



Cleveland State University  
**EngagedScholarship@CSU**

---

Michael Schwartz Library Publications

Michael Schwartz Library

---

2010

## Review of Licensing Digital Content: A Practical Guide for Librarians, 2d.ed.

Glenda A. Thornton  
*Cleveland State University*, [g.thornton@csuohio.edu](mailto:g.thornton@csuohio.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/msl\\_facpub](https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/msl_facpub)

 Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

**How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!**

---

### Original Citation

Glenda A. Thornton. (2010). Review of Licensing Digital Content: A Practical Guide for Librarians, 2d.ed., *Technical Services Quarterly*, 27, 2, 256-257.

### Repository Citation

Thornton, Glenda A., "Review of Licensing Digital Content: A Practical Guide for Librarians, 2d.ed." (2010). *Michael Schwartz Library Publications*. 82.

[https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/msl\\_facpub/82](https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/msl_facpub/82)

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Michael Schwartz Library at EngagedScholarship@CSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Michael Schwartz Library Publications by an authorized administrator of EngagedScholarship@CSU. For more information, please contact [library.es@csuohio.edu](mailto:library.es@csuohio.edu).

LICENSING DIGITAL CONTENT: A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR LIBRARIANS. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Lesley Ellen Harris. *Chicago, Illinois: American Library Association, 2009, 176pp., ISBN 978-0-8389-0992-8, softcover, \$57.00.*

If as author Lesley Harris states, “licensing becomes the leading way for libraries to acquire and use content” then books such as this one, *Licensing Digital Content*, will be required reading for those librarians who had hoped to rely upon the negotiation skills of the consortia to which they belong in order to acquire licensed content. Certainly this is the situation that I have been fortunate to benefit from, for the most part, at least in the past. For a long while librarians primarily handled only licenses for media items, and then came software and CD-ROMs, and then a few packages of e-journals from only a few sources. Today, for many libraries, including my own, there are all of the above and e-books, and art image databases, and individual journals such as *Science* and *Nature*, and single-use mixed media items—all of which come with their own license agreements that we have to deal with in-house. Then, libraries increasingly have their own digital content that other people want to use (and we may want to make money from that use)—again another licensing situation! Thus, it is no wonder that Harris can describe the duties for a new specialist/librarian as follows:

- Managing the acquisition of digital content
- Coordinating license negotiations & renewals
- Working with legal counsel to review licenses
- Coordinating efforts with consortia
- Maintaining databases of license agreement
- Collecting and evaluating usage statistics
- Advising on permissions and rights and copyright and license compliance
- Serving as the contact between the library and the various vendors/suppliers

- Responding to questions about copyright and compliance
- Overseeing end-user compliance with the terms of the license agreement
- Monitoring developments in domestic and global legislation affecting copyright and licensing
- Advocating the library's position on legal and policy issues relating to the use of digital content.

But, until such time that every library of any size has such an expert (and until such experts are readily available) Harris's book fills a valuable role.

Harris has produced a well-written and very user-friendly text that starts with some quick tips for negotiating a successful agreement, which are, in my opinion, designed to build the librarian/negotiator's self-confidence —perhaps thinking that a librarian may be picking up this book at the last minute and does not have time to fully review the entire field of contract law. Then, having gained the librarian's interest, she goes on to discuss when and why license agreements have become common in libraries as well as how the profession is responding by the development of standards and best practices.

The remainder of the book is a very practical guide to actually working with license agreements beginning with suggestions on how the librarian can be more proactive in this experience rather than merely trying to understand the license that the content provider has supplied. Harris discusses key licensing issues, the licensing lingo, global issues in licensing content, and legislation concerning the use of intellectual property. She continues with a chapter on key digital licensing clauses, one on boilerplate clauses, and another on negotiations. The final two chapters include one with questions and answers that she has fielded as the result of

teaching seminars and workshops on digital licensing and some further suggestions for the reader on how to utilize all of this information.

The text of this work is then followed by Sections 107 and 108 of the U.S. Copyright Act that deals with, respectively, Fair Use and Interlibrary Loan, a checklist of clauses that one might find or require in an agreement, and a wonderful glossary of terms reprinted from the Liblicense website copyrighted by Yale University Library, and of course, a very useful index.

I recommend this book for all practicing librarians. It is going on my bookshelf at an arm's reach away. It seems to me that library law must be seriously considered as a required course for all library school students, if it is not already.

*Glenda Thornton*  
*Director*  
*Michael Schwartz Library*  
*Cleveland State University*