

Copyright and research – a study on the views of researchers

SUMMARY

THE PREMISES OF THE STUDY

During the copyright forum organised by the Ministry of Education and Culture in autumn 2012, questions were raised about whether Finland's copyright legislation concerning education was up to date and how copyrights are handled with regard to research carried out at universities. As a result, a group of copyright experts representing various interested parties decided to carry out a study on the current state of copyright and research at universities. The study was designed in cooperation with Aalto University, the University of Helsinki, the IPR University Centre, University of the Arts and representatives from Kopiosto. The study was carried out with the help of funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture.

The purpose of the study was to form an overall picture of the views of researchers regarding the effects of copyright during their careers and particularly with regard to their currently ongoing research. The study was carried out as an Internet survey. In addition to quantitative questions, open questions were also included in the survey so that respondents would have the opportunity to freely express their views. The study mapped the following themes:

1. Background information
2. Utilising materials created by others in research work in general
3. The respondent's latest ongoing research or research project
4. Copying and saving materials created by others
5. Distributing materials created by others
6. Publishing your own research

This summary presents the key results of the study. The survey and the tables can be viewed in their entirety at: http://www.kopiosto.fi/kopiosto/tietoa_tekijanoikeudesta/tutkimus/erillisselvitykset.

GENERAL

Table 1. The distribution of all researchers who responded to the survey by field of science.

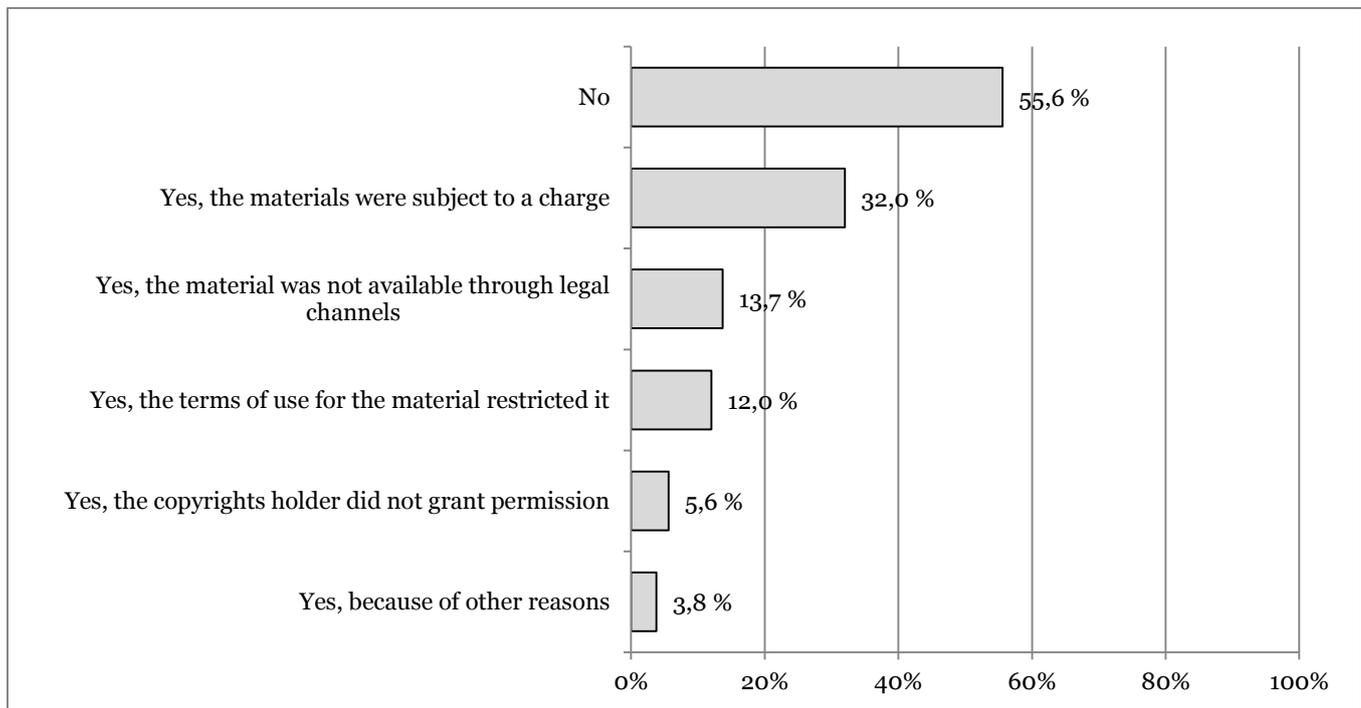
Field of science	All researchers		Included in the survey	
	Amount	%	Amount	%
Natural sciences	5 167	30,2	293	24,4
Engineering	2 757	16,4	126	10,5
Medicine and health sciences	2 297	13,5	249	20,7
Agricultural and forest sciences	488	2,8	58	4,8
Social sciences	4 025	23,2	251	20,9
Humanities	2 416	13,9	224	18,7
Total	17 149	100	1201	100

