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Desperately Seeking Copyright -- Paper vs. Digital: Paper Still Reigns in the Digital Decade

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Desperately Seeking Copyright — Paper vs. Digital: Paper Still Reigns in the Digital Decade

by Edward Colleran (Director, Publisher Relations, Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.) <ecolleran@copyright.com>

Personally, I read many more articles from the printed page than my computer screen. I'll bet you do, too. While the Internet has fueled an enormous boom in the accessibility, consumption and redistribution of information, according to a recent study sponsored by Copyright Clearance Center, most workers still consume the bulk of their on-the-job reading information from paper sources rather than from their desktop computer screens. Whether this is due to long entrenched habit or other reasons, our survey results are clear — and somewhat surprising: U.S. knowledge workers today obtain three quarters of their daily intake of information from paper documents and only one quarter from e-mail, Web sites, document delivery services or other digital sources.

For publishers and librarians who share an interest in knowing what workers are reading and their primary method of access, the growth of Internet content use appears to be at the expense of print media, rather than print consumption. In other words, the Internet is impacting distribution, making it easier to distribute content, and, in turn, making it more difficult to enforce copyright compliance.

As a result, print rightsholders need effective ways to protect their intellectual property in the digital age, and to do it well. Instead of rushing to clamp an indiscriminate lockdown on copyrighted content, publishers are exploring flexible digital rights management tools that offer a range of access and pricing options for different end-user requirements. The result: improved publisher control and wider consumer access, a win/win all around. Publishers who overreact to the threat of copyright infringement and shy away from the Internet arena may in so doing, bypass a rich source of potential new readers and new revenues, stunting their future growth as a result.

Now for the details from our recent survey:

- According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the U.S. has 141 million full-time workers. One third — 48 million — are classified as “knowledge workers,” or white-collar workers who read printed information regularly in the course of their jobs.

- Sixteen million U.S. employees work for corporations with licensing agreements through Copyright Clearance Center, the only U.S. reproduction rights organization (RRO) for processing text-based rightsholder authorizations for copyrighted works. Like the U.S. workforce overall, approximately one third of employees at CCC-licensed corporations are classified as knowledge workers, or approximately 5 million.

The above statistics about the U.S. workforce at large were compiled for Copyright Clearance Center by an independent research group and summarized in CCC's 2002 Corporate Information Consumption Survey. The research firm, Cahners In-Stat Group, solicited participants for the online survey via e-mail and telephone, tallying responses from 350 employees from 300 corporations in 18 industries and 10 job classifications. Respondents worked for a range of small, medium and large corporations, collectively providing sufficient volume and diversity to project the results on an aggregate level.

With many knowledge workers employed by corporations without copyright licensing agreements, it's reasonable to deduce that a considerable quantity of unauthorized reproduction of copyrighted materials is occurring. How much and how frequently, however, is anyone's guess.

So what are these knowledge workers reading and how much are they reading each day?

CCC's survey revealed that knowledge workers:

- Read an average of 26 pages a day.
- Consume primarily original paper documents (63 percent of total) and photocopies (14 percent), with the remaining 23 percent from all other sources (e-mail, publisher Web sites, online services, CD-ROM, document delivery, PDA, etc.).

- Peruse primarily periodicals (57 percent of copyrighted materials), followed by scientific, technical and medical (STM) publications (23 percent) and books, directories and reference materials (20 percent).

- Purchase online content in impressive numbers: 14 million knowledge workers (30 percent of the 48 million U.S. knowledge workers) have made one or more online purchases and nearly 2 million are “power consumers” with online purchases from six or more sources; and

continued on page 93
Paper vs. Digital:
from page 92

- Download multimedia content on the job in large numbers (60 percent of knowledge workers have downloaded at least one audio or video file for work purposes and 11 percent are frequent “downloa..." of multimedia content).

Company size is one factor which affects the form in which information is consumed by knowledge workers. Those in small firms rely on original sources the most, while those in middle-sized firms rely on photocopies. The image of a corporate librarian photocopying articles for general distribution comes to mind. Knowledge workers in large firms, on the other hand, rely more heavily on commercial online services and/or e-mail to disseminate information.

Perhaps surprisingly, knowledge workers across the board obtain more than 75 percent of their daily information from original sources or photocopies (63 percent from original sources and 14 percent from photocopies), irrespective of industry. Furthermore, even in the 20% or so of information consumed from digital sources, no industry is significantly more “digital” than another. A breakdown by job function, however, is quite another story. Information “super users,” such as market researchers and corporate librarians, for example, turn to digital resources far more frequently than their counterparts in IT, HR or research and development.

We also observed that the 35-44 year-old group led the workforce in use of digital media, with younger workers under 25 coming in second and older workers, as would be expected, turning to digital media the least. A reasonable inference from these facts, which would appear to contradict expectations, is that the middle group outstrips its younger counterparts because the “middlers” have advanced higher up the job ladder.

