



**Interview with Robin Neidorf
lead researcher and general manager for Free Pint Ltd.**

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KENNEALLY: The challenge of information in this information age is its ubiquity, and we're going to take a look at all of that and more based on a special report about copyright policies and practices. Joining us today on Beyond the Book is Robin Neidorf. She's a lead researcher and general manager for FreePint Limited, which has put together this new report, and Robin, welcome to Beyond the Book.

NEIDORF: Thanks so much. I'm looking forward to our chat.

KENNEALLY: So am I because of course, here at Copyright Clearance Center, we care deeply about copyright. Not that everybody doesn't, but especially here at Copyright Clearance Center. And we were a sponsor, among several others, of your survey. We should tell people briefly about FreePint. It's a UK-based publisher of resources, publications, sites and reports serving the global information industry. Robin, you developed and implemented this first report from FreePint on copyright policies and practices, and you're already at work on a revision. So maybe you might tell us a bit about what you're going to be looking at in year two. Much of this information is online at FreePint.com. And prior to joining FreePint, you ran a research and communications consulting business for 10 years and focused on strategic planning, ways to use information to make better decisions, and creating effective audience-focused communications across different media. And information is what we all live in. We seem to swim in it like fish do in water these days. So for you, just briefly before we get into the findings of the survey, how is it for Robin as an information worker to be living and working in 2010?

NEIDORF: Well, it's a very exciting time to be an information worker because there's so much information at our disposal. It can be delivered in so many different formats. We have a lot more control than we ever had before, and we have a lot more access than we ever had before. I find that it's really exciting that I can interact with information however it suits me, whether I want to be at my laptop or a mobile phone device or any kind of mobile device, and really get important work done that way – and also collaborate with others who are very rarely in the same



room with me. And that's a really new environment that really pushes business forward, I think.

KENNEALLY: Right, and it's not just that we have access to information today, but we have so many different ways we can use that information.

NEIDORF: Yes. And it's really – in the last several years particularly, I've seen a lot of evolution in terms of how much flexibility we have and how we interact with information. It's much easier today than it's ever been to share something, to post links, to become your own podcaster, to become your own producer, and really push those things out into the world and consume them as information consumers. There's a lack of friction in how we interact with information. It's so easy to simply push reply or simply push send or post, and as a consumer and as an individual, that's very exciting – though at times, as a producer of information, a publisher of information, that can be quite terrifying.

KENNEALLY: Right. We're going to look at some of those tensions there, but it strikes me that this is the fulfillment of that prophecy that we all know at least one half of from Stewart Brand, who said easily 25 years ago, information wants to be free. And then he continued, information also wants to be expensive. And that's really at the heart of your report here, correct?

NEIDORF: Absolutely. Absolutely. And those two tensions – I don't know that they're – that they always have to be mutually exclusive. We use the term information as a pretty generic thing. But of course, there're many different flavors and varieties of information, and they're all going to have different value propositions, depending on who's looking at it and why. And I think that as both consumers of information and publishers of information, we have to be really mindful of those different value propositions and make sure that the investment we're making in producing or consuming information is in line with what that value is.

KENNEALLY: Right, and because we are concerned about all those questions here at Copyright Clearance Center and were involved in your putting together the report, perhaps we should tell people a bit about how the research was conducted, who you talked to, and the methodology behind all of this.

NEIDORF: Yeah, what I realized was that, from the perspective of content – so people that are accessing information content, there really wasn't a landscape survey out there as to how corporations in particular are managing their risk with relationship to how their workers are interacting with content. And one of the catalysts for thinking about this problem was a number of high profile lawsuits, where publishers actually brought lawsuits against some of their customers around



sharing passwords or masking how many users were actually accessing the content. And as those trials – as those lawsuits made their way through the news and through the courts, people just became a lot more aware. It really brought the issue to the forefront of a lot of decision makers’ minds. But we didn’t really have data telling us what mechanisms organizations were using to identify that risk, to manage that risk, and to train their workers. For the most part, people do want to do the right thing, but there’s a lot of confusion as to what the right thing might be. So that was one piece of it.

And then at the same time, I knew from my work with individual knowledge workers, that they were feeling a lot of confusion about what they could and couldn’t do. So for example, more and more business research might be taking place in social networks as opposed to in traditional databases. What were their rights and responsibilities with regard to sharing that information? On the one hand, the sites themselves seemed to be actively promoting the sharing of information. But on the other hand, they didn’t really want to do something that was going to maybe put their organizations at risk. So I knew that there was likely to be a gap between the policies that organizations were putting in place and the tools that they were implementing to bring those policies to life, and the actual practice on the desktop. So those were my objectives there.

KENNEALLY: Right, and the gap that you’re talking about there gives rise to this level of uncertainty that you say to us in the report is throughout the industry.

NEIDORF: Absolutely. Absolutely. I think one of the things that I got most clearly in phase two of the research of the data gathering, which was when I was talking to end users, was how much confusion there was. People just don’t know – in question after question, in the open-ended responses, people would say, I just don’t know the answer and I don’t know who to ask.

