

Copyright Literacy among Nigerian Librarians: A Survey of Copyright Awareness, Attitudes, and Abilities

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Abstract

As copyright issues become increasingly prominent in the Internet age, librarians must have a high-level of knowledge in order to ensure that copyright laws are followed, and patrons are aware of potential violations. This study examines the awareness of and attitudes towards copyright policy and practices among professional librarians in Nigeria. A 27-item survey distributed in early 2021 to 110 library professionals received 85 responses. Three-fourths of participants indicated that they had a moderate or extremely good awareness of copyright, though competency in specific aspects of copyright varied greatly (e.g., 90% were familiar with national copyright laws, but only 14% with the concept of “copyleft”). Responses

were mixed as to whether the libraries at which librarians were employed had a specific copyright policy in place or aligned with national copyright legislation. Based on the findings of this survey, suggestions for improving copyright education and practices in libraries.

Keywords: *Copyright Literacy, Copyright Awareness Copyright Attitude, Nigeria*

Introduction

Violation of copyright has been identified as a major problem, negatively impacting creative drive and hampering intellectual productivity in Nigeria. One must only look at the impact of pirating in the Nigerian film industry, which has led to the loss of significant financial gain costing up to an estimated \$2 billion US dollars annually (Olutayo, 2016). Torrents of pirated films can be released to the market the same day as the original copies, threatening copyright owners’ profitability. Abuse of intellectual property is a single variable destroying the development of the arts and originality in Nigeria, even though legislation measures and policies have been implemented all to no avail (Essien, 2017).

The term “Copyright Literacy” is less than a decade old. The term was first used by Professor Tania Y. Todorova in 2012; in 2014, the first research study examining this subject was published in a multinational study (Todorova *et al.*, 2014). Morrison and Secker define copyright literacy as, “acquiring and demonstrating the appropriate knowledge, skills and behaviours to enable the ethical creation and use of copyright material” (Morrison & Secker, 2015). Today, the Internet and digital technologies, due to free and easy access, lack of supervision over how to use them, and the growing of Internet penetration rate, have complicated issues surrounding the breach and implications of copyright law. Though copyright

applies to almost everything on the Internet, it is easy for users' and content producers to ignore (Kortelainen, 2015). Such ready conditions for copyright infringement in the digital age has left users and information providers constantly faced with copyright issues.

Librarians serve a key role as guides, facilitators and educators on copyright-related issues (Secker & Morrison, 2016), and may also play a role in developing local copyright policy (Hofman *et al.*, 2013). Librarians in Nigeria are often recognised as copyright experts and act as a reference on copyright issues. Their approach and attitude are likely to influence others and the guidance provided to a wide range of users (IFLA, 2018). Therefore, librarians can be considered as the top consultants in copyright and related rights, despite the fact that librarians are not legal specialists and often lack copyright training in their library school courses. If librarians lack knowledge of copyright issues, this can produce both anxiety for the librarian and potential legal concerns for the library (Secker and Morrison, 2016). For this reason, it is important to better understand the current levels of copyright literacy among Nigerian librarians and identify areas in which instruction in copyright issues may be improved in library schools and within the profession as a whole.

Research Questions

The present study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How familiar are Nigerian librarians with copyright-related issues?
2. What are the opinions of Nigerian librarians towards institutional level copyright policy?
3. How much do Nigerian librarians know about copyright policy at their country and at institutional level?
4. What are the opinions of Nigerian librarians about adding copyright-related topics to LIS education?

Literature Review

The *Copyright Act Laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 2004* is the foremost law that governs

and safeguards copyrights issues in Nigeria. The monitoring agency that controls copyright registration in Nigeria, and works under the purview of this law, is the Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC). The Copyright Act (*Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004*) makes provisions for the protection, infringement, transfer, and remedies for contravention of copyrights in Nigeria. The functions of the NCC under Section 34 (3) of the Act include: responsibility for issues relating to Copyright in Nigeria, responsibility to observe and oversee the position of the country concerning global convention and advice to government, responsibility to ensure mutual and multilateral agreements between Nigeria and other countries, and responsibility to educate the general public on matters relating to copyright and keeping a database of authors and their works (Onoyeyan, 2018). It is imperative that Nigerian librarians are fluent with this law in order to ensure that library patrons abide by the rules and statutes set forth by the nation.

