INFS 111
INFORMATION IN SOCIETY

SESSION 13 – INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM, COPYRIGHT, AND CENSORSHIP

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Session Overview

- Freedom of expression and freedom of information are considered to be part of the natural rights of human beings and they are enforced in the United Nations Charter on human rights. Yet, there are other equally important aspects of human existence that seem to be in contradiction with the levels of freedom of information and intellectual freedom. These are the issues of copyright and censorship. In this session, the focus is on how the issues of copyright and censorship hinder the free access to information and free speech.

Session Objectives

By the end of this session, the student should be able to:

– Explain the terms copyright and censorship

– Understand the implications of 'fair use' in copyright

– Identify the various types of censorship

– Understand the various levels of intellectual property.

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Session Outline

The key topics to be covered in the session are:

- Topic 1: INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

- Topic Two: CENSORSHIP

- Topic Three: COPYRIGHT

Reading List

- Enakrire, R. T. and Onyenania, O. G. (2007) "Causes Inhibiting the Growth or Development of Information Transfer in Africa: A Contextual Treatment". *Library Hi Tech News*. Vol. 24. Iss: 4,   pp.20 – 28. Available at www.emeraldinsight.com

- Feather, J. (2004). *The Information Society: a Study of Continuity and Change*. 4th ed. London: Facet Publishing

- Thapisa, A.P.N. (1996) "The impact of global information on Africa". *Internet Research*. Vol. 6. Iss: 1,   pp.71 – 78. Available at www.emeraldinsight.com

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Topic One:

INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

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Definition

- Freedom and the right to think without government interference.

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
  - Article 19
    - Everyone has the right to freedom of expression and opinion
    - Seek, receive and impart information ideas

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Promotion of Intellectual Freedom

Promoted by several professions and movements;

- Education, librarianship and free software movement
- The library profession
  - Intellectual freedom – core responsibility
- LIS WIKI
  - Intellectual freedom deals with the right to say, do, and think without restrictions
  - Libraries provide access to ideas no matter how unpopular

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Promotion of Intellectual Freedom Cont'd

American Library Association (ALA)

- Right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction

(ALA Office of Intellectual Freedom, 2007)

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Promotion of Intellectual Freedom Cont'd

IFLA:

- Urges libraries and library staff to adhere to the principles of intellectual freedom uninhibited access to information and freedom of expression.

- Recognition of the privacy of library users

- Urges member Associations to actively promote the acceptance and realization of the principles of intellectual freedom.

- National Library Associations to expand the principles.

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Topic Two:

CENSORSHIP

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Introduction

- Interwoven with the ideas of intellectual freedom is the concept of censorship. ALA's unwavering support of intellectual freedom arose out of the censorship of certain publications (Krug, 2003:1379).

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Definitions

- Deletion or excision of parts of published materials.

- Efforts to ban, prohibit, suppress, proscribe, remove, label or restrict materials (ALA Office of Intellectual Freedom, 2007)

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Definitions Cont'd

- Prohibition of distribution, circulation or display of a work by a governing authority.

- Main WIKI
    - Suppression of speech or other communication which may be considered objectionable, harmful, sensitive, or inconvenient to the general public.

Application of Censorship

Can occur before or after the release of a work to the public.

- Preventive censorship
  - Application of restraint before dissemination of the material.

- Punitive censorship
  - Applying the restraint after the publication of the material.

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Historical Antecedents

Evidence exists in history that censorship in one form or the other has been practiced in all Civilizations;

- Cato the Elder
  - One of the renowned censors of the Roman Empire

- Assurbanipal(668 -627 BC)
  - Assyrian King removed clay tablets he considered objectionable from the Kings' library

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Historical Antecedents Cont'd

Censorship in Roman Public libraries

- Emperor Julian (361-363 CE) founder of Roman libraries in Constantinople attempted to destroy all Christian texts.

- Socrates (470 to 399 BCE) promoted freedom of thinking (intellectual freedom) and refused to allow his teachings and works to be censored.

- Plato (428 to 347 BCE) a disciple of Socrates on the other defended censorship.

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Types of Censorship

Different reasons exist for various types of information censored;

- Moral censorship: obscene or profane materials e.g pornography

- Military censorship: military intelligence and tactics

- Political censorship: government hold back information from their citizens

Types of Censorship Cont'd

- **Crime and violence:** restriction of books, films and magazines that show too much violence.

- **Religious censorship:** suppression of materials considered objectionable by certain faiths.

- **Corporate censorship:** disruption of publication by editors in corporate media, of information that portray their business negatively

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Censorship and the Library

- Librarians are not supposed to have any forms of bias – political, religious, moral, social etc.

- Librarians are therefore to provide all manner of materials in whatever form to everybody.

- Most libraries receive the bulk of their funding from government.

- Government policy on differentiation of information can affect libraries.

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Censorship and the Library

- The internet
  - Exposes users to all types of information

  - Controlling information on the internet is difficult

  - Software and programmes to block undesirable sites

Topic Three:

COPYRIGHT

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Definition

- It is a legal concept that grants authors and artists control over certain uses of their creations for defined periods of time.

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Purpose of Copyright

- Copyright limits who may copy, change, perform or share those creations.

- Copyright law encourages creativity. Allows creators to profit from their work.

- Copyright ensures that creators are paid fairly for their effort.

- A creative work is an expression of the personality of its creator. It must be protected from use without the permission of the creator

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Fair Use

- Allows for copying, without permission for the purpose of teaching, study, research, critique etc.

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The Berne Convention

- Spells out the terms of copyright.
- Signatories to the convention.

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Implications for Libraries

- Restrictions on copying.

- Developing conventions.

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Copyright in Ghana

- Copyright Act 690, 2005.

- Much emphasis on music and film.

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