

Interview with: Mike Linksvayer (Creative Commons)

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Highlights:

There are several big opportunities that stem from Wikipedia's adoption of Creative Commons licenses:

- Easier to understand and use (for people submitting and reusing content)
- Will hopefully lead other organizations to follow Wikipedia's example and open up content using less restrictive licenses

Most of the impact from using Creative Commons will be on the site of content reuse, not contribution

- Educators are a great example of a group who are already reusing content, and who will hopefully do that more once the amount of content available grows
- Other Wikimedia projects will also see benefits. In fact, the benefits might be largest for projects like Commons that deal with multimedia assets (where CC licenses are already popular)

Wikimedia should not look to host both open and closed content, as that will result in short term gain at the expense of the long term growth of the open content movement.

In order to get the full benefit from CC licenses, Wikimedia needs to engage in public outreach efforts to make sure that users understand the licenses and their value. It should also start to leverage its brand in order to get other organizations and projects to start to open up content

Detailed notes:

What do you think about Wikipedia's adoption of Creative Commons licenses?

- It's great adoption of Creative Commons license, and happened over the course of a lot of conversations and long time
- It's a big opportunity in a number of ways
 - Enables more re-use of content developed by Wikimedia projects
 - Makes it clearer what people need to do to submit and reuse content
 - More people are more familiar with it
- All of this will hopefully lead to opportunities to expand the universe of open content.

Wikipedia as an exemplar of massively collaborative projects, and having it use the best license for content will make other projects gel around that license

- Creative Commons has different licenses – the most popular ones were more restrictive than the ones Wikipedia is using, so this could be a nudge to open content ecosystem to be more open and make things happen faster
- More projects will hopefully try to interoperate with wiki projects
- For example: If people want educational materials to be able to be re-used, most widely known open education project uses more restrictive license. A lot of people have copied them, and a fantastic long-term outcome would be big

university open education projects adopt more open licenses, inspired by Wikipedia

- This is already happening, but hopefully now it will happen faster
 - Museum community is the obvious example of this

Educators are an example of a group of people who are already re-using content. Where else is there interest in re-using?

- Every place – “I see lots of content pulled from Wikipedia all over the web”
- However, non Wikipedia projects are going to see the most interesting use going forward
 - Video and image annotations – it could play a very central role in the free content universe and in getting media assets released under terms and curated by the community
 - In the past internet archive has been that, but it is difficult to use and it's not curated by a community

What could be the impact of the adoption of the CC license on individual Wikipedia contributors?

- Doubts it affects editing because there is already something below the edit box that says you have to release your edits
- Impact is more on people re-using content from Wikimedia projects because it makes it easier to understand the license terms and what you need to do to comply with them

What type of content is popular for creative commons license?

- Hard to answer – there is a lot of every sort of content. In terms of raw numbers, photographs are the most common

Is there any data available around the growth of open content?

- A little bit, mostly gleaned from a few big sites like Flickr and queries to Google and Yahoo
- It is hard to come up with a number, as there are lots of problems with over and under counting
- Current estimate 250M works with CC licenses on them

What makes CC license superior to other agreements that could have been adopted?

- Licensed to re-use content, not only better it is easier to understand and use
- CC license designed with the web in mind; provides a link to a license rather than having to include the license agreement
- CC-by-SA is a better license – people are more familiar with it, lawyers are familiar with it, they are bumping into it more and more

Could Wikimedia projects host content that is useful but not open?

- There is an important trade-off here – increase the quality of content in the short term or have a longer term effect of causing more content to be open such that it can be improved by other people
- Only hosting open content will help change expectations about how people can use content, and what they can do with it. In the long term that will result in more content being open and Wikipedia having access to better content
 - By being more demanding now, the long term impact of Wikipedia having policy mandating is going to increase impact down the road
 - Spreading and making people understand the philosophy of freedom could have long term more systemic effect and more impact than cobbling together content with whatever agreement necessary
- By keeping Wikipedia “safe”, you are making sure that its content is in the public domain or public license from the beginning so that in 20 years there is no question that content was released under those terms
- And if there is something better than the web in 20 years, there is no question that Wikipedia content could be used in that context

What does Wikipedia need to do to take full advantage of the CC license adoption?

- Use the leverage that Wikipedia has to get institutions to open up content or start new projects in an open fashion (both licenses and related technology)
- Invest in public outreach and community building
 - Everything from developing educational materials to ad campaigns to supporting local efforts such as Wikimedia chapters to do these sorts of activities
- There is a massive outreach opportunity, because many people use Wikipedia but relatively few understand the value

What other key challenges does Wikipedia face?

- Challenge isn't just staying focused (like any organization); it is staying focused on things like project quality and excellent governance while always aiming for the WMF's audacious mission -- a world in which every single human being can freely share in the sum of all knowledge. The incredible challenge/opportunity is that this mission is realistic for the WMF to effect: it should never just be a talking point.
- Having enough money to keep everything running also important