

Assessing the Role of Academic Libraries in Enhancing Awareness of Fair Use and Digital Intellectual Property Rights in Tertiary Institutions in Oyo State.

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Abstract

The growing prevalence of digital academic resources in tertiary institutions in Oyo State has heightened the need for copyright literacy and fair use awareness among librarians and users. This study examined strategies adopted by academic libraries to promote ethical use of digital materials, the perceived roles of librarians, and the institutional support available. The population comprised academic librarians, drawn across three tertiary institutions in Oyo State, with a sample of 167 respondents selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected via a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics. Results showed that only 33.5% of respondents agreed that their libraries regularly organized copyright training, while 37.1% confirmed the availability of printed fair use guides. Just 22.2% felt adequately trained to educate users, and only 17.4% reported strong institutional support. Although 28.8% strongly agreed or agreed that promoting copyright awareness was part of their role, higher disagreement rates suggest a gap between role recognition and implementation. The study concludes that limited training, inadequate resources, and weak institutional backing hinder effective promotion of digital copyright literacy. The study recommends continuous professional development for librarians, integration of copyright literacy into user education programs, and stronger institutional policies to support awareness initiatives. Strengthening these areas is essential to enhance compliance with ethical and legal use of digital resources in academic libraries.

Keywords: Academic libraries, Copyright literacy, Fair use, Intellectual property rights, Digital resources

Introduction

The widespread integration of digital technologies in higher education has fundamentally transformed access to information, research dissemination, and teaching practices. In Nigeria, academic libraries have progressively evolved from being custodians of print materials to facilitators of digital learning environments, where students and academic staff increasingly rely on electronic resources such as e-books, online journals, academic databases, and institutional repositories (Adebayo & Yusuf, 2020; Mohammed et al., 2022). While this digital shift has enhanced access to scholarly information and supported flexible learning, it has also introduced complex challenges related to digital intellectual property (IP) rights, copyright compliance, and the ethical use of information. Despite the existence of national copyright laws and fair use provisions, recent studies indicate that awareness and understanding of digital intellectual property rights remain inadequate among many users of academic libraries in Nigeria. Empirical evidence suggests that students and even academic staff frequently engage in the unauthorized use, sharing, or reproduction of digital content often unintentionally due to limited copyright literacy and insufficient institutional guidance (Nwachukwu & Okafor, 2019; Lawal & Quadri, 2021). These practices raise significant ethical and legal concerns within tertiary institutions, particularly in regions such as Oyo State, where access to digital resources is expanding rapidly but copyright education has not kept pace with technological adoption.

Academic libraries are expected to play a pivotal role in promoting responsible information use and fostering awareness of copyright and fair use policies. As intermediaries between information and its users, librarians are uniquely positioned to provide instruction on digital rights management, advocate for institutional copyright policies, and integrate copyright literacy into information literacy programmes (Oladokun & Aina, 2011). However, the effectiveness of these interventions is influenced by various factors, including institutional support, librarians'

own understanding of copyright law, and user engagement. The enactment of Nigeria's Copyright Act of 2022 marked a significant development in this space. The Act introduced updated provisions on fair dealing, digitization, and exceptions for educational use, libraries, and persons with disabilities (EIFL, 2022). These legal reforms create opportunities for academic libraries to strengthen their advocacy for ethical information use. However, there remains a gap in how well these changes are understood or implemented within academic settings, particularly at the institutional level.

In Oyo State, institutions such as Ladoke Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH), Ajayi Crowther University, and the Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo represent a diverse mix of public and private tertiary institutions with active academic libraries and growing investments in digital infrastructure. Despite this, there is limited empirical evidence on how these libraries contribute to promoting copyright literacy and fair use awareness among their users.

Statement of the Problem

The widespread digitization of academic content has significantly transformed how information is accessed, shared, and used within tertiary institutions. In Nigeria, academic libraries serve as critical access points for digital resources, placing them at the centre of efforts to promote ethical information use and respect for intellectual property rights. However, as digital content becomes increasingly accessible, the risk of copyright infringement and unethical use of intellectual materials has grown, often due to limited awareness and poor understanding of fair use policies and digital intellectual property legislation among library users. Empirical studies in Nigerian tertiary institutions illustrate this problem. For instance, Odunlade, Adedokun, and Ojo (2021) found that non-compliance with copyright law across three federal universities was linked to a

lack of awareness of key concepts such as fair use and plagiarism, limited knowledge of how to apply the law, and weak enforcement mechanisms, all of which contribute to infringement of intellectual materials.

