2020 Information Seeking and Consumption Study
Executive Summary

In the workplace, the reuse of content is essential for collaboration and is a driving force in guiding the R&D process. Since 2007, Copyright Clearance Center (CCC) has partnered with Outsell, Inc. to conduct quantitative research to provide cumulative insights about how copyrighted content is used and shared in the workplace. The behaviors and attitudes of business professionals around content use and sharing have shifted over time as they seek to establish a competitive edge in an ever-changing landscape. As a result of the pandemic, however, 2020 triggered dramatic changes to where and how employees engage and collaborate with published content.

The 2020 Information Seeking and Consumption Study revealed that the amount of information being shared across professional environments has tripled since 2016 with respondents sharing work-related content on average 16.5 times per week with nine people. Considering that 49% of that content is sourced from external providers such as scientific journals, news sources, and other publications, there is the potential for 75 instances of unlicensed sharing per employee per week.

This “velocity of content sharing,” as Outsell defines it, is nearly four times higher than last captured in a comparable study completed in 2016.

Not surprisingly, changes to our work environments in 2020 also had an impact on how and how often we share information. The study revealed that 34% of respondents working remotely reported an increase in the frequency of sharing content during the pandemic. While email continued to be the standard means of exchanging information, the study also showed an increased reliance on shared networks, company intranets and collaboration platforms such as Microsoft SharePoint, as a means to facilitate collaboration among teams (whether remote or in-office).

The study also indicated a low level of copyright awareness among respondents, with nearly half (47%) either unaware of their company’s copyright policy or unsure of its details. This study reaffirms the importance of a clear copyright policy and compliance solutions to support a streamlined content workflow. Read on for other essential insights from this 2020 study — and practical steps you can take to solve today’s content challenges and keep your employees compliant.
The latest in a series of surveys for CCC

Since 2007, Copyright Clearance Center has engaged Outsell, Inc., the voice of the data, information and analytics economy, to conduct research on how professionals across industries think and behave around how information is consumed, used, and shared in the workplace. The 2020 Information Seeking and Consumption Study focused on the speed, volume, and scale at which external content is being shared.

Who Did We Survey?
To achieve a 95% confidence level in the study findings with a margin of error of plus or minus 3.26%, Outsell surveyed over 770 business professionals in 10 different countries who:
- Are employed full time by an organization with at least 1,000 employees (average # of employees: 34,882)
- Use externally published content in the course of doing their jobs across various primary functions and job levels
- Are enterprise knowledge workers across 11 industries:
  - Chemicals & Plastics (9%)
  - Computers & Electronic Components (8%)
  - Consulting & Professional Services (10%)
  - Electric & Gas Utilities (10%)
  - Finance & Insurance (13%)
  - Law Firms (7%)
  - Leisure & Travel (5%)
  - Life Sciences including Pharmaceuticals, Biotechnology, Medical Devices, and Scientific Equipment (11%)
  - Oil and Gas Extraction including Exploration, Drilling, Production, and Refining (3%)
  - Transportation and Automotive (12%)
  - Wholesale / Retail (12%)

Annual Revenue
- 9% $100M–<$250M
- 15% $250M–<$500M
- 20% $500M–<$1B
- 42% <$1B
- 12% Not sure
- 2% N/A

Respondent Location
- 32% United States
- 12% France
- 11% United Kingdom
- 9% Japan
- 8% The Netherlands
- 8% Germany
- 8% India
- 6% Korea
- 4% Switzerland
- 3% Denmark

Job Level
- 32% Individual Contributor
- 21% Executive
- 47% Middle Mgmt/Supervisor

SQ1. In which country or region do you currently reside?

SQ2. Please indicate the level of your job.

SQ3. Which of the following describes your organization’s primary line of business?

Q3. What was your organization’s approximate annual revenue last year?
Published content is at the heart of innovation. The ease with which teams can access and share information can influence the pace at which organizations and their teams can drive innovation and deliver products and services to market.

In examining the number of publications viewed as critical to job function, all industries surveyed had a strong and consistent reliance on information from external sources, with law firms well above the industry average. Across the globe, this need for content is also largely consistent from country to country, however Switzerland (9.7) and Japan (7.6) demonstrated a greater reliance on published content critical to job function. The 2020 study also showed an increasing reliance on published information relative to job level in the corporate hierarchy with executives reporting the highest number of publications critical to their jobs (9), compared with middle managers (5.8) and individual contributors (5).

### Importance of Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Mean Critical Publications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Law Firms (n=57)</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Sciences (n=84)</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric and Gas Utilities (n=78)</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemical and Plastics (n=67)</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil and Gas Extraction (n=24)</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance/Insurance (n=100)</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computers and Electronic Components (n=63)</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulting and Professional Services (n=79)</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale/Retail (n=93)</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure and Travel (n=35)</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation and Automotive (n=91)</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (n=483)</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Number of Publications Critical to Job

- **Switzerland**: 9.7
- **Japan**: 7.6
- **United States**: 6.9
- **The Netherlands**: 6.8
- **Denmark**: 6.7
- **India**: 6.5
- **Korea**: 6.5
- **France**: 6.0
- **United Kingdom**: 5.1
- **Germany**: 4.6
- **Total**: 6.5

Q4. Thinking about the information that you rely on in performing your job responsibilities, how many different print or digital publications do you consider critical to your job function?
The Velocity of Content Sharing is on the Rise

The number of people with whom professionals share content remains consistent but extensive at an average of nine. However, the frequency of sharing has more than tripled since 2016 growing from an average of 5.5 to 16.5 per week.