KENNEALLY: Well, that’s fascinating, and you did ask a lot of open-ended questions but of course, you also gathered some really great hard numbers to go along with all of this. But again, your findings sort of point to something that goes beyond some of the approaches that publishers and others have taken. There’s – there are contracts and licenses, and we’re familiar with all of that here at CCC. There are technologies that can facilitate or attempt to slow down, de-accelerate the reuse of information. But both of those things, the contracts and the technology, can be breached and really, what it does come down to is behavior. So if we’re trying to move from this level of uncertainty toward something that is a bit more certain and a bit more self-policing, what do you think are the kinds of things that publishers and users are going to need to do, or to be thinking about?



NEIDORF: Well, I think the answer to that is always going to be different no matter – based on what type of publisher it is and the type of information they’re working with. Certain types of information, their value goes – the value of that information goes down almost hourly. If you think about what news used to be worth, a daily newspaper was worthwhile in a way that it isn’t anymore. People can get breaking news through so many different methods, that by the time the morning paper shows up on their breakfast table, it feels out of date for certain types of news. Now news analysis, on the other hand, is always going to have a higher value. So a publisher that is focused on the commodity type of information is probably going to have a very hard go of it, because somebody’s always going to be willing to provide that information at a lower cost, and probably at a zero cost.

Now when we go into the higher value types of information, there are ways of pricing, of implementing controls, of doing a combination of things that are both encouraging the kinds of usage that they want and also making sure that there’s economic protections in there. I think my personal bias is towards encouraging publishers to be a little less precious with their content and finding the pricing model that enables them to say, we know we’re getting the right payment for the investment that we’re making and making this content available. And therefore, it’s now free to go and do what it needs to do. So it’s almost a hybrid of that information wants to be free, information wants to be expensive. Get the payment, but then make it free within the confines of that payment, if that makes sense.

KENNEALLY: In a subscription model that’s kind of designed for the web, it sounds like, and I was going to point out that, among the other co-sponsors, are two outfits that have had come success with that model. The Dow Jones and the *Financial Times*.

NEIDORF: Yes. Yes.

KENNEALLY: And –

NEIDORF: And at the same time, they’re also both organizations that are very much experimenting, and that’s, I think, one of things that I admire about both of those organizations, is that they haven’t been afraid to try something that looks on the surface fairly risky. We’d look at somebody like the FT as an example. Two years ago, they introduced the idea of licensing their content directly with the user, if they want to – if the user wanted to have that content available either through an aggregator or through any other kind of medium. And at the time, it created a lot of upheaval in the industry. I talked to a lot of my subscribers who were panicked about the deadline that was coming up. And two years later, it doesn’t seem that unusual to think about a publisher doing that. They really set the pace for thinking



more creatively about what are our licensing models and what are our business models. And what was shocking two years ago today is another way of doing business.

KENNEALLY: Right. Well, that's interesting. But two years in this world is a lifetime nearly. Things have changed so much –

NEIDORF: Yes.

KENNEALLY: – even – and we can expect to see more change, particularly in the newspaper business. But some questions that you've asked for the report here that get answered, at least in part, and I know you are working on a subsequent report that may go further. But what about individual responsibility to track down ownership and all of that? What's the take on that from the information workers you've spoken to?

NEIDORF: I think that there certainly are some generational differences in how workers approach information, and I do lay some of the blame for the carelessness with which some workers will approach information at the feet of educational institutions that have not really emphasized enough what copyright means. And I know that schools have plenty to do without also educating around information literacy. But on the other hand, if there's a skill that's absolutely essential for success in the 21st century, I think that's it. So I really do think there's a really strong imperative for young people to grow up understanding that information doesn't just appear, and that some information may have more value than others and that they do need to respect how they can use and interact with information.

I also think that within a corporate environment, organizations have a responsibility to train their workers, to help them understand what the rights and responsibilities are. Now, that also means that organizations themselves have to open their eyes to what may be happening with other organizations. You can't address a breach until you know that it might be there. So projects like this one have really provided organizations with the opportunity to benchmark where they're at. They can do variations of this research within their own organizations and really start to identify how much do our own workers know about what our policies are, and I think that's a really important starting point for being able to make any progress with managing the risk here.

KENNEALLY: Well, to that point, and that report was issues earlier this spring and so you've had a chance to get some reaction on that. How do people respond to this notion of having set a benchmark? What's been the reaction, the feedback to the report so far?



NEIDORF: Well, I have worked directly with a couple of organizations that have taken on the project of doing customized versions of the report, where I've actually gone to their employees and done a private version of phase two. So going to the end users and asking them the same questions about how are they interacting with information everyday. And what that does for the company that's doing the benchmarking is it gives them a glimpse into what's really happening on people's – or at least what people report is happening on their desks, which is not necessarily the same as what's actually happening, but it's a starting point.