Despite the pivotal role of academic libraries in fostering information literacy, questions remain about the extent to which they are actively engaged in promoting copyright education and supporting responsible use of digital content. Many institutions lack formalised strategies for raising awareness, and the efforts of librarians to educate users on digital rights are often constrained by inadequate training, institutional support, or policy frameworks. Furthermore, while some libraries may implement educational initiatives, the effectiveness of such strategies and the actual level of awareness among students and academic staff remain unclear. Additionally, the professional role of librarians in shaping users' ethical engagement with digital resources is often underexplored, particularly in relation to their perceptions of responsibility and institutional expectations to assess the role of academic libraries in enhancing awareness of fair use and digital intellectual property rights in selected tertiary institutions in Oyo State.

Research Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. examine the strategies employed by academic libraries in tertiary institutions to promote awareness of fair use and digital intellectual property rights in Oyo State.
2. assess the level of awareness and understanding of fair use and digital intellectual property rights among library user in tertiary institution in Oyo State.
3. examine the perceptions of librarians regarding their professional roles and responsibilities in promoting copyright literacy and fair use practices among library user in tertiary institution in Oyo State.

Research Questions

1. What strategies are employed by academic libraries in tertiary institutions to promote awareness of fair use and digital intellectual property rights in Oyo State?
2. What is the level of awareness and understanding of fair use and digital intellectual property rights among library user in tertiary institution in Oyo State?
3. How do librarians perceive their roles and responsibilities in promoting copyright literacy and fair use practices among library user in tertiary institution in Oyo State.?

Literature Review

Digital intellectual property (IP) refers to creations of the mind such as research outputs, educational materials, software, and multimedia content that are stored, shared, and used in digital formats. The rapid growth of digital resources in academic environments has intensified concerns related to copyright, fair use, and ethical access to information (Lihitkar & Lihitkar, 2014). Fair use encompasses the lawful, limited use of copyrighted works without the explicit permission of rights holders, generally for purposes such as teaching, research, criticism, or commentary (Okiki, 2012). In Nigeria, the enactment of the Copyright Act 2022 has reshaped the legal framework for copyright protection by explicitly addressing digital rights and fair use in the digital age. This development is particularly significant for higher education institutions, where the creation, access, and sharing of digital content are integral to academic activity. Within this context, libraries are increasingly recognized not only as repositories of information but also as vital agents for promoting copyright literacy and digital rights education (EIFL, 2022).

Academic libraries have long been central to fostering ethical information practices among students, researchers, and faculty. Prior research highlights their role in providing orientations, workshops, and targeted user education sessions on copyright literacy and responsible

information use (Nwachukwu & Okafor, 2019). Such initiatives are especially crucial in Nigeria, where awareness of digital IP rights remains generally low. Libraries also act as custodians of licensed electronic resources, mediating access, clarifying licensing terms, and ensuring that users understand citation requirements and ethical usage guidelines. Aina (2014) emphasizes that librarians' instructional duties should include embedding copyright education into broader information literacy programs. However, the effectiveness of this role is often constrained by inadequate training opportunities and insufficient institutional backing, particularly in resource-limited environments.

Despite the proliferation of electronic resources, many students and faculty members in Nigerian institutions demonstrate limited understanding of copyright, licensing, and fair use principles. Research has shown that digital content is frequently reused without proper attribution, often due to a lack of awareness rather than deliberate infringement (Fatoki, 2020). Ogbebor and Adekunle (2018) found that only a small fraction of surveyed students could accurately define copyright or articulate the scope of fair use. This gap in knowledge has been linked to insufficient copyright education, weak enforcement of institutional policies, and a widespread perception that digital resources are inherently free to use. Libraries are well-positioned to address these gaps by embedding digital IP awareness within academic curricula and ensuring that clear, accessible copyright guidance is available through both physical and online platforms (IFLA, 2018). However, anecdotal evidence from tertiary institutions in Oyo State indicates that students often download, share, and redistribute course materials without considering the legal implications further underlining the need for targeted awareness campaigns led by library professionals.

