UKSG

Copyright life hacks for librarians

Librarians are continuously looking for new ways to make the training they offer accessible and engaging to both colleagues and users. One area where this is especially important is copyright – a topic many librarians identify as vital to their role, but they often find it hard to attend training. Cambridge University Libraries has introduced a range of methods to reach out to even the most reluctant copyright learner and improve the overall copyright literacy of its staff. This article showcases these methods in the form of 'life hacks' – simple measures which can be implemented with little or no cost and using existing resources.

Methods outlined include making the best use of knowledge already present within your organisation, using visual methods to attract a new audience and creating interactive online resources. Also discussed is the importance of making copyright training accessible, both to users with disabilities and those who may have constraints on their time and technological ability. The article concludes with a reflection about the challenges faced whilst creating new resources. The techniques outlined in this case study can be adapted for use by a range of libraries no matter the target audience.
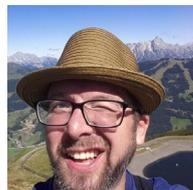
CLAIRE SEWELL

Research Support
Librarian
Betty & Gordon
Moore Library
University of
Cambridge

JOHN CLARKE

Senior Library
Assistant
School of Technology
Libraries Support
Cambridge University
Libraries

AMY THEOBALD

Research Support
Assistant
Physical Sciences
University of
Cambridge

What is a life hack?

As this article is being written, the world is in the grip of the COVID-19 pandemic. People are finding new and inventive ways to perform tasks they took for granted a few months ago and the resulting 'life hacks' seem to be everywhere. Defined by Australian journalist Michael Kozoil as 'all about eliminating life's manifold frustrations in simple and deliciously clever ways',[1] life hacks are, at their core, tips which can help you to use the resources at hand to achieve what you need. Anyone who has ever had responsibility for improving the copyright literacy of library staff may well see it as *one of life's manifold frustrations*. Many library staff rate copyright knowledge as important to their roles[2] but it can be a struggle to get them to attend training sessions. With the current pandemic situation making formal education opportunities impossible at a time when copyright knowledge is needed more than ever, how can we educate our colleagues? At the University of Cambridge there has been a recent push towards creating a variety of online engagement tools to encourage even the most reluctant of staff to engage in copyright literacy. The life hacks detailed below outline some of these methods and showcase how other institutions can adapt them to their local circumstances.

'copyright knowledge is needed more than ever'

1. Make use of existing expertise

With budgets at best static and many staff already at capacity, it is important not to reinvent the wheel. Anyone planning copyright literacy initiatives should first look at the existing expertise present within their institution both in terms of knowledge and materials, as they are likely to find many pockets of local expertise which can be harnessed in a new way. At a large and siloed institution such as Cambridge there are many pockets of existing copyright knowledge amongst staff, even if this is not an official part of their job description. In 2018 the Cambridge University Libraries Copyright Group (CULCG) was established to harness this knowledge and provide a central reference point for questions. The group is made up of representatives from both libraries and other departments in order to capture the common questions received from many different types of user. This cross representation also ensures that all aspects of copyright are covered, from dealing with the Copyright Licensing Agency (CLA) return to queries regarding researchers signing publication agreements.

> 'first look at the existing expertise present within their institution'

There are several advantages to this approach for both group members and the wider Cambridge community. As copyright is such a wide-ranging topic it is impossible to find many people who are experts in every facet. Bringing a cross-institutional group such as this together allows us to achieve a level of synergy we would struggle to reach alone. For example, a question involving intellectual property rights and publication agreements may ordinarily be covered by one person who has a specialist knowledge of one component. Bringing the question to the group allows experts in both to discuss it and reach the best answer. As well as helping to answer the question this discussion works almost as a community of practice which allows all group members to deepen their copyright understanding.

> 'copyright is such a wide-ranging topic it is impossible to find many people who are experts in every facet'

Another major benefit of the group dynamic is that it provides a central reference point for any copyright questions. Although the University has a Legal Services Division with a copyright specialist, many of the queries received did not require such a high level of attention. In practice, librarians fielding queries for users, or with questions of their own, would e-mail colleagues who they thought might know the answer. This resulted in extended query times and relied on an inefficient personal network. The CULCG can collect copyright queries in one central place and use them to inform education.

