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Copyright Education for Graduate Students: A Multi-Stage Approach

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INTRODUCTION
This article illustrates how academic librarians can structure a copyright education program for graduate students according to models of graduate student persistence. Adapting copyright education to stages of graduate persistence can help academic librarians find ways to strategically allocate resources while best educating students. DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM The article examines how students at the transition, development, and research stages of their education are served by differing types of copyright education such as tutorials, workshops, and consultations. At the large research library where the authors implemented this model, the multi-staged structure of the program allowed librarians to educate students about a broad array of copyright topics throughout their graduate programs instead of addressing issues solely related to dissertations and theses at the end of their studies. Implementing this model of copyright education for graduate students has implications for program scale, instruction across disciplines, and the reduction of graduate student anxiety. NEXT STEPS This program is subject to iterative improvements, and in the future the authors would like to expand early-stage graduate programming and investigate graduate student perceptions of copyright education.

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INTRODUCTION

Copyright education for graduate students is not a luxury, but a necessity. In models of graduate education where students produced monograph-like dissertations that would be published as books when they entered the professoriate, copyright education may have been necessary only when students became faculty. However, both dissertations and the dissemination of those dissertations have rapidly altered over the past two decades. Departmental models of dissertations are changing across a wide swath of disciplines, as some areas have embraced digital dissertations or dissertations that are composed of articles that are either published or intended for publication (Patton, 2013). Graduate students and those who advise them need a greater understanding of copyright than in the past both because of the complexities involved in these changing models of dissertations, where portions of the dissertation are published before it is filed, and because of the rise of open institutional repositories, where theses and dissertations that contain copyrighted material are available on the web.

Beyond copyright as it relates to dissertation and theses, understanding copyright is a key part of information literacy, particularly for graduate students. In 2013, the ACRL white paper, *Intersections of Scholarly Communications and Information Literacy*, notes that there is an opportunity to engage in copyright education when students are filing dissertations or theses (p. 12). The ACRL *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* clearly delineates the importance of understanding and negotiating intellectual property practices and laws in the frame “Information Has Value.” Copyright is specifically mentioned in the knowledge practices of this frame and also the broader statement that “as creators and users of information, experts understand their rights and responsibilities when participating in a community of scholarship.” Certainly this is the level of information literacy that graduate students will ideally move toward as they progress from entering students to emerging professionals.

However, getting graduate students to the point where they are expert practitioners of their copyrights is not an easy feat. Copyright education often involves trying to chunk complex concepts into learning objects that can be offered alongside curricular programming. There is seldom enough educational space in the curricula to offer sufficient instruction for graduate students to progress to mastery. It is because of the relatively rare opportunities for teaching copyright that targeting copyright education at longitudinal stages of graduate education is beneficial. By focusing on what types of education are appropriate, both pedagogically and practically, for a given stage of doctoral education, copyright educators can plan to scaffold instruction and integrate it into the academic areas and tasks most relevant to graduate students.
At the Texas A&M University Libraries, our copyright program has evolved over time to offer opportunities for copyright education throughout the entire graduate school career, instead of focusing all of our efforts on dissertations and theses alone. Targeting copyright education to longitudinal stages of graduate education has allowed the librarians teaching copyright to develop three distinct types of copyright educational offerings for graduate students as they progress through their studies. Those types include an online tutorial, professional development workshops, and one-on-one dissertation and thesis consultations.

Theories of doctoral student persistence\(^1\) guide how academic librarians divide the copyright program. Specifically, the librarians looked at a model of graduate persistence developed by Vincent Tinto (1993). Much of Tinto’s work concerns undergraduate persistence (1997, 1998, 2000), but there are certainly key points with regard to how student income affects access (2006) and the importance of feeling a sense of belonging (2017) that are relevant to graduate students as well. In *Leaving College*, Tinto explicitly addresses graduate students by outlining a three-part model of doctoral persistence that not only divides programs by tasks, but by key factors that contribute to persistence at a given stage (1993). Tinto’s model includes attributes of both students and programs, but the particular stages of education, transition, development, and research are relevant to the copyright education program. While this theory focuses solely on doctoral students, for the purposes of copyright education it is helpful to apply it in a compressed time frame for masters and professional students as well. The Texas A&M librarians find this model useful for planning instruction, but do not anticipate that all aspects of it will transfer to copyright education, as persistence per se is not a core feature of our educational program. Rather, considering stages of graduate student persistence helps us target our instruction to points in graduate education. This case study illustrates how a copyright education program for graduate students can be structured according to a theoretical model of persistence, and how other academic libraries might adopt a similar approach.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Copyright experts generally maintain that copyright education is important for graduate students. Kenneth Crews notes in his manual for graduate students, “With each…new work that you prepare throughout your career, you will find that giving some attention to copyright will make your publications more successful” (2013, p. 3). Scholars in both academic libraries and the law make cases for the necessity of copyright education. Legal schol-

