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Assessing the Use of Canadian Literature in Teaching at Simon Fraser University

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Abstract

For over a decade, members of Canada's creative industries have claimed that Canadian postsecondary institutions are copying and using content without adequately compensating creators; these campaigns have primarily focused on fiction authors. This study aims to address these claims by determining how much Canadian creative literature is actually being used in a representative Canadian university. We analyzed reading materials provided to students as library reserves, textbooks, and course packs for the periods 2010–2012 and 2018–2022 and found that across both periods, approximately 1.3% of courses assigned Canadian creative works as readings. An analysis of only the fall semesters across these periods found that approximately 0.7% of all works—that is, both copied excerpts and uncopied (purchased) works—assigned via library reserves, textbooks, and course packs were Canadian creative works. The number of assigned readings that included *copied* Canadian creative works (generally consisting only of course packs, not textbooks and likely not library reserves) would comprise much less than 0.7%. Therefore, this research suggests that the use and specifically copying of Canadian creative content in Canadian universities is not substantial enough to result in significant potential remuneration for the copying of an author's work.

Keywords: Copyright; higher education; universities; fair dealing; Canadian literature



Assessing the Use of Canadian Literature in Teaching at Simon Fraser University

Introduction and background

This article expands upon Assessing the Use of CanLit in Teaching at Simon Fraser University, presented by the authors at the 2024 ABC Copyright Conference (Zerkee & Taylor, 2024a). The authors undertook this research due to the decade-long turbulent relationship between certain segments of the Canadian publishing and creative industries and Canadian postsecondaries and universities in particular. The cause of this turbulence is the claim by a vocal segment of Canada's publishing sector that Canadian universities are copying and using content without adequately compensating creators when they rely upon the fair dealing exception and educational exceptions in Canada's Copyright Act. The claims tend to focus on the copying of fiction works and utilize stories from authors of Canadian fiction. Consequently, we wanted to understand how Canadian universities are using Canadian fiction in their academic courses. Simon Fraser University (SFU) is generally representative of universities in Canada. It is a highly ranked comprehensive university (Counter, 2024) with approximately 35,000 students enrolled across eight faculties, with a significant social sciences and humanities focus alongside a smaller applied sciences focus than some of our peer institutions. This focus led us to assume that use of Canadian creative fiction at SFU may be a reasonable exemplar for the average Canadian university's use of Canadian creative fiction.

The collective licensing period

Up until the mid-1990s, all Canadian postsecondaries managed copyright in house by depending on exceptions in the Copyright Act and by clearing copyright where needed. Then, in 1988 Canada's Copyright Act changed to allow for literary collective management organizations (CMOs), leading to the creation of two literary CMOs in Canada: Access Copyright for Canada outside of Quebec and Copibec for Quebec (Hudson, 2020, p. 117). Consequently, from the mid-1990s until the early 2010s almost all Canadian postsecondaries outside of Quebec utilized an Access Copyright license. The Access Copyright license was used by Canadian postsecondaries to manage the use of copyright-protected textual works at their institutions. The license incorporated two payment processes—a fixed fee per FTE student plus per-page copyright clearance fees for course packs—and also provided an indemnity from legal action by any member of the CMO for copyright infringement. This collective licensing system met the needs of postsecondaries due to its relatively affordable price and the risk-averse nature of postsecondaries hesitant to take advantage of Canadian jurisprudence, particularly the 2004 *CCH Canadian Ltd. v. Law Society of Upper Canada (CCH)* decision.

