



Newspaper Licensing Ireland Limited

Understanding Copyright

In the changing world of newspapers, copyright is one of the few constants. Fact is, anything that appears in a newspaper – whether it's a print or online version – is copyrighted to the publisher.

While most people are aware of what the little '©' symbol stands for, how many newspaper readers have a detailed understanding of their legal obligations in relation to copyright? Not many, one imagines.

The purpose of this document, then, is to outline the basics of newspaper copyright and explain the role of Newspaper Licensing Ireland Ltd.

Why does copyright exist?

Copyright is an essential aspect of publishing. It compensates publishers for the time and money they invest in the preparation and production of newspaper content, and gives them the exclusive rights to: copy the work; issue copies to the public; transfer any such rights to others; and be identified as the author of the work*.

It sounds straightforward but, until recently, complying with copyright law was anything but.

For instance, if you – as a company employee – spotted a relevant article in a newspaper and wanted to photocopy it, you would have been legally obliged to get prior permission and possibly pay a fee to the publisher. If you didn't, you were breaking the law and could have been sued.

In theory this meant contacting every single publisher, every single time somebody wanted to copy a newspaper article. Unsurprisingly, this did not happen – meaning that many companies were exposed to potential litigation, and also that many publishers lost out on revenue due to them.

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The establishment of Newspaper Licensing Ireland (NLI) has brought much-needed clarity to that situation. In a single stroke – by making available a licence – NLI has made it simple for companies to comply with copyright legislation, whether they are in-house or working on behalf of clients.

NLI was established in 2002 by National Newspapers of Ireland, and provides a licence for both paper and digital copying on behalf of Irish national and regional newspapers (16 national titles and 90 regional titles) as well as paper (analogue) copying of UK newspapers.

In addition to legal compliance for companies who photocopy or scan newspaper content, the establishment of NLI also benefits publishers who can now be more confident that they will receive revenue from any press clippings copied from their pages.

By working closely with press clipping agencies (PCAs), NLI has ensured widespread compliance with the copyright law. PCAs pay fees to NLI and submit regular reports about press clippings issued to their clients. Typically, the PCA would include a fee for the first copy

of a press clipping within the overall fee (the recipient must then obtain their own licence if they make additional copies).

Ultimately, it is the responsibility of organisations which photocopy or scan newspaper content – not the PCAs – to ensure they are observing copyright law.

An essential part of publishing

That last phrase is a telling one. Observing copyright law is more than simply a legal requirement: it's an absolutely essential part of the publishing industry, and income derived from the reproduction of copyrighted material is a crucial source of revenue for newspapers.

Newspapers, after all, are part of the business model that enables the companies featured in those publications – not to mention their PR and marketing agencies – to thrive. To put it another way, how much is a positive article in a national newspaper worth? Particularly if that article has an impact on the market awareness, sales or share value of a company? The potential value is vast.

It's important to look at copyright from a publisher's perspective. They are the ones, after all, who create newspapers – each one a unique entity – and as such, they should be allowed to control how and where that material is disseminated. In that context NLI can be seen as a 'collection agency', working on behalf of Irish publishers.

Collection agencies, as everyone knows, are dogged to say the least. So can companies afford to ignore copyright and illegally copy, fax and email press clippings? It's hardly worth the risk. It is a clear case of breaking the law; it exposes an employer to litigation; and there are heavy fines for those who are caught.

A far better, and fairer, solution is to build copyright management into everyday processes – by obtaining a licence from NLI.

For more about the licences available from NLI visit www.newspaperlicensing.ie. You can also phone us on (01) 668 9099 or email us at info@newspaperlicensing.ie.

* The principle source of copyright law in Ireland is the Copyright & Related Rights Act 2000.

*Ends
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