Memorial University of Newfoundland will not sign the model licence agreement negotiated between the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) and Access Copyright, according to Dr. David Wardlaw, provost and vice president academic and chair of Vice-President’s Council which made the final decision.

“After considerable analysis of the pros and cons of such an agreement, extensive input from individuals and groups on campus as well as from provincial and national organizations, and consultation with the Senate Committee on Copyright, Memorial’s copyright action committee recommended to Vice-President’s Council that the university not sign the agreement. Vice-President’s Council has accepted this recommendation,” said Dr. Wardlaw. He noted that feedback from the university community had a significant impact on the committee decision.

“The copyright action committee is appreciative of the insightful and reasoned assessments contained in the input from members of the Memorial community. Those who provided feedback were almost unanimously opposed to the proposed licence agreement,” said Dr. Wardlaw.

A dominant theme running through all discussions, consultations and feedback on this issue was the absence of a compelling value proposition for Memorial under the proposed licensing terms.

Memorial joins a growing list of Canadian universities including the University of British Columbia, Athabasca University, the University of Windsor, the University of Winnipeg, the University of Waterloo, York University, Mount Royal University, Trent University and the University of New Brunswick who have opted out of the agreement.

“As an academic institution, we are committed to the sharing and dissemination of knowledge, intellectual property rights, due payment of royalties to copyright owners, and the fair application of copyright law. We believe that these principles are best upheld by not signing this agreement. I wish to stress that this is a principled decision made in the best interests of Memorial University, its students, faculty and staff while at the same time respecting the entitlements of content creators, publishers, and copyright collectives under copyright law,” said Dr. Wardlaw.

“Memorial’s decision not to sign the Access Copyright licence agreement is an assurance that we will find the resources necessary to support the key principles of
the sharing and disseminating of knowledge while simultaneously complying with our obligation to respect intellectual property rights and copyright law,” said Dr. Wardlaw. He also acknowledged the role of the wider university community in actively protecting these principles and rights while at the same time assuming responsibility for individual copyright compliance, sharing responsibility for institutional compliance and participating in the institutional due diligence measures required to establish a copyright compliant environment.

Further details will be released in the near future.

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