

All eyes on the sharing society



Amsterdam-based RightsDirect offers content workflow and licensing solutions designed to make it easier for organisations to use and share copyright-protected material, as *WIPR* found out.

To the uninitiated, copyright can be confusing. Even industry specialists can find it hard to grasp the laws, which differ from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

That's where RightsDirect comes in. Established in 2010 and based in Amsterdam, RightsDirect is a wholly owned subsidiary of the US-based Copyright Clearance Center (CCC). CCC was formed in 1978 at the suggestion of the US Congress after negotiations that had led to the Copyright Act of 1976.



For Kim Zwollo, RightsDirect’s general manager, the need to create a physical presence in Europe and around the world was simple: “Copyright, especially international copyright, is confusing,” he tells *WIPR*.

“Our goal at RightsDirect is to make copyright work for everyone. We want to reduce the complexity associated with copyright and help our customers understand it,” he says.

To do this, RightsDirect offers a licence that simplifies the process of sharing and storing content while adhering to copyright laws.

Its annual licences provide a uniform set of rights from thousands of global right holders, allowing employees to share information with colleagues across borders easily.

In discussing the complications of copyright law, Zwollo points to a survey completed in 2014 by research and advisory firm Outsell. The survey assessed the attitudes towards information sharing and copyright of individuals at more than 300 companies in Europe. It explored how much sharing and storing of information is going on and an organisation’s potential risk of copyright infringement. The survey targeted businesses in selected European countries, including France, Ireland, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and the UK.

The answers, Zwollo says, revealed interesting results.

According to the findings, 87% of participants agreed on the importance of

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protecting intellectual property, while 77% said they would like their organisation to be perceived as a “socially responsible leader” in its respective field.

Yet, Zwollo says, this apparent interest from businesses in protecting IP doesn’t always align with day-to-day employee information use.

The survey also revealed that 42% of those asked said they shared copyright-protected

information with their immediate employees daily or weekly, while 57% stored copies for later use. Of those asked, 73% believed that they can share company-purchased information internally. Meanwhile, 75% felt it is acceptable to share content obtained for free online.

Email attachment was the primary method employees use to share information (76%), a practice that could find the senders unwittingly infringing third-party IP. Sending an article via email often goes outside the scope of what users are allowed to do with copyrighted material, even if they have a subscription or if the article was found online.

“People are sharing information but do not know that they’re infringing copyright. We have a solution to this problem,” Zwollo says.

Simple and cost-effective

RightsDirect’s annual copyright licences allow employees to share information with colleagues more easily. The licences cover content from millions of publications from right holders around the world.

Zwollo explains: “The licence provides a simple and cost-effective way to help employees share and store content lawfully and makes copyright easy to navigate across national borders. Corporations that have the licence can reduce the risk associated with employees sharing copyrighted material without permission.”

The licence includes the right to share digital



or printed content internally with co-workers; to save information to a corporate-owned hard drive or network drive; to photocopy items from a newspaper, magazine, book or other published document; and to use published content in a slide presentation.

Although CCC has offered annual licences for many years, Zwollo says that the sharing of copyright-protected information and the resulting need for a solution has increased dramatically as the digital age has evolved.

“Today it’s easy to share information, especially with the prevalence of social media. Companies don’t always realise that employees may be putting their business at risk. People want to do the right thing. They just don’t always know where to turn.”

With its annual copyright licences, RightsDirect offers complementary content workflow software that makes it easy for employees to know what rights are available for the content they wish to use. A wide variety of online copyright education videos and courses is also offered at no charge. Licence fees vary depending on the needs of the client.

“Copyright shouldn’t get in the way of finding and using information. Our licence, software and educational offerings are designed to help companies enforce their own policies on IP protection and information sharing and storing in order to make things easier for users. We see our role as a solution provider for organisations

“THE COMPANY ALSO OFFERS PREMIUM COPYRIGHT CERTIFICATE COURSES, A SERIES OF E-LEARNING MODULES THAT PROVIDE INFORMATION IN MULTIPLE LANGUAGES.”

that value intellectual property—both their own and others.”

RightsDirect offers more than robust copyright education programmes. It also offers a series of one-hour webinars called Copyright Challenges in a Global Environment. These webinars, offered in multiple languages, provide insight into how multinational organisations can tackle copyright

challenges across global offices. Presented by licensing specialists, these sessions feature an overview of the fundamental rules of copyright and take a look at the complexities of managing copyright in today’s digital environment.

The company also offers premium copyright certificate courses, a series of e-learning modules that provide information in multiple languages and cover topics ranging from copyright basics to copyright on social media. Free animated videos are also available.

“In addition to the online programming, we can go on-site to help a company’s legal team or information management staff as they educate their employees about why copyright is important and why they need to be copyright-compliant. We’ve received some very positive feedback about our presentations.”

Given the complicated world of copyright, especially in Europe, a licence to ensure companies remain copyright-compliant when sharing information appears crucial.

The results from the Outsell survey speak for themselves. Although respect for copyright is evident, the understanding among staff about how to manage copyright issues on a day-to-day basis is sometimes out of alignment with policy. With information access and sharing just a click away, businesses that want to reduce risk and improve employee awareness of copyright could benefit from the guidance of an outside specialist. ■