

Introducing the Copyright Hub | April 2016

The Copyright Hub is a British tech first – a free, open access, open source technology which updates the mechanisms of copyright to work the way the internet works. It empowers creators, copyright owners and users with practical new ways to reach out to each other and develop a global network of relationships. Whether they are pursuing commercial or non-commercial goals, the Hub unlocks new opportunities and new solutions across the entire spectrum of copyright and open access, and across the whole world.

It does this by reducing the cost and friction involved in seeking and giving permission – including licensing and open access – dramatically. Creative content, and more, can be used more easily. It opens up a whole new licensing market across the global internet that has hitherto not been addressable. It also brings new efficiencies to non-profit and open access activities which stimulate innovation and broader dissemination of work. It can open up new opportunities for developing nations, including new ways to reach international audiences and business opportunities.

The Copyright Hub was created in response to the UK's Hargreaves review of copyright. The main problem identified: users who cannot find out who owns the rights to a work they want to use. As a result they either do not use the work or they risk being unlicensed. Both are unwelcome outcomes for creators and users alike.

The Copyright Hub ecosystem, overseen by the not-for-profit Copyright Hub Foundation, does three things:

- 90% of its energy and resources go into defining and implementing the Copyright Hub technology that connects users with creators and their agents
- It is also a forum bringing the different sectors of the creative industries and open licensing advocates together to streamline copyright
- Copyright education. Helping people understand copyright and its importance to them.

It does not charge for its technology, for identifiers or seek a share of revenues or other value. It is run as a non-profit for the broad public good.

How it works: a creative work, for example a poem, is given, if it doesn't already have one, a unique identifier. This connects it to its owner, via the owner's server or service provider. Permissions can, if the owner chooses, be handled fully automatically, making the permission process as efficient as serving web pages. Just a few clicks can lead to licensing terms, other information too, and permission to use any content type – images, written works, films, music, art and so on. The need to search, often in vain, to find the owner and then discuss licensing terms in person is eliminated. This creates a huge opportunity for creators, media companies, public bodies, governments, new intermediaries and innovators working together. Because the platform's codebase is open source and the Foundation is non-profit, 100% of the benefit accrues to the market as a whole.

The Copyright Hub Foundation's short term role (2016-2018) is to help launch as many use cases (applications of the technology) as possible across all sectors of the creative industries in order, quickly, to gain critical mass. Its longer term role is to oversee governance and ensure trust in the market, and to continue to help creators, users and intermediaries around the world connect to a global network. The Foundation will maintain some technology (the index which resolves identifiers). The Copyright Hub Foundation will become self-funding to carry out these functions.

Today, there are nine use cases launched – eight in the images sector and the first one in the audio-visual sector. A million images on the web already have unique identifiers. There are another 100 use cases waiting to be implemented.

UK, US and Australian creative and tech industries, and the British Government, have funded us to date. We will now make this a truly global project and seek contributions from a far wider group of international public and private sources. The Copyright Hub is not just a UK project, not just a creative industries' project. Digital content is global and the Copyright Hub is a global project – born in the UK but for the whole world.

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