

CCC Opens Up New Ways of Working in Response to the Pandemic's Challenges

By Kate Worlock – VP & Lead Analyst

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The latest announcement from CCC — a partnership with EL Education — provides an example of the flexibility that solution providers will need to offer end-users in these unprecedented times.

What to Know and Why It Matters

Copyright Clearance Center (CCC) was quick off the mark in the initial stages of the pandemic. As early as March 24, 2020, it announced its Educational Continuity license to support educators looking to use copyrighted materials in innovative ways as they delivered teaching remotely.

CCC developed the license in just over two weeks, partnering with more than 40 information providers. The license ran from March to August and authorized US school districts, educators, parents, and others to make immediate additional uses of materials that they had previously lawfully acquired simply by registering this usage on the copyright.com website. To support those looking for resources during this time, CCC also created a page of links to Learning at Home resources, which it has continued to maintain.

The most recent development, now that the initial emergency stage of the pandemic has passed, sees CCC partnering with open education resource (OER) publisher EL Education to help school and district customers easily obtain permission to use texts for distance learning. EL Education offers an OER curriculum for K-8 classrooms that reaches nearly 500,000 students.

CCC built this curriculum around texts that allow students to dig deeply into academic topics and help them make connections between their academic learning and the real world. Access to these texts is, therefore, fundamental to the success of the curriculum. The problem that EL Education faced was that schools and districts had purchased limited numbers of classroom copies of texts, rather than acquiring a copy for each student. Students were, therefore, unable to access these resources when schools were closed.

The new license, again created by CCC in a very short time, lets EL Education customers purchase additional low-cost permissions to reuse the texts on a 1:1 basis for a specific period while students are undertaking remote learning. Depending on the resource and the agreement with the publisher, the texts could be available in print format, digital format, or both.

Analyst Rating: Positive

The prompt actions of CCC and its partners enabled educators and students to access resources in suitable and efficient ways during COVID-19. These access methods would not have been possible under pre-pandemic licensing arrangements.

The challenge is clear: Where once there were predictable models for enabling access, the swift move to remote learning for most of the K-12 world means that these models are no longer suitable. Providers of native digital solutions were obviously best placed to manage these new demands, but the lower level of digital penetration in K-12 when compared to higher education means that interim measures such as these new licenses are critical stepping stones to whatever the new normal will look like. CCC can now lead the way to creating this new normal in rights negotiation and management.

Recommended Actions for CCC

CCC needs to work with multiple stakeholders to develop equitable solutions that effectively address the needs of both information providers and end-users.

Working with educators might mean providing flexible digital access to resources already purchased in print form, or class-wide access to resources for which they have only purchased a limited number of classroom editions, as is the case with the EL Education license. The EL Education license, which runs for a year, is a one-off at this stage, but it is a model which other aggregators could take up as they look to support teaching and learning.

Working with information providers would mean providing fair remuneration for additional usage: making costs prohibitive, particularly for educators who have already bought these resources once, would be self-defeating. It may also mean helping them to negotiate additional digital rights with authors and illustrators.

Recommended Competitor Actions

CCC is one of several Reproduction Rights Organisations (RROs) that operate around the world. These bodies tend not to compete with each other, basing their activities within geographic bounds, for example, or negotiating bilateral agreements. The nature of digital distribution changes the playing field for these organisations: cooperation will continue to be critical, but they can also learn from the licenses others have developed to serve their own constituents.

Essential Actions

CCC's partnership with EL Education provides several valuable lessons for providers serving the global K-12 market. Essential actions include the following:

- **Address hybrid user needs.** Provide access to both print and digital solutions via multiple business models. Cash-strapped buyers will look for flexibility, demanding the delivery of tools in formats that work for their specific needs. They need ones that can work just as well in traditional and remote teaching scenarios, the latter becoming important if institutions must close their doors for long periods of time.
- **Go simple.** Ensure that rights agreements enable tools which improve learning outcomes while catering to a market which now includes many newcomers with limited digital experience. Solutions can be complex in technology or rights management terms under the hood, but they must be simple to operate in the front end.
- **Keep innovating.** Constantly build new models that allow vendors and users to select the solutions that work effectively for them at a specific time. This flexibility will be critical, given the evolutionary nature of the K-12 market right now.

About the Author



Kate Worlock
VP & Lead Analyst

kworlock@outsellinc.com

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www.outsellinc.com

contact_us@outsellinc.com

Burlingame, CA, USA
650-342-6060

London, UK
+44 (0)20 8090 6590

New York, NY, USA
332-208-6305

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