

Creative Commons: The Big CC

(Article by Megan Clark)

Libraries have long seen themselves as guardians and champions of information. On the one hand, Remix Culture may be seen as a terrible affront to the sanctity of information. On the other hand, however, it can also be seen as the creation of new information.

Whatever your personal stance, it's important to understand the legal issues surrounding Remix Culture. This is especially true when working with teens, who may or may not be aware of these issues themselves.

Introducing...copyright and Creative Commons.

For one hundred and seventy one years, copyright legislation has been tied to Canadian creative works. Beginning with the Imperial Copyright Act (a product of British law) in 1872, Canadian copyright slowly grew into its own, culminating in the Canadian Copyright Law of 1924. Initially brought about as a means to protect private financial interest with regards to the sales and distributions of artistic works, copyright legislation has become a major issue of public policy, igniting debate around the meaning of creation and culture. In this way, copyright law must try to "achieve a proper balance between

private interests and public interests" (Kim, 2007).

The digital landscape of culture sharing, swapping, and reimagining has complicated the traditional structure of copyright, bringing challenges upon the traditional emphasis on a single, isolated creator. For those who value the speed of cultural transmission and the emphasis on collaboration within the digital landscape, current Canadian copyright legislation, with its rigid "all rights reserved" model, stagnates the creative process.

Creative Commons is a non-profit organization based out of Massachusetts that seeks to provide alternative licensing options to creators. Aiming to communicate the specifics of copyright licensing to people without legal backgrounds, Creative Commons complicates the previously strict structure of "public domain" or "all rights reserved" by allowing the adoption of licenses that exist between those extremes.

Using the Commons Deed (a collection of six licensing options) creators are free to open and restrict access to their work on a more nuanced level than when using traditional copyright. These licenses allow creators to base their choices on

Notable Uses of Creative Commons (CC) licenses:

- Steven Sanders (Comic book artist, interviewed in this issue!)
- Cory Doctorow (YA author, also interviewed in this issue!)
- Nine Inch Nails: *Ghost I-IV* and *The Slip* albums (rock musician)
- Flickr, both the company and many photographs on it (online photo-posting company)
- Wikipedia, one of the most familiar organizations that has adopted a CC license
- Khan Academy, many open source educational tools employ CC licenses (learning institution)

derivatives, attribution, and sharing as it relates to their work. It is important to remember that once a Creative Commons license is applied, it cannot be repealed, as the work has potentially already been interacted with according to the license; traditional copyright no longer applies. "All rights reserved" has been surrendered for "some rights reserved". The Society of Composers, Authors, and Music Publishers of Canada (SOCAN) emphasizes the risks of using a Creative Commons license on artistic work for these reasons, stressing the importance of the artist understanding the details of the license and recognizing that SOCAN may not be able to provide support or funding if the license works against the previously established structure of SOCAN (SOCAN, 2012).

Creative Commons licenses are incredibly important to Remix Culture. These licenses enable

opportunities for creating remixes and mashups without fear of legal consequences.

Creators are able to select one of six Creative Commons licenses when they release their work. The choice of license determines whether or not a reproduction of the work has to be attributed to the creator, to what extent the new works can be created from the original, and how freely the work can be shared among other members of the digital or cultural community. These licenses allow for a whole new vocabulary of copyright, especially in environments like the Internet where traditional copyright regulations are becoming more and more at odds with common use.

To find out more about the Creative Commons project and licenses, visit:

creativecommons.org

References

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