\(^1\) Graduate student persistence refers to how long graduate students stay in a given program and at what point attrition occurs.
ars argue that it is important because of the intersection of entrepreneurship (Pilz, 2012) or technology (Saunders & Lozano, 2018) and intellectual property law that students may face. There are also implications of work-for-hire for graduate students (Strauss, 2011).

Copyright as a topic can be found within library literature soon after the Copyright Act of 1976 went into U.S. law. Articles discuss the issues of reproduction, courses reserves, and policies. John Lubans, Jr. felt compelled to pen his thoughts in 1982 about the growing field of user education, i.e. library instruction. He states, “Do we have an ethical responsibility in consumer education? I think we do” (1982, p. 95). He realized that librarians have a duty to instruct patrons, to help them think critically and evaluate their sources, for quality. While Lubans’ focus was on ethics and not copyright, he recognized that information and books fall on a spectrum of value, if not as intellectual property. Mary Reichel directly correlates teaching with copyright in her 1989 article. She answers the question posed in the title of her work, “Ethics and library instruction: is there a connection?” with a resounding yes, and devoted a paragraph to intellectual property, emphasizing copyright, copying, and computer software (Reichel, 1989).

Since 2007 (Greenhow, 2007), the subject of teaching copyright has covered varied topics, like the intersections of copyright with plagiarism (Clement & Brenenson, 2013), information literacy (Reed, 2018), teaching methods (Yang & Flatness, 2012), and policies (Papp, Matulich, Walters, & Mcmurrian, 2010). Educational resources slightly expanded the aforementioned list, including rights (Stitzlein, 2018), copyright education programs in general (Rodriguez, Greer, & Shipman, 2014), and licensing (Kaptizke, 2009).

Copyright education specifically for graduate students is a subset of broader copyright education conversations, and “concerns about copyright literacy for graduate students go back decades” (Clement, 2011). One of the goals of having a copyright education program is for students to attain copyright literacy, which Jane Secker and Chris Morrison define as “acquiring and demonstrating the appropriate knowledge, skills and behaviours to enable the ethical creation and use of copyright material” (2016, p.211). Recently, Andrea L. Schuler detailed how electronic theses and dissertations (ETDs) relate to copyright instruction and what graduate students need to know (2019). The topics mentioned—using copyrighted works, authorship, copyright ownership, and copyright essentials in an ETD—are basic elements in a copyright education program.

Indeed, electronic thesis and dissertation filing preparation is one of the principle areas discussed as a rationale for copyright education for graduate students (Lippincott & Lynch, 2010; Keener, 2015). However, as Gesina Philips pointed out in her survey of literature related to copyright and ETDs, “several of the articles identified discussed the needs of
graduate students. However, a more thorough examination of educational outreach to this population is called for” (2018). Philips’ work places graduate copyright ETD instruction on a timeline, which is useful for thinking generally about the tasks associated with the graduate time for ETDs. This type of timeline arrangement is helpful when thinking about how to develop and scale a broader copyright education program not solely focusing on electronic theses and dissertations. Many forms of copyright education deal with multiple, overlapping topics. Copyright has both legal and educational contexts, both of which intersect in academic work. Thus, it is necessary to develop education across these areas.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

Texas A&M University is a large public research university with over 69,000 students, of which nearly 15,000 are graduate or professional students. Of the students at the flagship campus, approximately 6,600 are master's students, 5,000 are doctoral students, and 1,600 are professional students (Texas A&M Data and Research Services, 2019). The school grants graduate degrees across the full spectrum of disciplines, but has particular strengths in engineering, the sciences, agriculture, and veterinary medicine. While there are a number of master's and professional students, much of copyright education is focused on doctoral students, since they are nearly all required to write dissertations, many publish articles while they are students, and many of them teach courses independently. However, we extend our learning opportunities to all graduate students, regardless of their program type.