Since postsecondaries did not report itemized data to Access Copyright for copying covered under the per-student license fee, specific individual authors or creators were not being identified and could not be paid directly for the use of their work under this license. These kinds of payments generally came from large-scale licensees like educational institutions and government agencies, where tracking of individual items is, as Access Copyright acknowledges, "impossible or impractical" (Access Copyright, 2024, p. 1). These "non-title specific royalties" get pooled in the Payback program. Payback first distributes 15% of all Access Copyright revenues equally among all members each year, and then takes the non-title specific royalties and shares out 40% of that pool among all members and the other 60% among eligible creators who apply for Payback, with

the individual amount for each of these creators calculated based on the types and volume of works they have published in the previous 20 years (Access Copyright, 2024, pp. 1–2). To be clear, therefore, the beneficiaries of Payback are any creators who are members of Access Copyright, and for the 60% portion of the non-title specific royalties, any Access Copyright members eligible for Payback receives payment. There is not any direct link between an author receiving Payback payments and the use of that author's work by the organizations whose licensing fees fund Payback. The move away from collective licensing

In March 2010, Access Copyright filed a tariff for postsecondary use of copyrighted literary works with the Copyright Board of Canada (Copyright Board of Canada, 2010) that represented a 300% increase in the cost of the Access Copyright license to universities. This was followed by the 2012 Supreme Court decision in Alberta (Education) v. Access Copyright, which concluded that it was fair dealing for the purpose of research for teachers to make copies of copyrighted works for students.

These two events triggered the beginning of the shift of Canadian postsecondaries away from depending on a collective license for the educational copying of works for course materials and toward using licensed e-resources through their libraries, individually clearing copyright, and depending on Copyright Act exceptions. Unsurprisingly, this led to a reduction in fees paid to Access Copyright and a consequential reduction in the various remittances made to Canadian publishers and authors, resulting in a concerted pushback and campaigns from Access Copyright, Canadian publishers, and literary and creative authors. For example, author Jill MacLean testified at the 2018 Statutory Review of the Copyright Act that her 2017 Payback check was one quarter the amount of her 2012 Payback check (INDU, 2018, p. 1925).

To be clear, the decision by the vast majority of Canadian postsecondaries to opt out of an Access Copyright license in the early 2010s was the cause of this reduction in remuneration. However, since the Payback program was broadly compensating all Access Copyright members, these payments were not necessarily confirmation of actual use of the work of these vocal authors. The teaching of Canadian literature (or lack thereof)

The reading and study—or lack thereof—of Canadian literary works in both the K-12 (primary and secondary) and postsecondary sectors in Canada has long been an issue. Canadian confederation occurred in 1867, but it was not until 1907 that Canadian literature was first taught at a Canadian postsecondary, in a summer course at the Ontario Agricultural College (Fee, 1993, p. 22). In the succeeding decades, more Canadian universities started to teach courses that included Canadian literature (Fee, 1993, p. 22-23). However, by the 1950s, still only a minority of Canadian universities offered even one course dedicated to Canadian literature (Friskney, 2007, p. 23). Most courses that included Canadian literature combined American and Canadian literature, with Canadian works representing the much smaller component of course content, and with none of these courses being offered to first-year students, where hundreds of students per institution could have been expected to purchase Canadian literary works (Friskney, 2007, p. 33). Two decades later, by 1974, all anglophone universities in Canada had at least one undergraduate class dedicated to Canadian literature (Friskney, 2007, p. 67). But by the mid-1970s—possibly the high point of Canadian literary nationalist enthusiasm—only 8% of English literature courses offered at Canadian universities dealt with Canadian literature in any way, shape, or form (Symons, 1975, p. 40).

Moving forward to the 21st century, the prevalence of Canadian creative works in Canadian university courses, and in Canadian education in general, is little different. In the first decade of



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the 21st century, it was reported that only 10–30% of content in Canadian school libraries was Canadian content (Edwards & Saltman, 2010, p. 136), and between 2010 and 2012 in English-speaking Canada, K–12 purchases of resources fell 30% (Rollans & de Jocas, 2012, p. 17). At universities, courses dealing with Canadian literature in some way make up approximately 10% of English department course offerings (Dean, 2016, p. 27), or perhaps as little as 5% (Martin, 2013, p. 42), depending on the study. It can safely be said that students studying literature at Canadian universities are only exposed to a light sprinkling of Canadian content. Our institution—a top-ranked comprehensive Canadian university—offers one undergraduate course dedicated to Canadian literature and the occasional graduate course dedicated to Canadian literature. This is pretty much unchanged from the situation in the 1970s.

