

## LIBRARIAN PARTICIPATION IN COPYRIGHT EDUCATION AND SERVICE DELIVERY IN AN INFORMATION AGE

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**ABSTRACT:** In the digital information environment, librarians are uniquely positioned to lead copyright education and to design services that both enable lawful access and protect creators' rights. This paper argued that librarians must move from passive compliance to proactive leadership in copyright literacy, policy formation, and practical service design. Drawing on international policy statements and recent empirical studies from Nigeria (including Rivers State), It identify structural barriers, outline a practical agenda for libraries, and offer policy recommendations to university and library leaders. The argument stresses capacity building, institutional coordination, and measurable outcomes as essential to sustainable copyright education and service delivery. The discussion identifies training gaps, policy fragmentation, resource limitations, and rapid technological change as core barriers. A practical agenda, including the establishment of Copyright & Scholarly Communication Units, modular copyright curricula, train-the-trainer programmes, workflow checkpoints, and measurable evaluation is proposed. Policy recommendations emphasize institutional recognition and funding. The paper concludes that empowering librarians in copyright literacy and service innovation is ethically necessary and strategically advantageous for knowledge societies.

**Keywords:** Copyright Literacy; Librarianship; Rivers State; Intellectual Property; Scholarly Communication; Digital Libraries.

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### INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has revolutionized the way knowledge is created, stored, accessed, and disseminated. In today's information age, libraries and librarians occupy a strategic position in promoting equitable access to information resources while ensuring respect for intellectual property rights. Copyright laws are essential legal instruments designed to protect the rights of creators, encourage innovation, and regulate the use of intellectual works in both print and digital formats (WIPO, 2023). As libraries increasingly migrate their collections and services to digital platforms, the issue of copyright compliance and education has become central to sustainable information management and service delivery (Okonkwo & Asogwa, 2020).

Librarians serve as information mediators and educators, ensuring users' ethical and legal use of information resources. Their participation in copyright education enables users like students, researchers and the public to understand how to use and share intellectual materials

responsibly (Kawooya & Sturges, 2019). In academic institutions, librarians play a vital role in guiding faculty and students on fair use, licensing, plagiarism prevention, and open access publishing (IFLA, 2022). Effective copyright literacy among librarians not only enhances service delivery but also promotes institutional integrity and compliance with national and international copyright laws (Ekoja & Ogbomo, 2019).

However, the proliferation of digital resources and online sharing platforms has complicated copyright enforcement and user education. Many library users still lack awareness of copyright laws, leading to rampant copyright infringements, unauthorized reproduction of works, and ethical dilemmas in resource utilization (Nwosu & Eze, 2021). Consequently, librarians are increasingly expected to balance user access with copyright obligations, a task that demands continuous professional development and institutional support in copyright education and policy implementation.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Global perspectives on copyright literacy**

International bodies consistently highlight copyright literacy as a core library function. IFLA's (2018) statement on copyright education emphasized that librarians must "teach, support, and advocate" for lawful use of works in learning and research. EIFL (2014) developed model policies to guide libraries in navigating copyright. WIPO (2005) linked library services with copyright awareness, highlighting their role in national knowledge economies.

Recent ACRL toolkits (2025) present copyright not only as legal compliance but also as a scholarly communication issue, urging libraries to guide authors through rights retention, licensing, and open access publishing.

### **African and Nigerian scholarship**

African scholarship on copyright literacy shows persistent gaps between awareness and practice. Studies in Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa report librarians' partial knowledge of copyright exceptions and underutilization of Creative Commons licenses (IFLA, 2022).

In Nigeria, empirical studies reveal moderate awareness among faculty and librarians but low confidence in applying copyright to digital services (Aguolu & Aguolu, 2017). Osuchukwu et al. (2022) found Library Information Science professionals had theoretical knowledge but struggled with applied issues like course pack creation and repository management.

### **Rivers State evidence base**

Local evidence provides nuanced insights like:

ICT competencies: Omehia and Okwu (2021) found Rivers State librarians competent in ICT and digital service adoption but noted limited integration of copyright policies in service delivery.

