
As a librarian, do you need to care about copyright law? Carrie Russell’s newest book on the subject is a plea for librarians and schoolteachers to become familiar with copyright law so that we will stop shortchanging our constituencies. In her view, the less we know, the greater our tendency to be overly conservative, thereby denying our students or patrons access to materials that probably are permissible under copyright law. Is there a painless way to find answers to our questions on copyright? No, not really. She eschews the idea that checklists can really serve any meaningful purpose. Instead, she aims to empower librarians with information so that they are prepared when new challenges arise. To that end, she does an excellent job of guiding readers through the basic framework of copyright law, citing court cases, the United States Code, and other official sources without inundating the reader with legalese. She clearly understands the needs of her audience inside and out. Each chapter is loaded with examples applicable to the kind of work that librarians do every day at every kind of library. She also appears to be quite conversant with the law, as one would expect from someone who has served as the ALA copyright specialist for more than ten years.

Those who have read Russell’s previous book, Complete Copyright: an Everyday Guide for Librarians (ALA, 2004), might wonder whether this book is intended to supersede it. That is something of a mystery. The previous book is still available in print and, in this reviewer’s opinion, is a better product overall. It is twice as long and goes into much more depth than the newer book. The 2004 volume included minicapsules of the leading legal cases, a feature that is missing in the 2012 book. Moreover, the table of contents in the new book is worthless. In fact, the book as a whole is challenging to use for reference: it is difficult to zero in quickly on specific facets of copyright law. Complete Copyright for K–12 Librarians and Educators works better as a supplement to the previous title. It is not, by any means, the kind of comprehensive guide implied by the title.


Drawing on his expertise as research and instruction librarian at the Baron-Forness Library of Edinboro University of Pennsylvania, McAdoo offers in this book an overview of library instruction, including how to assess what information students need and how to reach them. The book opens with a look at the history of library instruction, outlining various approaches and terms used. According to the author, instruction must evolve continuously to meet the changing needs of library users. This concise volume, a part of the ALA Fundamentals series, is intended as a primer for library instruction and attempts to fill what the author perceives as a gap in the library literature. According to McAdoo, resources that address library instruction are “noticeably limited” (p. x) and focus on how-tos, specific exercises, or searching methods.

He looks at librarians’ role as teachers and the methods they employ to reach students as information proliferates. The ever-increasing amount of information available to library users leads to a continuous need to guide users in its access and use. In his discussion of how students learn and how librarians can reach them more effectively, McAdoo integrates information about learning theories, learning styles, and obstacles to learning.

Content and delivery are important, but McAdoo asserts that several other considerations must come first. The instruction librarian must determine how to develop content to deliver and, in doing so, must consider class size, the use of technology, publicity efforts, the library-specific resources and services, the students’ characteristics, the location (whether in-person or online), and the amount of time available. The author also lists characteristics of effective instruction and offers strategies for creating effective instruction experiences. Other useful advice addresses how to manage common concerns, such as disruptive behavior, nerves, absent teachers, and emergencies.

In addition to his advice on how to prepare for and conduct instruction, McAdoo offers a detailed look at how to assess instruction efforts and how to collect and interpret data. The book provides a broad overview of instruction and offers suggestions for the future. It ends with a look at challenges and concerns, emphasizing the need to adapt to changing information needs. Although written for an academic library audience, this book would also be useful for public and school libraries.—Paula Barnett-Ellis, Health and Sciences Librarian, Jacksonville State University, Jacksonville, Alabama


Many tried and true methods of library science have changed due to advances in technology and reduced budgets, but librarians continue to adapt. The materials we collect have changed, and in many libraries and many situations, electronic materials are preferred over print. Since a plethora of information is now at our fingertips, it is perhaps difficult even to define “reference.” Reference materials are no longer just indexes and dictionaries, but online subscription databases, non-fiction books, and free Internet sources. In an academic or public library, many younger patrons may never think to pick up a reference book; for them, Google is ready reference.

Carol Singer’s Fundamentals of Managing Reference Collections, part of the ALA Fundamentals series, is a concise outline