

Whitepaper

Navigating Copyright Compliance in the Digital Era:

Implications for Pharmaceutical and Life Sciences Companies

Copyright laws vary from one country to another, making the resulting mix of obligations difficult to reconcile and enforce, especially for global, research-driven organizations with employees working in different countries.

The digital age has fundamentally transformed how knowledge workers collaborate, accelerating interactions from across the hallway to across the globe. Now, AI is further reshaping how users engage with content—placing copyright and data use at the heart of global litigation and regulatory reform.

Research and information professionals in the life sciences rely on the rapid dissemination of information to accelerate drug discovery, keep physicians and patients informed, communicate with regulatory authorities, and monitor drug safety throughout development and in the marketplace. AI can increase efficiencies by streamlining the initial stages of literature triage and review, enabling researchers to efficiently prioritize articles, quickly uncover key themes and trends, and identify conflicting findings. However, for medical affairs professionals, information managers, and pharmacovigilance teams, a key challenge remains: ensuring that these activities are conducted in a way that respects the rights of content holders and complies with evolving copyright requirements.

The digital age has made the rapid exchange of scientific research and product information across geographic boundaries routine, and AI technologies are now transforming how this content is accessed, analyzed, and repurposed, presenting users of published materials with an increasingly complex landscape of copyright and compliance challenges.



What is protected by Copyright?

The Berne Convention sets minimum standards for copyrighted works. The detailed list of categories may slightly vary from country to country, but usually include the following:



Text and literary works



Computer software



Images, graphics and sculptures



Sound recordings



Movies and audiovisual works



Dramatic works and accompanying music



Dance

What is Copyright?

Simply stated, copyright is the legal framework that provides creators (authors, artists and publishers) with exclusive rights to control how their work is used, shared, or adapted. These exclusive rights provide economic incentives for creators to produce new works and make them available, ultimately promoting progress in science, the arts, and culture.

Although there is no single international copyright law, more than 160 countries have ratified the Berne Convention, a treaty that sets minimum standards for protecting the rights of creators and copyright holders around the world. However, each country is responsible for incorporating these standards into their own national laws, resulting in a fragmented legal landscape that can pose significant challenges for global organizations who need to ensure copyright compliance across borders.

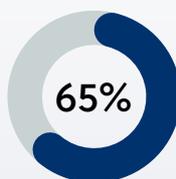
For those responsible for managing the flow of information within their research-driven organizations, it is essential to understand the general concepts of copyright protection, recognize the most common barriers to compliance, and be familiar with established models for how permissions are aggregated and made available to end users.

Copyright Awareness in the Workplace Varies

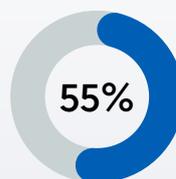
Published content is at the heart of innovation, and the use and sharing of that content in life sciences organizations is critical. Yet not all employees understand that the sharing of third-party published materials without first obtaining the necessary permissions can pose significant risk.

Results from a survey conducted in 2025 by research and advisory firm Outsell Inc., indicate that while knowledge workers in life sciences were the most aware of their organization's copyright policy, with 100% of respondents claiming to have some level of awareness of their company's copyright policy, only 65% understand that their organization's copyright policy also includes the use of third-party information with AI tools.

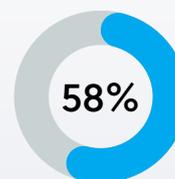
The survey also found that employee attitudes and behaviors about copyrighted content are often misaligned with policy.



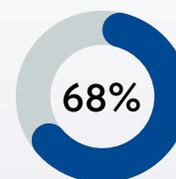
know that their copyright policy also includes the use of third-party information with AI tools.



don't strongly agree that copyright infringement has serious risks and implications.