Repository practice: Ajayi et al. (2024) studied University of Port Harcourt's library and reported inconsistent application of copyright law in digital collections.

Entrepreneurship: Benibo and Bupo (2024) found that while academic staff in Rivers State universities understood intellectual property in theory, practical application for entrepreneurship was weak, implying a gap that librarians could fill via education.

Collectively, these findings suggest that Rivers State has the professional capacity and institutional structures such as Intellectual Property & Technology Transfer Offices (IPTTOs), but requires stronger librarian involvement in copyright education and service design.

### **Why librarians must lead copyright education**

Three practical reasons among others make librarians the logical leaders for campus copyright work:

Constant contact with users: Librarians teach information skills and support research workflows, so every interaction is a teachable moment for copyright. Institutional guidance is more likely to be used when delivered at point-of-need by a familiar local professional. Librarians interact daily with students, staff, and researchers, making them effective educators on copyright at point-of-need (IFLA, 2018).

Repository and scholarly-communication stewardship: Libraries manage repositories, advise on publishing agreements, and administer course reserves and digitization projects; each area requires copyright-aware decisions. Librarians can translate legal obligations into everyday procedures, for instance licensing choices, fair dealing evaluations, and deposit licenses. As custodians of repositories, course reserves, and digitization projects, librarians must make copyright-aware decisions (EIFL, 2014).

Public trust and neutrality: Libraries occupy a non-partisan space that supports both users' access needs and creators' rights, making them credible educators and policy mediators on campus. International guides from WIPO, EIFL and IFLA recommend library-led outreach and policy development. Libraries are perceived as neutral and trustworthy; they can mediate between institutional interests, user needs, and rights holders (WIPO, 2005).

These are not abstract points: recent analyses show that when librarians receive targeted training and remit for copyright work, institutional outcomes improve, which signifies more compliant repository deposits, better-constructed course packs, and reduced uncertainty among staff and students.

### **The Nigerian/Rivers State context: Evidence and Implications**

Empirical research from Nigeria and Rivers State highlights both need and potential:

- A national survey of Nigerian librarians reported varying levels of copyright awareness; so many librarians knew national law in broad terms but had lower familiarity with licensing models (e.g., copyleft) and digital exceptions, indicating gaps that training can address.
- Studies of academic libraries in Rivers State find good ICT competencies among many librarians but uneven application of emerging services (digital repositories, course pack

management), suggesting that technical readiness exists but needs complementary legal and policy skills.

- Research focused on the University of Port Harcourt and other Nigerian institutions documents inconsistent adoption of library copyright policies and variable collaboration between libraries and institutional legal/IP offices, and these are gaps that constrict effective copyright-aware service delivery.

Together, these studies imply a clear local mandate: Rivers State and Nigerian libraries have the human and technical building blocks for copyright leadership but require targeted capacity building, formal policy frameworks, and institutional recognition of librarians' copyright function.

## **BARRIERS TO LIBRARIAN PARTICIPATION**

### **Training and knowledge gaps**

Studies show that while librarians may know the basics of Nigerian Copyright Act, they lack applied skills in licensing, digital exceptions, and Creative Commons. This leads to uncertainty in repository deposits and teaching material preparation (Osuchukwu et al., 2022). Familiarity with statutory language does not automatically translate into practical licensing or repository management skills (e.g., choosing appropriate Creative Commons licences, negotiating author agreements, interpreting exceptions for online course delivery). Empirical surveys in Nigeria demonstrate these skill gaps.

### **Policy fragmentation**

Many universities lack campus-wide copyright policies. Where IPTTOs exist, they often operate independently from libraries, creating silos (Rivers State University, n.d.). Many institutions lack an integrated copyright policy that links teaching, repositories, and commercialization. Where IP or technology-transfer offices exist, collaboration with libraries is often ad hoc.

### **Resource constraints**

Librarians face limited professional development budgets, heavy workloads, and inadequate funding for copyright training and outreach. Libraries often operate under tight budgets and staff workloads; without dedicated time and funding, copyright education becomes episodic rather than systemic.