This case study considers how the University Libraries’ copyright education program for graduate students has developed over the past four years, when both of the current librarians, the Graduate Studies Librarian and the Copyright and Fair Use Librarian, came to be primarily responsible for graduate copyright education. Librarians offered copyright education previously before this, and as the responsibility for offering copyright education changed, so did the program. Since the current copyright education program has been in place for approximately the past four years, it has developed in its breadth as capacity allows. This has meant increasing the copyright training for the librarians themselves, in particular for the Graduate Studies Librarian. Additionally, there are other librarians throughout the organization who are learning more about copyright.

There are three elements of our copyright education program. The first is an online training module, the second is a suite of professional development workshops, and the third consists of one-on-one consultations. As the copyright program developed over the past four years, all of these types of education were mostly aimed at students who were completing their dissertations or theses, since this is when graduate students at Texas A&M are required to sign a copyright availability form to file their document. Andrea L. Schuler notes that this is a
good time to educate students because “Copyright education, although vital, can sometimes be a tough sell if students do not understand how it is relevant to them. Writing a thesis or dissertation can make it relevant” (2019, p. 191). This is certainly true for our students, but when we focused our copyright education offerings to students at the very end of their graduate careers we found that it was difficult to scale our efforts at one high-volume point. We also wanted more time with students to help them with broader copyright-related areas, like teaching, publishing, and conducting collaborative research.

Accordingly, as we began to shift our copyright program to have different elements targeted to students according to the stages of their graduate careers, we started to tie our copyright education program to progressive stages of doctoral education. Formulating a way of looking at doctoral persistence, i.e. how long doctoral students persist in their graduate education, Vincent Tinto posits three stages, “namely that of transition and adjustment, that of attaining candidacy or what might be referred to as the development of competence, and that of completing the research project leading to the awarding of the doctoral degree” (1993, p. 235). These stages can be characterized as the transition stage, which takes place during initial coursework, the development stage, when students complete exams, remaining coursework, and a dissertation proposal, and the research stage, in which students write and defend their dissertations (Ampaw & Jaeger, 2012, p. 642). Because this model relates to doctoral persistence, it is tied to the activities and stages of doctoral education, and is useful for mapping how students move through these doctoral programs in time.

In addition to a doctoral persistence timeline, Gesina Philips’ graduate student timeline where she maps ETD copyright-related education onto is helpful (2018). Her timeline consists of coursework, research and writing, and publishing. It is not completely longitudinal, in that the phases of research/writing and publishing are likely to be recursive for graduate students, but is useful since it broadly maps out tasks associated with graduate education. For example, when considering how to plan education for students in the earliest stage of graduate education, it is good to consider that they are likely completing coursework and may not be available for a substantial number of co-curricular workshops. In the University Libraries’ program, at early stages when students are in coursework we offer an online asynchronous module, while our workshops are targeted at students who are at the research/writing stage.

**Stages of Copyright Education**

**Transition Stage: Online Training**

The first stage of copyright education for graduate students is an online information review involving the basics of copyright (“Copyright Basics,” 2017). The Copyright and Fair
Use Librarian, Graduate Studies Librarian, and Instructional Designer created the training module, which is openly accessible on the website of the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGAPS). It is intended for students to complete while they are in coursework, and OGAPS strongly recommends completion before submitting a thesis or dissertation proposal. Practically speaking, this means that most of the students who complete this element have finished some of their coursework and are at the end of their transition stage. The training module consists of a PowerPoint slide deck of 30 slides. The content of the slides contains introductory material about copyright, namely what copyright is, what it covers, and the university intellectual property statement that is applicable to graduate students. Additionally, there are some common scenarios that students might encounter in their education involving copyright. It was designed and assembled by an instructional designer within the libraries.

