

In 1999 I wrote a resource that set the specific purpose of providing materials for a teacher-training initiative. This package of resources contained innovative literacy resources never produced in this format and content before. A group of consultants in one region of Public Education in New South Wales took this resource and used Department of Education training and development funds to form a writing group that met on a regular basis to produce school lesson materials using my base resource package (without my knowledge or consent). This group then published a regional resource for all of their schools (over 100 schools) that was then photocopied in duplicate for each of these schools as packages for free photocopying within each school. Given that each school enrolls many hundreds of students all accessing this material across the region becomes an insurmountable issue for me. When I discovered the problem, I was horrified to also observe that no acknowledgement of author was visible on any document.

The only recourse I have is to sue the Department of Education and Communities for allowing such an action to occur. (I shouldn't have to do this!)

With the changes to copyright laws now for the future, I feel there is a focus on allowing fair copyrighting for organisations in their access of materials for any purpose, but my query is, what about the fair rights of authors?

Authors are not wealthy people – there is very little money in writing, and the field is hugely competitive. With the changes to the way the general public now purchases and reads authors' works, as a result of the 'Technological Age', many publishers have cut back on their production of both hard-copy and e-book distributions. This has made it impossible to get books published unless the author is already famous and their books are guaranteed sales. Authors have had to resort to self-publishing, which is costly to the author and ultimately not financially viable as a living.

In implementing changes to copyright laws, I urge you to consider the plight of writers like myself who write educational resources for school students. I create highly specialised materials for students with special needs in literacy, and should be compensated if schools breach the copyright laws, or should be protected against unauthorised access to these materials by teachers who do not want to purchase them.

Photocopying copyrighted materials is stealing. I can provide direct evidence to support this practice in many schools and educational establishments. I am concerned now though, that new laws and practices will allow even greater access of materials to schools, under fair access rights, leading to loss of significant income for authors – an income they have a right to earn.

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