What has changed from the 1970s at Canadian universities is the availability of digital library resources, an acrimonious relationship with a literary copyright collective, and concerted efforts by key players in Canada's creative literary sector to blame Canadian educational institutions for the diminution of remuneration to Canadian authors for the use of their works. Since 2014 or so, Canada's literary CMOs Access Copyright and Copibec, as well as many Canadian publishers and literary and creative authors, have called out postsecondary institutions (particularly those outside of Quebec) for opting out of the CMOs' license options. Through a variety of publicity campaigns like "I Value Canadian Stories," lobbying on Parliament Hill, and media channels such as radio interviews and newspaper articles, CMOs, authors, and publishers have claimed that postsecondaries are copying and using the creative works of Canadian authors without properly compensating rightsholders for that copying. For example, in their submission to the 2018 Copyright Act Review, the Association of Canadian Publishers (ACP) was insistent that only a license with a CMO such as Access Copyright provides "creators and publishers with fair remuneration for use of these works" (ACP, 2018, p. 3).

Methodology

Research questions

Prompted by the question "How much Canadian creative content do universities actually use in teaching and learning?" we narrowed down our scope with the following research questions:

- 1. How much Canadian creative content is used at Simon Fraser University in teaching?
- 2. Was the use of Canadian creative content so substantial as to result in significant remuneration for the copying of an author's work?

We did not just look at copying or focus on fair dealing. In this first stage we haven't differentiated between what was purchased, what was used under a license, and what was copied, instead considering all readings assigned to students in our three data sources. Definitions

In order to investigate the use of Canadian creative content, we had to define what we were looking for. What is a Canadian work? Does the author have to have been born in Canada, or have lived here for a certain amount of their life? What about Canadians who lived and wrote elsewhere, or authors from other countries who moved to Canada at some point in their lives? We developed the following definitions:

- *Creative works* are novels, short stories, poetry, plays, and collections of any of these.
- Canadian creative works are

- creative works which were written by someone who was born or lived in Canada and/ or is generally known as a "Canadian author";
- creative works which were published by members of the Association of Canadian Publishers (ACP); or
- in the case of anthologies or collections, works consisting primarily (i.e., 50% + 1) of creative works by Canadian authors and/or which were published by ACP members.

We did not include other nonacademic works such as popular nonfiction, and we only looked at written works, not films or other media. Methods

Our data sources were from calendar years 2010 through 2012 (when SFU operated under an Access Copyright license) and 2018 through 2022 (a number of years after SFU opted out of an Access Copyright license). These periods differ in length due to limitations in the available data. The data sources we looked at were spreadsheets of textbook and course pack orders from the bookstore and spreadsheets of reserves requests from the library for each of the semesters in these periods. Textbooks are assigned books made available for purchase through the bookstore. Course packs are collections of assigned readings compiled and provided by the bookstore. Library reserves are assigned readings placed "on reserve" in the library, meaning access is limited to students in a specific course.

We started with course-level data, compiling the number of courses ordering any textbooks, course packs, or reserves each semester. We then compiled the number of courses ordering creative works and Canadian creative works in each semester for each data source. We also looked at itemlevel data for the fall semesters only, compiling the number of total items, creative items, and Canadian creative items ordered in each of these semesters for each data source. We analyzed itemlevel data for fall semesters only due to time constraints. Limitations

For the earlier period, we only had textbook data for Fall 2011 and Fall 2012 due to difficulties retrieving older records, though we had textbook data for all semesters in the later period, and we had course pack and reserves data from all semesters in both periods.

We did not look at content that was uploaded to the learning management system (LMS). This was decided for a number of reasons, including the sheer volume of content the LMS contains as well as the fact that instructors have the freedom to use the LMS how they wish, meaning they all do it differently and the content does not necessarily get expunged at any point. This makes it impossible to know what content is actively being used in a given semester, and what is simply being stored and not made available to students. At least 92% of the content in the LMS is made available to students under fair dealing, educational exceptions, a library license, or an open-access license, or is publisher-provided teaching material or in the public domain, or copyright is owned by the instructor (internal data).