> 'collect copyright queries in one central place and use them to inform education'

The most visible outcome of the CULCG has been the creation of a LibGuide aimed at researchers[3] (see Figure 1).
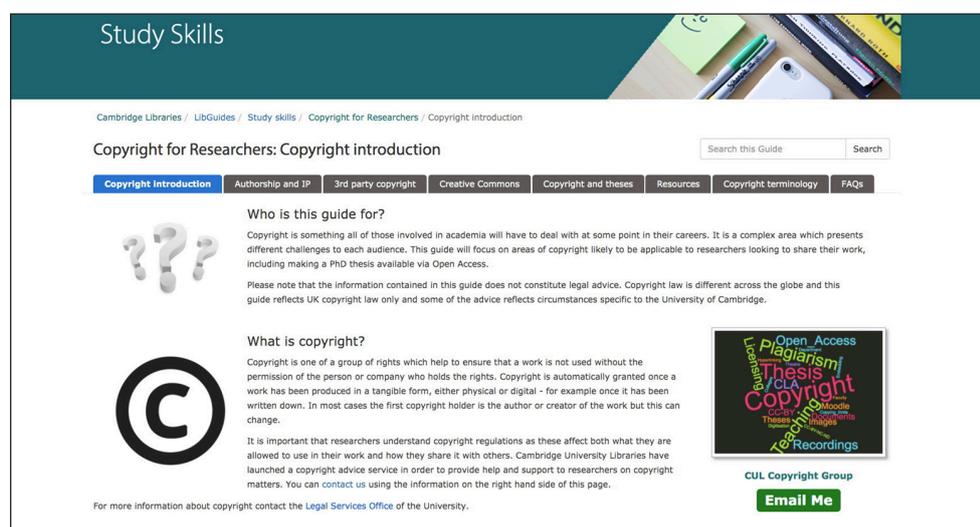

Figure 1. Copyright for Researchers LibGuide

Although web pages exist across the University outlining various aspects of copyright, this guide allows us to outline the answers to key questions in one place. Currently, the guide focuses on researchers but there are plans for further content, addressing the needs of staff and students. This will offer a central place for library users to find the copyright information they need in a format which is familiar to them. Having a single online presence for copyright has become especially important during situations such as the COVID-19 crisis, as people are working remotely and need somewhere central and accessible for guidance.

2. Try new formats

Many institutions rely on delivering copyright education as a traditional face-to-face session, but this is not always the best format in terms of practicality or engagement. Copyright can be a complex and dry topic and even an interactive workshop can struggle to communicate information to attendees. At Cambridge we have had moderate success with introducing elements of gamification such as the Creative Commons Card Game[4] (which introduces the concept of building a Creative Commons licence to learners), but still often find engagement is low with staff who are not confident in their copyright knowledge.

> 'Copyright can be a complex and dry topic'

It can also be difficult for many staff to dedicate time to training. Cambridge has over 100 geographically dispersed libraries and, with travel time, attending even a one-hour session can involve a half-day commitment.

As a direct result of understanding this, we began hosting regular webinars on copyright and associated topics. Initially these were produced using Adobe Connect but as the University was not able to continue its subscription, we have moved on to tools such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom. The webinars can be viewed either live or at a later date, which helps to address the time commitment issue. We tried to build elements of interactivity into these webinars to benefit live attendees but this also needed to be balanced with the needs of those consuming content asynchronously. These webinars lasted 45 to 60 minutes and aimed to directly replicate the content from in-person sessions.

> 'We tried to build elements of interactivity into these webinars to benefit live attendees'

One of the most important lessons we learned from creating these webinars is that most people are unlikely to watch a one-hour session unless they have a special interest in the topic. One solution to this was to provide a time stamp to the video content which allowed viewers to skip to the relevant section for their needs (see Figure 2).

Topics and timings:
Copyright primer 0:58
What is Creative Commons? 4:48
Anatomy of a Creative Commons licence 9:07
Using Creative Commons licences 18:50

Figure 2. Time-stamped index for YouTube video

Downloadable transcripts were offered as default for all webinars to aid those unable to access video content, but we also offered audio versions of many sessions. Recorded using free online tools such as Anchor,[5] these recordings are shorter and more informal in nature. Operating as a podcast, they allow learners to access the content at a convenient time and we found that people were listening to recordings at their desks whilst doing other work, which was a great way to make copyright information accessible to those who may not attend training.

> 'Downloadable transcripts were offered as default for all webinars'

When thinking about adapting any training to an online format such as webinars, librarians need to consider the formats they choose and whether they best fit the needs of their intended audience. It is also important to be prepared to change this if necessary. Webinars were implemented in Cambridge as an easy way to address concerns about attending in-person sessions but this straight replacement did not solve as many problems as we anticipated.

