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Copyright & copyleft: Knowledge mediation at the interface of law and computer technology

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides a qualitative investigation into the many ways in which exposition mediates exclusive knowledge about *copyright* and *copyleft* to lay-people and (semi-)experts with different profiles, needs and goals, in different user situations. The analysis moves from objective exposition in the COPYRIGHT article of the *Oxford Dictionary of Law*, primarily intended for inclusion and knowledge transfer, to institutional and non-institutional webpages at the front end of Google search listings (pages from *GOV.uk*, *Techopedia*, *MakeUseOf*, the *GNU Project*). While highly ranking online pages are generally held to be objective, credible and authoritative sources of knowledge, non-professional online dictionary articles may depart from lexicographic practice and provide thin if incorrect content (e.g. the *Techopedia* dictionary article). Moreover, the goals of self-promotion and persuasion may frame expository content, which may communicate the ideology shared by author and principal organization, and therefore take on a significant argumentative dimension (e.g. the *GNU's* page *What is Copyleft*). Another point concerns the ability to reach out to the lay-person in new genres and media: the analysis suggests that popularization strategies and usability principles interact in diverse ways and to different extents in (multitype) expository texts written for online communication, on pages which benefit from dilution of information and recourse to expandable content down or outside the sitemap.

Keywords: copyright, copyleft, exposition, popularization, knowledge transfer, new media, old genres, usability.

1. Introduction

This paper is concerned with the many facets of exposition in mediating domain-specific knowledge about *copyright* and *copyleft* to lay-people and (semi-)experts with different profiles, needs and goals, in different user

situations (Tarp 2008; Bergenholtz – Bothma 2011). Our question is whether and to what extent exposition (Werlich 1983) is used by itself or with other types, to mediate knowledge that is “exclusive” (Engberg et al. 2018a) to a restricted (i.e. specialist) discourse community in old genres like dictionary articles remediated or written for online, and short essays published on popular online pages.

Exposition reflects the basic cognitive process of comprehension (Werlich 1983). Dictionary definitions and dictionary articles in general (Bergenholtz – Tarp 1995: microstructures) are prototypical manifestations of the objective, analytical, expository text type. Linguistically, exposition correlates with phenomenon-identifying and phenomenon-linking sentences (respectively, *definiendum* is *definiens/definiencia*; *definiendum* INCLUDES *definiens/definiencia*). The major difference from description lies in the prevalence within exposition of general stative verbs, which are relatively abstract and non-dynamic in nature – in generic or generalizing sentences. Generic sentences say something about abstract individuals rather than particulars located in time and space; generalizing sentences express a pattern or regularity rather than specific episodes (Smith 2003: 24). As an information mode (Smith 2003), exposition provides knowledge about things and events. In lexicographical terms, it caters for the cognitively oriented needs of the dictionary user, or the acquisition of linguistic, sometimes semantico-encyclopaedic information (“What?”). When the user’s needs and questions are operative, however, the focus is on procedural information (“How to?”). This function is typically overlooked in current lexicography (Agerbo 2017). Lay-users and semi-experts searching for *copyright* and *copyleft*, however, may have both cognitively-oriented and operative needs.

Another important point for our investigation and text selection regards the slow dynamics of legal language, and the (in)ability of traditional legal lexicography to keep an up-to-date record of terms and definitions. In our particular case, Elizabeth Martin and Johnathan Law’s (2019) authoritative *A Dictionary of Law* (ODL) accounts for *copyright*, but does not record *copyleft*. ODL is now available online via subscription on the *Oxford Reference* platform (OR). Given the century-long debate around *copyright*, its adaptation to national and international law, as well as the development of an established core meaning, ODL provides coverage of the principle in an article of around 180 words. In terms of Search Engine Optimization, this is short but not deplorably thin content, which users can visualize above the fold.

Copyleft has only recently developed as one of the basic tenets of the Free Software Foundation. It sets conditions on copyrighted work, challenging the traditional conception of private property and the rights granted by Copyright Law.¹ Many legal issues still remain unclear about the *copyleft* licencing system and its relation to the copyright principle. This explains both the exclusion of the lemma from ODL's macrostructure and short meaning descriptions and thin content in other OR dictionaries. Even in the best of circumstances, Daniel Chandler and Rob Munday's (2020) *A Dictionary of Media Communication*, devotes only 57 words to copyleft (ODMC: COPYLEFT) and 72 to copyright, with mutual cross-referencing (ODMC: COPYRIGHT).

With the web now in power stage (Moor 2005), our knowledge search habits have significantly changed. As a consequence, it makes sense to broaden the picture to websites that provide content at the interface of law and computer technology. Very briefly, we have learnt to demand fast(er) access to more and preferably free information (Sunstein 2008; Lorentzen – Theilgaard 2012; Lew – de Schryver 2014). This means sidelining active searches and long-established paying options while depending on general internet search engines and their underlying algorithms for our queries. Webpages on the front end of google search listings are automatically held to be credible and authoritative sources of knowledge (Sunstein 2008; Lorentzen – Theilgaard 2012).

On these grounds, we complement discussion of ODL's copyright article (ODL-cr) with insights into expository passages from freely available pages with high google rankings for the search strings "copyright site:uk" and "copyright OR copyleft" (1 September 2018). Setting aside high-ranking extended essays (e.g. the Wikipedia pages for *copyright* and *copyleft*), we concentrate on the texts listed in Table 1.