Employees aren’t just sharing more content — they’re sharing more externally sourced content. We’ve seen a 13% increase in the sharing of externally published information from 36% in 2016 to 49% in 2020, resulting in 74.6 potential instances of unlicensed sharing per employee per week compared to 17.8 in 2016.

Q6. What percentage of the information you share is published internally versus content published by third parties?
Q7. How many times during an average day do you share work-related information such as news articles, journal articles, book excerpts, blog posts and other content from digital or print sources with colleagues?
Q8. When you share work-related information via email, collaboration tools or hard copy print-out/photocopy, how many people do you typically share it with?
Impact of Changing Work Environments

The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 also brought about dramatic changes to where and how professionals engage with their work and each other, as well as their level of content sharing:

- 64% of respondents reported working from home during the pandemic.
- 34% of respondents working from home reported an increase in the frequency of content sharing during the pandemic.

**Increased Content Sharing During the Pandemic by Job Role**

- 63% of Executives
- 27% of Middle Management
- 22% of Individual Contributors

Q12. Are you currently working remotely?
Q12a. Has working remotely had an impact on your information sharing activities? / I’m sharing more often
Employees up and down the corporate hierarchy share information with co-workers. **Executives continue to be the most prolific content sharers, averaging nearly 25 shares per week**, double the rate reported in 2016 (12.3). Middle managers share nearly 16 times per week while individual contributors share nearly 11 times per week on average, both of which are nearly three times the rate of sharing reported in 2016 (5.5 and 3.7 respectively).

**Executives also share work-related information with more people on average** (12), compared to the 10 people that middle managers share with and the six that individual contributors share with on average. With roughly half of the information that is shared at all levels of the organization externally sourced, **executives are responsible for nearly twice as many (143.6) potential instances of unlicensed sharing** as middle managers (74.4) and almost five times that of individual contributors (30).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Sharing by Job Role</th>
<th>EXECUTIVES (n=163)</th>
<th>MIDDLE MANAGEMENT (n=361)</th>
<th>INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTOR (n=247)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frequency of sharing per week (mean)</strong></td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of people shared with (mean)</strong></td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percentage of information shared that is externally sourced (mean)</strong></td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of potential violations per employee</strong></td>
<td>143.6</td>
<td>74.4</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q6. What percentage of the information you share is published internally versus content by third parties? (Base = 598)
Q7. How many times during an average day do you share work-related information such as news articles, journal articles, book excerpts, blog posts and other content from digital or print sources with colleagues? (Base = 570)
Q8. When you share work-related information via email, collaboration tools, or hard copy print-out/photocopy, how many people do you typically share it with? (Base = 498)
Content sharing is also influenced by the nature of the industry in which professionals work and collaborate. Some industries may have a need to frequently monitor market conditions, changing regulations, or current events that can impact their businesses. Others are more heavily reliant on competitive intelligence, industry standards, or the latest research, which may impact both their need for external content, as well as the frequency at which they share content.

While most industries were similar in the number of people with whom content was shared, Law Firms led the way in frequency of sharing with 30 shares per week, with Oil and Gas Extraction following with 23 shares per week, and both Computers/Electronic Components and Electric/Gas Utilities with above-average sharing. Combining this with the percentage of information shared from external sources, those working in Law Firms (159.2), Oil and Gas Extraction (114.4), and Computers/Electronics Components (84.8) had the greatest number of potential instances of unlicensed sharing versus other industries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of sharing per week (mean)</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>CHEMICAL AND PLASTICS</th>
<th>COMPUTERS AND ELECTRONIC COMPONENTS</th>
<th>CONSULTING AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES</th>
<th>ELECTRIC AND GAS UTILITIES</th>
<th>FINANCE/INSURANCE</th>
<th>LAW FIRMS</th>
<th>LEISURE AND TRAVEL</th>
<th>LIFE SCIENCES</th>
<th>OIL AND GAS EXTRACTION</th>
<th>TRANSPORTATION AND AUTOMOTIVE</th>
<th>WHOLESALE/RETAIL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of people shared with (mean)</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of information shared that is externally sourced (mean)</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of potential violations per employee</td>
<td>74.6</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>84.8</td>
<td>70.3</td>
<td>77.0</td>
<td>75.2</td>
<td>159.2</td>
<td>79.3</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>114.4</td>
<td>64.0</td>
<td>73.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Click on the industry headers in chart above for a complete 2020 Information Seeking and Consumption report on Chemical and Plastics, Electric and Gas Utilities, Finance and Insurance, Life Sciences, and Oil and Gas Extraction.

