

Teachers' use of Internet materials in the classroom

Changes to our country's copyright laws have established a clearer legal framework for digital technology and use of Internet materials for learning purposes. Updating our country's copyright law to address Canadians' evolving digital learning needs has been long overdue. So, it is very good news that the new copyright law supports the use of the Internet in classrooms.

New Internet amendment

A new Internet provision in the *Copyright Act* establishes that teachers and students can legally conduct routine classroom activities such as downloading, saving, and sharing publicly available Internet text or images. Teachers and students can also incorporate Internet materials into assignments, and exchange works electronically with one another.

Where the copyright law was once silent on activities like surfing and using on-line resources, it is now stated explicitly within our country's *Copyright Act*. The Internet amendment permits teachers and students to use publicly available materials on the Internet for educational purposes without having to pay copyright or license fees.

This Internet amendment is essential in a day and age when our federal and provincial/territorial governments are simultaneously increasing our levels of connectivity and positioning the country to be a leader in the information age.

Respecting Creators

However, this new Internet amendment does not allow teachers or students to use any and all material that they find on the Internet.

The new Internet amendment applies only to material that has been posted to the Internet with the authorization of the copyright holder and without any barriers to restrict access such as encryption or password protection. Teachers and students must respect any "digital" lock that in any way restricts access or use of the Internet content.

The new education amendment does not apply to materials that are not publicly accessible. Content creators and copyright owners still have a right to continue to sell and receive payment for their works through subscription, password, and payment technologies. In this way, the amendment respects the rights of those creators and other copyright holders who post materials on-line for commercial purposes.

Note as well that the new Internet amendment does not apply to pirated textbooks or films.

The use of pirated materials is akin to plagiarizing works. The education sector teaches respect for creators and copyright. Students are required to cite materials used no matter what the source, as a matter of appropriate use of material created by others. This practice teaches respect and recognition for intellectual property. Teaching the inappropriateness of pirating materials is one way the education sector re-enforces respect for creators.

Internet in the classroom

The Internet provides us with access to a wealth of information. Computers and digital technology are invaluable tools in the learning process. With the new copyright law, teachers have wonderful new opportunities to teach and use on-line materials.

The new copyright law and its Internet amendment ensures that both teachers and students can reap the full benefits of the evolving digital technology without harming the interests of copyright owners.

Given the many changes to the copyright law, teachers should learn more about the new benefits and limits for classroom learning. *Know your rights – Know your limits:* www.cmec.ca/copyrightinfo