A cursory look at the sample suggests that ODL-cr is a homogeneous text, with *I explain* as the main performative verb (Longacre 1983). The

¹ Since the Statute of Anne, passed in England in 1710, national *copyright* legislation has developed as part of intellectual property regulations and adapted to the changing needs of national states, while going through a continuing process of international harmonization. Recent technological advances and the Internet in particular, however, have been challenging the traditional conception of private property and the rights granted by Copyright Law. For example, in the 1980s Richard Stallman developed the *copyleft* licencing system, one of the basic tenets of the Free Software Foundation. It allows users to modify the source code of a system, provided they grant the same rights to those they pass the system on to. Since copyleft sets conditions on copyrighted work, copyleft licences are interpreted as a development from copyright, or a subset thereof.

other texts are multitype (Virtanen 1992). That is, exposition combines with narration (performative verb: *I recount*) in TECH-cl and with instruction in the GOV passages (performative verb: *I direct*), while it combines with objective argumentation in MUO-cl (performative verbs: *I explain* and *I argue*), and takes on a clear argumentative-persuasive dimension in GNU-cl (Amossy 2005). This comes with a shift from more impersonal forms of knowledge mediation and knowledge transfer, to recourse to popularization strategies (Calsamiglia – van Dijk 2004) for user engagement and orientation (Nielsen Norman group).

Table 1. Freely available online texts selected for analysis

COPYRIGHT	
<p><u>GOV</u>: Gov.uk institutional platform Subdirectories and itemized hyperlinks about copyright:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GOV-cr1: <i>Patents, Trademarks, Copyright and Designs</i> • GOV-cr2: <i>How Copyright Protects Your Work</i> • GOV-cr3: <i>Intellectual Property: Copyright</i> • GOV-cr4: <i>Intellectual Property and Your Work</i> • GOV-cr5: <i>Guidance. Licence, Sell or Market your Copyright Material</i> 	<p>https://www.gov.uk</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/browse/business/intellectual-property</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/copyright</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/browse/business/intellectual-property</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/intellectual-property-an-overview</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/guidance/license-sell-or-market-your-copyright-material</p>
COPYLEFT	
<p><u>TECH</u>: for-profit <i>Techopedia – The IT Education Site</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TECH-cl: COPYLEFT article in the <i>Techopedia Dictionary</i> <p><u>MUO</u>: partially free online magazine <i>MakeUseOf – Technology, simplified</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MUO-cl: free magazine article <i>Copyleft – Three Key Concepts You Need to Know</i> <p><u>GNU</u>: <i>The GNU Project</i>, sponsored by the Free Software Foundation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GNU-cl: the FAQs page about <i>What is Copyleft?</i> 	<p>https://www.techopedia.com/</p> <p>https://www.techopedia.com/definition/3261/copyleft</p> <p>https://www.makeuseof.com/</p> <p>https://www.makeuseof.com/tag/copyleft-copyright-key-concepts/</p> <p>https://www.gnu.org/gnu/the-gnu-project.en.html</p> <p>https://www.gnu.org/licenses/copyleft.en.html</p>

We are interested in the diverse status, features and uses of exposition in a highly respected article such as ODL-cr vis-à-vis exposition in non-traditional online intermediaries (Sunstein 2008) with varying credibility, diverse purposes, user situations and communicative contexts. Section 2 introduces the methodology and framework of analysis. As a second step, the texts are analysed consecutively in Sections 3 to 5, and positioned at different points between the knowledge transfer end and the popularization end of the knowledge mediation/communication spectrum. Section 6 looks back and summarizes, with an eye to esteem and credibility in traditional genres and new media.

2. Methodology and framework of analysis

The analysis is strictly qualitative. As suggested in Section 1, ODL's COPYRIGHT (ODL-cr) shows the core features of objective analytical exposition (Werlich 1983; Smith 2003: information mode). It is a cognitively-oriented (Tarp 2008; Bergenholtz – Bothma 2011), semantico-encyclopaedic article (Cacchiani 2018b). Additionally, ODL is held to be an authoritative source of knowledge (ODL), which commands trustworthiness and esteem based on a history of eight subsequent editions, taken-for-granted lexicographic and professional expertise, and the unrivalled reputation of the Oxford University Press. On these grounds, our analysis in Section 3 starts with ODL's COPYRIGHT.

Dictionary function, user profiles and needs are identified following Tarp and associates' Functional Theory of Dictionary (Bergenholtz – Tarp 1995; Tarp 2008; Bergenholtz – Bothma 2011). Crucially, notions such as cognitive and operative function (see also Section 1) can be readily stretched to apply to all passages under scrutiny. In like manner, defining the intended user and encoder profiles, needs and situation for all texts is fully in line with genre-based work and corpus-assisted studies of legal knowledge transfer and mediation, also online (Engberg et al. 2018b).

The move from traditional dictionary article and highly respected publisher (ODL-cr) to freely available content on webpages with diverse purposes and user situations results in variation along multiple dimensions.

As regards article description, insights from Wiegand's long-established Actional-Semantic Theory of Dictionary Form (Wiegand 1977; 1992; 2015) are used to identify key structural and linguistic features of the dictionary article. The theory concentrates on lexicographical meaning descriptions, which provide descriptors about the definiendum within a specific frame-

based structure, as well as (semantico-)encyclopaedic items and comments. The descriptors allow for non-natural condensation, as for example ellipsis of copula between lemma and definition, and cross-references to other articles.

Public libraries in the UK maintain subscriptions for public use to the ODL online and the OR platform, with the express purpose of making specialised knowledge accessible to students and lay-users. This raises a fundamental question about the mediation of knowledge in ODL-cr: besides dialogic reference to other texts and interdiscursive dialogism (Bres 2005), is there recourse to any popularization device? To tackle the issue, we shall draw on Calsamiglia – van Dijk (2004), which provides a set of recontextualizing knowledge-oriented strategies (Jacobi 1987). For instance, the “word *called* term” type of denomination and designation for indirect metalinguistic naming with a word-to-term direction (Loffler-Laurian 1983); exemplification via generalizations and scenarios, hypothetical exemplificatory situations (Calsamiglia – van Dijk 2004); concretizing associative tropes such as analogy, metaphor and similes. Calsamiglia – van Dijk (2004), however, does not work equally well with interlocutive dialogic devices for engaging with users, for which we mostly refer to Bres (2005). These comprise, among others, directives in imperatives and the question-answer pattern, inclusive-*we*, and recourse to the 2nd person to address the user.