Q6. What percentage of the information you share is published internally versus content by third parties? (Base = 598)
Q7. How many times during an average day do you share work-related information such as news articles, journal articles, book excerpts, blog posts and other content from digital or print sources with colleagues? (Base = 570)
Q8. When you share work-related information via email, collaboration tools, or hard copy print-out/photocopy, how many people do you typically share it with? (Base = 498)
Information sharing practices are shifting as respondents reported the use of collaboration tools (43%), intranet postings (29%), and shared network drives (27%) to make information available to colleagues.

Email remained the preferred method for sharing information across all respondents, such as sending an email attachment (48%) or a link in an email (20%), while collaboration tools like Microsoft Teams, Google Suite and Slack (16%), intranet postings (6%), and shared networks (5%) have gained in popularity since 2013.

Q9. When you share work-related information, how do you share it? (multiple responses allowed)
Q9a. Which method do you use most often?
Copyright Awareness and Attitudes

Despite efforts to educate employees about copyright, according to Outsell’s 2020 research, 47% surveyed are either unaware of their organization’s copyright policies or unsure of its details.

A majority of executives (73%) responded that they are aware of their corporate copyright policy compared to middle managers (53%) and individual contributors (39%). This is significant as due to the volume at which executives share content, a lack of awareness of policies and obtaining the necessary permissions could increase potential copyright infringements.

The good news is that 73% of all respondents believe there are serious risks and implications to copyright infringement, 68% reported taking responsibility for verifying whether they have permission to share third-party information, and 64% said they think about copyright issues before forwarding information.

However, 63% also believe sharing is permitted for information obtained free on the open web or in print. In competitive, mission-critical, or time-critical situations, another 58% will also forward any and all relevant information that will help their organization be more competitive.
Why This Matters
In summary:

Rising Risk of Copyright Infringement

While the sharing of information with co-workers supports collaboration and drives innovation, the sharing of published information without obtaining the necessary subscriptions, licenses or permissions also carries enormous potential risk. Ordinary content exchanges that come so naturally in the digital world can increase the risk of copyright infringement, trigger costly lawsuits or settlements, and result in damage to brand reputation.

Rising Risk of Copyright Infringement

- 47% of respondents are unaware of their organization’s copyright policy or unsure of its details.
- On average, respondents share work-related content with 9 other people, nearly half of which (49%) comes from external sources.
- On average, organizations are at risk of unlicensed sharing per employee per week.

The events of 2020 also triggered dramatic changes to where and how employees engage and collaborate, resulting in 64% of respondents working from home, 34% of whom reported an increase in content sharing.
Start by considering these questions:

- How many publications does your organization subscribe to?
- Who manages those subscriptions and how?
- Who maintains records for written permission releases?
- What percentage of your employee population has access to the Internet?
- Do the systems your employees rely on to access and share content reflect your organization’s IP protection and copyright compliance initiatives?
- Do your employees understand what materials can be shared with colleagues and external contacts?
- Do your employees understand that copyright infringement can result in multi-million-dollar lawsuits?
- Do you have a current copyright policy?
- Does your copyright policy address how different employees should handle different situations (e.g., the CEO who wants to share legal information with the board vs. an individual contributor who wants to share a journal article with colleagues)?
- How often do you communicate your copyright policy to employees and how (e.g., email, intranet, company-wide meetings)?
- How frequently does your organization provide copyright training sessions?
- Who is the designated copyright policy contact (or contacts) within your organization?
- Do your employees know where to find your copyright policy?
By taking steps to balance employee reuse of published content with a strong compliance and licensing program, your company can leverage today’s rise in content sharing to help support collaboration and drive innovation.

Certain publishers’ enterprise subscriptions include rights to reuse the content within your company. Unfortunately, what is allowed in these agreements often varies by publisher and subscription. Respecting copyright is an important aspect of getting high-quality information. By obtaining the appropriate licenses and permissions, you can apply broader protections for employees to collaborate using content from the most valued journals, blogs, news publications, and more.

CCC’s Annual Copyright License (ACL) is a trusted licensing solution that complements an organization’s publisher agreements and subscriptions by providing a consistent set of reuse rights across a broad repertory of titles. The ACL enables teams to more easily collaborate using content from a wide range of sources, simplifying copyright compliance, driving innovation, and providing resources that educate employees about the importance of copyright compliance.

Steps to Success

1. First, if you don’t have a copyright policy, **CREATE** one.

2. **PUBLISH** the policy in a central location and make every employee aware of it and its details, including guidelines for using externally published materials.

3. **PROMOTE** the policy by sending periodic reminders about how employees can access it and why they should.

4. **EDUCATE** employees on copyright with resources, webinars and courses on www.copyright.com/learn

5. **SECURE** needed permissions, annual licenses and rights management tools for easier compliance and a streamlined content workflow.

Learn more

For more information on how to promote collaboration, simplify copyright compliance, and streamline your content workflow, contact us at:

- [www.copyright.com/acl](http://www.copyright.com/acl)
- [licensing@copyright.com](mailto:licensing@copyright.com)
- [+1.978.750.8400 (option 3)](tel:+1.978.750.8400)