

Copyright and Your Dissertation: Hypotheticals

With a partner or small group, review the hypotheticals below. Be prepared to share your answers and discuss them with the group.

1. As part of his research, Matt, a University of Michigan graduate student, creates a word frequency list of Dickens's *Bleak House* (which is in the public domain). That is, for every word that occurs in the book, he notes the total number of times it appears in the book. Matt would like to include the word list as an appendix to his dissertation. Will he run into copyright trouble? Why or why not? Do you require any additional information to assess this, and if so, what?
2. Susan is a University of Michigan graduate student writing a dissertation about the architecture of Detroit's neighborhoods. Some of the buildings she is writing about have been demolished or renovated, so she must rely on photographs to know how they looked in the past. She anticipates finding such photographs in a variety of locations: in historical photograph collections on museum and library websites, in digitized or microfilmed historical newspapers, and in physical format in various local archives. Some of these photographs are of the buildings only; others are photographs of people and events that happen to have the demolished buildings in the background. Susan would like to keep a digital copy of each photograph she finds, so that she can refer to it later. She would also like to include copies of some of the photographs in her dissertation. She plans to publish her dissertation in an academic journal after she has completed her degree. Will she run into copyright trouble? Why or why not? Do you require any additional information to assess this, and if so, what?
3. Jason is a University of Michigan graduate student in materials science and engineering. His dissertation is about fatigue (the way a material weakens when loads are applied to it). He would like to use a *Calvin and Hobbes* comic strip as a frontispiece for his dissertation. Its subject is related to Jason's research; it will draw attention to the applications of Jason's research and provide a bit of levity. (In the strip, Calvin asks his father, "How do they know the load limit on bridges, Dad?" His father's response, and then his mother's, are typical of the humor of the comic strip.) Will Jason run into copyright trouble? Why or why not? Do you require any additional information to assess this, and if so, what?
4. Laura is a University of Michigan graduate student writing a dissertation about online harassment in a particular community. Her research involved defining a set of Twitter users, harvesting their tweets in a manner consistent with Twitter's terms of use, and performing social network analysis on them. She has completed her work and would like to deposit the raw dataset in Deep Blue Data. Will she run into copyright trouble? Why or why not? Do you require any additional information to assess this, and if so, what?

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