

Access Copyright and Creative Commons Canada Announce Public Domain Registry
Ground-breaking project will feature globally searchable catalogue of Canadian culture

For Immediate Release

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Toronto, ON – Access Copyright, The Canadian Copyright Licensing Agency and Creative Commons Canada, in partnership with Creative Commons Corporation in the US, today announced the development of a Canadian public domain registry. The ground-breaking project – the most comprehensive of its kind in Canada – will create an online, globally searchable catalogue of published works that are in the Canadian public domain.

“Canada has a rich cultural heritage of literature, music and fine art that is in the public domain just waiting to be freely enjoyed,” said Marcus Bornfreund of Creative Commons Canada, a non-profit organization that works in collaboration with Creative Commons US. “The problem until now was that there was no easy way to identify whether or not works are in the public domain. This registry will change that.”

There is currently no one place where information about the public domain is collected. The registry will make published works in the Canadian public domain easily identifiable and accessible in an online catalogue. The project will develop in two stages – first, a comprehensive registry of works by Canadian creators that are in the public domain will be established. Eventually, the reach of the registry will expand to include the published works of creators from other countries. The public domain registry will be a non-profit project and freely accessible to the public online.

“We’re excited about this partnership that will enhance and preserve Canadian culture by making Canadian works in the public domain more widely accessible both here and abroad,” said Maureen Cavan, Executive Director of Access Copyright, Canada’s leading copyright licensing agency, which represents a vast repertoire of copyright protected works. “Creators looking for source material and educators looking for classroom content will have this free database at their fingertips.”

The Wikimedia Foundation, developers of the popular online encyclopedia Wikipedia, will supply software that will allow the public to contribute information to the registry. “The public domain is our shared cultural heritage, and the best ground for the great new ideas of the future,” said Wikipedia founder Jimmy Wales. “Without access to the public domain, we are cut off from our past, and therefore cut ourselves off from our future.” The innovative registry’s backbone will be Access Copyright’s Rights Management System, the largest database of copyright information in Canada. Individuals will be able to use the registry to determine whether a published work is in the public domain. The registry will also link to digital versions of the work, and provide information about where a paper copy of the work can be purchased.

“Quick and easy access to legally available content is vital as we move further into the digital age,” said Roanie Levy, Access Copyright’s Director of Legal and External Affairs. “The public domain registry has limitless possibilities and will place Canadian cultural content at the leading edge of the public domain.”

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