We do recognize that readings are increasingly shared by instructors in the LMS, so this may be a significant limitation, which likely impacts our later period more than the earlier period. We will note, however, that at the time of writing approximately 78% of the licenses for e-resources subscribed to by SFU Library permit instructors to post their contents in the LMS for students (internal data), meaning that the rightsholders of these resources are being compensated for their use in the LMS.



Findings

This data was first presented at the ABC Copyright Conference, but the findings presented in this article are marginally different due to refinements of calculations. Also note that SFU is a trisemester institution with fall (September–December), spring (January–April), and summer (May–August) semesters. The Fall semester is the busiest semester, followed by Spring and Summer. Library reserves data analysis

In the 2010–2012 period, on average 505 courses per semester used library reserves, with 18 courses per semester placing creative works on reserve and 5 of those courses placing Canadian creative works on reserve. This means that approximately 1% of courses using library reserves put Canadian creative works on reserve. Due to time constraints, only the 2010 and 2011 fall semesters—the busiest semester for library reserves—were analyzed for how many works on reserve were Canadian creative content. Canadian creative content only accounted for, on average, 0.25% of all works on reserve in the 2010 and 2011 fall semesters. During this period, the academic departments placing Canadian creative works on reserve were Communication, English, Fine Arts, History, French, Education, and Interactive Arts.

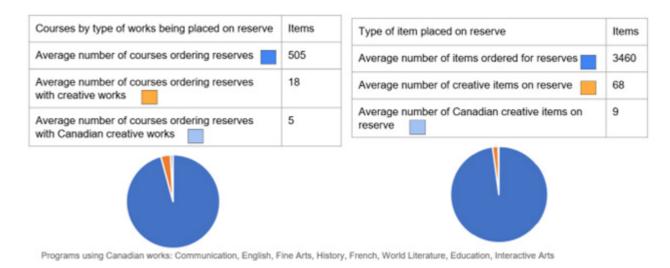


Figure 1. Library reserves data 2010–2012. Course-level data was reported for each semester (spring, summer, and fall) for 2010, 2011, and 2012 and is presented in this chart as averages of the nine semesters of data. Item-level data was tabulated for each fall semester and is presented in the chart as averages of the three fall semesters.

For the 2018–2022 period, there was a significant drop in the use of library reserves, with the average number of courses using reserves each semester falling to 237 courses. There was a corresponding decline in the number of courses placing Canadian creative works on reserve, with an average of between 1 and 2 courses putting Canadian creative works on reserve each semester. However, the percentage of all content on reserve that was Canadian creative content stayed somewhat stable, with approximately 0.2% of items on reserve in any given semester being Canadian creative works. Academic departments placing Canadian creative works on reserve during this time were Communication, English, Publishing, History, French, World Literature, Education, Geography, Humanities, and Indigenous Studies.

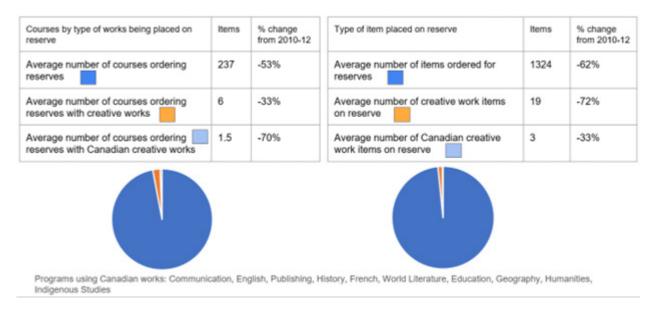


Figure 2. Library reserves data 2018–2022. Course-level data was reported for each semester for 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022 and is presented in this chart as averages of those 15 semesters of data. Item-level data was tabulated for each fall semester and is presented in the chart as averages of the five fall semesters.

