

Book Review

Michael Fernandez, editor

Developing Authorship and Copyright Ownership Policies: Best Practices.

Allyson Mower. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2024. 103p. \$45.00 softcover (ISBN 978-1-5381-7385-5); \$112.00 hardcover (ISBN 978-1-5381-7384-8).

Developing Authorship and Copyright Ownership Policies: Best Practices is a useful and concise publication that provides clarification to copyright questions that libraries frequently encounter. As many librarians in academic, public, school, and tribal libraries are working to integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) into their organizational practices, Allyson Mower's text is especially timely. This nuts-and-bolts guide to policy development is laid out in a format that is both intuitive and useful. While it is relatively short, there is a dense amount of information contained within this book. In particular, the first fifty pages provide guidance and insight to the reader on conceptual and practical tenets of policy development.

Academic librarians will find this book helpful in providing guidance to students and faculty on copyright and ownership, but it could also be highly utilized in a research setting or public library. This book clearly explains copyright and ownership from their conceptual foundations to practical applications, including student's rights as authors and a section on academic freedom. Furthermore, Mower succinctly summarizes scholarly communications, and organizes the topic logically into subtopics that are easy to navigate: conferences, journals, books, reports, websites, databases, art, and oral histories.

Readers may find that the organization of the book's chapters is particularly on-point. Chapter 4, for example, "Best Practices in Developing Policies," is followed by sample copyright ownership policies and sample authorship policies that support and exemplify the content of the chapter. For readers that are beginning the process of policy development, this flow of information could be very useful.

Because this book starts at the earliest stages of the process, readers will likely feel supported as they begin to draft their initial attempts at codified authorship and copyright ownership policies. The author provides encouragement to the reader by explaining that it is not a linear or overnight process. One passage that is especially noteworthy is the recommendation to create a clear policy purpose: "Establishing the policy statement can be the most challenging step in the entire process. It will be iterative. It will feel frustrating at times with the slow pace and with moments of confusion and uncertainty. . . . Resist the temptation to abandon the process" (31).

This passage catches the reader's attention because the previous chapters are primarily informational. Chapters 1 through 3 create a foundation of background knowledge for the reader, and chapter 4 provides the space for the reader to actively begin the process of policy development. Mower explains the basic elements of authorship and copyright ownership policies, then empowers the reader to develop their own policies suited to their own purposes. The aforementioned passage feels like the author is speaking directly to the reader in a way that promotes resilience toward the goal of policy development.

The author also does an excellent job of integrating the need for DEI within policies into this book. Readers will appreciate the strong argument for embracing DEI—in particular within scholarly publishing. Mower writes:

As publishers begin to think of themselves more as partners and collaborators in the scholarly communication system (as opposed to simply thinking of themselves as stand-alone companies, which they are, competing for works in an open marketplace), the policies could come to reflect the reality of that symbiotic relationship. In turn, author-employees can operate in a more equitable landscape that supports their goals to develop new lines of inquiry, novel methodologies, and more diverse audiences. (44)

This passage is just one of many that demonstrate how the author eloquently advocates for DEI in scholarly publishing. Mower continues to expand on this position in chapter 6, “Sample Copyright Ownership Policies”:

When academic authors receive equity by means of the works they create as employees, it generates opportunities for remuneration and decision-making authority. An equitable copyright ownership policy also has the chance to be inclusive of employees at an institution, making the endeavor of research and creativity more than simply an administrative or institution-owned effort. In essence, an equitable copyright ownership policy establishes the autonomy and independence necessary for an inclusive workplace where employees have ownership interest in the institution as well as an environment that fosters free and open thought and communication. (49)

In addition to establishing a foundation and connecting threads of support for equity and inclusion, Mower provides sample policies that honor institutional commitment to DEI. The selected samples are carefully curated to include policies that promote equitable ownership and authorship. The author also recognizes the importance of an accurate definition of authorship and provides tips on how to create inclusive and equitable authorship practices, for example, “establish equitable author order based on data-gathering role plus writing assignment” (80).

To supplement and strengthen the foundational content, this book includes many well documented references in the “Notes” section of each chapter, and a “Resources and Further Reading” section at the end of the book. This book could be utilized as a resource in an introductory (or advanced) communications class, or for students enrolled in technical writing courses. For a student seeking to learn more about this topic, or perhaps an organization conducting essential research, this book could serve as both an introduction and a stepping stone to additional resources.

One content area that was unaddressed by the text was the impact and importance of artificial intelligence (AI), specifically large language models like ChatGPT. As AI becomes increasingly integrated into everyday applications and academic institutions, many users of this technology struggle to understand its impact and governance. While those are both nebulous topics at present, it is imperative that policies are developed that address the use of AI—especially where it touches intellectual property and copyright. To use Mower’s words, academia must “resist the temptation to

abandon the process” (31) where it concerns defining boundaries for acceptable use of generative AI in education. AI is evolving exponentially to offer access to nearly unlimited content, and intellectual property in particular is vulnerable to abuse.

With the above exception, this book provides a comprehensive introduction to authorship and copyright ownership policy development. This content is ideal for someone seeking foundational information, whether it be in the role of student, policy developer, librarian, or instructor. It could also be useful for university administration seeking to broaden the scope of DEI in university policies, or a researcher wishing to protect intellectual property. In my case, the information provided by this book will provide a guideline for me as I begin work on a dissertation. My university has established policies on authorship and copyright ownership, and it is enlightening to compare other organizations’ policies to mine. I feel that I now have a better understanding of their content, scope, and application.

Developing Authorship and Copyright Ownership Policies: Best Practices contains valuable core content and has merit as an addition to one’s bookshelf.—*Julie Sanchez (julie.sanchez@nmt.edu), Joseph R. Skeen Library, New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, Socorro, New Mexico*