



<http://creativecommons.org>

Press Release

Creative Commons explores a digital copyright registry system

San Francisco, CA USA – May 22, 2008

Creative Commons today announced that it is exploring possible roles in connection with a digital copyright registry system.

Creative Commons is the San Francisco-based not-for-profit organization which provides free copyright licenses that allow creators to mark their works in advance with a range of permissions granted to others. This licensing model eliminates many of the high transaction costs entailed by the current default of copyright systems worldwide, which automatically grant full copyright to all creators. Creative Commons licenses have been attached to millions of artistic, scientific and educational works distributed by their creators over the Internet.

“Key to the success of the Creative Commons licenses is the fact that the metadata that expresses the rights associated with a digital copy of the work, also allows the work to be searchable,” says Creative Commons CEO Joi Ito. “For example, anyone who is looking for a great song to back a video, a photograph to illustrate an article, or curricular materials on ecology or astronomy for K-12 students, can go to the Creative Commons website or use Google or Yahoo to find works available under CC licenses. But we have come to believe that both creators and users would benefit from the greatly enhanced search and locate functionality that a comprehensive digital registry of copyrighted works would permit.”

While current US law does not require copyright owners to register their works with the Copyright Office, doing so provides some benefits under the law, particularly if the owner files a lawsuit for copyright infringement. The Copyright Office maintains a registry where copyright owners may now voluntarily register their works, for a fee. However, there has been interest in many sectors, including the commercial sector, in developing alternatives or supplements to the government registry. In particular, recent debate on the issue of “orphan works” – works whose authors are not known and cannot easily be found – has prompted much discussion of the ability of the existing government system to handle registration of certain kinds of works, particularly visual works.



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“On the Internet, if something can’t be found, for practical purposes it doesn’t exist,” Ito continues. “Creative Commons is undertaking a logical extension of its mission by exploring what a truly open and interoperable registry would look like. CC may not create and operate a registry itself, although our doing that, perhaps as part of a distributed network, could prove to be a great solution for both creators and users of works. We are fundamentally interested in helping to establish standards and protocols that in principle would enable all digital works to be registered across various systems that might be managed by a number of different organizations.”

“We see that a registry could provide a service that is already viewed as important to the growth of the digital economy, and we believe that Creative Commons is well positioned to play an important role here, given the expertise we have gained through over five years of providing open licensing tools, and our ability to draw on the legal and technical expertise of an international group of partners. So we are excited to be undertaking this exploration of our possible role in building this piece of digital infrastructure, with the community,” Ito explains. “We also will be exploring possible additional fee-based, value-added services that CC might be able to provide, as a means of helping the organization to become self-sustaining while we continue to serve the public interest. It is in everyone’s interest that Creative Commons develop sustainable methods of supporting our work: the global infrastructure of sharing has to be reliable and permanent. At the same time, we remain committed to maintaining CC’s role in providing free tools to everyone who wants to share their work with the world. That will never change.”

The first public meeting in connection with the Creative Commons registry initiative will be held in Silicon Valley on June 18. For more information, please visit <http://creativecommons.org/projects/registry>.

About Creative Commons

Creative Commons is a not-for-profit organization, founded in 2001, that promotes the creative re-use of intellectual and artistic works, whether owned or in the public domain. Through its free copyright licenses, Creative Commons offers authors, artists, scientists, and educators the choice of a flexible range of protections and freedoms that build upon the “all rights reserved” concept of traditional copyright to enable a voluntary “some rights reserved” approach. Creative Commons was built with and is sustained by the generous support of organizations including the Center for the Public Domain, Omidyar Network, The Rockefeller Foundation, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur



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Foundation, and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, as well as members of the public. For more information about Creative Commons, visit <http://creativecommons.org>.

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