Course pack data analysis

In the 2010–2012 period, there was still a considerable number of course packs—in both paper and digital formats—being created by the SFU Bookstore for use in academic courses at SFU. (SFU also created a significant number of digital and paper course packs for distance education courses through the Centre for Online and Distance Education. However, the data for those course pack materials are not available and therefore could not be included in this analysis.)

The 2010 spring, summer, and fall semesters saw an unusually low number of course packs, but even with this outlier year, the average number of courses ordering course packs each semester was 48, with on average five courses per semester copying creative works for inclusion in their course packs. The number of courses ordering course packs containing copies of Canadian creative works averaged one course per semester, with many semesters having zero courses including Canadian creative works in course packs. As with library reserves, only the fall semesters were analyzed for how many works in the course packs were Canadian creative works. On average, 1,065 works were copied for inclusion in course packs each fall semester. Canadian creative works, on average, made up 0.15% (2 out of 1,065) of all works copied in course packs in fall semesters during the 2010–2012 period. The academic departments ordering course packs containing copies of Canadian creative works were Political Science, English, Sociology & Anthropology, World Literature, and Fine Arts.



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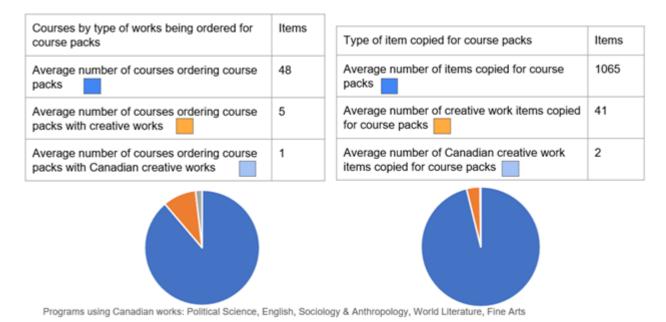


Figure 3. Course pack data 2010–2012. Course-level data was reported for each semester (spring, summer, and fall) for 2010, 2011, and 2012 and is presented in this chart as averages of the nine semesters of data. Item-level data was tabulated for each fall semester and is presented in the chart as averages of the three fall semesters.

In the 2018–2022 period, the use of digital and paper course packs declined even more than the use of library reserves. In this four-year period, only one course ordered a course pack that contained Canadian creative works: a course in environmental science whose course pack only contained a single Canadian creative work.



Figure 4. Course pack data 2018-2022. Course level data was reported for each semester for 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022 and is presented in this chart as averages of those 15 semesters of data. Item-level data was tabulated for each fall semester and is presented in the chart as averages of the five fall semesters.

Textbook-ordering data analysis

For the 2010–2012 period, no 2010 textbook ordering data was available, and only 2011 fall semester and 2012 fall semester textbook ordering could be analyzed for Canadian creative content. For the 2011–2012 period. an average of 93 courses each fall semester ordered texts that were creative works, with 44 of these courses on average ordering texts that were Canadian creative works. During this period, an average of 1,398 courses per semester ordered textbooks. Therefore, just over 3% of courses ordered course texts that were Canadian creative works. As well, out of an average of 2,721 course texts ordered per fall semester for the period, 53 course texts per fall semester, or 2% of the total, were Canadian creative works. The academic departments ordering Canadian creative works as textbooks during this period were English, Education, World Literature, French, and History.

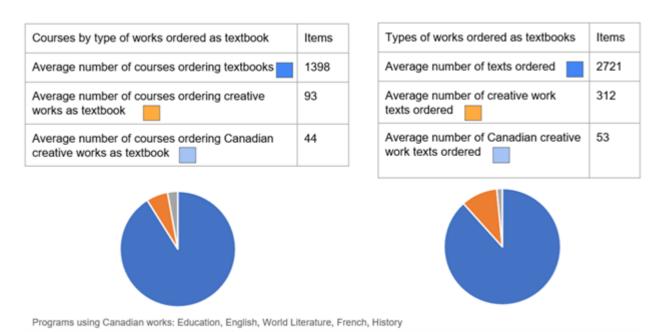


Figure 5. Textbook data 2011–2012. Semesterly averages. Both course-level and item-level data were only available for fall semesters 2011 and 2012 and are presented in this chart as averages of the two semesters of data.