n=1201

Over 1,200 researchers and research directors from different branches of science and all the universities in Finland responded to the survey. Together, the respondents represent 7.2% of the total number of researchers operating in Finnish universities. The respondents' distribution by field of science also largely followed the distribution of all researchers in Finland (table 1).

PROBLEMS IN UTILISING MATERIALS CREATED BY OTHERS

Table 2. Have you been forced not to utilise materials created by others in your research even though you wanted to utilise them?



The respondents were asked if they had ever been unable to utilise materials created by others even if they wanted to do so (table 2). When interpreting the results, one should consider the fact that even a single occurrence of not being able to utilise materials created by others is presented as a problem in the table. Because of this, the significance of “No” answers is great: 55.6% of respondents have never found themselves unable to utilise materials created by others during their entire careers.

Table 3. In your research work, were the following issues so problematic that you left them unresolved?*

Field of science	Distributing materials created by others to, for instance, my research team/colleagues	Publishing materials created by others as a part of my own research	Problems relating to the right to publish my research
Humanities	1,73	1,69	1,83
Natural sciences	1,42	1,47	1,55
Medicine and health sciences	1,48	1,3	1,42
Agricultural and forest sciences	1,55	1,52	1,61
Art and design	1,68	2,27	2,41
Social sciences	1,54	1,48	1,6
Economics	1,56	1,52	1,56
Engineering	1,63	1,57	1,7
All	1,54	1,5	1,61

*Average on a scale of 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = all the time.

n=1153

The respondents had rarely encountered unresolvable problems during their research (table 3). The problems encountered were related to unclear usage rights of materials and the publication terms of the research. The fact that some materials are subject to a charge was also seen as an obstacle to utilisation.

“Our university does not have access to all the articles found by search engines. Sometimes summarising an article vital to your research is difficult when you cannot access the article without paying for it yourself.”

“The publisher’s agreement made it difficult to understand the limits of personal use.”

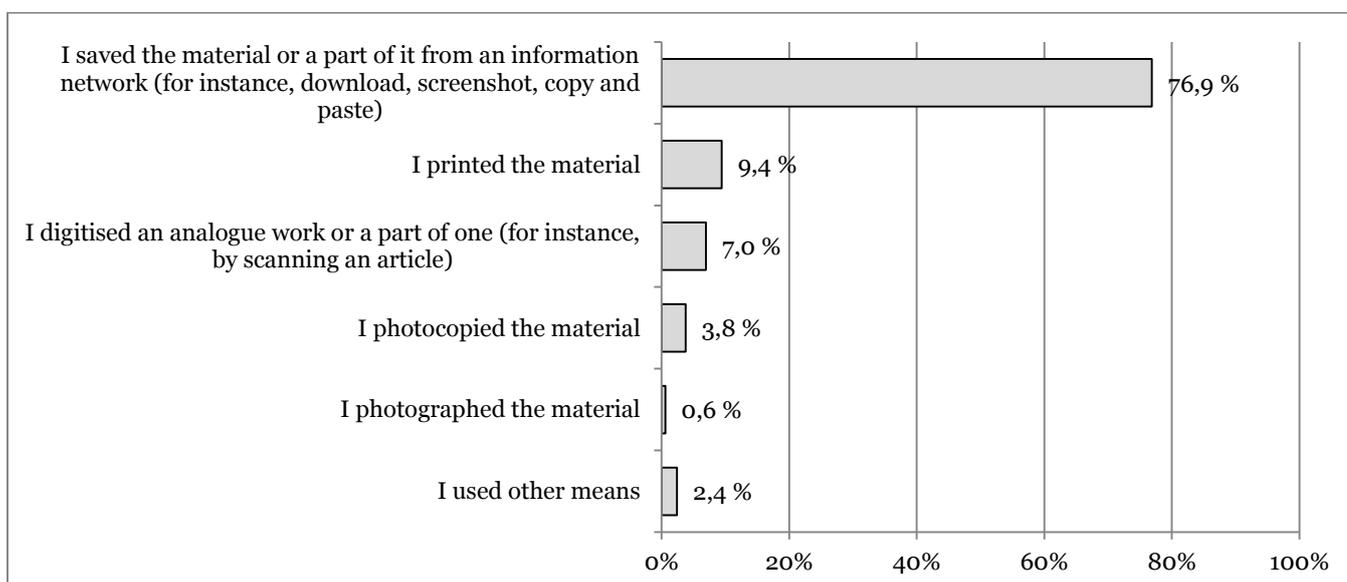
The respondents' understanding of copyrights also seemed to be insufficient at times – for example, the fact that copyright legislation allows the citation of images without permission did not seem to be clear to respondents.