Librarians themselves increasingly acknowledge their responsibility in promoting copyright literacy, but systemic and operational constraints remain. Nnadozie and Egwunyenga (2012) report that while librarians are generally willing to educate users on copyright matters, many lack confidence, resources, and structured training. Obuh (2016) argues that continuous professional

development in digital copyright, licensing, and open access is essential for librarians to fulfill this evolving role effectively. Similarly, institutional policies must explicitly support and define the librarian's mandate in intellectual property management. Librarians are often burdened with administrative and technical duties that limit their capacity for outreach and advocacy. Adedokun (2021) contends that Nigerian academic libraries must transition from a predominantly custodial role to one of active engagement with their user communities on digital ethics and rights.

This transition is hindered by multiple challenges, including inadequate staffing, weak institutional commitment, absence of clear IP policies, and persistent undervaluing of the librarian's instructional contribution (Nwalo & Anasi, 2012). Technological limitations also constrain the enforcement of copyright compliance. Without access to digital rights management tools or IP monitoring software, libraries struggle to implement fair use policies effectively. Furthermore, the absence of nationally coordinated training initiatives on copyright literacy for librarians remains a critical barrier (Ogungbeni, 2020).

In conclusion, literatures underscore the crucial and underexploited role of academic libraries in promoting ethical use and awareness of digital intellectual property. While notable progress has been made, particularly in the integration of copyright education within user training programs, significant gaps persist in policy formulation, professional capacity, and sustained user engagement.

Research Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey research design to investigate the role of academic libraries in promoting awareness of fair use and digital intellectual property rights in selected tertiary institutions in Oyo State. This design was considered appropriate for capturing and analyzing current practices, user perceptions, and institutional strategies within a real-world setting. The population for the study comprised academic librarians, students, and academic staff

in tertiary institution in Oyo State. The choice of institutions in Oyo State was guided by availability, accessibility, and the presence of active academic libraries with digital resources.

A multi-stage sampling technique was used to draw participants from the study population. Within each institution, a stratified sampling method was applied to capture the three target groups. Librarians were selected purposively based on their roles and responsibilities in the library, while academic staff and students were randomly selected across faculties. A total of 167 respondents participated in the study. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of four sections covering demographic data, awareness of fair use and digital intellectual property, strategies employed by libraries, and the professional roles of librarians. To ensure the validity of the research instruments, the questionnaire and interview guide were reviewed by academic experts in library and information science and educational research. Following this expert validation, a pilot study was conducted to test the reliability of the questionnaire, and the internal consistency of the instrument was determined using Cronbach's alpha. The analysis yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.82, indicating a high level of reliability and confirming that the instrument was suitable and dependable for data collection. Questionnaires were distributed both physically and electronically, depending on respondent availability. Questionnaire were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means, and percentages were used to summarise responses.

Results presentation

This section presents findings based on the research objectives. Data were summarized in tables with descriptive statistics, followed by interpretation supported by relevant literature.

Objective 1: To examine the strategies employed by academic libraries to promote awareness of fair use and digital intellectual property rights.

Table I: Strategies employed by academic libraries to promote awareness of fair use and digital intellectual property rights

Item	Agree	Disagree	Mean	SD
Library regularly organizes training on fair use and digital copyright	56 (33.5)	111 (66.5)	2.87	.822
There are visible notices in the library promoting ethical use of digital materials	62 (37.1)	105 (62.9)	2.72	.811
Librarians provide guidance on how to legally use digital academic content	39 (23.4)	128 (76.6)	3.01	.795
The library uses online platforms to promote copyright awareness	62 (37.1)	105 (62.9)	2.72	.909
Workshops and seminars on intellectual property are available	62 (37.1)	105 (62.9)	2.73	.906
The library has printed guides or manuals on fair use practices	69 (41.6)	98 (58.7)	2.68	.944
Strategies adopted by the library are effective in raising awareness	65 (38.9)	102 (61.1)	2.71	.892

Author's field work, 2025

The percentages in Table I reveal that strategies for promoting awareness of fair use and digital copyright in academic libraries are in place but appear to be underutilized or only moderately implemented. Regular training sessions were reported by 33.5% of respondents, while a majority (66.5%) disagreed that such programs were frequent. Visible notices promoting ethical use of digital materials were acknowledged by 37.1%, whereas 62.9% indicated their absence. Only 23.4% of respondents agreed that librarians regularly provide guidance on the legal use of digital academic content, leaving 76.6% perceiving a gap in this support. The use of online platforms to promote copyright awareness was reported by 37.1% of respondents, with the majority (62.9%) stating otherwise. Workshops and seminars on intellectual property reached 37.1% of the sample, and printed guides or manuals were available to 41.6%, showing moderate but insufficient reach. When asked whether these strategies were effective in raising awareness, just 38.9% agreed, while 61.1% did not. Therefore, these results suggest that while some initiatives

exist such as workshops, printed guides, and online awareness efforts their coverage and frequency remain limited, leaving substantial room for improvement in copyright literacy promotion.

