What is Copyright?
Copyright is a form of protection provided by the laws of the United States (title 17, U.S. Code) to the authors of "original works" that are fixed in a tangible form of expression. Copyright law gives the owner of copyright the exclusive right to:

- Reproduce the work in copies
- Distribute the work publicly
- Prepare derivative works
- Display the work publicly
- Perform the work publicly

Who Owns Copyright?
Copyright protection is automatically given once the work is fixed in tangible medium. Copyright immediately becomes the property of the author who created the work. Only the author or those deriving their rights through the author can claim copyright. In essence, transferring your copyright ownership limits the dissemination of your hard work. Access to your work becomes limited to an increasingly smaller audience.

Why Should I Secure My Copyright?
By retaining certain non-exclusive rights to your copyright, you retain the right to control your own scholarly material. You have the freedom to do what you want with your work. Whether this means posting the work on a web page or in an Institutional Repository, you and not a publisher determines how and where you use and develop your work.

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How Can I Secure My Copyright?
Read a publisher's agreement with great care to see if your rights are restricted. Consider modifying an agreement with a publisher to retain certain rights to make use of your work in ways that serve your needs and that promote educational and research activities. SPARC, the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition, has created an Author Addendum that can be attached to a publisher's agreement. For more information, go to [http://www.arl.org/sparc/author](http://www.arl.org/sparc/author). The Scholar's Copyright Project, through Science Commons, also provides valuable assistance for authors in creating their own addendum through the Scholar's Copyright Addendum Engine (SCAE) found at: [http://sciencecommons.org/projects/publishing/scae](http://sciencecommons.org/projects/publishing/scae)

What Does Transferring Copyright Mean to Me?
Transferring copyright means that you sign away your rights and control over a particular work to another party. For example, if you create an article for a scholarly journal, you may be asked by the publisher to transfer your copyright to the publisher as condition of publication. When you sign a publisher's agreement, you may lose the right to post copies of your own work in an Institutional Repository or on your own web page. You may also lose the right to distribute a copy of your own work to your colleagues or your students. In essence, transferring your copyright ownership limits the dissemination of your hard work. Access to your work becomes limited to an increasingly smaller audience.

Additionally, you can consider submitting your articles to publishers who have less restrictive copyright policies. The SHERPA/RoMEO Publishers Copyright Policies and Self-Archiving page found at: [http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo](http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo) provides summaries of permissions that are normally given as part of each publisher's copyright transfer agreements. So check SHERPA/RoMEO to see if your favorite journal allows you the freedom to post your article on your web page or in an Institutional Repository. Moreover, you can consider publishing your article in an Open Access publication. An Open Access journal freely disseminates your work to a worldwide audience and not just to the few who can afford to purchase your article. For a list of Open Access Journals, see the Directory of Open Access Journals at: [http://www.doaj.org](http://www.doaj.org)

What Happens if I Cannot Secure my Copyright?
Ensuring that a publisher’s agreement is fair and balanced is up to you. Some publishers will outright reject any attempt to add an addendum securing certain rights to your work. Other publishers, however, may be open to a discussion on allowing you to retain certain rights to your work. Some publishers, like Elsevier and Springer, already allow post-publication articles to be displayed on a personal web page or in an Institutional Repository—all you have to do is ask them.

The library is not advocating that you refuse to publish an article in the journal of your choice. The library only wishes to make you aware of the consequences and costs of surrendering your complete rights to copyright. The library is asking you to consider retaining certain non-exclusive rights to allow you the freedom to post your article on your web page or in the university’s Institutional Repository called MINDS@UW-River Falls.

Securing your rights to copyright is only a part of the larger discussion. Changes in scholarly communication and access to information are in the forefront of the news today. For an overview on such topics as Institutional Repositories, Open Access and Scholarly Communication, check out our page at: [http://www.uwrf.edu/Library/MindsCopyright.cfm](http://www.uwrf.edu/Library/MindsCopyright.cfm)

What is the Library's Involvement in the Discussion over Author Rights?
The library is committed to the preservation, organization and dissemination of all formats of scholarly information, including the intellectual output of the University. To assist in this goal, the library maintains an Institutional Repository called MINDS@UW-River Falls. MINDS@UW-River Falls is a gathering place for all types of scholarly research produced by faculty, staff and students of the university. The repository is open access and the contents are available to a worldwide audience. The repository is by no means a replacement for traditional publishing. Rather, it serves as an organized method of supplementing traditional publishing by preserving and making accessible scholarly works. The library is offering to all members of the UWRF community the chance to place their scholarly materials in the repository. There are no costs to you or to your department. For more information on the project, please contact Heidi Southworth at 715-425-3924 or heidi.southworth@uwrf.edu or visit our web page at: [http://www.uwrf.edu/Library/Minds.cfm](http://www.uwrf.edu/Library/Minds.cfm)

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