“There is not enough information available on whether you can use photographs, maps, etc. in your own publication. When I have sent queries about this, I have received no replies. In the end I’ve just had to take the risk and publish and hope that there are no repercussions.”

“I am unsure about copyrights, in terms of what I can utilise and where.”

SAVING MATERIALS CREATED BY OTHERS

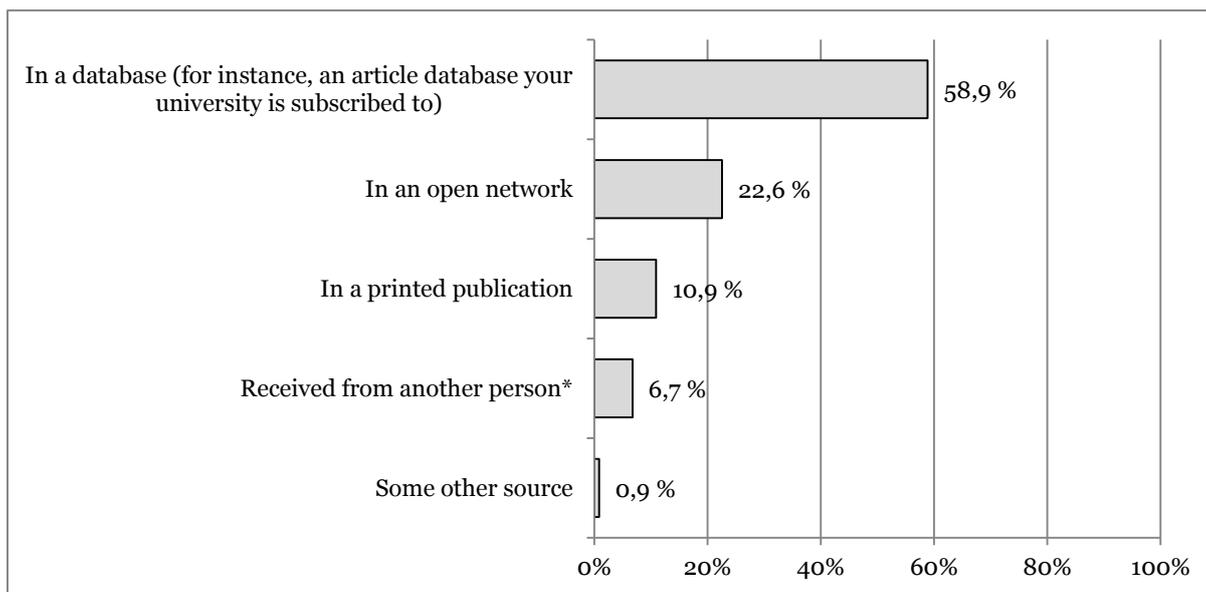
Table 4. How did you copy or save this material for your research?



n=851

The most often utilised type of material created by others was written material: for 82.3% of the respondents, the last piece of work saved or copied for research purposes was a written work. The most prevalent way of doing so was to save or print the material from the Internet (table 4). The majority of the materials saved originated from various article databases and the open Internet (table 5). Some materials were also saved from printed publications by scanning or photocopying.

Table 5. Where did you find the material you saved or copied?