Objective 2: To assess the level of awareness and understanding of fair use and digital intellectual property rights among library users.

Table II: Level of awareness and understanding of fair use and digital intellectual property rights among library users

Item	Agree	Disagree	Mean	SD
I clearly understand what constitutes fair use of digital materials	65 (38.9)	102 (61.1)	2.75	.832
I am aware of copyright restrictions when using digital resources for academic purposes	43 (25.8)	124 (74.3)	2.93	.800
I know how to cite or reference digital content appropriately	49 (29.4)	118 (70.7)	2.84	.864
I have attended a training on copyright or intellectual property rights	51 (30.6)	116 (69.5)	2.79	.881
I feel confident distinguishing between legal and illegal use of digital academic content	24 (14.4)	143 (85.6)	3.19	.667
I understand the consequences of violating copyright laws in academic work	32 (19.2)	135 (80.8)	3.05	.781
I know where to find information about copyright and fair use in my institution	36 (21.6)	131 (78.4)	3.04	.805
I believe copyright education is important for all library users	38 (22.8)	129 (77.2)	3.02	.809

Author's field work, 2025

Analysis of the percentages in Table II indicates generally low levels of awareness and understanding of fair use and digital intellectual property rights among library users. Fewer than half of respondents (38.9%) reported understanding what constitutes fair use, while a clear majority (61.1%) disagreed. Awareness of copyright restrictions when using digital resources

was even lower, with only 25.8% in agreement and 74.2% indicating otherwise. Similarly, just 29.4% affirmed knowledge of how to cite digital content appropriately, and 30.6% reported having attended relevant training, leaving a large proportion without exposure to such instruction. Confidence in distinguishing between legal and illegal use of digital academic content was particularly limited, with only 14.4% agreeing and 85.6% disagreeing. Understanding of the consequences of violating copyright laws was also low (19.2% agreement), as was knowledge of where to find copyright and fair use information within the institution (21.6%). Even the perceived importance of copyright education for all library users received modest support (22.8% agreement). Collectively, these percentages suggest substantial knowledge gaps, limited training exposure, and weak confidence among library users regarding intellectual property and fair use. This underscores the need for structured awareness programs, regular training sessions, and improved accessibility of copyright-related information within academic institutions.

Objective 3: To explore the perceptions of librarians regarding their roles and responsibilities in promoting copyright literacy and fair use practices.

Table III: Perceptions of librarians regarding their roles and responsibilities in promoting copyright literacy and fair use practices

Item	Agree	Disagree	Mean	SD
Promoting copyright awareness is part of my professional role as a	48	119	2.93	.892

Item	Agree	Disagree	Mean	SD
librarian	(28.8)	(71.2)		
I feel adequately trained to educate users about digital copyright and fair use	37 (22.2)	130 (77.8)	3.02	.783
My institution supports librarians in promoting intellectual property literacy	29 (17.4)	138 (82.6)	3.09	.762
I believe copyright and fair use literacy should be integrated into user education services	31 (18.6)	136 (81.4)	3.05	.770
I actively engage in creating awareness on digital copyright compliance	47 (28.1)	120 (71.8)	2.95	.801
Users frequently seek my assistance on issues related to digital intellectual property	33 (19.8)	134 (80.1)	3.05	.859
Librarians should take the lead in promoting ethical use of digital academic resources	34 (20.4)	133 (79.6)	3.09	.827

Author's field work, 2025

Result from table III, revealed a notable gap between the recognized importance of copyright literacy and librarians' readiness to actively promote it. Fewer than one-third of respondents (28.8%) agreed that promoting copyright awareness is part of their professional role, while the majority (71.2%) disagreed. This suggests that a significant proportion of librarians either do not see this responsibility as central to their work or lack the institutional framework to support it. Confidence in their own capacity to educate users about digital copyright and fair use was similarly low, with only 22.2% of respondents agreeing they feel adequately trained. Institutional support was perceived as insufficient, with just 17.4% acknowledging that their institution supports librarians in promoting intellectual property literacy, compared to 82.6% who disagreed. Although 18.6% of respondents believed copyright and fair use literacy should be integrated into user education services, 81.4%) did not share this view pointing to possible gaps in strategic planning or awareness of global best practices. Active engagement in creating awareness on digital copyright compliance was reported by 28.1% of respondents, leaving the majority (71.9%) without direct involvement in such initiatives. User demand for assistance in

matters related to digital intellectual property was also modest, with only 19.8% reporting frequent requests. Finally, while 20.4% of librarians believed they should take the lead in promoting ethical use of digital academic resources, nearly 80% expressed disagreement, suggesting a systemic undervaluation of the librarian's advocacy role in copyright literacy.