Since we concentrate on online texts, in our treatment of exposition we shall consider adherence to certain usability principles in content design (Nielsen 2001, 2015 and Nielsen Norman group) as a measure of the intent of popularization. These principles are used as guidelines to make (ideally) meaningful content clear, fast and easy to read.

- In usability theory, utility content is accessed fast, usable – i.e. it is processed and understood easily – and is useful for the user (Nielsen 2001, 2015). It is split into chunks by topic – ideally, no more than seven chunks per text – and organized in clear text hierarchies of short paragraphs. Lines of 50-70 characters are recommended.
- Bullet and numbered lists assist in grouping together related content (Moran 2016).
- Also regarding comprehension, clear, meaningful (vs. fancy), user-centric headings support scanning and attract the user’s interest. Likewise, texts start with meaningful words (Nielsen 2015) for scannability, while abbreviations, initialisms, and acronyms are spelt out in the first instance (Nielsen 2001).

- Whereas usable texts are expected to aim for a 12th grade reading level when addressing readers with college degrees, an 8th grade reading level is recommended for general users. Specialized domain terminology is required when content is designed for specialised users (Nielsen 2015). In what follows, we use WebFX's Readability Test Tool to provide information about the readability scores and, particularly, sentence length and grade or age required to understand the texts under investigation.²
- With reference to interaction and engagement, FAQs and – we may want to add – the question/answer (Q/A) pattern deliver good value to website and users. Well-managed/targeted FAQs and questions show that the organization/principal (Goffman 1981)³ is listening and addressing people's concerns (Farrell 2014). As to imperatives, they should come only with mandatory tasks or when the statement is qualified appropriately, i.e. preceded by information that signals goals and relevance to the audience. Within the economy of this paper, this guideline is stretched to cover other directives as well.

Given the varied nature of the data set, descriptive categories and theoretical perspectives will be prioritized differently as the exploration unfolds. This shall enable us to focus on the status and various forms of exposition at play. We shall position the texts at different points on the knowledge mediation continuum based on the ability to engage and explain, adopt user-centric language (Nielsen Norman group), signal and demonstrate relevance to the user (Nielsen Norman group: user orientation) and, ultimately, popularize content (Calsamiglia – van Dijk 2004).

² WebFX's Readability Test Tool is available on <https://www.webfx.com/tools/readable/>. It provides text scores for the most used readability indicators: Flesh Kincaid Reading Ease and Flesh Kincaid Grade Level; Gunning Fog Score; Coleman Liau Index; Automated Readability Index; Smog Index.

³ In his chapter on participation and *footing* in social interactions, Goffman (1981: 144-146) deconstructs the speaker into three persons and social roles. For our purposes, suffice it to say that the *principal* is responsible for the message, the *author* originates the content, and the *animator* produces the actual utterance. These roles do not need either to conflate into the same person or to be performed simultaneously. Consider, in this respect, ghost writers of presidential speeches, or party leaders talking on behalf of party members and supporters. When anonymous online author and (non-)institutional organization are mutually interchangeable, we can assume that principal and author share values and motivations for writing, and that the author adopts the originator's position, formulates the text and usually animates it.

3. COPYRIGHT (ODL-cr) and COPYLEFT (TECH-cl)

3.1 COPYRIGHT (ODL-cr)

According to the *Preface*, ODL addresses cognitively-oriented user needs and situations. It communicates encyclopaedic knowledge of a cultural and subject-specific nature (Tarp 2008) to novices (law students), lay-users and semi-experts (practitioners in other disciplines) for purposes of inclusion in the community of practice (Wenger 1998; Wenger-Trayner – Wenger-Trayner 2015). Example (1) provides the dictionary article for COPYRIGHT (ODL-cr).

- (1) **Copyright** n. The exclusive right to reproduce or authorize others to reproduce artistic, literary, or musical works. It is conferred by the Copyright, Designs and Patent Act 1988, which also extends to sound broadcasting, cinematograph films, and television broadcasts (including cable television). Copyright lasts for the author's lifetime plus 70 years from the end of the year in which he died; it can be assigned or transmitted on death. EU directive 93/98 requires all EU states to ensure that the duration of copyright is the life of the author plus 70 years. Copyright protection for sound recordings lasts for 50 years from the date of their publication; for broadcasts it is 50 years from the end of the year in which the broadcast took place. Directive 91/250 requires all EU member states to protect computer *software by copyright law. The principal remedies for breach of copyright (known as **piracy**) are an action for *damages and *account of profits or an *injunction. It is a criminal offence knowingly to make or deal in articles that infringe a copyright. *See also BERNE CONVENTION.*
(ODL-cr)

The article has a readability level of about 12 and, on average, 20.11 words per sentence. As a text that was originally written for paper and then remediated for online, it does not align in any way with usability guidelines. It is a concise modular, non-elementary article (Wiegand 1977, 1992, 2015). Distinctive features include non-natural condensation with copula deletion (e.g. between lemma and definition), third person style and objectification, complex clauses.

The initial definition, integrate core (Wiegand 1977, 1992, 2015), specifies function and application of the superordinate term, *right* (1a). As the article unfolds, semantico-encyclopaedic references are made to national

legislation and procedural information regarding the interpretation and application of the law with a technical explanation. Further detail comes from the shift from national to supranational legislation. By doing so, technical examples merge with external legal references to community law (1b) and cross-references to synopses in the outside matter (1c).

- (1a) The exclusive right to reproduce or authorize others to reproduce artistic, literary or musical work.
- (1b) It is conferred by the Copyright, Designs and Patent Act 1988, which also extends to sound broadcasting, cinematograph films, and television broadcasts (including cable television). Copyright lasts ... EU directive 93/98 requires ... Directive 91/250 requires all EU member states to protect computer *software by copyright law.
- (1c) *See also BERNE CONVENTION.*

The purpose is twofold: to explain and to provide access to the relevant literature for further study. The relations between *copyright* and other technical terms within copyright law and intellectual property law are brought to the fore in separate complex clauses that form other meaning descriptions. Some examples are associative naming with relational expressions as in (1d), intratextually dialogic analytical definitions with internal cross-referencing (**damages; *account of profits; *injunction*) also in combination with metalinguistic naming and internal cross-referencing (*known as piracy*), as in (1e), and additions in the form of relative clauses, such as circumstantial information in (1b) above.