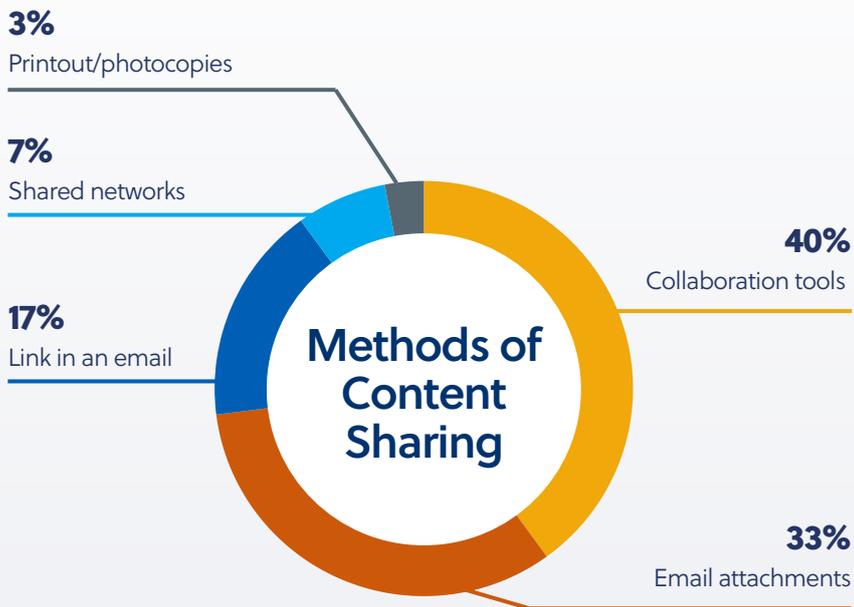
believe that sharing is permitted if the information is obtained on the open web or in print.



will forward any and all relevant information in competitive, mission-critical, or time-critical situations.

Content Usage and Sharing Habits

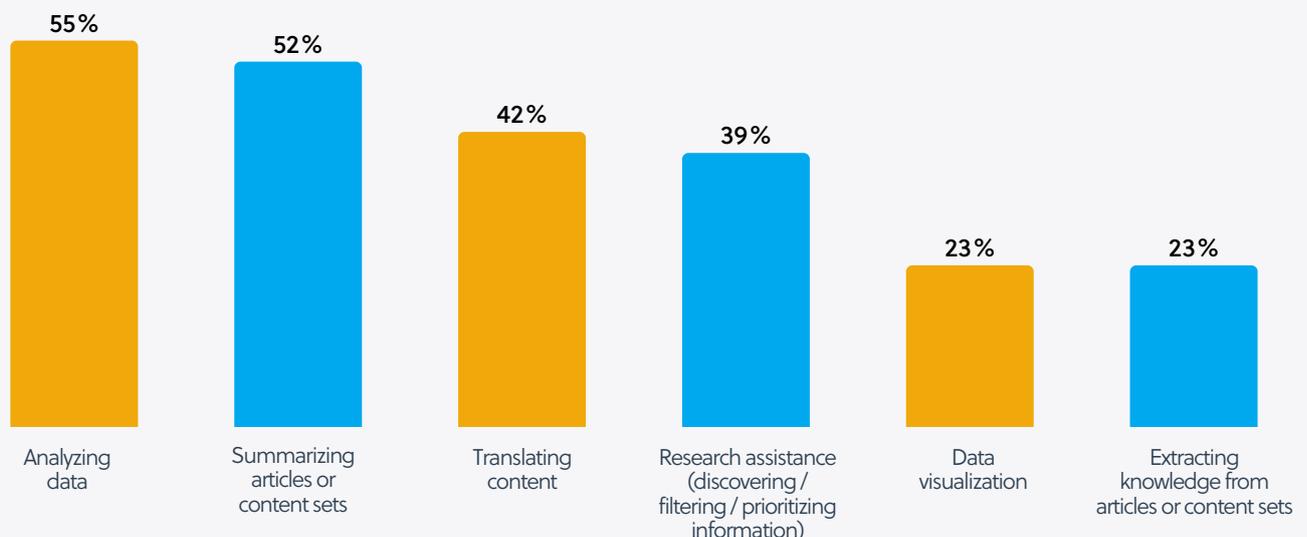
Collaboration throughout the organization and across borders is crucial to the ongoing exchange of ideas and the development of new products. According to Outsell, knowledge workers in life sciences share work related content 7.8 times per week with 13 other people, and 47% of content is sourced from external providers such as scientific journals, news sources, and other publications.



Collaboration tools (40%) have now surpassed email (33%) as the preferred method of sharing information.

Businesses in nearly every industry are rapidly embracing AI, particularly generative AI, to revolutionize their operations, enhance productivity, and drive innovation. Sixty-seven percent of respondents in Life Sciences reported using AI tools more than occasionally for tasks like summarization, translation, and knowledge extraction.

