

THE CREATIVE COMMONS

A SHORT HISTORY OF A GLOBAL PHENOMENON

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PRELUDE TO A MOVEMENT

SLIDE 1

- In 1998, an act of copyright legislation was passed in the United States that would have far-reaching and unforeseen consequences.
- Titled the Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act (CTEA), this new legislation extended copyright protection in the United States “an additional 20 years, so that the copyright term equaled the life of the creator plus 70 years” (Creative Commons Organization 3).
- The legislation was named for the late singer/songwriter turned politician Sonny Bono, who had recently passed away. Bono had been one of a group of legislators who had proposed similar legislation some years earlier (Wikipedia Contributors, Sonny Bono).



Photo of Sonny Bono courtesy [Raul654](#) on [en.wikipedia](#), [Sonny Bono](#), marked as public domain, more details on [Wikimedia Commons](#)

PRELUDE TO A MOVEMENT

SLIDE 2

- Interestingly enough, the CTEA was at the time often derisively referred to as the Mickey Mouse Protection Act.
- This was because the Act was passed “just before the original Mickey Mouse cartoon, *Steamboat Willie*, would have fallen into the public domain” (Creative Commons Organization 3).

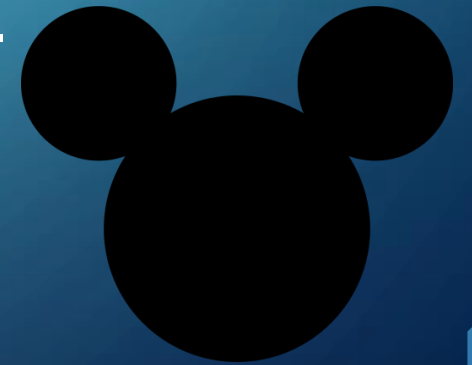


Image courtesy Philroc, [Mickey Mouse head and ears](#), marked as public domain, more details on [Wikimedia Commons](#)

PRELUDE TO A MOVEMENT

SLIDE 3

- **Lawrence Lessig**, a Stanford University law professor, believed that this new legislation was not only unconstitutional.
- This was the latest example of a pattern of gradual copyright extension.
- The extension of copyright periods would delay works from entering the public domain where they could become part of the pool of knowledge new generations could draw on, ultimately stifling creativity (Creative Commons Organization 3).



Photo of Lawrence Lessig courtesy Lessig 2016, [Lawrence Lessig Headshot, CC BY 2.0](#)

PRELUDE TO A MOVEMENT

SLIDE 4

- Eric Eldred was a web publisher and literacy advocate involved in making public domain works available via then-new Internet technologies (Wikipedia Contributors, Eric Eldred).
- Eldred challenged this new legislation, represented by Lessig, in the case *Eldred vs. Ashcroft*.
- The case made it all the way to the Supreme Court, but unfortunately CTEA was upheld (Creative Commons Organization 4).
- Despite this loss, a new movement was born.

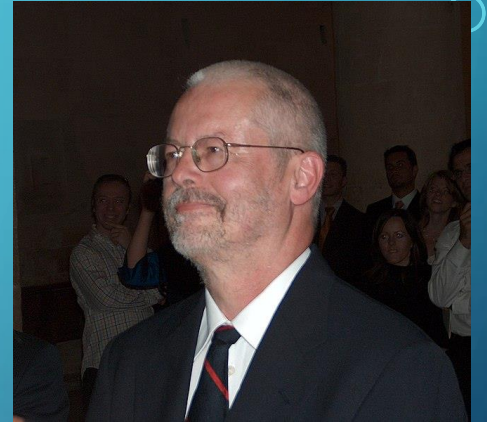


Photo of Eric Eldred courtesy [Nelliebored79](#), [Eric A. Eldred in 2005](#), CC BY-SA 4.0

THE BIRTH OF CREATIVE COMMONS

SLIDE 1

- The Internet was growing, and an increasing number of people were becoming “Netizens, or people actively involved in online communities or the Internet in general” (Wikipedia Contributors, Netizen).
- New computer technologies and the Internet were making it very easy for Netizens like bloggers to share content of many kinds, but copyright laws put restrictions on what could be shared, remixed, and synthesized into new creations (Creative Commons Organization 4).
- Clearly there was a need for resources to feed the creative needs of Netizens that could be easily made available and used without fear of repercussions.

THE BIRTH OF CREATIVE COMMONS

SLIDE 2

- Simply put, it has never been easier to share the fruits of human creativity as a result of modern digital technologies, but copyright laws place serious restrictions on what can legally be shared.
- It is this tension between copyright restrictions and the ability of creators to share that is perhaps the most fundamental reason for the creation of the Creative Commons (Creative Commons Organization 2).

THE BIRTH OF CREATIVE COMMONS

SLIDE 3

- The case of Eldred vs. Ashcroft inspired Lessig and others to found the Creative Commons in 2002 in response to this need .
- The Creative Commons that Lessig and his associates created is a nonprofit organization that publishes Creative Commons licenses.
- These are free licenses that allow the creators of many different types of works to share their creations on far more flexible terms than the “all rights reserved” approach of typical copyright law (Creative Commons Organization 4).