This module is intentionally brief and is there to serve as an introduction to copyright. Given that it is a recommended training, the developers recognized that it was unlikely that much attention would be paid to the content, so this unit was designed to be cursory. Deep copyright learning occurs at later stages in the education process. Rather, this training was designed to help students understand that copyright applies to much of the work done at the university and to give students a few scenarios that, should they arise for the student later, would prompt them to go ask for help or further resources. Also, after viewing the slides, students would know that there were resources on campus to help them with copyright questions.

While there is no interactive element to this training, it has the benefit of being completely scalable, since only maintenance work is needed after the initial development. Additionally, students are able to review the information on the slides at point-of-need. They are able to access the information repeatedly and whenever they find it most convenient. However, they are strongly encouraged to view it before submitting their dissertation proposals. OGAPS hosts the tutorial on its website, making it easy to get to, but does not register who has viewed the file.

In terms of relating to a stage of doctoral persistence, the online model is aimed at students in the transitional phase. Tinto notes that during this stage much of the interaction a student has with an institution is in academic departments or programs, and that this is the point when students begin to develop a sense of “community membership” and how that fits into their career goals (1993, pp. 239). Our online training model serves, at this point, as a way to introduce copyright into a student’s set of considerations of academic work, hopefully establishing copyright as a concept that students see as related to their fields.
Development Stage: Professional Development Workshops

The next type of copyright education that the Libraries offer is workshops. These workshops are face-to-face, and generally last for one hour. They are scaffolded into a series of five workshops related to copyright, where students can move from understanding the basics of copyright and fair use to understanding the implications and best practices for using copyrighted material in creating academic works and in teaching. Recent topics include:

- Introduction to copyright
- The information landscape of dissertations and theses
- Using previously published material in academic writing
- Traditional and open access publishing models
- Copyright for educators

Each workshop contains some mix of lecture and problem-based learning activities, and they are generally taught by the Graduate Studies Librarian.

Initially our workshops began as just one workshop on an introduction to copyright and was not targeted to a particular stage of graduate education. However, as both the Copyright and Fair Use Librarian and the Graduate Studies Librarian began interacting with more graduate students over copyright concerns, particularly with regard to electronic dissertations and theses, it became clear that many students were finding copyright assistance at a later than optimal time. Either they were about to meet dissertation or thesis clearance deadlines and were stressed about the added step of reviewing their dissertations for copyright conflicts, or they needed to know about copyright earlier when they were scoping their projects.

Accordingly, it became apparent that it would be beneficial to catch students earlier in their studies, so that they would be able to learn about copyright as they were developing research projects, and not when their studies were mostly finished. To do this, the librarians partnered with our Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGAPS), which offers a professional development program for graduate students. In this program, graduate students get credit for completing professional development workshops in a variety of competency areas, such as leadership and communication. After completing a certain number of workshops and writing reflections on the applicability of the professional development topics, students earn certificates, and can earn them at the basic, intermediate, and advanced levels. These certificates do not currently appear on transcripts, but they are tracked by the university. One of the benefits of aligning with a professional development program is that doing so can provide an extra incentive for graduate students to attend copyright education.
Copyright education through professional development allows for a much broader scope of copyright topics to be addressed than in the earlier mandatory training. It also allows for more depth. During this development stage graduate students are beginning to formulate their research projects. Thus, this is an ideal time for copyright education that is not just reactive, i.e. helping students respond to what they view to be problems, but proactive, where students can learn to design projects and publications with copyright in mind.

As a stage of doctoral persistence, our professional development workshops align with the development stage. Here, Tinto notes that students begin to “[form] specific affiliations with faculty within the department/program” (1993, pp. 241). This is important to note because in this stage it can be particularly helpful to have faculty members recommend copyright workshops to graduate students. Inferring from Philips’ timeline, students at this stage are likely to be writing and researching, and in our experience, students may also be teaching and publishing. Professional development workshops at this stage allow students to integrate copyright considerations into their researching and teaching practices.

Research Stage: Pre-Submittal Conferences and One-on-One Consultations

The final piece of our copyright education program consists of one-on-one consultation and instruction, usually with regard to a student’s dissertation or thesis. These offerings are specifically for students in the final phase of graduate education, the research stage. Students at this point are writing, defending, and filing their dissertations, and the “faculty-mentor” relationship becomes prominent” (Tinto, 1993, p. 241). Our one-on-one model echoes the student-advisor relationship. At this point, their questions tend to be specific to their work and their particular situation, so large professional development classes do not best address their needs. Rather, we aim to explain fair use in the context of their research and have students actively learn how to analyze their own works with regard to copyright.

