

Teachers' use of Internet materials in the classroom

Canada's copyright laws have a clear legal framework for the use of Internet materials for learning purposes; our copyright laws support digital learning and the use of the Internet in the classroom.

The Internet amendment

The Internet provision in the *Copyright Act* establishes that teachers and students can legally perform routine classroom activities such as downloading, saving, and sharing publicly available Internet text or images. Teachers and students can also incorporate Internet materials into assignments and exchange works electronically with one another.

Whereas the copyright law was once silent on activities like surfing and using on-line resources, Canada's *Copyright Act* now contains a specific Internet amendment that explicitly permits teachers and students to use publicly available materials on the Internet for educational purposes without having to pay copyright or licence fees.

This Internet amendment is essential in a day and age when our federal and provincial/territorial governments are simultaneously increasing our levels of connectivity and positioning the country to be a leader in the information age.

Respecting creators

However, the Internet amendment does not allow teachers or students to use any and all material that they find on the Internet.

The Internet amendment applies only to material that has been posted to the Internet with the authorization of the copyright holder and without any restrictions to access such as encryption or password-protection. Teachers and students must respect any "digital lock" that in any way restricts access to or use of Internet content.

The Internet amendment does not apply to materials that are not publicly accessible. Content creators and copyright owners still have the right to continue to sell and receive payment for their works through subscription, password, and payment technologies. In this way, the amendment respects the rights of those creators and other copyright holders who post materials on-line for commercial purposes.

Nor does the Internet amendment apply to pirated textbooks or films. The use of pirated materials is akin to plagiarizing works. The education sector teaches respect for creators and copyright. Students are required to cite materials used, no matter what the source, as a matter of appropriate use of material created by others. This practice teaches respect for and recognition of intellectual property. Teaching the inappropriateness of pirating materials is one way the education sector reinforces respect for creators.

Internet in the classroom

The Internet provides us with access to a wealth of information. Computers and digital technology are invaluable tools in the learning process. Canada's copyright law and its Internet amendment ensure that both teachers and students can reap the full benefits of the evolving digital technology without harming the interests of copyright owners.

Given the many changes to copyright law in Canada, teachers should learn more about the new benefits and limits for classroom learning. Visit the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), Web site at www.cmec.ca/copyrightinfo.