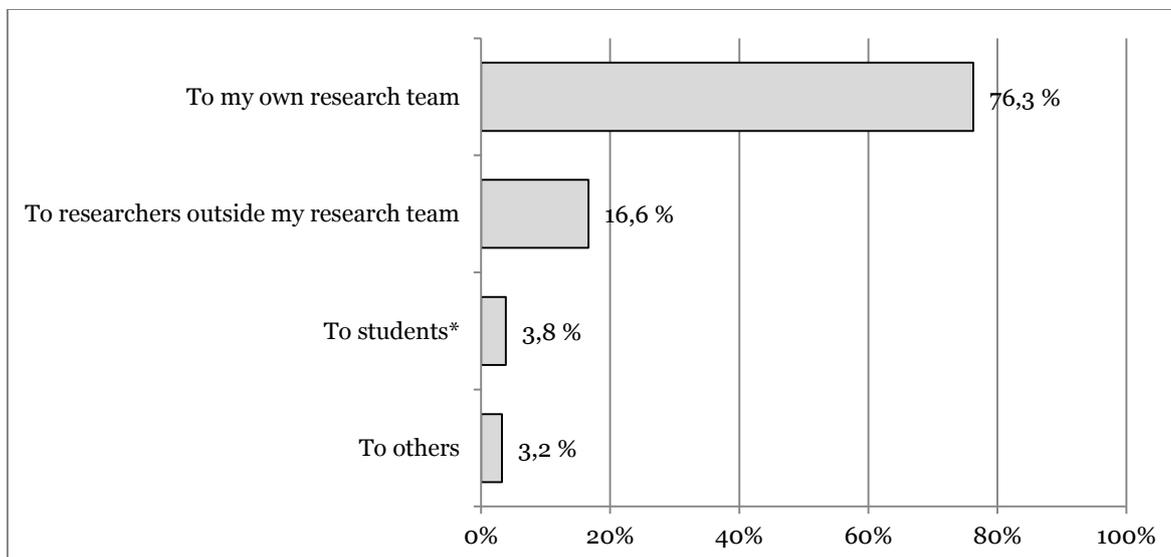


*Category formed based on open responses.

n=851

DISTRIBUTING MATERIALS CREATED BY OTHERS

Table 6. To whom did you distribute this material?

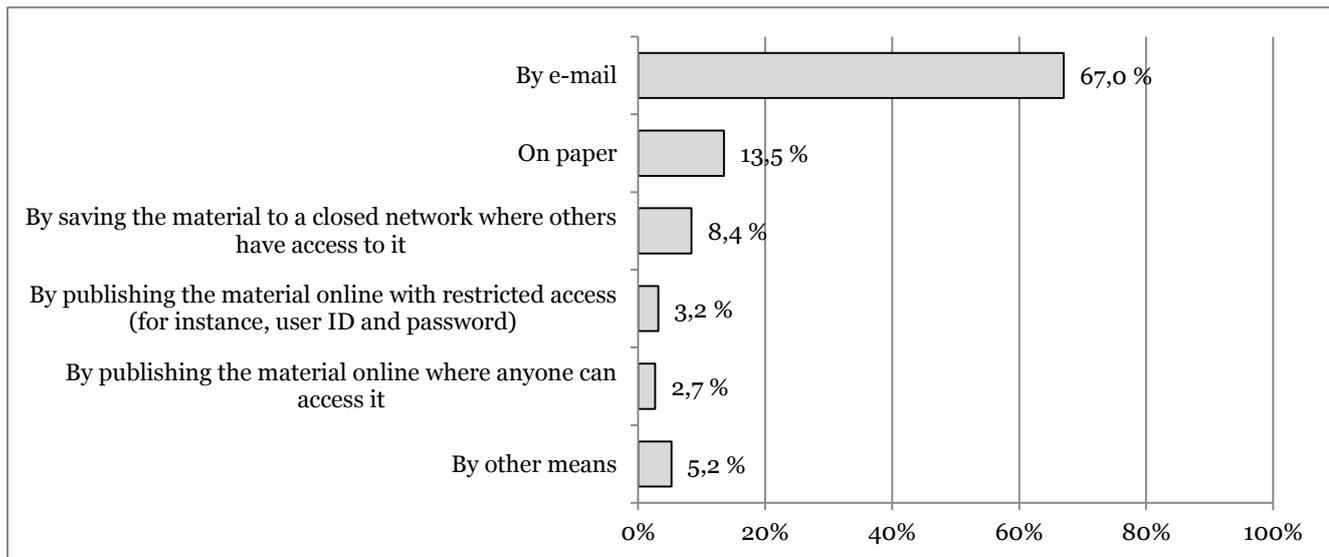


*Category formed based on open responses.

n=591

Materials created by others were primarily distributed within the respondents' own research groups or to other researchers (table 6). The most common method of distribution was e-mail – online sharing platforms, such as Moodle and wikis, were seldom used (table 7).

