

Mother, May I?

By Joyce Miller

Some of us remember a game called *Mother, May I?* One child, “Mother,” chooses a child from a line, and gives him/her a direction such as, “Betsy, you may take a giant/regular/baby step, forward/backward.”

A child responds with “Mother, may I?” The “Mother” then says, “Yes” or “No,” and the child who has been given direction complies. Often children, in their excitement forget to ask, “Mother, may I?” They must then go back to the starting line. The first one to reach “Mother” wins.

You may sometimes be engaged in “Mother, may I?” situations whether you wish to play or not. When you get caught up in the excitement of the moves allowed you (the creative twists and turns in the avenues down which your writing takes you), asking permission for copyrighted content can frustrate you and slow down your progress.

Below are some suggestions that may help:

Can you assume if your borrowed content is very old or taken from a government source you are safe from infringement claims?

- A chart titled *Copyright Term and the Public Domain in the United States* may be helpful. This site has links to other charts and resources on copyright. Find it at www.copyright.cornell.edu/training/Hirtle_Public_Domain.htm.
- Another chart *U.S. Copyrighted Works that have Expired into the Public Domain* can be found at www.librarylaw.com/DigitizationTable.htm
- As for U.S. government works, some caution is wise. Projects written by non-government authors with federal funding may be copyright protected. (Other legal issues may be involved as well, such as right of privacy

and publicity. For example, astronauts’ pictures to be used in for-profit projects may require permission.)

- Caution in determining ownership is important. Authors may mistakenly think they own the rights to content and may be generous in passing these rights on to others. However, they may have signed rights over to a publisher without even realizing it.
- Content found in a source may not credit the originator. In my attempt to obtain permission for use of a very well known quote my client had taken from a Nelson Mandela speech, I discovered that someone else penned and owned the quote and that the charge for using it was quite steep (hundreds of dollars).
- Seeking permission to use a quote can take time and cost money. Begin seeking permissions months before your book is to be printed. This gives you time to find other desirable content if permission requests for particular works don’t pan out.
- Don’t fail to ask for permission for fear the owner will reject the request. Refusal does not necessarily mean content cannot be used. You may want to engage a lawyer if permission is refused to help you determine if your use might be fair and the risks involved in it.

Some helpful sources in determining who owns copyright are listed below:

- www.Bartleby.com: It contains a free, searchable database of Bartlett’s Quotations, Roget’s Thesaurus, the Bible, encyclopedias, literature, etc.
- www.copyright.gov: The U.S. Copyright Office offers free publications on copyright. Also, you may search for a publishing date, author or title.
- *Contemporary Authors* published by Thompson Gale Publishing. (Denver residents can now access this source through the Denver Public Library website.)

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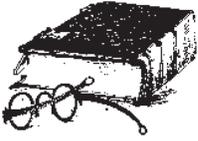


Karen Saunders
Karen@macgraphics.net
www.macgraphics.net
303-680-2330



Major publishers usually have explicit directions on their website for requesting permission. In other cases, mail or fax a letter and a form to the owner. For a detailed discussion of copyright that includes a library of sample forms such as permission requests and copyright assignments, information on how to assess whether the content you wish to use is in the public domain, and how to locate

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CIPA Book Reviews

Being Spherical

By Phil Lawson and Robert L. Lindstrom,
with conceptual drawings by Geoffrey Moss
Sphericity Press, 2004

Reviewed by John Maling, Publisher, Mile High Press, Ltd.

Being Spherical is a modern philosophical treatise that is attractively bound and illustrated. It espouses the need for complete social integration as the next step in the evolution of our civilization, a step that may ultimately be

essential to the very survival of the human race. The authors, in a thorough 65 short-chapter presentation, seek to convince the reader of the necessity of replacing the current worldview, symbolized by the “Box,” with a more accurate one symbolized by the “Sphere.” They even provide a “Spherical Modeling Tool” (SMT) for analyzing the complete range of human activities. Examples of its use are given for a “Global” and for a “Leadership” and an “Educational Organization” modeling analysis.

What is our current “worldview?” It is a view of how our complex human and material world works. The authors are convinced that it doesn’t work the way we have been taught. We have been taught to see the world from a mechanistic perspective. They take us on an illustrated journey to correct that impression. Our world of six or so billion is sequestered into several continents, separated culturally by different languages and traditions, and further compartmented into many philosophical, religious, and political beliefs. Nevertheless, our world of over 100 nations is steadily moving into an advanced state of interdependence and interconnectivity.

Recognizing this truth is the “Being Spherical” imperative. History has persuaded us to embrace a mechanistic, clockwork-like and compartmented view of our world, life and lives. The authors argue that we have failed to recognize its unity while trying to understand its parts. The “Box” symbolizes that worldview. They believe the idea “that everything influences everything else”—an idea symbolized by the “Sphere”—is the correct worldview. It must replace the artificial view that the elements of our human and physical world are compartmentalized and isolated.

The average reader will struggle with these ideas, particularly with the new and unfamiliar vocabulary introduced to educate one to the generalities of their vision. For example, the Renaissance is called the “mid-millennial consilience.” The Renaissance is that period in history where we moved from a worldview dominated by religion and the church to the presently held mechanistic, compartmentalized view, brought about by the rise of science and the success of the analytical method. Words like “consilience,” “partmentalization,” “tensegrity,” “spherical emergents,” “nascence,” and “nodes” present a barrier to the average reader; one who may not be ready to learn and use new terms to represent familiar ideas as well as unfamiliar ideas. A clear illustration of the depth of

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rights holders, see the following:

- *The Copyright Permission and Libel Handbook: A Step-by-Step Guide for Writers, Editors, and Publishers* by Lloyd J. Jassin
- *Literary Law Guide for Authors: Copyrights, Trademarks and Contracts in Plain Language* by Dan Poynter
- *Getting Permission: How to License and Clear Copyrighted Materials Online and Off* by Richard Stim
- *The Chicago Manual of Style*. See the chapter titled “Rights and Permissions” for helpful information on granting and obtaining permissions as well as on duration of copyright, author’s responsibilities and quoting without permission.

For help locating material you may use without permission, see *The Public Domain: How to Find Copyright-Free Writings, Music, Art & More* by attorney Steve Fishman.

Some searches may be complex and time-consuming and require a decision on your part as to value of the content to your work. You can engage someone to do some of this research for you. Speak to them about your budget and the value to your work of the material in question before you make any decisions to go forward with the project.

Nothing contained in this article is intended to be considered as the rendering of legal advice for specific cases. The information herein is intended for educational and informational purposes only.

Joyce Miller is an editor, ghostwriter and permissions consultant. Previously, she was an intellectual property manager for several NASA-funded projects and associate editor for a NASA-directed academic and trade journal.

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