3. Keep it short and accessible

The issues experienced with transitioning to webinars led us to think in more depth about how we could use videos to improve copyright literacy. Video marketing is a growing trend and research suggests that people retain more information by watching a video than through other forms of instruction.[6] As a result, our next step towards developing copyright literacy was to create several short videos covering key copyright concepts such as fair dealing and Creative Commons licences. Known as Moore Minutes[7] (after the library where we are based), these videos explain the concept in roughly 60 seconds using a mixture of text and images.

This was a deliberate choice over the more traditional talking heads format – the on-screen text means that the videos can be viewed without sound and they can be easily created or altered without the need to set aside extra time for filming. The videos were created using a freely available online tool called Lumen5[8] which allows users to easily adapt existing textual content, such as blog posts, to video format.

Preparation of the Moore Minute videos involves drafting the text, selecting an appropriate background image for each slide and adjusting transitions to ensure that the viewer has enough time to read the text. This simple process means multiple videos can be made in a day, unlike more labour-intensive webinars. Their shortness also forces us to really think about the key information we need to communicate about a particular topic, a useful reflective exercise.

Another benefit of these videos is their adaptability as they can be embedded in a range of both in-person and online content such as a slide deck or a LibGuide. They can also be shared directly on social media and it is here where we have seen the most benefit. The videos act as an advertisement for other resources we offer and help to start a conversation about copyright. Sharing the videos via Twitter resulted in an average of 600 views per video and a corresponding interest in other resources. Part of the appeal of these videos is undoubtedly how short they are. In a world where everyone is under increased time pressure, being able to learn something in a short space of time helps to increase engagement.

4. Make it visual

Another method we have successfully increased engagement with is the creation of a range of static visual resources. Copyright resources are usually text heavy due to the sheer amount of complex information which needs to be communicated. However, a dense wall of text can be off-putting to someone who is not already interested in copyright, so we challenged ourselves to make copyright visually interesting.

To do this we used another freely available tool called Canva.[9] A graphic design site, Canva allowed us to use templates and images to create a range of content. Although it offers paid-for options it also contains a wide selection of free features which we used in two projects – the Moore About guides and Instagram stories and posts.

The Moore About guides are a series of four-page booklets covering various research support topics including copyright. Each one follows the same format – a full-page image, a visual list of information and links to other appropriate sources, as shown in Figure 3.

'librarians need to consider the formats they choose and whether they best fit the needs of their intended audience'

'on-screen text means that the videos can be viewed without sound'

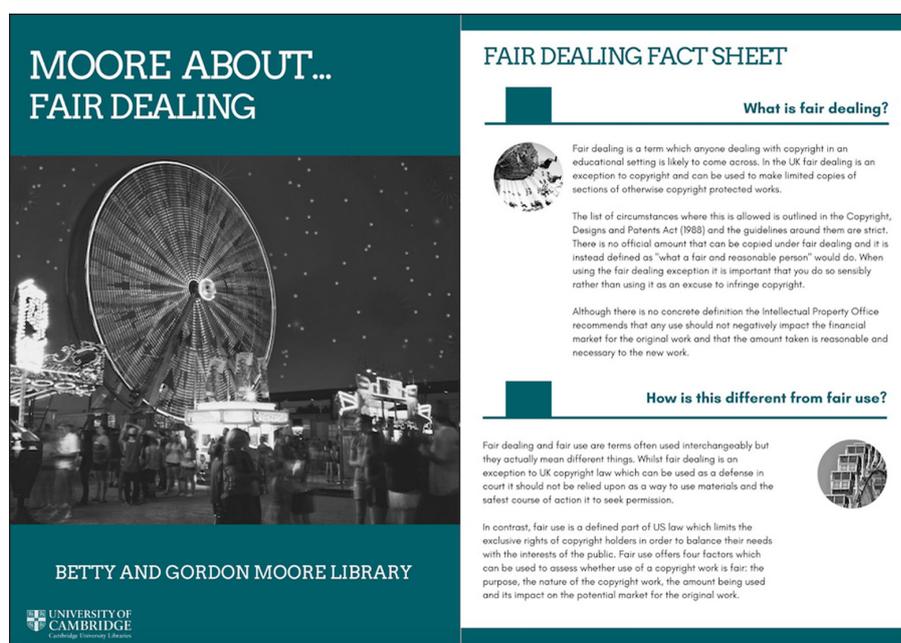'we challenged ourselves to make copyright visually interesting'

Figure 3. Moore About guide

These guides can be viewed online either as a PDF document or through an embedded reader or they can be printed out and used as takeaway materials at in-person events. Although the guides do allow for the inclusion of more information than some of our other resources, content still needs to be carefully planned to ensure that the most important points are adequately explained to avoid ambiguity. We were surprised by the popularity of these guides, which have been viewed over 3,000 times. The fact that they do not look like typical, text-heavy copyright information helps to broaden their appeal and they also offer a chance to cross-promote our other copyright literacy resources. Much of the information in the guides is adapted from our existing resources but a more visually appealing format increases the likelihood that people will read it.