- (1d) It is a criminal offence knowingly to make or deal in articles that infringe a copyright.
- (1e) The principal remedies for breach of copyright (known as **piracy**) are an action for **damages* and **account of profits* or an **injunction*.

Concretization and exemplification via hypothetical scenarios are not part of this semantico-encyclopaedic article. Moreover, what might be seen as an interlocutive dialogic device (*See, in 1c*) can be readily replaced by typographical conventions for cross-referencing to other matter within the

dictionary, in the interest of lexicographical condensation (e.g. the star key or bold in 1e).

Overall, ODL-cr can be seen as an objective expository text that transfers knowledge to current peripheral though prospective active members of the community of practice, for learning and future inclusion (Wenger 1998; Wenger-Trayner – Wenger-Trayner 2015).

3.2 COPYRIGHT (TECH-cr)

Since the commercial website *Techopedia – The IT Education Site* purports to provide accessible information and “actional advice” to its users – primarily IT professional and technology decision makers (TECH) – we would expect a dictionary article that adjusts to usability guidelines rather than to lexicographic conventions. For example, we expect chunking of meaningful expandable content and user engagement. Yet, the COPYLEFT (TECH-cl) article returns quite an unsatisfactory picture.

(2) Copyleft

Definition

What does *Copyleft* mean?

Copyleft is free software license requiring copyright authors to permit some of their work to be reproduced. With copyright law, authors have complete control over their materials. But with copyleft law, users and authors co-exist. Users are permitted to engage in copying and distributing copyrighted materials. However, authors do have some say in who uses the materials based on their intended use. Copyleft does not require source code distribution. Thus, copyleft grants users similar rights to those normally only granted to the copyright authors, including activities such as distribution and copying.

Techopedia explains *Copyleft*

In the mid-1980s, Don Stallman coined the term copyleft in a letter he sent to Richard Stallman. [...] Emacs General Public License [...] was the original copyleft license. As time went on, this was renamed to the GNU General Public License.

Copyleft laws have provided users the same rights as copyright authors. They not only can review materials protected by copyright laws, but they can also copy, modify and distribute the materials. This gives many the benefit of using copyright materials, a “share all” type of use. However, to use copyleft, it must be determined (usually by the

copyright author) that the materials are going to be used in a pertinent manner benefiting others for educational or cultural purposes.
(TECH-cl)

TECH-cl has a grade level of 11 and, on average, 11.6 words per sentence. Contrary to usability guidelines, it stretches over subsequent screens. *Techopedia explains Copyleft* and matching content are part of screen 2, together with a rectangle used for advertising other products and companies. Contrary to lexicographic practice, a narration about the early history of copyleft (2b: *In the mid-1980s ... GNU General Public Licence*) sets apart the primary expository subtypes (2a: *Copyleft is free software ... distribution and copying*; 2c: *Copyleft laws have provided ... for educational or cultural purposes*). Contrary to both usability guidelines and lexicographic practice for concise expository articles in legal dictionaries, content is diluted and repeated across headings and paragraphs. For example, headings and bylines such as *Definition, What does copyleft mean?* and *Techopedia explains Copyleft* are redundant. Also, superordinates replace exact domain terminology. For instance, *license* substitutes for *non-proprietary license*. Furthermore, there are no mediostructural references to terms within the copyleft frame, no encyclopaedic comments, and no external references to encyclopaedic detail.

In short, the article is not written by a professional lexicographer. It fails to provide correct meaning descriptions, exemplifications and illustrative scenarios for the specific situations, conditions and frames activated by the application of copyleft. As a consequence, COPYLEFT (TECH-cl) does not answer lay-user questions and cannot mediate the knowledge needed by IT professionals and technology decision makers either.

4. Copyright (GOV-cr)

On the Gov.uk platform, UK government experts address lay-citizens as anonymous authors and animators for the principal institution (Goffman 1981). They provide quick and easy access to user-friendly content that is especially designed for online communication. The target user seeks information, basic advice and instruction in order to perform some kind of action in compliance with current rules and regulations – i.e. in order to behave prosocially and responsibly (Cacchiani 2018a, 2018b). This accounts for significant departures from the defining features of ODL-cr.

First, exposition is a secondary text type, and instruction is the primary or functionally dominant text type within an operative user situation (Tarp 2008; Bergenholtz – Bothma 2011). Second, usability guidelines and linguistic strategies interact in order to satisfy the intent of popularization (Cacchiani 2018b). As a consequence, content is diluted on the page and schematized in bullet lists with syntactically parallel subcomponents, short paragraphs and short text lines (Moran 2016), as in (3). This applies to both headings that link to subdirectories and meaning descriptions in expository passages as in, respectively, the *Contents* in the bullet list (from *Overview* to – *Stop people using your work*), and the passage opening the *Overview* (*Copyright protects your work ... There isn't a register of copyright works in the UK*).

Additionally, knowledge on the platform is expandable and communicated progressively: technical details, circumstantial information and legal references are postponed via shortcuts to source discourses in pdfs or external directories as final landing sites, and to subdirectories down the sitemap. For example, *for example the Berne Convention* and *Find out about all charges*⁴ in (4).

As a result, the Gov.uk copyright pages have an average grade level of about 8 and 5.53 average words per sentence – which is in line with usability guidelines for websites that address a large lay audience.

(3) *How copyright protects your work*

Contents

- [Overview](#)
- [How long copyright lasts](#)
- [License and sell your copyright](#)
- [Stop people using your work](#)

Overview

Copyright protects your work and stops others from using it without your permission.

You get copyright protection automatically – you don't have to apply or pay a fee. There isn't a register of copyright works in the UK.

You automatically get copyright protection when you create:

- original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, including illustration and photography

⁴ *Berne Convention* jump links to *Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and artistic Works (as amended on September 28, 1979)*: wipolex.wipo.int/en/text/283693; *Find out about call charges* jump links to *Call charges and phone numbers* (www.gov.uk/call-charges).