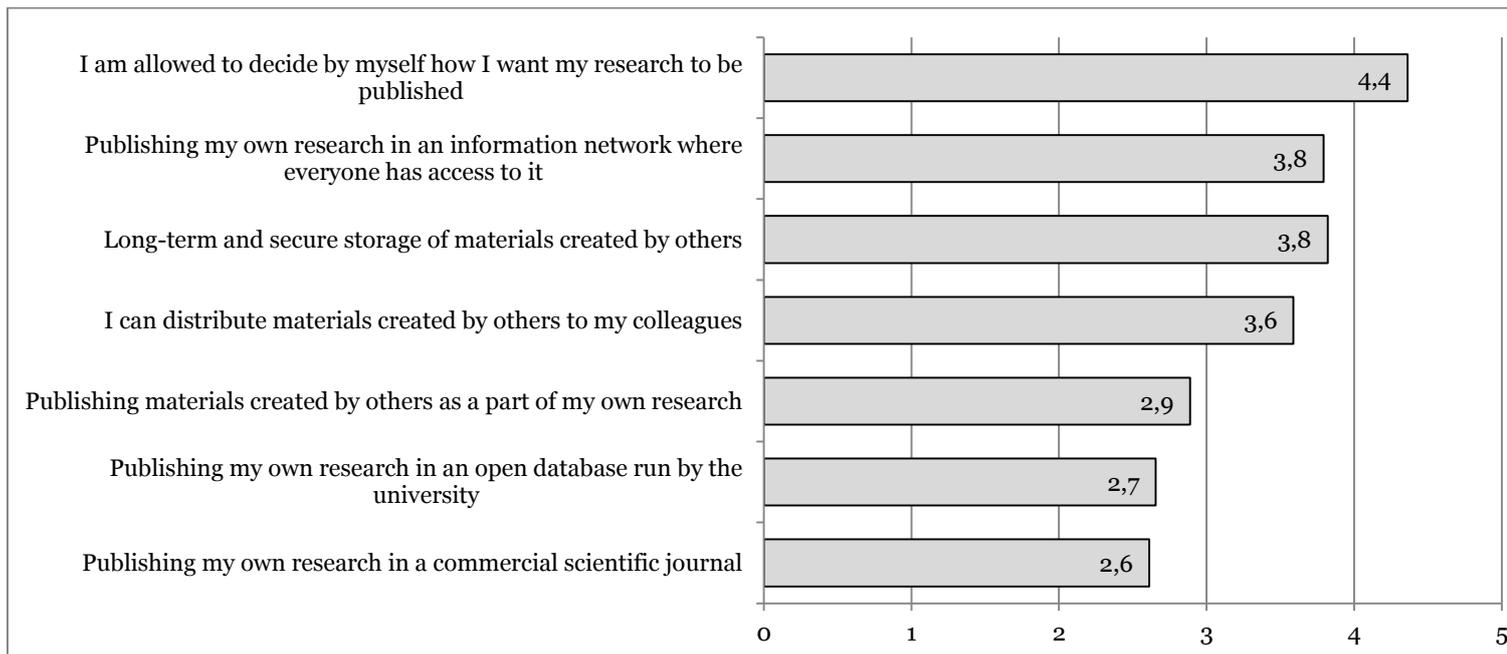
Table 7. How did you distribute this material?



n=591

PUBLISHING RESEARCH

Table 8. How important do you think the following matters relating to the use and publishing of materials are?*



*Average on scale: 1 = not at all important, 5 = very important.

n=524

Respondents viewed it as very important to be able to decide on the publishing methods of their research (table 8). Respondents also wanted to make their research openly available to all. Publishing your research in a commercial scientific journal was deemed the least important. This is a somewhat surprising result, since publishing in international scientific journals is very important to researchers due to the referee points awarded for doing so. One possible explanation is that the respondents have not thought that the term “commercial scientific journal” refers specifically to international scientific journals, the usage rights of which are sold to universities.