The utilization of published course textbooks at SFU has declined since the early 2010s, but not as much as the use of course packs (print or digital) and library reserves. For the 2018–2022 period, data for all three semesters for each year was available. During this period, an average of 766 courses each semester ordered academic course texts through the SFU Bookstore. Fiftynine courses ordered course texts that were creative works, with 16 of these courses on average ordering texts that were Canadian creative works. Therefore, just over 2% of courses ordered course textbooks that were Canadian creative works. As with 2011 and 2012, only the fall semesters for this period were analyzed for the number of items ordered, the number of creative works ordered, and the number of Canadian creative works ordered. On average, 1,562 items were ordered each semester, with 177 items being creative works and on average 21 of those 177 being Canadian creative works. This works out to Canadian creative works comprising, on average, 1.3% of the works ordered as course textbooks each semester for this period. The academic departments ordering Canadian creative works as textbooks during this period were Education, English, World



Literature, French, History, Indigenous Studies, Communication, Humanities, Political Science, Sociology & Anthropology, and Gender, Sexuality, & Women's Studies.

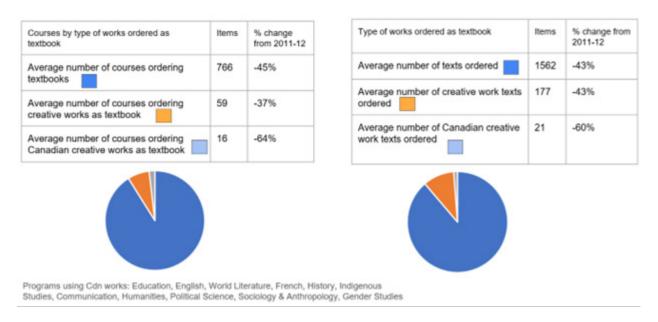


Figure 6. Textbook data 2018–2022. Semesterly averages. Course-level data was reported for each semester for 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022 and is presented in this chart as averages of those 15 semesters of data. Item-level data was tabulated for each fall semester and is presented in the chart as averages of the five fall semesters.

Summary of findings

The data analyzed across all three data sources includes both copied and noncopied works. Although we do not know for certain whether any of the Canadian creative works on library reserves were copied, it is unlikely that anything more than a small number of those works would have been on reserve as copies. And of course, none of the textbooks were copied. Based on the analysis of the 2010–2012 data, likely all, or almost all, copying of Canadian creative works during the period when SFU was an Access Copyright licensee was done for course packs. The course pack data analysis demonstrates that very little copying of Canadian creative works happens at SFU. Whether on reserve, in course packs, or assigned as course textbooks, Canadian creative works accounted for on average 12% of all creative works and 0.8% of all works used. When considering course packs only, Canadian creative works were less than 5% of all creative works and 1.5% of all works copied in 2010–2012.

Table 1 shows the sums (\$CAD) paid by SFU to Access Copyright for institutional licenses in 2009, 2010, and 2011. SFU ceased being an Access Copyright licensee in August 2012. It should be pointed out that these sums do not include the amounts SFU's Centre for Online and Distance Education paid to Access Copyright, which was approximately CAD\$150,000 a year for the years 2009–2011. If we contrast the copying of Canadian creative works at SFU in the last years of our Access Copyright license (2010–2012) with the payments made to Access Copyright overall, it is clear that the vast majority of money we paid to Access Copyright for the copying of works was not for the copying of Canadian creative works, but for the copying of other works—the majority of which would be foreign works published by large multinational publishers. The analysis of the

2010, 2011, and 2012 fall semesters for copying of Canadian works in course packs shows that, on average, 0.15% of works copied for course packs were Canadian creative works. In other words, over 99% of payments to Access Copyright were for copying of works other than Canadian creative works.

