Electronic Libraries and Model Licences

This paper will examine the intertwined relationships between technology development, an increased momentum towards harnessing such developments in the research and academic library sector, copyright law and rights holders over the last twenty-five years. Early efforts to digitise collections and to extend the scope of legal deposit provisions were hampered by copyright issues. Legal deposit law was eventually reformed and there were also more general reviews of the UK intellectual property framework, including of the fitness for purpose of copyright exceptions for libraries and archives. An new EU exception for orphan works is also now in force in the UK. The roles of key players, such as the Joint Information Systems Committee, the British Library, publishers and other rightsholders and bodies lobbying on behalf of libraries will be evaluated. Distinctive aspects of the UK situation and the balance between UK and EU-initiated change will be considered. This paper will also address the questions of whether, and to what extent, changes to copyright law have facilitated increased circulation of knowledge through research and academic libraries and how the relationships between libraries and scholarly publishers have evolved during this period. The paper will conclude with predictions for the future of policy making.