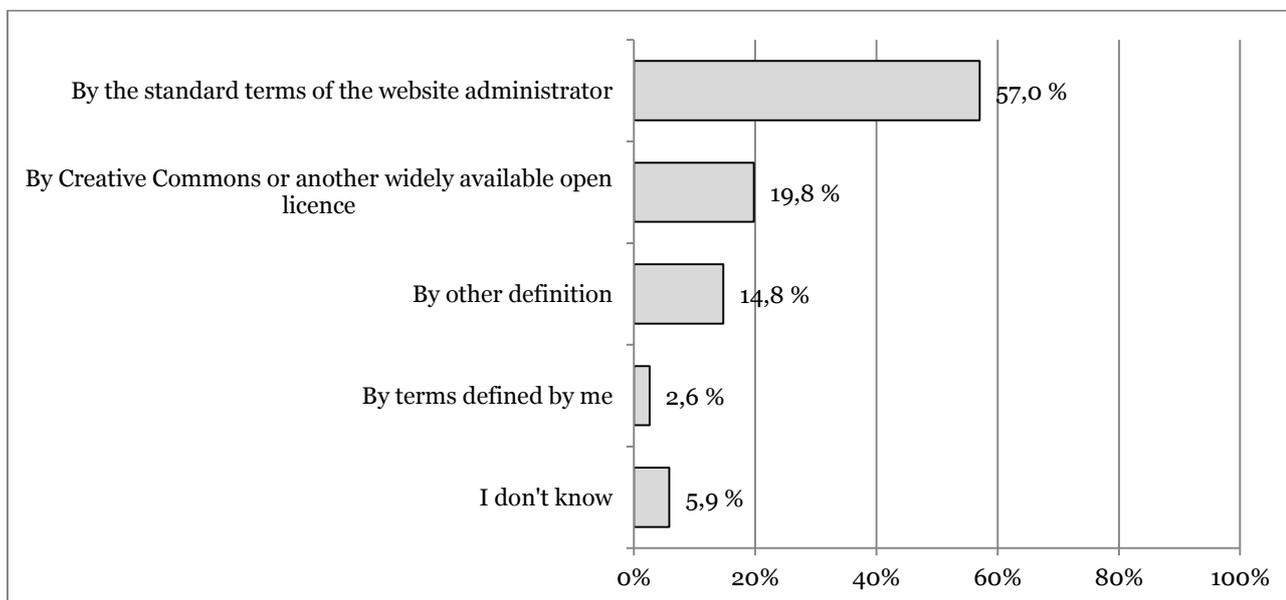
Even though the responses highlighted the respondents' desire to decide on the publication methods of their research themselves and the open availability of scientific information, the respondents felt that they could not influence the publication terms of their own research. Terms could be influenced mainly by choosing the publication platform or by paying a separate fee in order to publish the research in Open Access format. In the latter case, the high cost was often seen as an obstacle to open publication.

“My only method of influence was to pay a considerable sum for open publication.”

“I [could not influence the publication terms], but obviously I decided what to include in the publication and in which journals I would try to get it published.”

“A commercial operator is such a large operator that I can hardly protest if I want them to publish my work, and I have to publish through them in order to receive research points and funding for the university.”

Table 9. How was the further use of the research defined?



n=104

Respondents who had published or had been involved in publishing research within the last six months were asked additional questions about the publication process. These respondents were asked to state whether the further usage rights of the research were defined when the research was published; this question was further clarified by asking how the further use of the research was defined (Table 9). Respondents had already stated that they could rarely influence the terms of publication. The same phenomenon was reflected in the definition of further usage rights: only 2.6% of respondents had defined the further usage rights of their research themselves. The most common method was to use the standard terms defined by the website administrator or the Creative Commons licence.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the study was to survey whether there are any copyright-related problems or development needs related to carrying out research. According to the results, it would seem that researchers rarely encounter insurmountable copyright-related problems during their work. However, the respondents were of the opinion that there are currently some copyright-related problems associated with research work, some of which have to do with confusion about the usage rights of materials and some with the fact that researchers are not always very familiar with copyrights. Differences between fields of science were also observed: compared to other fields, encountering problems related to the use of materials, both during research and the publication of studies, was particularly common in the field of arts and design.

According to the study, the most common forms of materials created by others to be utilised were written materials and data. The utilisation of images was rare, even though all respondents had a clear need to publish them as part of their own research. Materials were saved or copied for research purposes primarily from databases and the open Internet. Respondents usually carried out research as part of a group, and materials created by others were mainly distributed within the respondents' own research groups via e-mail. Research was usually carried out entirely or partly with outside funding, and over half of the research was international in nature.

The majority of respondents had not encountered any problems related to publishing their research. However, respondents found it important to be able to decide the publication methods of their research themselves, even though this was not always possible in practice – the publication terms of publishers were deemed to sometimes be too strict. The open availability of information was also emphasised in the responses, and some respondents stated that the current copyright legislation is too restrictive with regard to research.

The feedback provided by the respondents also revealed that the copyright terminology used in the survey was found to be somewhat difficult to understand. The respondents did not always understand what the questions were aiming for – for example, “material created by others” was sometimes misunderstood. The respondents also noted that there was not enough easy-to-understand information available about copyrights, and that they required further training about copyrights.

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