### **Legal and technological complexity**

Evolving copyright challenges such as AI, digital preservation, open data, outpace librarians' training (ACRL, 2025). Also, mass digitization, and evolving international treaties complicate the legal environment; librarians require continuing professional development to keep guidance current.

## **Behavioural patterns**

Students and some staff frequently engage in “accidental infringement,” such as duplicating course packs without permissions (Ajayi et al., 2024). Librarians can reduce these risks via targeted education.

## **A PRACTICAL AGENDA FOR LIBRARIES**

### **Establish Copyright & Scholarly Communication Units (CSCU)**

Units within libraries can coordinate copyright education, repository oversight, and policy advice. Starting with a dedicated librarian, they should liaise with IPTTOs and legal units. Create a Copyright & Scholarly Communication Unit (CSCU) inside the library with a clear mandate (training, policy advice, repository oversight). Start small (one dedicated librarian) and scale with measurable deliverables (number of workshops, repository checks). EIFL and IFLA provide templates and guidance for library copyright policies and units.

### **Develop modular copyright curricula**

Short, practical modules can be embedded in student orientation, faculty workshops, and research methods courses. Topics: basics of copyright, fair dealing, licensing, repositories, and commercialization. Develop a modular copyright curriculum for students, faculty, and administrative staff. Modules should be short, practical, and embedded into existing programmes (orientation, research-skills classes, pedagogy training). Use materials from IFLA, WIPO and ACRL as foundations and adapt them locally.

### **Train-the-trainer programmes**

National associations (e.g., Nigerian Library Association) should certify librarians as copyright trainers. This cascades knowledge across institutions. Run ‘train-the-trainer’ programmes so librarians become certified in campus copyright guidance, partner with national library associations, EIFL-type networks, or regional IP offices for accreditation and credibility.

### **Embed copyright checkpoints in workflows**

Repository forms should include license-selection checkboxes; grant submissions should require copyright compliance statements. Embed copyright checkpoints in research and teaching workflows. Simple actions such as repository deposit forms that include license selection, grant proposal checklists, and course pack sign-offs as it reduces risk and create teachable moments.

### **Monitor, evaluate, and publish outcomes**

Libraries should track workshop attendance, repository deposits, and licensing behavior. Publishing outcomes in local LIS journals sustains scholarly debate. Track workshop attendance, licensing choices, repository deposit rates, and incidents of infringement; publish findings in local LIS journals to build evidence and secure future funding. Local Nigerian scholars have modelled similar practice-research approaches in LIS.

## Policy recommendations for university leadership

- Adopt campus-wide copyright policies that integrate library, teaching, and research practices. Adopt a campus-wide copyright policy co-developed by library, legal, and academic units (IFLA/EIFL models).
- Provide dedicated budgets for copyright literacy and training. Fund a recurring copyright literacy programme within libraries (training, staff release time, outreach materials).
- Recognize copyright education in librarians' appraisal and promotion. Recognize copyright outreach in staff appraisal and promotion for librarians to professionalize the role.
- Strengthen collaboration between IPTTOs, legal units, and libraries.

## CONCLUSION

Copyright in the information age is not merely a legal restraint; it is an operational and pedagogical challenge that shapes access, reuse, and scholarly communication. Librarians, especially in Rivers State and across Nigeria hold the right mix of trust, proximity to users, and repository stewardship to lead copyright education. Realizing this potential requires focused capacity building, integrated policy work, and institutional recognition. When libraries lead on copyright literacy, campuses gain lawful, sustainable, and creative use of knowledge.

The information age demands proactive, copyright-literate librarianship. Rivers State libraries are well positioned but underutilized in copyright education and service delivery. By establishing copyright units, developing curricula, embedding checkpoints, and publishing outcomes, librarians can protect creators, empower users, and advance institutional goals. Librarian-led copyright education is not optional, but it is integral to ethical, lawful, and innovative knowledge societies.

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