Year	Per-student rate	Course pack fees	Total	Estimate of fees paid for
	cost			copying Cdn creative
				works
2009	\$59,517.00	\$301,815.00	\$361,332.00	\$452.72
2010	\$64,231.00	\$259,720.00	\$323,951.00	\$389.58
2011	\$66,510.00	\$231,966.00	\$298,476.00	\$347.95

Table 1. Payments to Access Copyright for years 2009–2011. Does not include payments made by SFU Centre for Online and Distance Education. All values in Canadian dollars. Estimate of fees paid for copying of Canadian creative works is calculated by multiplying course pack fee amount by average of percentage of Canadian works copied (0.15%).

Discussion

Author and publisher organizations have been making direct connections between the reduction in royalties from Access Copyright since 2012 and the use of Canadian creators' works in education, with their campaigns primarily highlighting fiction authors (see, e.g., Access Copyright, 2023; I Value Canadian Stories, n.d.; The Writers' Union of Canada, n.d.). As detailed here, we have confirmed that courses at SFU just don't use very much creative or Canadian creative content, either historically (i.e., when SFU operated under an institutional license with Access Copyright) or more recently.

Because we did not differentiate in this study between what was copied, what was purchased, and what was used under a license, the number of Canadian creative works being a) copied and b) copied outside of any license—in other words, what might be eligible for license or tariff payments through Access Copyright—would be an even smaller portion of the small percentages in our findings. Course packs are likely the only one of our content types that routinely contain or consist of copies, and Canadian creative works made up, on average, 0.15% of the works in course packs in fall semesters in 2010–2012, and in fall semesters in 2018–2022, this dropped significantly to only a single work in this entire period, which calculates to 0.0004%.

The per-student portion of SFU's Access Copyright payments that would have gone into the Payback pool was around CAD\$60,000 per year in 2009 through 2011. For this portion of payments, the university was not reporting item-level data, and those royalties were not able to go directly to the authors whose works were actually used. In course packs, for which item-level data was reported and which were covered by the remainder of SFU's payments (around CAD\$300,000-360,000 per year), less than 0.2% of the items copied were Canadian creative works. This leads us to conclude that it is virtually impossible that SFU is copying anywhere near as much Canadian literature as is being claimed, or that the use of Canadian creative content could be so substantial as to result in significant remuneration for the copying of an author's work.



Conclusion

This research is a step in responding to the Canadian publishing sector's insistence that "collective licensing remains the most effective means of ensuring that students and educational institutions can easily and inexpensively access the published materials they need while providing creators and publishers with fair remuneration for use of these works" (ACP, 2018, p. 3). If Canadian creative works are only being used in extremely small numbers—and copied in even smaller numbers—is CAD\$15.65 per FTE student per year (Access Copyright, 2022) for an Access Copyright license "fair remuneration?" This rate would amount to a licensing cost of over CAD\$400,000 per year for SFU.

There is no reason to suspect that SFU might be substantially different from other universities in its use of Canadian creative works. There is little information available on equivalent data from other institutions; however, the University of British Columbia (UBC) found in a 2018 assessment of its library's print collection that 8% of the collection was literature and 25% of that, or 2% overall, was Canadian literature (Universities Canada, 2018, p. 3). While that data is not directly comparable to this study's data, an academic library's collection is based on the teaching and research needs at the institution, so there is likely a close connection between UBC Library's collections and the materials used in UBC courses. The finding of a very small proportion of Canadian literature at UBC Library therefore provides corollary evidence that SFU is likely comparable to other Canadian institutions in its use of Canadian creative works for teaching purposes.

Future research will expand our item-level analysis, and may assess the copied works to determine how many of them were library licensed, openly licensed, transactionally licensed, in the public domain, or used under fair dealing or another Copyright Act exception. We hope that this research is useful in future copyright advocacy by postsecondary institutions. Our detailed methodology and compiled data are available in SFU's institutional repository Summit (see Zerkee & Taylor, 2024b); we invite other institutions to produce comparable data to increase this pool of evidence.

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¹ This rate is a proposed tariff by Access Copyright for postsecondary educational institutions for the years 2024-2026, currently before the Copyright Board of Canada.

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