In ETD pre-submittal conferences, which are run by the Thesis Office in the Office of
Graduate and Professional Studies, we join in to help students prepare their works for the dissertation review process. In order to submit their dissertations to the university, students must certify that they have obtained the necessary permissions for using copyrighted work in their dissertation, such as if a student has previously published an article that will be included in the dissertation. Students also have to give Texas A&M University the right to “archive and make accessible” their dissertation (Office of Graduate and Professional Studies, 2018). In practice this means that the university deposits the dissertation into its open access institutional repository. Since students have questions about both of these aspects of copyright with regard to their dissertations, meeting with them when they are undergoing or about to undergo their review process is timely.

In this arrangement we meet individually with students after they take a larger workshop from the Thesis Office. Discussions usually start with students asking a specific question about their dissertations and then move to a greater explanation about the principles of copyright and fair use. The main benefit of this type of education is that it is at point-of-need. Students are invested in learning about copyright because they can very clearly and concretely see the relevance of copyright to their situations. The drawback is that students at this point are often very rushed, and they are trying to submit their dissertations on a sharp deadline. Because of this they are not always interested in taking in new information about intellectual property. Additionally, they are far enough into their research that if they do have copyright issues, they are more difficult to deal with than if they had been caught early on. In 2019, the Graduate Studies Librarian and the Copyright and Fair Use Librarian participated in 15 of these pre-submittal conferences, generally consulting with two to five students individually after at each conference.

Sometimes students are not able to attend pre-submittal conferences, or they have questions that are too complex to adequately answer in the time and format that follows the conference. In those cases, students can sign up to meet with either the Copyright and Fair Use Librarian or the Graduate Studies Librarian for 30-minute appointments. The librarians use the scheduling feature of LibApps to create a publicly available calendar where students can book and cancel either phone or face-to-face appointments. While it is possible for students to receive email assistance for questions via a generic copyright email address, the librarians find it preferable to communicate synchronously with students due to the complexity of copyright consultations.

LESSONS LEARNED

Apart from the individual elements of the copyright education program, taking a multi-stage approach has several broader implications regarding running a copyright program for
graduate students. These include scaling instruction, working across disciplines, and reducing graduate student anxiety.

Scale

Scaling copyright coverage is challenging. By considering longitudinal stages of doctoral persistence, we have been able to divide our copyright education program and therefore look at different methods of scaling each area. We can also consider how the size of the graduate student population changes at each stage due to attrition. The early online module best addresses scale, since it is automated and asynchronous. This is also the stage of education where we have the largest number of students to reach, since there have been fewer students lost through attrition. However, it is also the most superficial form of copyright education the University Libraries offers. There is considerable need for more in-depth instruction, particularly as students progress through their degree programs, and this type of instruction is more difficult to scale. Our next largest offerings are in workshops, where up to 70 students can attend a single session, although it is more common to have workshops with 10–20 students. In 2019 we saw over 200 students in professional development workshops. Finally, our most resource-intensive education occurs in the final stages of graduate education, where not only is there a smaller population of students to educate, but also a wider spread between when students are filing dissertations, as they might be finishing at the 5, 6, or 7+ year mark. While we still cannot adequately scale all parts of our copyright education program, we can use stages of graduate persistence to consider how best to allocate differing intensities of instruction when planning for scaling.

EDUCATION ACROSS DEPARTMENTS AND DISCIPLINES

While taking a staged approach to copyright education has a number of benefits, one area of it that is challenging is working across varied departments that may have substantially different timelines for the tasks that they require graduate students to complete. While many of our departments generally follow the same timelines with the same tasks, there are still outliers, where students might not submit dissertation proposals until they are nearing the end of their research. This makes using a uniform staged model somewhat more challenging. It would be ideal to be able to stage copyright education in a way that is customized to each department. Collaborating with subject librarians would strengthen this effort,

