

Creative Commons: A History

1998

The Sony Bono Copyright Term Extension Act was passed. This extended the term of copyright by 20 years for works by individuals (life of creator plus 70 years) and corporations (95 years from publication or 120 years from creation, whichever comes first). At the same time, the internet was changing the world of intellectual property. The tension between increasing copyright restrictions and growing use of online tools to create and share copyrightable works would inspire the future of Creative Commons.*



1999

Law professor Lawrence Lessig believed that the CTEA was unconstitutional because the purpose of the copyright term is to encourage production of creative works by giving them exclusive rights for a limited time. He represented Eric Eldred, a web publisher, in challenging the act in a case that went all the way to the Supreme Court.**



2002

Although Lessig and Eldred ultimately lost Eldred v. Ashcroft, Lessig and others were inspired by the case, the changes in copyright, and the increase in sharing, remixing, and creating courses online. They founded Creative Commons and created the first suite of Creative Commons Licenses.*

Creative Commons licenses allow creators more options for giving permission to others to use works than the automatic "all rights reserved" copyright, but they still work completely within the framework of current copyright law.

Creative Commons licenses have a use beyond copyright as well. They are also a symbol of a greater movement towards openness and sharing and a broader belief that knowledge and creativity are our culture, not just products. ***



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2020

Creative Commons launched a new strategy to empower not just more sharing, but better sharing through advocacy, innovation, and capacity building. The goals of this plan are to increase sharing in the public interest, and increase openness of knowledge and cultural assets.****



TODAY

After over 20 years of stewarding Creative Commons licenses, nearly 2 billion works are a part of the commons today, including images, videos, books, songs, and more. ***

The CC Global Network is an organization that supports working platforms in Open Education, Copyright, and Open GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums). Volunteers work together through these platforms to collaborate, educate, and advocate for better policy. Get involved at <https://network.creativecommons.org>.



Learn more at www.creativecommons.org

* "The Story of Creative Commons". Creative Commons. C-BY 4.0

** "Eldred v. Ashcroft". Wikipedia. CC-BY 4.0

*** "Creative Commons Today". Creative Commons. CC-BY 4.0

****Stihler, Catherine. "Announcing Our New Strategy: What's Next for CC". Creative Commons Blog. 16 Dec 2020. CC-BY 4.0

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