ABSTRACT

While delivering content via the Internet can be efficient and economical, content owners risk losing control of their intellectual property. Any business that wishes to control access to, and use of its intellectual property, is a potential user of Digital Rights Management (DRM) technologies. Traditional DRM has a passive one-way downstream consumption of content from producer to consumer focus primarily concerns digital rights enforcement. This model does not translate well to the education environment where openness, informal decision making, sharing of ideas, and decentralization are valued. Collaboration and multiple authorships are common in the educational environment, as is the repurposing and modification of digital content used for teaching and learning. A DRM system for educational content distribution must be substantially more sophisticated and flexible than what is available right now to gain support in the educational community.
INTRODUCTION

A copyright is the legal right granted to an author, composer, playwright, publisher, or distributor to exclusive publication, production, sale, or distribution of a literary, musical, dramatic, or artistic work (American Heritage, 2006). It provides creators with the legal right to be paid for, and to control the use of their creations. As the unimpeded flow of information is fundamental to the mission and activities of teaching and learning, copyright law makes exceptions, such as the Fair Use Doctrine for educational institutions who access material protected under the copyright laws (LII, 2007a).

The Internet has made an unprecedented impact on the educational landscape. Today, 83% of US Higher Education institutions regularly use course management systems (Green 2004). Broadband subscriber enrollment in the US is projected to jump from 24 million in 2003 to nearly 50 million in 2008 (Cravens, 2004). The penetration of digital technologies in homes, workplaces, and public places means a rapidly growing number of people who can have access to digital information and knowledge. Contents for e-learning today are much more complex and dynamic than web pages; there are e-books, courseware, simulations, animation, and even access to live data and webcasting. While these capabilities significantly enhance learning experiences, their complexity add many challenges to the management of digital rights as modern technology allows perfect and unlimited copying and distribution of content in very convenient and inexpensive ways.

A NEW ROLE FOR EDUCATIONAL CONTENT PROVIDERS

The Internet enables digital content to offer many more options to its users than print form can. Globally, the print media are under tremendous pressure. Circulation declines lead to staff reduction as print media are unable to compete with e-media for an audience that is younger, with a busier lifestyle, and increasingly seeking information online (Ahrens, 2005). Similarly, e-learning technology is rapidly changing the landscape for education products and services. Publishers, the traditional undisputed leaders in the educational content market who based their business process on the production of textbooks, must now seriously rethink their role and business model. The digital educational content market has arrived. The focus is now shifted from the distribution and sale of tangible products to the distribution and licensing of intangible products, from products to the services, and perhaps phasing out the paper product altogether.

While e-books have not experienced mass-market success, digital technology does provide ample opportunity for content marketers with the right strategy (Hasebrook, 2002). Today’s educational market is truly global. Digital content can be packaged and customized for different market segments and electronically distributed to different geographic areas. Print materials are expensive to produce and store, while digital content lowers manufacturing and distribution cost. New technology now enables an entire reference library to be carried in a small lightweight portable device, making it convenient for field workers who need access to reference materials or consumers who want to take their personal libraries with them. Intranets and wireless networks extend on-line courses to non-traditional learners who are highly motivated, reducing the cost of corporate training. The use of virtual private networks and wireless LANs empowers an entire new educational paradigm: mobile, or m-learning.

Over the past few years, the world of textbook and educational material publishing has been shaken by the advent of technology. The ongoing process of innovation and media integration has led to a