- original non-literary written work, such as software, web content and databases

[...]

You can mark your work with the copyright symbol (©), your name and the year of creation. Whether you mark the work or not doesn't affect the level of protection you have.

(GOV-cr1)

(4) *How copyright protects your work*

[...]

Copyright overseas

Your work could be protected by copyright in other countries through international agreements, for example the Berne Convention.

[...]

Contact the IPO Information Centre if you have a question about international copyright.

IPO Information Centre information@ipo.gov.uk

Telephone: 0300 300 2000

Fax: 01633 817777

Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

Find out about call charges

(GOV-cr1)

Audience orientation is realized via engagement strategies that pursue interlocutive dialogism (Bres 2005) and user-centric language choices for meaningfulness and comprehension (Nielsen 2015). The Q/A pattern in elliptical reported questions with 2nd-person pronouns and adjectives works towards engagement. Headings like *How copyright protects your work* (3) presuppose ignorance on the part of the user, and knowledge on the part of the author. In addition, they signal that the principal institution is listening to the user's needs (Cacchiani 2018b), and is interested in creating and enlarging common ground between participants via the provision of user-friendly responses (Engberg et al. 2018a). The 2nd person is an obvious engagement marker in all "modules" (Bateman 2008: 81) within the page. It is used in headings and framed texts to address users directly and signals relevance to them. That is, it is an associative strategy that creates proximity to the user (Hyland 2010).

Imperatives are frequent. They presuppose knowledge of facts and expertise on the part of the issuer, and encode orientation towards the

addressee, who feels under the obligation to realize the state described. They are found not only in (sub-)headings like *Licence and sell your copyright* or *Stop people using your work*, from the *Contents* in (3), or *Sell your copyright*, from the *Guidance* subdirectory (5) below, but also in framed texts such as *Contact the IPO Information Centre if ...* in (4). Forms like “*You can/may + INF*” have similar effects, e.g. *You can mark ...* in (3), and *You may decide to...* in (5).

(5) Guidance

License, sell or market your copyright material

[...]

[...]

Copy protection devices

For copyright material issued to the public in an electronic form, you may decide to use technological measures so that it is **not possible to make a copy of your material**, that is, it is **copy-protected**.

[...]

Sell your copyright

If you decide to sell or transfer your copyright there would need to be a written, signed contract stating a transfer has taken place. This is known as an **assignment**.

(GOV-cr5)

In a slightly different manner, topic-giving (sub-)headings with noun phrases (4: *Copyright overseas*) and nominalizations (6: *Owning intellectual property*) also work towards answering potential user questions, but do not pursue proximity (Hyland 2010) at the level of form. *Intellectual property and your work* (6) is another example, which combines nominal style and meaningful word selection for user orientation, and the 2nd-person possessive for proximity and user-association (adapted from Barnbrook 2012).

(6) *Intellectual property and your work*

[...]

Owning intellectual property

You own intellectual property if you:

[...]

- have a brand that could be a trade mark, eg a well-known product name

Intellectual property can:

- have more than one owner

[...]

(GOV-cr4)

Moving on to the comprehension side of audience orientation, all (sub-) headings provide meaningful information and frame chunked content. As far as cognitively-oriented popularization strategies are concerned, legal communication calls for recontextualization of source discourses and intratextual reformulations within expository subtexts. Most of the defining strategies observed in the ODL-cr are also found in GOV-cr (Cacchiani 2018a). What is of special interest to us, however, is the inclusion of informal definitions for associating with the user (e.g. using *you* in 3a) and so-called full-sentence definitions (*If-/When*-definitions in 3b, 4a, 5a, 6a).

- (3a) You can mark your work with the copyright symbol (©), your name and the year of creation.
- (3b) You automatically get copyright protection when you create:
- original literary, dramatic, musical, and artistic work, including illustration and photography
 - original non-literary written work, such as software, web content and databases
- (4a) Contact the IPO Information Centre if you have a question about international copyright.
- (6a) You own intellectual property if you:
- [...]
 - have a brand that could be a trade mark, eg a well-known product name.

In a trade-off between usability guidelines (meaningful words to the left) and the End-Weight Principle, meaningful items (terms) tend to precede definitions in a term-to-word direction, also in analytical definitions. Yet, indirect designation (without ellipsis) is present (5a: *that is, it is copy-protected*), also in the form of Loffler-Laurian's (1983) metalinguistic naming (5b: *This is known as an assignment*).

- (5a) ...so that it is **not possible to make a copy of your material**, that is, it is **copy-protected**.
- (5b) If you decide to sell or transfer your copyright there would need to be a written, signed contract stating a transfer has taken place. This is known as an assignment.

In line with the End-Weight Principle, important information (here, the term) is placed at the end of the clause or sentence. Emphasis on the term in clause-final position signals meaningfulness. Usability guidelines and popularization strategies appear to converge with acronyms and symbols, which follow gloss and explanation for clarity (3a: *the copyright symbol (©)*). Other popularization strategies comprise extensive recourse to exemplification (3b: *including illustration and photography; such as software, web content and databases*; 6a: *eg a well-known product name*). As can be seen, exemplification comes with familiar vocabulary in recontextualizations that do without technical detail. As suggested above, content is expandable, and technical detail is provided via shortcuts to other pages down the map or to source discourses for statutory documentation (4: *for example, the Berne Convention*).

Finally, pre-posed conditional clauses are textual organizers because they introduce the scenarios, causes and preconditions where the state described in the directive or assertive main clause may apply. Giving a statement of the consequence at the outset is a marked but viable option (5b: *If you decide to ...there would need to be...*), which qualifies what follows appropriately (Nielsen Norman group). It brings to the fore the goal or reason for reading on, signalling relevance to the user.

As is apparent, exposition on the Gov-cr pages makes a substantial move towards the popularization end of knowledge mediation in a cognitively-oriented and operative situation. The text accommodates the characteristics of the intended lay-user. User engagement and user orientation are established by making extensive recourse to familiar and user-centric language in highly readable texts.