So for the first time, they're able to identify how often their end users are going to the open web to get information, how much they're accessing their premium databases, how much they're asking their colleagues for opinions and ideas, and do they know who to turn to, to answer questions if questions arise about copyright? And then being able to compare those answers to what the organization knows they put in place, and see where those gaps exist. It's been a really educational process for the companies that I've worked with on it, where they've been able to say, OK, our staff are actually doing pretty well with not sharing information that shouldn't be shared or making sure that licensed information stays within the confines of the license.

But you know what? They're not aware that we're offering a special training twice a year on what's new in copyright or what's happening on social media sites and how they can interact with that information. So let's make sure we do a better job of publicizing that. Let's make sure that we've really clarified for people, asked them hard questions about do you know how to interact with this information and who to turn to if you've got a question, and make sure that those resources are visible and available to them. So it's really a self-awareness tool that they've gotten a lot of value from, from trying it out and now they're starting to make some changes based on what they've learned.

KENNEALLY: Well, let me ask you something that I think is kind of overlooked in all of this, and I'm curious of your reaction. In the past when you worked in an office, if you had a typewriter or any kind of information device, if you will –

NEIDORF: Yes?

KENNEALLY: – it was at the office. And when you went home, you very rarely touched a typewriter. You certainly didn't touch mimeograph machines, the Xeroxes or any of those other kinds of things. But today, the device that's accessing the internet or any other kind of source of information comes along with us. It goes from our house to our workplace to our vacation home to wherever we



go. And so people's habits that they might be forming at night after dinner looking online and Tweeting about the Academy Awards, or whatever it is they do, follow them into the workplace environment. That must present a very special kind of challenge for the workers themselves, as well as for their employers because you're asking people to make a real distinction between the way they interact with information at home and the way they interact with it at work.

NEIDORF: Yes, and that's definitely something that employers do need to be aware of, that we don't have as clear boundaries anymore between our work selves and our private selves. And in some ways, that's an extension of the ubiquity of our information, whether it's work information bleeding into home life or vice versa. And I also has a lot to do with the frictionless nature of information. It used to be a big project to make a copy of a book. You'd have to sit there and scribe it by hand, and today it's very easy to make a copy of something, even a lengthy document. I think, though, that it's always a mistake to try simply to legislate against behavior, to simply try to say, you can't do this. I think people will do what they're – they will follow the path of least resistance, and they will be who they are.

And I think that the smarter organizations are the ones that are able to find ways of operating within this ecosystem that we're living in now and not try to fight it. I think that that's part of what's so interesting about looking at, say the news industry right now, is that we see a lot of confusion there and we see a lot of fighting. Now if only we'd lock it down behind a pay wall, that'll save it. But it's a losing battle. The information will leak out and people will do what they're going to do, and I think that it's harder, but it's almost more forward-thinking to really look at it from a strategic perspective and say, OK, where is this heading in the future and how can we meet where it's going to be five years from now, 10 years from now? It's a much harder question, but it's also a much more interesting question.

KENNEALLY: Right, and there are some things that are always difficult to accept, and as they say, denial isn't just a river in Egypt, right? So we –

NEIDORF: Yeah.

KENNEALLY: (laughter) We are talking with Robin Neidorf, who is a lead –

NEIDORF: Yes.

KENNEALLY: – researcher and general manager from FreePint. And as we approach the end of the conversation here, and we'll ask you about what are the questions



you're looking at in the upcoming revision for the report, I wanted to ask you about something because FreePint, your UK-based operation but clearly with a global reach – are there any important differences in behaviors between Americans and their European counterparts, for example?

NEIDORF: I haven't seen differences in behavior based so much on geography. But like I said, I do see some differences in behavior based on length of tenure in a professional role. So we're asking some questions around how long have you worked as a knowledge worker? And there were some distinctions that were interesting to take a look at if somebody had less than five years of experience in the professional world. So that's definitely something that I would take a closer look at. For next year's project, we're already working with new sponsors, including Copyright Clearance Center, that have also signed on for next year's sponsorship, to work with them first of all, to define what additional questions we want to ask, and then also getting feedback from people who have looked at the resulting report and find out what else they'd like us to dig into. As I said, there really weren't landscape studies like this before, and so now we have a baseline to work from, and I'm really interested to see how over the course of the next four years – because this issue certainly isn't going to go away – we see some changes and the some movement in terms of where people's priorities are and what they're going to address the situation.

KENNEALLY: Well, we'll look forward to chatting with you maybe in a year's time about the results for your revisions to the policy report, and I want to thank you. Robin Neidorf is lead researcher and general manager for FreePint Limited. She's the author of a special report called Copyright Policies and Practices, looking at behaviors and attitudes on copyright and publishing in the enterprise. Robin, it's been a pleasure chatting with you.

NEIDORF: Thank you. It's always a pleasure to talk about what we've learned.

KENNEALLY: Right, and we look forward to having you back on Beyond the Book. For all of us at Copyright Clearance Center, this is Chris Kenneally. Have a great day.

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