Key Work-Related Tasks Where Respondents Report Using Content with AI Tools



But who is most likely to be sharing and storing this content, and for what purposes? The following scenarios are based on interviews conducted by CCC and RightsDirect with information specialists at several global pharmaceutical companies, and serve to demonstrate how and why content is shared both internally and externally.

Sharing key research findings with R&D project members

The staff of corporate libraries or scientific information centers play a key role in the licensing and distribution of scientific content for their R&D colleagues. Fast dissemination of the latest scientific articles enhances productivity and can often speed up the pace of drug discovery.

Responding to requests for scientific information from customers

Medical affairs departments are often asked by patients, doctors, and other healthcare professionals for scientifically-validated information, including full text articles from peer-reviewed journals. These published works typically come with specific permissions.

Displaying information for educational purposes

The sharing of published product information on tablets and smartphones is a vital sales tool, whether for display during an individual sales call or for in a presentation at a large medical conference. However, some employees may not be fully aware of the license limitations that apply to the re-use or redistribution of these materials.

Maintaining pharmacovigilance databases of company products

Drug monitoring helps ensure the safety of drugs in the development pipeline and those already approved for marketing. Storing published information about the company's products in up-to-date databases allows the pharmacovigilance department to quickly distribute time-sensitive information as an early warning tool for the detection, assessment, and prevention of possible adverse effects.

Keeping regulatory authorities informed

As the agencies responsible for the scientific evaluation of medicines used in their jurisdictions, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the European Medicines Agency (EMA) require that any adverse reactions to medicines be promptly reported by the manufacturers and applications for new drugs be submitted properly. Copyright is also implicated when submitting copies of previously published material as part of the process of obtaining regulatory clearance for new therapies.

What all these scenarios have in common is the ongoing need to distribute copyrighted materials to complete a required business task, but often copyright is perceived by employees as an interruption to the exchange of information rather than as a facilitator of it.

Copyright Compliance and the Socially Responsible Company

How to create a copyright compliance policy

Internal copyright guidelines can decrease your risk of copyright infringement. When creating a copyright policy, here are some helpful tips:

- ✓ **Tap your organization for input:** helpful suggestions can come from any department.
- ✓ **Establish your policy objective:** be clear about why your organization is implementing a copyright policy.
- ✓ **Define copyright:** provide concise definitions and examples.
- ✓ **Address international copyright issues:** your guidelines should cover the countries you operate in.
- ✓ **Clarify copyright formats and intended uses:** when it comes to copyright, multiple formats are protected as well as uses including the use of content with artificial intelligence (AI) tools.
- ✓ **Outline compliance procedures:** name a point-of-contact and layout steps to request permissions.
- ✓ **Handle copyright infringement properly:** encourage employees to act responsibly.
- ✓ **Promote your policy:** don't hide it in manuals, advertise on the corporate intranet and issue periodic reminders.

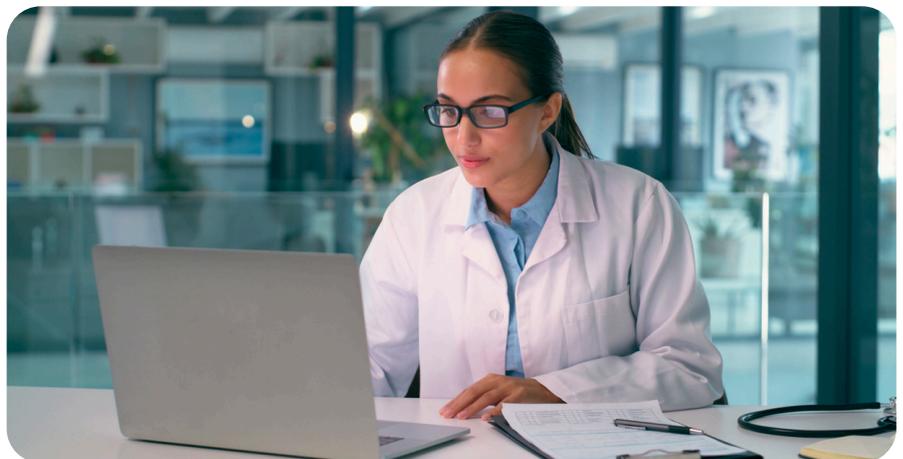
Trust in a company's commitment to the public good often takes decades to build. Yet it can be damaged in minutes by a seemingly minor misstep that results in unwanted scrutiny from regulators, governments, customers, and the media.

