



## **CARL Statement on Optimal Equitable Access to Post-Secondary Learning Resources During COVID-19**

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a sudden and disruptive impact on the delivery of higher education. Courses that were designed for face-to-face delivery are being shifted entirely online, and both students and faculty are unable to access their libraries' physical resources. This has happened toward the end of the academic term, at a point where instructors' recommended course resources had long been set and students had found ways to access these resources according to their needs and financial capacity, with many turning to libraries to obtain access. However, many in-person library services cannot be shifted to an online environment due to existing usage restrictions on licenced content.

### **How can those of us serving instructors and students best respond to the new exigencies imposed by COVID-19? What would be the optimal equitable access scenario?**

The Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL) commends the efforts being made to broaden access, including the [Internet Archive's National Emergency Library](#), and the [vendors](#) providing free or enhanced access to their online collections. To further support the critical need in the current educational context, CARL calls for the following immediate actions:

- That **publishers** waive, for the duration of the COVID-19 crisis, access restrictions currently imposed on their licensed online collections (e.g. limit on number of simultaneous users; ILL and copying restrictions; campus-only access restrictions), and that such measures apply at the institutional level rather than requiring individuals to create accounts. This aligns with the [International Coalition of Library Consortia Statement](#) (to which CARL is a signatory) and individual countries' calls for action;
- That **providers of video resources to educational markets** open access to their online libraries, even to non-licensed titles;
- That, where possible, **course instructors** apply open licenses to course materials they create, and make these available in publicly accessible collections for optimal adaptation and reuse; and that they take advantage of the large and growing corpus of open access scholarly literature and open educational resources;

- Recognizing the intention of the *Copyright Act* to allow certain educational uses of copyright-protected material, both on campus and at a distance, that **libraries** rely on existing rights, exceptions and limitations to copy resources that are recommended course material (and had therefore been on reserve for physical lending); the digital copies could then be made available for lending through a secure online library reserve service or equivalent.

The following resources may be helpful:

- for ensuring instructors understand copyright considerations in the current context, CARL has released a website template: [\*Serving Student Access Needs As We Rapidly Shift to Online Course and Exam Delivery: Copyright Considerations\*](#)
- for considering the applicability of fair dealing in the COVID-19 context, see the discussion by Samuel Trosow and Lisa Macklem, [\*Fair Dealing and Emergency Remote Teaching in Canada\*](#).
- That **university administrations** recognize the potential negative effects of a rapid transition to virtual delivery for students with disabilities, and proactively commit to developing or increasing services that assist faculty and libraries in ensuring all digital materials are created in compliance with recognized accessibility standards and legal requirements;

Importantly, it is now almost certain that the current situation will extend beyond the current academic term. It will therefore become essential that in addition to the temporary measures being adopted, we start considering more long-term solutions for ensuring equitable, optimal access to learning resources by post-secondary students.

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CARL members include Canada's twenty-nine largest university libraries as well as two national libraries. Enhancing research and higher education are at the heart of its mission. CARL develops the capacity to support this mission, promotes effective and sustainable scholarly communication, and public policy that enables broad access to scholarly information.