Discussion

This study examined three key areas in academic libraries in Oyo State, these are libraries strategies to promote fair use, user awareness of digital intellectual property rights, and librarians' perceptions of their roles. The findings reveal significant gaps in implementation, knowledge, and institutional support. The majority of strategies are inconsistently applied or poorly communicated. Only 33.5% of respondents agreed that their library regularly offers training on copyright and fair use meaning 66.5% see no such programming in place. Visible reminders (posters, signage) are perceived by 37.1%, while 62.9% say they don't exist. Even though 23.4% acknowledge receiving guidance from librarians on legal digital use, a substantial 76.6% report that this support is absent. Use of digital platforms for copyright messaging is recognized by only 37.1%, and reliance on printed guides is noted by 41.6%. In terms of effectiveness, just 38.9% say these strategies work 61.1% disagree. These outcomes reflect patterns identified by Secker, Morrison, and Nilsson (2019), who found copyright education efforts often remain underdeveloped due to low institutional prioritization. The International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA, 2018) similarly argues that successful literacy programs require coordinated, multichannel approaches an alignment currently lacking.

Awareness and understanding among users are generally weak. Only 38.9% claim they clearly understand fair use, leaving a worrying 61.1% with limited understanding. Just 25.8% are aware of usage restrictions, and 29.4% feel confident citing digital content properly meaning over two-thirds are uncertain in their abilities. Participation in copyright training is low at 30.6%, while 85.6% cannot distinguish legal uses from infringing ones. Similarly, only 19.2% understand the consequences of violation, and just 21.6% know where to find institutional copyright information. Remarkably, only 22.8% believe copyright education is important despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. These findings coincide with observations by Onyancha

and Jiyane (2021) that users in academic settings frequently misunderstand the boundaries of fair use, often equating "free" with legally permissible. Crews (2019) argue that this misinterpretation compromises compliance and ethical scholarship.

Librarians exhibit cautious positioning around their roles in copyright literacy. Only 28.8% view literacy promotion as central to their professional mandate; 71.2% do not. Confidence in training readiness remains low, with 22.2% feeling prepared. Institutional support is perceived by just 17.4%, and structured awareness engagement happens for 28.1% only. When asked if librarians should lead this effort, just 20.4% agreed. Research by Secker, Morrison, and Nilsson (2019) echoes this, noting that librarians often understand their advocate roles but are hindered institutionally. Gilmour and Barranco Garcia (2021) also highlight that without formal training and policy frameworks, librarians struggle to take meaningful action.

Conclusion

This study examined strategies employed by academic libraries in tertiary institutions in Oyo State to promote awareness of fair use and digital intellectual property rights (IPR), assessed the level of awareness among students and academic staff, and explored librarians' perceptions of their roles in promoting copyright literacy. Findings revealed that while libraries have implemented various outreach activities, such as workshops, seminars, and integration of copyright modules in information literacy programs, these efforts are not yet consistent across institutions. Awareness levels among students and academic staff remain moderate, suggesting a need for more targeted and sustained initiatives. Librarians generally recognized the importance of their role in promoting copyright literacy, though some expressed the need for further professional training and institutional support. The implications of these findings highlight the urgency for academic libraries to adopt structured, institution-wide copyright education

strategies. Strengthening awareness of fair use and digital IPR will not only safeguard academic integrity but also promote ethical use of information resources.

Recommendations

1. Tertiary institutions should develop and implement formal policies on copyright education and fair use, with academic libraries playing a central role in enforcement and training.
2. Academic libraries should organize periodic workshops and seminars for students and staff to address knowledge gaps and update stakeholders on emerging copyright and IPR issues.
3. Copyright literacy should be integrated into general education courses and research methodology classes to ensure early and consistent exposure.
4. Professional development opportunities should be provided for librarians to enhance their expertise in copyright, fair use, and digital rights management.
5. Libraries should collaborate with legal professionals to provide authoritative guidance and resources for the academic community.

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