Intranets, however, win even less acclaim. Although nearly all large companies have implemented intranets as their major internal communication vehicle, only a third of respondents said intranets had “substantially improved” their productivity. An interesting note from a publisher’s perspective: companies are not using intranets to disseminate copyrighted articles but rather as a very basic communication medium.

In the academic arena, a second study sponsored by Copyright Clearance Center tells a similar story: digital content use is on the rise, but paper remains dominant. We interviewed over 500 librarians, professors, academic deans or administrative staff and bookstore cop... owners, at a range of 2-4 year colleges, as well as master’s and doctorate level universities across the country. These interviews revealed the following insights:

- College and university staff report that digital tools and content have been adopted to conduct classes (45% of respondents), disseminate information (27%), and administer tests (15%).
- Nearly 39% of professors report that they post teaching materials online. Yet a minority still deems digital content as either not at all important (30%) or they purposely avoid digital content (5%).

So what picture emerges from all these data—and what are the implications for the publishers and librarians?

First, it’s clear that corporate America still relies primarily on original documents and photocopies for the majority of its information; therefore, as stated above, publishers still have time to develop the tools and strategies to protect their intellectual property from unauthorized and uncompensated digital use.

Second, Internet use for data acquisition continues to climb, albeit at a slower rate than in earlier years. We won’t know how much Internet/intranet use is growing now until we obtain and analyze the results from a subsequent survey, sometime in mid-2003. But it’s clear that digital content is far more convenient to access, store and distribute and, therefore, will continue to grow at the expense of print media.

Third, the Internet has increased the demand for content from all sources, digital and nondigital, a trend that will certainly continue. Fourth, the volume of online content purchases appears to be growing at a healthy clip, but, like the apparent boom in overall Internet usage, we’ll have to wait until the next survey results are in before we can assess this definitively.

Adventures in Librarianship — Reality
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Cable Television's most iconiclastic station, the ATG Network, is planning to bombard its summer audience this year with reality shows that are sure to please.

In June, prepare yourself for “Sweat Shop.” ATG cameramen spent two months in the highly dysfunctional and very amusing Technical Services office of Morfify College’s Bantering Library. Have there ever been catalogers so canterous? Has there ever been an acquisitions office so parochial? I doubt it. Throw in a handful of territorial preservation technicians and a soul-mouthed, gumpy systems administrator and you’ve got yourself the makings of a hit show! Where did they find these people?

Keep an eye out for “Lib Cribs” in August, when ATG will take you inside the homes of famous librarians. You’ll love the two-bedroom bungalow that Dr. Samuel Prudent, dean of Darkmound University’s Fraught Memorial Library, calls home. Its slate-tiled entrance hall and blackened stone fireplace are warm and inviting. Dr. Prudent himself will guide you through his plans to install indoor plumbing next year. Missy Sooner, from New York’s PL 480 will show off her half-bedroom pied-a-terre with its magnificent view of room 603 in the Hotel Metro. And you won’t want to miss the improvised cardboard and sheetrock abode designed and built by Malachy Esposito of Underling Library fame. Its setting, under the Interstate 57 bridge, is certainly unique and probably illegal.

“Book ‘Em” will follow the adventures of Chicago Public Library’s famous Library Police squad. Ride along as they use handwriting analysis to expose a dangerous margin-writing scheme. Visit their DNA lab as Sergeant Piller tries to unravel the mystery of the missing Newsweek issue. Watch Detective Dolores Hunt confront an indignant patron who refuses to put current newspapers back where he found them. The dedicated men and women of Chicago’s Library Police leave no stone unturned!

“Survival Ex Libris” takes six academic librarians from Yale and dumbs them in a small town public library somewhere in Idaho. Their challenge? To organize and conduct a book sale for the locals without condescension. To hold a Friends of the Library meeting without using bibliographic jargon. To weed the collection without throwing away all the romance novels (which proves hilarious). With the help of Yale’s Whos will be voted out of the library first? After reviewing the first show, my vote goes for Robert, the didactic engineering reference librarian who can’t abide cooperative assignments. But I’ll hedge my bet with the lovely Arianna, whose Ph.D. in physics doesn’t seem to lessen her frustration with shelf list cards and the Dewey Decimal system.

ATG is promoting this summer season line-up as a new approach in niche-market programming. CEO Katina Strach told her executive staff that “this daring and innovative schedule will surely boost ATG beyond Fox and Warner... or you’ll all be looking for new jobs come September.”

Back Talk
from page 94

do they print, publish or sell such publications. It is critical that libraries continue to select, catalogue, circulate and preserve materials that discuss all points of view. Our students and teachers, indeed all of our citizens, need the freedom to read, think and ponder the important issues of our time. We look forward to additional open and free discussion of Article 23 and to being able to see the exact language of Basic Law 23. We congratulate the Government for taking this very positive step forward.

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