According to Durodolu (2016), copyright literacy is related to ethical issues about the use of intellectual property to avoid plagiarism and breach of copyright. Murray (2012) opines that it is imperative to be mindful of concepts such as privacy, security, copyright, intellectual freedom, fair use, censorship and freedom of speech because they have effect on responsible information use in the 21st Century. Information literate citizens are expected to recognise and observe rules and regulations concerning ethical use of information, by learning how to properly acknowledge various sources by precisely citing the use of intellectual properties. In the opinion of Onoyeyan and Awe (2018), the protection of copyright in Nigeria is an essential role of the librarian, and it was discovered that librarians are cognisant with the requirements of copyright law and take measures to avoid its infringement. The study recommended that librarians as information experts should be deliberate in ensuring that copyright is not violated in the library by enforcing compliance. Afegbua (2017) noted that library schools in particular should be aware of regulation guiding photocopy of materials because it is a way to deprive intellectual property holder the benefit of their hard work. In a study by Nworie *et al.* (2019), it was revealed that library personnel are cognisant with copyright law that governs the information resources in their care

and they comply with the provision of the Copyright Act to a large extent. The authors are of the opinion that there is a positive relationship between library personnel's awareness of copyright law and compliance with copyright law in Nigerian University libraries. Therefore, it was recommended that library management should participate actively in sensitising librarians on copyright law and any act that constitute violation of copyright regulations. These studies all indicate a good base-level knowledge of copyright concepts, but do not indicate whether Nigerian librarians have sufficient mastery of advanced concepts necessary to educate patrons and adhere to all facets of copyright law.

Adu and Van der Walt (2021a; 2021b) examined levels of awareness of copyright policies among academic librarians in Ghana, finding that the level of knowledge was generally moderately strong but could vary based on the experience of respondents and the specific copyright topic being discussed. Most studies in this area of copyright awareness and literacy have suggested that competency can indeed vary based on specific concepts or aspects of copyright. For instance, Fernandez-Molina *et al.* (2017), in their study of Brazilian librarians, found that there was limited knowledge of what circumstances could constitute an exception to standard copyright limitations (e.g., for teaching or library use) as well as limited knowledge of copyleft licenses and their implications. Similar gaps were found in studies in an early study of a university in Ghana (Korletey and Tettey, 2015), and librarians in Finland (Kortelainen, 2015), the United Kingdom (Morrison and Secker, 2015), and the United States (Estell & Saunders, 2016). The extent to which these gaps in awareness exist among Nigerian librarians is unknown. This study, in addressing this gap, will add to this emerging body of research and identify specific copyright-related learning needs for Nigerian librarians.

Methods

This study is grounded in the positivist philosophical paradigm, which favours quantitative methods to examine an objective reality about the world and

human experience (Majeed, 2019). Specifically, this study employs a survey, or questionnaire, approach to examining copyright literacy of Nigerian librarians (Babbie, 2010). This approach was selected due to its ability to capture a large number of perspectives over a relatively short period of time (whereas it may take five- or ten-times as long to collect the same number of responses from an interview-based study). There are also benefits, in a quantitative study, to utilise discreet answer choices (multiple choice, Likert scales) as opposed to open-ended type questions. This survey was designed online, using Google Forms, and was designed to elucidate responses from librarians in Nigeria about their awareness, opinions and policy in relation to copyright issues within the country. The questions for the survey were adapted from and inspired by the study of Todorova *et al.* (2017), which examined similar issues among librarians across the world. The questionnaire was launched on the web platform in "Google Forms" with the automatic receive and store feature. The link of this survey was shared from 12 January 2021 among Nigerian librarians by Nigerian Library Association (<http://nla.ng>), professional blogs and WhatsApp groups. It is estimated that approximately 110 librarians received the request to participate. Data collection ended on January 21, 2021, with 85 librarians having participated in the study (providing a complete and valid response to all questions).

The questionnaire consisted of 27 questions, including mainly closed-ended questions (some based on a five-point Likert Scale) along with a few open-ended questions. The questionnaire had four general sections: 1-Demographic characteristics (including age, gender, educational and professional experience of participants), 2-knowledge and awareness of copyright related issues, 3-copyright policy in institutional level and 4-opinions of librarians about copyright related topics in LIS education and Lifelong Learning Scale (LLL). In this study, survey data were analysed within IBM SPSS (version 27), with Chi-square tests to examine whether any differences in responses were evident based on demographics of respondents. $P < 0.05$ was considered statistically significant.

