregory (gregory@luna.cas.usf.edu), School of Library and Information Science, University of South Florida, Tampa


How must map libraries change to have a role in the digital era? Does networked spatial data put the traditional map curator out of business? Should map libraries refocus their collection development to emphasize access rather than acquisition? How should spatial-data librarians employ technologies such as geographic information systems (GIS), digitization, and the Web to provide better services? These are some of the questions addressed in this collection of seventeen essays. Editors Parry and Perkins provide an international venue for practitioners in the field to express their views on how technology is affecting map librarianship and the cartographic publishing industry.

This work has the familiar ring of what have by now become new genres in our professional literature—library-identity crisis and technology-issues angst. It is, however, unique in focusing on the technical and specialized realm of geospatial data, whose image-based documents are arguably even more fundamentally challenged by technology than is printed text. In a larger context, it is worthwhile to note that Mary Larsgaard, the doyenne of this specialty, acknowledged in her third edition of Map Librarianship: An Introduction (1998), that she will not revise this standard text again.

Map libraries are indeed at a fork in their road. It is time to refocus, or perhaps re-engineer—but how, and to what end? The editors, and many of the essayists, point out that map