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The Instagram stories and posts are an extension of this visual adaptation of information. Visual marketing has grown in popularity in recent years and Instagram is one of the best known examples of this, with over one billion global users a month.[10] Users post carefully constructed images showcasing their daily lives – not the immediate choice for posts on copyright. We used the Instagram Stories feature to import the Moore Minutes videos to our Instagram profile. These stories usually only display for 24 hours, but by using the Story Highlight feature, we were able to 'pin' them to our profile homepage and make a permanent, visually appealing feature of them (see Figure 4).
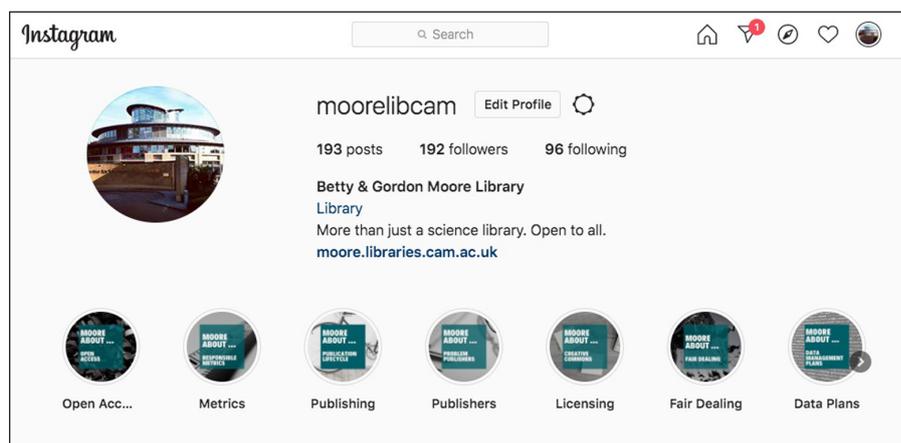

Figure 4. Instagram story highlights

We also used the Instagram multiple-images feature to display a slideshow of images outlining key concepts such as Creative Commons and fair dealing.[11] Each multiple-images post allows a maximum of ten images, including title cards, so information has to be further condensed from other formats (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Instagram story

The biggest challenge we faced with both the guides and Instagram stories and posts was balancing the visual appeal of content with sharing appropriate information. As anyone who has delivered copyright information will know, the language used to outline legislation and exceptions needs to be carefully chosen to avoid confusion. With reduced space to use to communicate this information in both resources, we needed to carefully plan the content. This approach resulted in breaking down longer copyright topics into multiple resources. For example, a single guide on copyright exceptions could become four or five Instagram stories each focusing on a single exception. The responses have been overwhelmingly positive. In fact, in just one week, we recorded over 6,000 engagements with our various new short-form visual resources (see Figure 6).

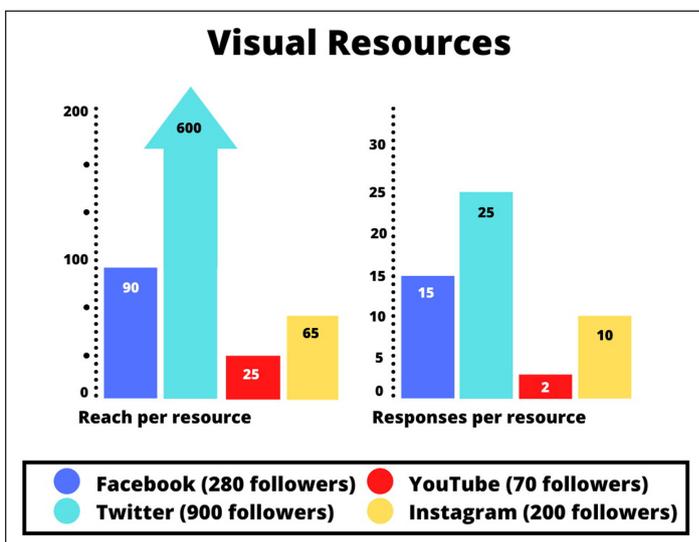'This approach resulted in breaking down longer copyright topics into multiple resources'

Figure 6. Visual resources impact statistics

This scaling down has also made the content easier to reuse in other training initiatives and provides easy-to-use resources as we migrate to increased online teaching. Although the images were originally designed for Instagram they can be used across a wide variety of platforms and in a similar way to the Moore Minute videos. These can be used to start a wider conversation about copyright with users who may not seek out copyright training themselves. Although we are still at an early stage with using Instagram in this way, we have plans to develop the format and create more stories and posts following the same templates.