Results

Demographics of Respondents

A total of 85 complete responses to the survey were received. Among the respondents, 36 were men (42.4%) and 49 were women (57.6%). Only two respondents were under the age of 30 (2.4%), while 13 were between the ages of 30 and 39 (15.3%), 36 were between the ages of 40 and 49 (42.4%), 29 were between the ages of 50 and 59 (34.1%) and 5 were older than age 60 (5.9%). Four of these respondents had attained a bachelor's degree only (4.7%), while 81 (95.3%) had at least a master's degree, and 31 (36.5%) had a PhD. 20 respondents had less than 10 years of experience (23.5%), 48 had between 10 and 19 years of experience (56.5%), and 17 had 20 or more years of experience (20%). While the majority of respondents (70.6%) were employed in academic libraries, 11.8% worked in special libraries, and 17.6% were employed in some other type of library (e.g., school, public, government, archives). Based on these demographics, it can be said that these perspectives largely represent those of senior academic librarians in Nigeria, due to oversampling in these areas.

Librarians General Copyright Awareness

As indicated in Table 1 below, the vast majority of survey respondents indicated that they were moderately or extremely aware of copyright (78.9%). However, it is important to note that this is merely a self-rating of general copyright awareness, and respondents are likely to overrate their own skills (e.g., a potential Dunning-Kruger effect). While no statistically significant differences were found in survey responses based on demographic groups, responses to this question were closest to having a **statistically significant effect**, with $X^2 = 9.76$, $p = .12$. The greatest difference was among the number of respondents in the 10-19 years of library experience group who indicated that they were "extremely aware" (31%) which was much greater than the less than 10 years' experience group (only 10%) and 20+ years' experience group (12%). This again suggests a potential Dunning-Kruger effect, whereby those with moderate experience overrate their skills/knowledge, while those with less or more experience are more accurate in their skills assessment (Mahmood, 2016).

Table 1: General Copyright Awareness

General Awareness about Copyright	Numbers (n=85)	Percentage (n=85)
Extremely Aware	19	22.35%
Moderately Aware	48	56.47%
Somewhat Aware	11	12.94%
Slightly Aware	6	7.06%
Not at all Aware	1	1.18%

As shown in Tables 2 and 3 below, the proportions of respondents that were familiar with various general (Table 2) and specific (Table 3) copyright concepts. While general aspects of national copyright laws and open access policy were familiar to most respondents, very few were familiar with the

concepts of "copyleft" (referring to the free distribution of works) and "clearing rights" (i.e., receiving direct permission to produce and use works). While there is some overlap among these concepts, each is distinct and important for copyright experts to understand.

Table 2: Familiarity with Copyright Concepts

Copyright Concepts	Numbers (n=85)	Percentage (n=85)
National Copyright Laws	76	89.41%
Open Access	72	84.72%
Fair Use/Dealings	52	61.18%
License Policy for Digital Resources	51	60.00%
International Copyright Law	48	56.47%
Creative Commons Licensing	45	52.94%
Licensing Relationship within your institution	32	37.65%
How to Clarify Copyright Status of Materials	20	23.53%
Copyleft	12	14.12%
Clearing Rights	10	11.76%

Among specific copyright issues, a majority of respondents indicated that they were familiar with issues of copyright relevant to institutional repositories and digitisation, but very few were familiar with how to handle copyright concerns related to out-of-print

and orphan works. More experienced librarians tended to indicate more familiarity with each of these concepts, on average than those with less experience. However, no discernable difference was found based on educational attainment or gender.