5. *Copyleft* (MUO-cl) and *copyleft* (GNU-cl)

5.1 *Copyleft* (MUO-cl)

Make Use Of is a for-profit magazine with some free features. "It issues tips and guides on how to make the most of the internet, computer software,

and mobile apps. [Its] mission is to help users understand and navigate modern trends in consumer technology” (MUO). The article *Copyleft vs. Copyright: 3 key concepts you need to know* (MUO-cl) can be accessed freely on MUO’s *Technology explained* subdirectory. To reinforce reliability and esteem (Brennan – Pettit 2008), the expert author signs using his real identity – Joel Lee – and provides a passport photo along with a short biosketch about his roles in virtual and real settings. Here, the author provides expository content about *Copyleft* in a primarily cognitively oriented situation:

- (7) Copyright infringement is one of the biggest problems of the internet age. Never before] has it been easier to infringe on intellectual property rights, and never before has it been harder to prevent others from stealing one’s hard work.

As a creator, you need to protect your intellectual property: photographers should **copyright photos and images**, software developers should **use proper software licenses**, bloggers should **issue DMCA takedown notices**, etc. But that can be quite a headache, especially if you’re prolific and your work is popular.

Which is why many creators are adopting copyleft instead. Here’s everything you need to know about copyleft licenses and how they differ from copyright licenses.

(MUO-cl)

Following an initial introduction that identifies intended users as *creator(s)*, their needs and goals (7), the text is structured into primarily expository chunks via meaningful (user-centric) headlines. The overall organization can be schematized as follows “GIVEN PROBLEM (7), IF MEANINGFUL STATEMENTS AND MATCHING EXPLANATIONS 1..., 2..., 3... (8a), THEN 4... (8b)”, where 1 to 4 are topic-giving sub-headings within the text:

- (8a) **1. Copyleft is about user freedom; 2. Copyleft is more than just permission; 3. Copyleft isn’t always free**

(MUO-cl)

- (8b) **4. Is copyleft right for you?**

(MUO-cl)

The intent of popularization is apparent throughout. The text has a grade level of about 11, which meets usability guidelines for readers with college

degrees. Primarily expository responses to questions and explanations of the headings in (8) reveal a preference for meaning descriptions that reconceptualize and recontextualize source discourses with a term-to-word direction, which is in line with the End-Weight Principle and usability research on online reading habits. Consider, for example, metalinguistic naming (9: *Public domain means that ...whatever they want with it*) or the initial definition in (10), which combines relevance marking associative patterns, relative clauses, and explanation by function (*The most notable aspect of copyleft licences is that they require users to distribute ... that offers ... as the original work*).

(9) [...]

Public domain means that nobody owns rights to a particular work and anybody is free to do whatever they want with it. You can **take a public domain image**, modify it, and then sell it under your own restrictive license. You can take MIT-licensed source code, modify it, and release it under a stricter license.

(MUO-cl)

(10) The most notable aspect of copyleft licenses is that they **require** users to distribute derivative works under a license that offers the same rights as the original work.

Suppose a photographer releases a copyleft photo for anyone to use. As a user, you're within rights to download that photo, modify it however you want, and then distribute it however you want to whoever you want--but you'd also have to permit anyone else to modify and distribute your work however they want.

This is called a "share-alike" clause.

[...]

(MUO-cl)

As regards popularization strategies, there are word-to-term designations with terms in End-Focus position and avoidance of natural condensation, e.g. at the end of (10), with indirect metalinguistic naming (*This is called a "share-alike" clause*). Likewise, acronyms are in brackets in (11) below, for usability (*GNU General Public License (GPL); Red Hat Enterprise Linux (RHEL)*). Exemplification has a major role. As a matter of fact, hypothetical exemplificatory situations with open conditionals – which are likely to be true in the actual world – precede the main clause (10: *Suppose a photographer...*), and generic statements point to the addressee's ability to perform particular

actions (9: *You can **take a public domain image**, modify it...*). The shift from hypothetical scenario to particular facts is illustrated by real-life examples, e.g. *Red Hat Enterprise Linux* in (11).

(11) **Red Hat Enterprise Linux is a good practical example of this.**

The Linux kernel is licensed under the GNU General Public License (GPL), which is a copyleft license. Red Hat Enterprise Linux (RHEL) is a commercial operating system built on a modified Linux kernel. The desktop version of RHEL is sold for \$49, but to abide by the GPL, the RHEL source code is included in the purchase.

RHEL users are free to modify and redistribute the source code, [...].
(MUO-cl)

Within the body of the text, the content is expandable via shortcuts to additional information (bold in the original). Importantly, however, shortcuts to other organizations and cross-references to MUO articles for further reading and additional detail are also provided in separate modules, as background rectangles.

(12) **On the other hand, commercial restrictions are permitted.**

The Creative Commons organization offers two copyleft licenses that creators can use when distributing their works.

The first is the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike license (CC BY-SA), which allows modification and redistribution as long as the original creator is attributed and the derived work adheres to the “share-alike” clause.

(MUO-cl)

The examples so far clearly show a constellation of unmistakably user-centric language choices in headings, main modules and expansions that jump link to other pages. These comprise general language (7: *Here’s everything you need to know about...*), (partial) recurrence (9: *You can take*; 13: *confused*; *confusing*), informal expressions (7: *But that can be quite a headache*; 13: *yes, but*; *You wrap your head around it*), discourse markers (13: *yes, but*), auxiliary contractions (13: *you’re*), ellipsis in questions (13: *Confused...?*) and syntactic parallelism (e.g. 7, with contrastive focus: *Never before has been easier to ... and never before has been harder to...*).

(13) If you’re still confused, we recommend these websites that explain copyright well.

Confused About Copyright Law? These Online Resources Can Help

It's a confusing subject, yes, but it's important that you wrap your head around it. If you're involved in any sort of creative work, these resources will help you do just that.