'scaling down has also made the content easier to reuse in other training initiatives'

5. Make the content relevant

However the content is reused to develop resources for library staff, it is important to make it relevant to their roles and what they need to know about copyright. It can be difficult to engage reluctant learners with copyright and teaching them a range of extra background theory is not an effective use of resources.

At Cambridge we have tried hard to build relevance to local context into all our approaches to copyright literacy. The cross library CULCG helps with this as it offers perspectives from a range of stakeholders and allows us to compile queries from users across the Cambridge system to better inform our training provision. One example of this is the Research Support Ambassador programme – an online open educational resource aimed at developing library staff research support skills.[12] Copyright literacy is a major component of this skill set and the programme features a dedicated copyright module. As well as bringing together the previously discussed resources with new content, each module contains activities to encourage learners to relate the concepts to their own circumstances (visible in the 'Think about…' boxes in Figure 7).

'each module contains activities to encourage learners to relate the concepts to their own circumstances'

Figure 7. Research Support Ambassador: Copywrong to Copyright module

This applied learning approach helps to add context and relevance to what could otherwise be an abstract and theory-heavy topic. Applied or experiential learning 'places the emphasis on students' active integration of subject knowledge and learning'[13] and learners are encouraged to apply the concepts they are studying to situations encountered in their daily roles in order to solidify learning. We have found that offering learners this opportunity helps to engage them on copyright topics and prompts them to seek out further information. Although we are still at an early stage with this resource and have yet to carry out formal assessment, anecdotal evidence suggests staff are referring to the resource, especially when they need a refresher on certain topics. Creating scenarios for learners to work through does not have to be complex and examples can often be found in the real questions which librarians receive from their users, further aiding relation to real life circumstances.

'learners are encouraged to apply the concepts they are studying to situations encountered in their daily roles'

Lessons learned

One of the crucial elements of any successful life hack is that it fulfils a need using readily available items. All of the measures outlined above have been implemented using free tools or expertise that was already present within the organisation, something important to note when many library services are operating under restricted budgets. Although it would be tempting to look at the range of paid-for tools which are available, it is important not to overlook the resources already available in the rush to try the latest technology fad.

'All of the measures outlined above have been implemented using free tools or expertise'

Another lesson learned was the importance of considering all aspects of accessibility, both in terms of ability and format choice. Videos and images are visually appealing but they do not work for all, for example those working at a service desk may not be able to access this type of content at work, leaving them with an uncomfortable choice about access. Transcripts for all video content are provided as a default but it is also worth looking at alternative means of access such as audio versions of content. It is important to remember that access needs may change over time and that your provision should change accordingly.

'the importance of considering all aspects of accessibility'

Although we introduced webinars in direct response to a need identified by those who could not attend in-person sessions, once the novelty had passed we found that staff were equally unable to make time to watch a webinar, so we had to look at alternative (shorter) formats. When planning any training initiative, it is important to think realistically about the time your colleagues will have to devote to it, especially if the topic is not a core element of their role. Producing short, bite-sized resources which can be adapted to a range of situations is often a better investment of time than working to replicate existing training in a new format.

Our final lesson was to include elements of interaction wherever possible. It is tempting, especially when dealing with online resources, to rely on passive learning but this is not the best way to teach a complex concept such as copyright. Relating core copyright concepts to the tasks which learners undertake in their everyday roles can help to both embed learning and spark unexpected but no less useful connections.

'it is important to think realistically about the time your colleagues will have to devote to it'

However you choose to hack your own copyright literacy provision, you will find ways which work and ways which are less successful in your own circumstances. If the latter is the case, then please do not give up. The most ingenious of life hacks come from finding the courage to try something new and a little different in order to meet your objective and you may find the ideal way to engage your colleagues already exists right under your nose.

Abbreviations and Acronyms
A list of the abbreviations and acronyms used in this and other *Insight*s articles can be accessed here – click on the URL below and then select the 'full list of industry A&As' link: **http://www.uksg.org/publications#aa**.

Competing Interests
The authors have declared no competing interests.

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Corresponding author:
Claire Sewell
Research Support Librarian
Betty & Gordon Moore Library
University of Cambridge, GB
E-mail: ces43@cam.ac.uk
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1669-7861

Co-authors:
John Clarke
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1558-9845

Amy Theobald
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8581-3670