SMU LIBRARIES COPYRIGHT GUIDE

Quick Copyright Information for Students

What is Copyright?
Copyright is a system of laws that is designed to protect the works of authors from unauthorised copying and transmission, whilst at the same time allowing the public to have reasonable access to information. The Copyright Act (Cap. 63) and its subsidiary legislation, form the legislation governing copyright law in Singapore.

Copyright Terminology
In the language of copyright, the things that a person creates, such as essays, photographs, cartoons, stories, novels, term papers, paintings, maps, plays and musical scores are called "works". So there are:

- Literary works (books, letters, articles, written assignments, etc),
- Dramatic works (plays, film scripts, scenarios, treatments and the like)
- Musical works (compositions of popular or classical music)
- Artistic works (photos, paintings, drawings, maps, charts, diagrams, etc).

As well as works, these are protected by copyright as well:

- Films and video
- Sound recordings
- Broadcasts

Who owns copyright?
In most cases, copyright will be owned by the creator of the work.

What does that mean?
A copyright owner has a number of exclusive rights. In general, these rights are:

- to make copies of the work
- to publish the work
- to perform the work in public
- to make adaptations of the work - e.g. make a novel into a screenplay
- to communicate the work to the public - i.e. to put the work online and make it accessible to the public.

Unless explicit permission or a license has been obtained to use the work in the above indicated manner, copying or distribution of copyrighted work is not legal. However, there are some provisions in the law for research and study.

As student, what can I copy?
The Copyright Act has provisions called the "fair dealing" provision for research and study. The “Fair Dealing” principle states that you may copy a "reasonable portion" of a literary, dramatic or musical work for your own research and study. A reasonable portion is set at 10% or one chapter of a book, or one article from any one issue of a journal.
Copying a whole textbook would not be considered fair, even if you need it for your course but you think it is too expensive.

Research and study includes assessment, so you may include reasonable portions of works in your assignments, projects and theses, provided that you attribute the sources properly.

**What about the internet?**
It is not correct to assume that all that is available on the internet is free of copyright. If you want to use materials found on the web for your research and study, you may do so under the fair dealing provisions – where copying is permissible within the set limits.
It is good practice to check the Terms and Conditions listed on the website on copying and reuse of content and act accordingly.

**Where can I get more help?**
If you need more information, consult the [SMU Libraries Copyright Guide](#)