Table 3: Knowledge of Specific Types of Copyright Issue

Knowledge of Specific Types of Copyright Issues	Numbers (n=85)	Percentage (n=85)
Institutional Repositories	52	61.18%
Digitization	51	60.00%
Public Domain	41	48.24%
E-Learning Materials	34	40.00%
Out-of-Print Works	23	27.06%
Orphan Works	16	18.82%

Respondents' Knowledge of Copyright Policy at Institutional Level

Table 4 displays findings relevant to the existence and knowledge of copyright policy at an institutional level among respondents to this survey. Almost 44% of the respondents reported that their institution had a copyright policy to deal with copyright issues, at the same time it was also worrying that almost 33% of the respondents were not aware of any copyright policy exist in their institution. Over 90% of the Nigerian librarians studied were of the opinion that institutional copyright policy was of very much necessary for libraries and cultural institutions. With growing digital content and licensing agreement for accessing scholarly resources through publishers and

other e-resource vendors, it has become important to have copyright policy at the institutional level to negotiate and provide access to digital scholarly content without any copyright restrictions or violation. More than three-fourths of the respondents indicated that their institutions had the resources protected by copyrights. When it was asked about, was there any person in-charge of dealing with copyright issues in their institutions only 27.06% respondents answered yes and 35.29% of the respondents have said that there was no person in their institution responsible for copyright issues. This result shows that most of the Nigerian libraries and cultural institutions have not had a person who could exclusively look after copyright issues.

Table 4: Copyright Policy at Institutional Level

Features	Yes	%	No	%	I am not Aware	%
Do you have a copyright policy or internal regulations in your institution?	41	48.24%	16	18.82%	28	32.94%
Do you think institutional copyright policy is necessary for libraries and other cultural institutions?	78	91.76%	3	3.53%	4	4.71%
Does your institution (library, archive, museum etc.) possess resources protected by copyright and related rights?	64	75.29%	9	10.58%	12	14.11
Is there a person in your institution in charge of dealing with copyright issues in particular?	23	27.06%	30	35.29%	32	37.65%

Knowledge of National Copyright Policy

Table 5 shows respondents' knowledge of the national copyright policy in Nigeria. The survey results showed that over one-half of the respondents had a high level of knowledge of national copyright policy in Nigeria. However, over one-third of the Nigerian librarians had limited knowledge of the national copyright policy in Nigeria. A small fraction of the

respondents (2.36%) were not aware if there was a national copyright policy in their country. Compared to Table 2, where nearly 90% of respondents indicated that they had knowledge of national copyright policy, this finding indicates that only about two-thirds actually had such knowledge (again indicating the possible presence of a Dunning-Kruger effect).

Table 5: Knowledge of National Copyright Policy in Nigeria

Knowledge of National Copyright Policy in Nigeria	Numbers (n=85)	Percentage (n=85)
High Knowledge/Awareness	53	62.40%
Limited Knowledge/ Awareness	30	35.30
No Knowledge/Awareness	02	2.35%

When it was further examined how knowledgeable the Nigerian Librarians were about their national copyright policy, it was found that 60% of the respondents were aware about copyright exceptions for private use, educational, scientific and research purpose as shown in Table 6. Almost similar percentage (58.82%) of the Nigerian librarians were aware about copyright relaxation for exceptions for libraries, museums and archives and right for

librarians to provide modified copies (e.g., converting books or other resources into braille) copies of works to serve the need of the visually impaired patrons. Only 24.71% of the respondents knew about the duration of copyright protection for books and other copyright protected materials and 11.76% were aware of copyright related matters about orphan works.

Table 6: Librarians Awareness about Specific National Copyright Legislation Provisions

Features	Numbers (n=85)	Percentage (n=85)
Exceptions for private use, educational, scientific and research purposes	51	60.00%
Exceptions for libraries, educational institutions, museums and archives	50	58.82%
Rights for librarians to provide modified copies of works to serve the needs of visual impaired patrons	50	58.82%
Duration of copyright protection	21	24.71%
Orphan works (e.g. compulsory license or limitation of liability)?	10	11.76%

Inclusion of Copyright/IPR Issues in LIS Curriculum and Continuing Education

Almost all the 98.82% respondents in the survey opined that inclusion of copyright and IPR issues in LIS curriculum and cultural heritage science education was very necessary. All respondents agreed that it was necessary to include copyright/IPR issues both in continuing education of LIS and cultural heritage professionals. The overwhelming response indicates the importance of knowledge of copyright and IPR issues for librarians working in Nigeria

The word cloud (Figure 1) indicates the topics that should be included in LIS curriculum and Cultural Science Education as suggested by the respondents. Out of the 85 respondents who answered this question, a plurality of them (30.58%) suggested that copyright law should be included in both LIS curriculum and cultural science education. Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) was another domain that was highly recommended, by 22.35%

of the respondents. Digital rights management, plagiarism, fair use or dealing, publishing and privacy were some of the other topics which were highly suggested by the Nigerian Librarians in this survey for the inclusion in the LIS and Cultural Science Education curriculum. Figure 1 shows the topics that have been suggested by the participants in the survey. In the Figure, the larger the word in the visual the more frequently the topic was suggested by the respondents.