READ MORE

(MUO-cl)

The intended users are new to licensing issues and therefore lay-users in that sense, but they are on their way to becoming active participants in the creators' community. (Mutual) engagement is achieved via a number of interlocutive dialogic devices that create proximity (Hyland 2010) and mutual author-user association (Barnbrook 2012). For example, elliptical questions in meaningful Q/A patterns (13), 2nd-person pronouns and adjectives (*you, your*) and recommendations that turn the responsibility for carrying out future actions onto the user (8: *you need to*; 13: performative *we recommend*, with exclusive *we* for the expert author and MUO, the principal: *it's important that*, with a relevance adjective).

In line with usability guidelines, 2nd-person imperatives are shortcuts to other pages (13: **READ MORE**). And, as is often the case with recommendations or other directives, they are qualified by the preceding text, which states (mostly generic) goals or conditions for carrying out the directive speech act (13: *If you're still confused...*).

On these grounds, it is safe to claim that the text can be positioned towards the popularization end of knowledge mediation. Engagement strategies and relevance signals motivate the user, while author and principal reach out to the reader and provide basic knowledge about *copyleft* via a combination of familiar, user-centric and meaningful language, and chunking of expandable content in cognitively-oriented situations. This makes the article usable both in view of the targeted user (creators) and of lay-users in general.

In case the ultimate goal of the intended user is operative, however, the article concludes by advancing an evaluative standpoint about *copyleft* as a mission and philosophy of life, using reasons to justify the proposition involved and making it acceptable to the user (14).

(14) **Is Copyleft Right for You?**

At the end of the day, *copyleft* is a philosophy.

It's harder to make money when you commit to *copyleft* licensing. Even if you do end up making money, you'll likely end up making significantly less than if you played by traditional rules of copyright.

The only reason to endure such disadvantages is if you truly believe in the copyleft mission: freedom for users.

(MUO-cl)

Yet, argumentation is no more than a secondary and little represented text type. At best, the article can be understood as having only an inherent argumentative dimension: it tries to orient the user's ways of seeing the world by providing unbiased knowledge in factual-expository content (Amossy 2005).

5.2 Copyleft (GNU)

MUO's argumentative dimension is significantly different from the self-promotion and call-to-action that characterize the GNU page. In *What is Copyleft?*, exposition combines with the explicitation of values and philosophy, and the inclusion of positively evaluated products to persuade the user to join the Free Software Foundation community. As a matter of fact, the buttons on the leaderboard and horizontal top banner frame the text, and encourage the user to read content about copyleft within the specific philosophy of the Free Software Foundation (FSF), which supports the GNU Project and achievements (15).

(15) <GNU head> / **GNU Operating System** / JOIN THE FSF

Sponsored by the **Free Software Foundation**

ABOUT GNU / PHILOSOPHY / LICENCES / EDUCATION / SOFTWARE / DOCS / HELP

GNU / **more**

(GNU-cl)

The anonymous author identifies fully with the values, motivation and philosophy of the *Free Software Foundation*, principal and sponsor of the GNU project and the GNU Operating System. Lay-users, of course, may have cognitively-oriented goals and can glean information from the content presented. Still, the intended user is a software developer that may need to know more about copyleft licences (15: LICENCES) and philosophy (15: *ABOUT GNU; PHILOSOPHY*), and a potentially prospective active member of the community that will use them in operative situations (15: *JOIN THE FSF*). As such, the user may need to move from the *What is copyleft?* page to further specialist detail on other, more enticing, subdirectories of the GNU website (15: *SOFTWARE; DOCS; MORE ▼*).

The joint focus on licences, community and values frames the entire article: values are key, and cast a positive light on the GNU workings. As the text unfolds, *freedom* (16) and *freedom to redistribute and change GNU software, for anyone* (17) and *all users* (16), and the *incentive* (18) for programmers to bring about *improvements* (16), i.e. *improvements to free software* (17), are construed as positive cultural keywords (Rigotti – Rocci 2005). They explain the workings and values of the GNU project and of the FSF community.

(16) **What is Copyleft?**

Copyleft is a general method for making a program (or other work) free (in the sense of freedom, not “zero price”), and requiring all modified and extended versions of the program to be free as well.

The simplest way to make a program free software is to put it in the public domain, uncopyrighted. This allows people to share the program and their improvements, if they are so minded. But it also allows uncooperative people to convert the program into proprietary software. They can make changes, many or few, and distribute the result as a proprietary product. People who receive the program in that modified form do not have the freedom that the original author gave them; the middleman has stripped it away.

(GNU-cl)

(17) In the GNU project, our aim is to give *all* users the freedom to redistribute and change GNU software. If middlemen could strip off the freedom, our code might “have many users,” but it would not give them freedom. So instead of putting GNU software in the public domain, we “copyleft” it. Copyleft says that anyone who redistributes the software, with or without changes, must pass along the freedom to further copy and change it. [...]

(GNU-cl)

(18) Copyleft also provides an incentive for other programmers to add to free software. [...]

Copyleft also helps programmers who want to contribute improvements to free software get permission to do so. [...]

(GNU-cl)

(19) A compromise form of copyleft, the GNU Lesser General Public License (LGPL) applies to a few (but not all) GNU libraries. To learn

more about properly using the LGPL, please read the article [Why you shouldn't use the Lesser GPL for your next library.](#)
(GNU-cl)

The average grade level is about 11, which is understood to be fine with users with college degrees. The standard usability tricks are at play throughout. The interactive meaningful heading in the form of a question (16: *What is copyleft?*, a FAQ) shows that the expert author and principal is listening to the user. Content is chunked into paragraphs. Acronyms in brackets follow the matching phrase (19b). Expandable content is diluted via shortcuts that cross-refer to other pages on the platform, for meaning descriptions of technical terminology (16a and 18a, for the lay-user), and for technical specifications and more detail (19a: intended for creators). Other references land on technical documentation in source discourses (19b).