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2 For masters cohorts at the College Station campus that began between 2014 and 2016, we have seen a first-year attrition rate between 6.5–6.7%, with a 7.8–8.4% attrition rate at the 3-year mark. For doctoral cohorts at the College Station campus that began in 2012 and 2013, we have seen a first-year attrition rate between 9.9–10.3% and a 27.3–27.9% attrition rate at the 5-year mark (Texas A&M Accountability, 2019).
particularly those pursuing self-directed, online copyright courses, such as “CopyrightX” (CopyrightX, n.d.) and “Copyright For Educators and Librarians” (Smith et al., n.d.). At the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, subject librarians teach classes on copyright through their Scholarly Commons (Hensley, 2015, p. 28). Having subject librarians with copyright familiarity would also help address the specific concerns that arise from particular disciplines. For example, engineering students may be concerned about joint-authorship applicability of copyright to data, where a historian might be more concerned about whether reproducing a photograph of a historical event in her dissertation counts as fair use. Targeting copyright education to broad graduate student stages could be refined by tailoring education to specific departments.

Graduate Student Anxiety

One of the benefits of tying graduate student copyright education to longitudinal stages is the opportunity to potentially reduce anxiety. By staging education, students can learn about copyright at times keyed to their development, and this will enable them to have a foundational understanding of copyright before they have to make decisions about their publications and dissertations. This is important because not only will they be able to make decisions in a more timely fashion, it could reduce the anxiety that comes with making such decisions. As Sara Benson notes, addressing fear is an important part of copyright education. Benson states that before one can teach fair use, “the copyright specialist must deal with the learner’s visceral emotional response for the audience to have the confidence to use fair use in their daily work” (2019, p. 33). The same holds true for graduate students requesting permission to deposit previously published works into an institutional repository or deciding whether to embargo their work.

Reducing fear and anxiety is especially important for graduate student populations. New studies have demonstrated that sizeable populations of graduate students have mental health issues such as depression and anxiety (Barreira, Basilico, & Bolotnyy, 2018), with one study claiming “that graduate students are more than six times as likely to experience depression and anxiety as compared to the general population” (Evans, T. et al., 2018, p. 282). While copyright concerns are not direct factors in causing mental health issues, it is the case that every effort should be made to reduce fear surrounding copyright in order to not unnecessarily distress students who may be suffering from them. By planning for multiple opportunities for copyright education over the stages of doctoral careers, students can be more prepared to make decisions in advance of filing or publishing deadline, therefore possibly sparing them from learning all about copyright at a high-stakes time, such as right before dissertation clearances are completed.
NEXT STEPS

By considering how our copyright education program aligns with stages of graduate education, we have discovered areas where we would like to develop the program further. In particular, it would be desirable to increase the depth of instruction in the first stage of graduate education, where students are acclimating to their programs and are taking their introductory coursework. Currently we have our asynchronous PowerPoint tutorial, but there is some variation in when students may take this, and we would like to make it more engaging. Some possibilities for increasing education in this area include holding more social events and/or embedding copyright in graduate coursework. Recently, the University Libraries and the School of Law held a day of customized education events for the Visualization Department, which has a large number of students working in graphic arts and animation who benefitted from copyright education related to those specialized areas. We are interested in offering more events like this in the future.

We would also like to launch a large-scale survey at our institution of graduate student perceptions of the value of copyright education. In particular, we want to focus on surveying advanced students to see where they think copyright education best fits into their programs and then share that survey with the broader copyright education community. Currently we have assessment data that can be used for programmatic improvement, but it cannot be used in publications or research projects without approval from our Institutional Review Board.

One of the challenges of our current copyright program is having the human resources to scale our instruction, so we are continually looking for ways to be able to teach more students with the staff that we have. For the last stage of copyright education, we hope to create online tutorials to answer some of the most common consultation questions we receive, such as how to obtain permission to include a published article in a dissertation that will be housed in our open access institutional repository. We anticipate that the creation of those tutorials will reduce the number of consultations we have, thereby freeing up human resources to increase workshop instruction.

Our graduate copyright education program continues only to expand, both because of intention and demand. Adapting copyright education to broader models of graduate persistence and activities can help academic librarians find ways to strategically allocate resources while best educating students. At our library, doing so has helped us to move from focusing primarily on copyright issues related to dissertations and theses to a multi-staged program where we reach students earlier about a broader array of copyright topics.
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