Copyright laws protect original works of authorship and give the owners of copyrights the exclusive right to do and to authorize others to do certain things in regard to a copyrighted work, including: make copies, distribute the work, display or perform the work publicly, and create derivative works. Copyright laws apply to nearly all forms of captured content, including traditional works like books, photographs, music, drama and sculpture. The laws also adapt to changes in technologies, and include in their scope modern forms of works like motion pictures, web sites, electronic media, software, multimedia works and some databases. Registration is not required to obtain a copyright, so if in doubt, assume a copyright applies.

Unless an exception to the copyright owner’s exclusive rights applies, you must obtain permission from the copyright owner to copy, distribute, display or perform a copyrighted work in any medium for any purpose. Be especially mindful of copyright principles when using the Internet. Just because a work is posted on the Internet does not mean that the owner of the copyright has given you permission to use it. In general, do not post material onto the Internet without copyright clearance.

Stanford University Libraries have licenses with many publishers, which permit copying of materials in accordance with the educational, research or administrative functions of the University. In addition, there are four major exceptions to the copyright owner’s exclusive rights, which (if applicable) permit limited use without permission. These are: the fair use exception, the library exception, the face-to-face teaching exception, and the distance-learning exception. For a more detailed explanation of these exceptions, the copyright laws and Stanford’s copyright policies, please review the University’s Copyright Reminder (http://www-sul.stanford.edu/libraries_collections/copyright_reminders/) web site. It is each person’s responsibility to be aware of and abide by copyright law; violation may result in civil or criminal liability, and constitutes grounds for University discipline, up to and including discharge, dismissal and expulsion.