THE BIRTH OF CREATIVE COMMONS

SLIDE 4

- Under a Creative Commons license, the creator of a work still has the copyright on their creation, but the license allows them to easily share their works, contributing to collective human knowledge and culture, and providing others with scaffolding for their own creativity.
- For example, an educator wishing to supplement a PowerPoint presentation with images or sound files for their students will have no problem finding an abundance of such files with a simple Google image search. However, there is a good chance these files may be copyright protected.
- Using them without permission might lead to legal repercussions for the educator and the institution he or she works for.
- Creative Commons and the licenses they publish makes it possible for creators to make images, sound files, and much more available for use.

THE CREATIVE COMMONS NOW

SLIDE 1

- Since its inception in 2002, the Creative Commons have experienced incredible growth.
- At this time there are now more than 1.6 billion works made available by creators under one of the Creative Commons licenses.
- Additionally, there are more than nine million websites hosting CC-licensed works (Creative Commons Organization vii).

THE CREATIVE COMMONS NOW

SLIDE 2

- When we think of the Creative Commons today, it is helpful to remember that it is:
 1. A nonprofit organization dedicated to helping people realize the full potential of the Internet and stewarding the CC legal tools to do so.
 2. A set of licenses that may be seen as tools allowing creators to more freely share their work with the public.
 3. A movement made up of people around the world who create and/or use CC licensed resources as well as those who advocate for greater access to such resources (Creative Commons Organization 6– 8).

THE CREATIVE COMMONS NOW

SLIDE 3

- Indicative of their success, Creative Commons licenses have become widely accepted as the global standard for open copyright licenses by numerous:
 1. governments
 2. institutions
 3. individuals

(Creative Commons Organization 5)



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THE CREATIVE COMMONS NOW

SLIDE 4

- Creative Commons licenses have a number of advantages to include (but not limited to):
 1. Allowing creators to maintain copyright but share work on flexible terms.
 2. Licenses are up to date and designed to function in the modern digital world.
 3. Licenses are free to use.

(Creative Commons Organization 4–5)

GETTING INVOLVED WITH CC

SLIDE 1

- There are three basic ways the individual can get involved with Creative Commons:
 1. As a creator.
 2. As a reuser.
 3. As an advocate.
- It is in the opinion of this presenter that getting involved in one of these ways will likely lead to involvement in all three ways!

GETTING INVOLVED WITH CC

SLIDE 2

- Creators can be any number of things, but some common examples include photographers, artists, musicians, and writers.
- Creators who want their works to see their works used, and perhaps make a difference in the world, and who are not concerned with profit, should consider making their works available under a CC license.

GETTING INVOLVED WITH CC

SLIDE 3

- Reusers are those who make use of CC licensed resources.
- Some examples include but are not limited to educators, students, web developers, web publishers, scholars, bloggers, open source journalists, and many, many more!

GETTING INVOLVED WITH CC

SLIDE 4

- Advocates are of course likely to be those who believe in the values that underlie the Creative Commons such as:
 1. The belief that everyone has something to contribute.
 2. The belief in the promise and benefits of sharing

(Creative Commons Organization 8)
- Advocates could be anybody, but some who are likely to take advantage of CC licensed works and become advocates include educators, students, bloggers, webmasters, open source journalists, and many others!
- Some advocates are activists pushing for copyright reform, and others are policy-makers who promote making publicly funded open-source works available (Creative Commons Organization).

MY STORY

SLIDE 1

- I consider myself involved as a creator, a reuser, and as an advocate.
- I began my second career as a community college instructor in the disciplines of History and the Humanities in 2005.
- Recognizing that there are many different learning styles, I have tried to structure my lectures in ways that address these styles.
- For example, I try to include images to address the needs of visual-spatial learners and sound files to address the needs of musical or linguistic learners.

MY STORY

SLIDE 2

- I quickly found that obtaining images and sound files that could be freely used was a bit of a challenge.
- I found many sites that featured these resources but required a fee for their use. I even encountered some sites that were “selling” images that I was quite certain were public domain.
- Eventually I found Creative Commons licensed materials on Wikimedia Commons.

MY STORY

SLIDE 3

- I thus became a reuser of CC resources, and took advantage of them for several years in my classes before taking it to the next level.
- Having enjoyed photography for many years, and travelled extensively for many years, I realized I had many works that might be of value to others.
- I created a Wikimedia Commons account and began sharing my own works. Currently I have nearly 2000 photos uploaded to Wikimedia Commons and made available under CC license.
- My goal in this course is to become more of an advocate for CC by using the knowledge I will gain to create professional development sessions for my colleagues and students.

MY STORY

SLIDE 4

In conclusion, my journey began as a reuser of CC resources. This led me to become a creator, and ultimately, an advocate.

At right is my profile picture from my Wikimedia Commons page.

It is my hope that students, educators, and many others benefit from the work I share, just I have benefitted from the CC licensed works of many others.

It is my hope I may inspire others to become part of this movement.



Image courtesy [DrStew82](#), [Photographer at Fort Sumter SC](#), [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)

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