



Do you need to copyright your web content?

By Molly Morris, memDesigns, June 2008

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The World Intellectual Property Organization defines copyright as “a legal term describing rights given to creators for their literary and artistic works”, but then offload the specifics to individual countries. The Government of Canada defines copyright with a great deal more flourish, but it amounts to the same thing.

What is the real harm in having your website content copied?

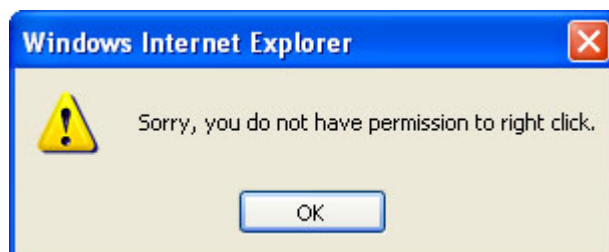
Besides the usually automatic protective, territorial response to discovering someone has copied your website content, there is a repercussion with respect to the viability of your own site. If a search engine finds duplicate content on several websites it may register the content as spam and either drop your search engine placement or remove your site from their index altogether

Equally as damaging as being dropped from search engines, is the impact that copyright infringement could have on your reputation. Do potential customers know which site hosts the original content, and which site is plagiarized?

How can you prevent it?

In short, you really can't. The best you can do is use deterrents, the most obvious of which is inserting the copyright symbol © on your web pages, or at least on your home page. Include the year and your company (or personal) name, to indicate who owns the material, and since when. That's all you have to do to invoke your copyright – you do not need to register a copyright with any legal authority, unless you want to license your content and charge for usage of it.

There is also a piece of javascript coding, called the “no-right-click” script, that, when inserted in your web page coding, will prevent users from right-clicking your images and saving them for their own use, instead displaying a message like this:



If you do need to address a case of copyright infringement, and need to prove that the content is original, and you owned it first, you can visit the Internet Archive's [WayBack Machine](#) to view archived screenshots of your website over a period of time.

Ultimately, though, if you do find you've been copied, you will have to contact the site owner and use all your business diplomacy and tact to persuade them to remove it.