Multiple recent studies show that consumers prefer to buy from companies that are socially responsible and transparent about their practices. For example, 77% of consumers are motivated to purchase from companies committed to making the world a better place, and 88% seek information about a company's corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives before making a purchase.¹

As business activities become increasingly complex, a growing number of companies are voluntarily embracing the value of fostering an enterprise-wide culture of integrity and transparency. This heightened focus on CSR is slowly expanding to include a greater awareness of — and respect for — copyrighted material and the intellectual property rights of others.

For years, global organizations have been working to protect their own intellectual property from misuse or misappropriation by others. It only makes sense, then, to extend and expand this same respect and protection to include materials produced and distributed by others.

But to do this, companies need to have the right policies, training, processes, and monitoring tools in place in order to succeed. Naming a point person for copyright issues in the organization is critical, as is the proper implementation of copyright guidelines.



Making Copyright Compliance Easy

While technology has made it easy to find and use content, obtaining copyright permissions can be a difficult, time-consuming, and expensive endeavor. Subscriptions and access to publisher databases provide basic usage rights, but reuse rights granted by publishers differ. Some publishers do not offer licenses permitting employees to reuse published content legally at all, and clearing permissions individually one publisher at a time can be quite challenging.

A better and more comprehensive solution is an annual repertory license that simplifies the licensing of content and helps researchers and other knowledge workers to use copyrighted materials without having to seek multiple individual permissions.

The copyright licenses offered by CCC and its international subsidiary, RightsDirect, enable cross-border sharing and reuse of copyrighted materials throughout the entire organization. The repertory includes millions of rights from thousands of international publishers, representing a broad range of content types and authorized use cases—including a harmonized set of rights for the internal-only use of lawfully acquired content with AI systems.

With a CCC or RightsDirect copyright license in place, employees in pharmaceutical companies and healthcare organizations can lawfully re-use content within their organization in a variety of ways:

- Share digital and print content such as full-text scientific articles within the organization
- Provide single digital or print copies of an article to healthcare professionals who specifically request them
- Store articles for records, projects, and pharmacovigilance databases
- Submit copies of articles to government agencies for regulatory filings
- Automate literature triaging and review
- Fine-tune a licensed LLM for a specialized R&D project.

Pharmaceutical and life science companies can benefit from a consistent set of rights across all participating rightsholders, streamlining the permissions process while respecting the intellectual property of others and demonstrating a commitment to socially responsible business practices.

Looking to find more information on copyright in one place?

Visit the CCC EducationPortal

 copyright.com/education-copyright-programs/

Learn more about events and webinars

 copyright.com/calendar-of-events/

CCC and RightsDirect offer a variety of copyright resources:

- Regular Webinars
- Online Certificates
- Special Seminars
- White Papers
- Educational Videos

Copyright Education

CCC and RightsDirect offer copyright education programs and assist with corporate compliance programs. This incorporates instructor-led trainings, group discussions, question and answer sessions, and analysis of real-world scenarios. In addition, CCC offers regular webinars and online certificate programs on the basics of copyright in a global environment.

Finding the right solution

Questions to ask

Pharmaceutical and life sciences organizations should ask the following questions to assess the copyright compliance-readiness of their employees' information sharing practices:

- 1 What rights are included or excluded with the content typically shared? Are additional licenses necessary to cover secondary use?
- 2 Are the same re-use rights and permissions included when content is acquired through direct publisher subscriptions versus document delivery?
- 3 How much time and resources does it take to clear permissions individually?
- 4 Which is the more cost-effective licensing acquisition method — pay-per-use or repertory license?
- 5 How difficult will it be to explain the coverage terms of available licenses to employees?
- 6 Does the license cover the use of content with AI tools?
- 7 Will the organization be allowed to reproduce content in employee communications?
- 8 Can a single copy of an article be provided in response to doctors, patients, or other customers who request it?
- 9 Will the license permit the storage of articles internally for records, projects, and in publications databases?
- 10 Does the license include the right to submit copies of articles to government agencies for regulatory filings?

¹ 2019 Aflac Survey on Corporate Social Responsibility

About CCC

A pioneer in voluntary collective licensing, CCC advances copyright, accelerates knowledge, and powers innovation. With expertise in copyright, data quality, data analytics, and FAIR data implementations, CCC and its subsidiary RightsDirect collaborate with stakeholders on innovative solutions to harness the power of data and AI.