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Press Release

CREATIVE COMMONS' ONE-OF-A-KIND SEARCH ENGINE DEBUTS, HERALDING NEXT-GENERATION WEB SEARCH FEATURES

EXTRA: The new Mozilla Firefox 1.0 browser ships with the Silicon Valley nonprofit's new search technology, allowing users to comb the web for royalty-free content

SAN FRANCISCO, USA — November 22, 2004 — Creative Commons today unveiled an updated beta version of its search engine, which scours the web for text, images, audio, and video free to re-use on certain terms — a search refinement offered by no other company or organization today.

Creative Commons' announcement coincides with the Mozilla Foundation's release of its industry-leading browser, Firefox 1.0, which now features the Creative Commons search technology in its toolbar — alongside such leading search services as Google, Yahoo!, Amazon, eBay, and Dictionary.com.

“The Creative Commons search engine helps companies, educators, and artists find content they can re-use without having to call a lawyer, and it offers authors and artists who want to share their work a competitive advantage toward having their work discovered online,” said Neeru Paharia, assistant director of Creative Commons and the search engine's product manager.

For example, a documentary filmmaker could use the Creative Commons engine to search for “images of the Eiffel Tower free for noncommercial use,” and incorporate any or all of the many photographs indexed. A DJ seeking songs free to remix or mash-up could browse listings of MP3s by their legal terms. An entrepreneur seeking illustrations for her slideshow presentation could reduce costs and liability by using a Creative Commons image-specific search. An educator building course materials could include texts and videos found by the engine.

What distinguishes the Creative Commons engine from other search services is that all of the above are possible without the hassle of rights-clearance, licensing requests, or royalty payments.

At the core of the Creative Commons search engine are two key innovations, one legal and one technological. First, Creative Commons offers authors and artists a simple, standardized way to mark their work as free to share or transform, on certain conditions. By applying a Creative Commons copyright license and (cc) notice to her work, an author invites the world to make certain uses of it — without giving up her copyright. Rather than the traditional “all



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rights reserved,” a Creative Commons license declares “some rights reserved.”

Second, and complimentary to this free legal tool, is Creative Commons machine-readable translation of the copyright licenses. When an author affixes the (cc) copyright notice to her webpage or MP3 or image file, it is automatically marked with Creative Commons “metadata” as well. It is this metadata — akin to a library catalog card describing a particular book — that the Creative Commons search engine then reads, processes, and presents to users as it crawls the web for their search requests.

The search engine was developed with the help of Nutch.org, an open-source search developer. See <http://nutch.org>.

Creative Commons metadata is based on a language known as Resource Description Framework (RDF) using Extensible Mark-up Language (XML) as an interchange syntax, designed and standardized by World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), the Web standards-setting body.

The beta search engine indexes just under one million web pages, but Creative Commons expects it will soon index the full five million pages known to carry Creative Commons licenses today.

“Creative Commons will keep working with Nutch.org and other metadata initiatives to index more document types and offer domain-specific and reuse-specific searches,” said Mike Linksvayer, Chief Technical Officer of Creative Commons. “For example, to find music with a certain tempo or works that incorporate a specific piece of film footage.”

About Creative Commons

A nonprofit founded in early 2002, Creative Commons promotes the creative reuse of intellectual and artistic works—whether owned or in the public domain—by empowering authors and audiences. It is sustained by the generous support of the Center for the Public Domain, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Omidyar Network, and the Hewlett Foundation.

For general information, visit <http://creativecommons.org>.



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