

Book review

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Kevin L Smith and Erin L Ellis (eds), *Coaching copyright*, ALA Editions: Chicago, IL, 2019; 240 pp.: ISBN 9780838918487, US\$59.99 (pbk)

Reviewed by: Edgardo Civalero, *Coordinator de Biblioteca, Charles Darwin Foundation for the Galapagos Islands (CDF), Cordoba, Argentina*

Every day, librarians enforce copyright policies that we may disagree with and that, in some ways, run contrary to the values of our profession. . . . Every day, librarians must make a choice between doing what's easy, doing what's right, and determining what's right in the first place. No textbook or mission statement or policy document can relieve us of the necessity to make those decisions, nor remove the complexity of those decisions. That's why we are librarians and why librarians are professionals, not clerks. That's why we are stewards within the communities we serve, not servants to them. That's why we must shape the missions and the work of our organizations and communities, and not simply accept them. (Lankes, 2016: 52)

Since the uprising of the new digital paradigms governing and modelling the information universe, copyright has become one of its key features and one of the most complex, most debated and most contentious as well. This is because of its many facets – legal and ethical being the best known – and also a general lack of clear information about it, which can have serious consequences for off-guard intermediaries and end users alike.

Hence, within the many fields covered by library and information science (LIS) – those fields that librarians have tried to map for centuries – copyright seems to be one of those thorny topics that needs experienced guidance before being addressed – experienced guidance and even some good coaching.

To some ears in the LIS arena, talking about 'coaching' may sound out of place, and even a bit unprofessional. However, if we take a close look at librarians' daily tasks, we might say that coaching – a form of development in which an experienced person supports another in achieving a specific goal by providing training and guidance – is among their most common activities. In fact, assessment and counselling are essential elements in the work of reference librarians, to give a useful example.

Coaching Copyright is devoted, as its title unmistakably points out, to providing practical information on copyright training. Edited by Kevin L Smith, the Dean of Libraries at the University of Kansas, and Erin L Ellis, the Associate Dean of Libraries at Indiana University, the book is aimed at librarians supporting patrons dealing with intellectual property rights. These professionals face a major challenge: although librarians all around the world are familiar with copyright's basic features, both in their countries and at an international level, they are not usually aware of all the intricacies and issues. Information about the subject is not always clear or well presented. In fact, sometimes it can be confusing, misleading or simply incorrect. Therefore, work trying to provide guidelines, tips, soundly grounded information and advice about how to deal with intellectual rights is always most welcome.

In its almost 200 pages, *Coaching Copyright* offers a collection of 10 articles by as many contributors, coming with different areas of expertise. Although all of them are related to libraries and their environment, their professional backgrounds range from law to education. That diversity in training and their particular experience in legal affairs are highly valuable when dealing with such a sensitive topic.

When reading this book, a quick warning is necessary: it is not a handbook, a textbook or a guide. It does not contain instructions, even if many legal issues are mentioned and a good amount of orientation regarding US law is included. The text is focused somewhere else – that is, on the coaching process itself. The chapters address that process from different points of view, providing specific comments about how to manage a task that is not always easy, for patrons usually knock on librarians' doors looking for ultimate, proven solutions and, with some exceptions, librarians cannot provide them. They are not lawyers and do not have in-depth knowledge of (inter)national legislation.

Besides, coaching is not about providing final solutions. As with many other processes in libraries, it is all about assessment. As Smith points out in the book's opening chapter: 'it is vital that our clients understand that we can offer information, and even discuss options based on the information we uncover, but we cannot advise about specific courses of action' (p. 3). This first chapter, the

longest in the book, provides an introduction to the subject. Through practical examples, it describes copyright coaching in general terms, establishing five questions that help to set up an initial scenario and spot potential issues, and briefly defining elements as crucial as infringement, exceptions and fair use.

The following nine chapters of this edited work explore copyright coaching in a number of different contexts. Jill Becker and Erin Ellis describe how to integrate coaching into a LIS instruction programme, while Laura Quilter explains how to 'hook' students (and other audiences) onto as complicated a topic as copyright. In this regard, to make things easier, Anne Gilliland suggests using storytelling for copyright education and training: law teachers use countless stories to illustrate their points and copyright is, ultimately, a legal subject. Role-playing is another technique that is used to teach copyright, and is explained by Ana Enriquez.

Beyond this, Merinda Hensley explores how to use undergraduate research journals as pedagogy, while Anali Perry describes how to teach 'copyright confidence' among instructional designers. Stephanie Davis-Kahl and Karen Schmidt present a case study of copyright services at a liberal arts college; Carla Myers narrates how to coach the upper 'chain of command'; and Will Cross closes the book with a five-year review of a course on legal issues for librarians.

Although at some points in *Coaching Copyright* the main topic is somehow lost in the midst of other considerations – something that tends to happen in edited works – and even if some explanations and descriptions may sound too legal for a librarian, the general tone of the book is educational, and the effort to make things understandable and provide practical tips for teaching and training is noticeable, for copyright may be considered one of the hardest topics to be managed in a library because of its complexities and nuances, as well as one of the less popular topics among LIS students.

It is likely that coaching will become a strong trend within LIS, as is happening with other disciplines within the humanities. There are a good number of topics that could benefit from dynamic assessment techniques and tools, including copyright, open access, academic social media and knowledge mobilization. However, the focus should always be on providing solid, reliable information, for no matter the way chosen to assess patrons and users, librarians are to be trusted as a basis for their work, especially when dealing with a subject that is surrounded by as much heated debate as copyright is.

Reference

- Lankes RD (2016) *The New Librarianship Field Guide*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.