
Gene Sprouse,
Editor in Chief
American Physical Society

May 25th, 2007

Dear Prof. Sprouse,

The mission statement of the American Physical Society expresses important principles:

"In the firm belief that an understanding of the nature of the physical universe will be of benefit to all humanity, the Society shall have as its objective the advancement and diffusion of the knowledge of physics."

Evolving technology has altered scientific communications. The creation of public archives such as arxiv.org was one such advance, and the APS admirably embraced this by giving scientists the right to post their papers there. We continue to witness the exciting proliferation of new communication tools for use by physicists -- from science blogs, to online open encyclopedias (Wikipedia), to specialized encyclopedias (Quantiki, Qwiki).

Unfortunately, some of these forums, for their own understandable reasons, have strictly enforced rules against including any copyrighted material, particularly figures, without explicit permission or a fair-use justification that usually does not apply to derived works. The would-be author of a derived Wikipedia article based on an APS publication is thus required---by Wikipedia, not by APS---to obtain permission for each figure, or else redraw all the figures, an unedifying task. This problem, we believe, would be alleviated to the benefit of all if the APS transfer of copyright were amended to include the addition proposed by Bill Unruh:

"Derived works by the author(s): In case another work is created, which is derived from the current work, and in which all of the following conditions apply, the copyright in that derived work rests with the authors of that work, and no claim by APS or its successors will be made on that copyright, except that that derived work shall include a reference, in the standard form for the field, to this work as published in an APS Journal. The conditions are that no more than a total of 50% of the contents of this paper, whether text, equations, tables, or figures, is included in that derived work, that no less than 10% of that derived work consists of new material not covered by this copyright, and that at least one of the authors of that derived work also be an author of this work. In cases where the first two conditions do not apply, and the new work is for commercial purposes, explicit permission of the APS is required."

Sincerely,

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Chris Adami, California Institute of Technology
David Bacon, University of Washington
Howard Barnum, Los Alamos National Lab
Charlie Bennett, IBM Watson Laboratory
Gilles Brassard, University of Montreal

Ignacio Cirac, Max-Planck Institute for Quantum Optics
Richard Cleve, University of Waterloo
Ivan Deutsch, University of New Mexico
Igor Devetak, University of Southern California
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