Technology Trend: Intellectual Property and Creative Commons

To youth, sharing and collaborating online comes naturally. They download, copy, and mix images and music, re-purposing the work of others into something new. Similarly, to adults, mixing graphics or music found online with one’s own original writing seems a logical way to build presentation slides. Indeed, anyone who has worked on a team can attest that collaborative products are often better than work done individually.

In the digital age, collaboration is easier than ever, and collaborators need not be in the same room or the same country. Importing artwork or literary passages needs no Xeroxing or re-typing?just right-click and copy.

But what if a youth group wants to use a photograph found online to illustrate its own website? What if they want to change that image by emblazoning it with the group’s name? What if the group sells posters or T-shirts that contain that image?

US copyright law may get in the way. About 10 years ago, US Congress extended copyright law to life of the author plus 50 years, a term that many people found excessive, especially in the rapidly changing Internet age. The meaning of the circled ?C? is absolute: the work belongs completely to the owner, and no one else may use it, except for research, education, or fair comment. These exceptions mean that most educators and program leaders may use copyrighted materials for teaching, but not for works that will be sold. For discussion of fair use within universities, see guidelines from Columbia University [1] and the University of Minnesota [2].

Some thought the 1998 Copyright Protection Act went too far. Some called it the "Mickey Mouse Protection Act," charging that it protected corporate interests and hampered creativity in an age of rapid change. In response, a group of lawyers and media producers came up with Creative Commons. CC is less rigid than traditional copyright, in which all rights are reserved, using the expression ?some rights reserved.?

Identified by the double-C symbol, Creative Commons allows artists to specify how their video, poem, image, or other work may be used by others. There are four kinds of CC license. Authors can choose which and how many of them to apply to each work.

- **Attribution**: Users agree to give credit to the work’s author. Also known as the ?by?
license.
- **Noncommercial**: Users agree that their organization is nonprofit and that they will not be making a product from this work that will profit a commercial organization.
- **No derivative works**: Users agree to use the work as-is, without adding to it or changing it.
- **Share alike**: "Pass it on" is the philosophy here. By using this license, users agree that they will not make any restrictions on the work derived from the CC-licensed work.

There is no one place to search for Creative Commons-licensed works, but they are easy to find online. Many CC-licensed works are created by amateurs, but some are highly professional. For example, since 2003 the Massachusetts Institute of Technology has placed virtually all of its course materials online [3], using the attribution share-alike and noncommercial CC licenses.

A few well known musicians have placed their compositions under Creative Commons licensing. The Creative Commons organization has begun an initiative called CCLearn, intended to facilitate sharing among educators, and another called CC Science Commons, which attempts to identify and bridge unnecessary barriers to scientific research. The original Creative Commons licensing dealt with US intellectual property law, but it has been adapted and translated to suit the laws of more than 50 countries so far.

**You may wish to consult:**

Creative Commons [4]

Public Knowledge Proposes New Copyright Reform Act [5]

Below are a few resources for finding CC-licensed materials:

**Music**

Ccmixter [6]

Jamendo [7]

**Images**

Flickr [8]: Under advanced search, tick the box marked "Only search for Creative Commons-licensed content."

Google Image Search [9]: In the advanced search, select one of the choices in the "usage rights?" category.

Wikimedia Commons [10]: All images and sounds on this site, sister of Wikipedia, are licensed under the attribution and share-alike licenses.

More Emerging Technologies and Trends in [Hardware] [11], [Software] [12], and [General] [13].

**Common Measure:**

Technology [14]

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**Links**

[1] [http://copyright.columbia.edu/copyright/fair-use/what-is-fair-use/](http://copyright.columbia.edu/copyright/fair-use/what-is-fair-use/)
[8] https://www.flickr.com