The suggested topics in the survey provide a snapshot of lack of inclusion of copyright related issues in LIS and Cultural Science Education curriculum in the Nigerian LIS schools. Most of the topics suggested by the respondents were of introductory concepts of copyright and IPR. Nigerian LIS schools and Cultural Science Education programme managers could consider using World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) and other copyright related organisations at national and international levels in developing course content on IPR and copyright.



Figure 1: Word Cloud of Topics Suggested by the Respondents to Include in LIS Curriculum & Cultural Heritage Science Education (created using worditout.com)

Discussion

This study examined copyright literacy awareness and familiarity among Nigerian librarians. The findings of the study provide some significant insights with regard to Nigerian librarians' copyright literacy skills and may also help Nigerian LIS and cultural heritage Science Education institutions to embark on new initiatives to incorporate copyright literacy skills in LIS and Cultural Science Education curriculum to deal with emerging copyright and intellectual property rights issues.

Respondents to this survey appear to have a moderate level of awareness of general copyright issues, though they also tend to overrate their own skills and likely could benefit from more training on these general concepts. Emerging copyright topics, like copyleft, appear to be less well-known among these respondents, which could present challenges if library patrons – students and faculty – have questions about these concepts. Expanding training in these areas should be a priority for Nigerian librarians and educational institutions.

This study found that Nigerian librarians are familiar with emerging open science concepts such as open data, open access and open educational resources, copyright related institutions at national level, digitisation, copyright issues involved in developing institutional repositories, fair use, and licensing for information sources. Librarians' involvement in licensing agreements with content providers or publishers and providing information under fair use policies in their day to day work environment made them very familiar with these concepts. Similar to previous studies (Hossain, 2020), Nigerian librarians were also less familiar with clearing rights, copy-left, orphan works, and out of print works. Studies after studies have found that LIS professionals in other countries were also not familiar with copy-left, orphan works, and out of print materials related to copyright issues.

Most of the respondents in this survey were of the opinion that copyright/intellectual property rights issues must be included in LIS and cultural heritage science education curriculum and also part of continuing education of LIS and cultural heritage professionals. Some of the topics suggested by the Nigerian librarians in the survey are: copyright law,

intellectual property rights, digital rights management, plagiarism, fair use and publishing and privacy. The topics suggested by the Nigerian librarians in the inclusion of LIS and cultural heritage science education curriculum is a clear indication of lack of general awareness of copyright and IPR. Nigerian librarians suggested that organising training programmes, thematic workshops, panels and conferences and online courses through distance education would be useful for continuing education on copyright issues to keep update with the latest development in the field. The survey participants have also suggested for copyright and IPR related case studies could be included in the curriculum so that they would have practical experience or exposure in handling copyright and IPR related issues in the ever-changing information ecosystem with technological interventions.

Conclusion

The findings of the study align with those of previous studies of copyright literacy in other countries and, similar to these studies, emphasise the imperative for Nigerian libraries and librarians to enhance or improve upon the awareness of copyright concepts. Having a key role in the understanding of copyright for published materials within the country, librarians are expected to enforce policy as well as inform others, which is challenging when these professionals lack such knowledge themselves. This study has illuminated clear areas upon which educational programmes can develop or evolve their copyright instruction, such as licensing, copyleft, clearing rights, copyright for out-of-print and orphaned works, institutional copyright policy, and general intellectual property rights. LIS schools and cultural heritage science education programmes may enrich their curriculum by adding one, or multiple, courses on the topic of copyright and incorporating these important emerging topics into their lessons. Practising librarians may also seek out continuing education opportunities, while professional development organisations like the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) and the Nigerian Library Association (NLA) may work to promote these educational opportunities for its membership.

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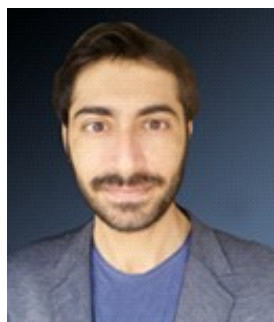
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