(16a) [in the sense of freedom, not "zero price"; public domain; proprietary software](#)

(18a) [incentive; improvements to free software](#)

(19a) [Why you shouldn't use the Lesser GPL for your next library.](#)

(19b) [GNU Lesser General Public Licence \(LGPL\)](#)

As far as meaning descriptions are concerned, the strong preference for term-to-word patterns is in line with the End-Weight Principle, for example in (16b), where the associative type combines with definition by function, exemplification markers in brackets, and a non-finite participial clause.

(16b) Copyleft is a general method for making a program (or other work) free ([in the sense of freedom, not "zero price"](#)), and requiring all modified and extended versions of the program to be free as well.

An argumentative passage follows to address the problem of *proprietary software* as a way to *strip freedom away* and present the organization's ideological standpoint on *copyleft* (vs *proprietary software*). Primarily descriptive-expository paragraphs follow in order to provide facts about copyleft and copyleft licenses.

It is interesting to note how meaning representation by function in (17) combines with *exclusive-we*, which sets apart GNU developers –

devoted members of the righteous FSF community – from the bad workings of 3rd-person entities. Community members (*we*) take responsibility for their positive actions, which leads to freedom.

(17a) our aim is to; our code; we “copyleft” [GNU software]

(17b) In the GNU project, our aim is to give all users the freedom to redistribute and change GNU software.

The workings of 3rd-person entities go against freedom and the FSF’s positive values:

(16c) ...uncooperative people ... convert the program into proprietary software... People who receive the program in that modified form do not have the freedom that the original author gave them; the middleman has stripped it away.

(17c) If middlemen could strip off the freedom...

Objective, factual exposition is given in the form of definitions by function.

(16d) Copyleft says that...

(17d) Copyleft also provides an incentive for ... Copyleft also helps programmers...

Last, the 2nd person is used with imperatives to engage with the user and encourage them to click on shortcuts to additional detail (20), or caution them, as in (21), which concludes the article with an exclamation mark for emphasis, mutual engagement and principal-user association.

(20) If you would like to copyleft your program with the GNU GPL or the GNU LGPL, please see the license instructions page for advice.
(GNU-cl)

(21) A backwards C in a circle has no special legal significance, so it doesn’t make a copyright notice. It may be amusing in book covers, posters, and such, but be careful how you represent it in a web page!
(GNU-cl)

To conclude, in the GNU article readability guidelines and popularization strategies are used in order to attract and motivate lay-users and (semi-) experts to use the GNU Operating System and join the Free Software Foundation.

6. Conclusions

The purpose of this paper has been to compare and contrast the status of exposition and the representation and communication of knowledge about *copyright* and *copyleft* in old genres and new media. Our research question was one about the ability to mediate legal knowledge beyond the community of discourse and practice and reach out to lay-users or semi-experts.

The classic objective expository article in ODL (ODL-cr), we have seen, illustrates the case of transfer of uncontroversial knowledge for inclusion. The assumption of trustworthiness and reliability based on its long-established history is further reinforced by the experience of a cooperative (Grice 1975) interaction with beneficial outcomes for the intended user. That is, the intended users receive the information they need to improve their situation, based on their specific profile and goals (Tarp 2008). In a mutually enhancing (hence, cooperative) relationship, we may want to add, maximising utility for the user turns out to be beneficial for ODL, e.g. in terms of growing credibility and reputation, increasing product attractiveness, consultation and sales chances in a highly competitive market: the user-consumer is more willing to engage in further and continuing communicative interactions with ODL. By contrast, breaks with lexicographic conventions and departures from the expository text type in non-professional dictionary articles such as Techopedia's *COPYLEFT* (ODL-cl) may invite users to question the validity of any assumption of trustworthiness and reliability they might have made about Techopedia. One obvious reason for this is that the article fails to answer basic questions of lay-users', who are likely to turn elsewhere for a more comprehensive and satisfactory answer. Also, the article does not provide any actional advice to (semi-)experts.

Moving away from dictionary articles, lexicographical condensation, objectification and conciseness, the texts on online subdirectories like *GOV-cr*, in the *MUO-cl* online magazine article and on the *GNU-cl* FAQs page, depart from the features of classic exposition in the interest of user engagement and user orientation. Consequently, exposition combines with dialogic devices in different degrees and to different purposes.

On the popularization end of legal knowledge mediation, the Gov.uk pages about *copyright* (GOV-cr) reveal thorough reflection on webpage usability. The platform pairs diluted information with expandable content, recontextualization with reconceptualization of source discourses, user-centric language and engagement with users (lay citizens), in order to connect with and motivate them. This is highly likely to result in a history of cooperative interactions and positive user experiences, which provide basic answers to questions about primarily transaction-oriented information in user situations that prioritize operativity over cognitive orientation. By doing this, the platform delivers good value both to the lay end user and to the principal organization (Cacchiani 2018a, 2018b): when citizens receive quick and easy help and support with the knowledge and documentation that they need to behave prosocially and responsibly, the principal organization behind the website gains in credibility. With Marková et al. (2008), this can be seen as context-dependent trust, which reinforces the citizens' taken-for-granted trust in the institution.

A similar line of reasoning applies to the GNU community and the MakeUseOf magazine. Both organizations deliver good value to users – (semi-) experts and lay-users. In GNU-cl and MUO-cl, they pair popularization strategies and usability tools for user orientation, while recourse to user engagement and an emphasis on mutual engagement in MUO-cl are intended to enhance user comprehension. To gain in credibility, MUO pursues unbiased mediation of subject specific knowledge. This counts as a marketing strategy: credibility and trustworthiness result in an increase in active subscribers and pageviews, and higher ranking among the most popular blogs on the web (Business Insider).⁵ In slightly different ways, mediating subject-specific knowledge on the GNU-cl page comes with the goal of persuasion, an argumentative dimension and self-promotion – i.e. the promotion of community values and the philosophy shared by members of the Free Software Foundation, which lay-users and semi-experts are encouraged and invited to join.

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⁵ BI: *Business Insider*: www.businessinsider.com/author/makeuseofcom?IT=.

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