About this Open Work

"Marble Madness #7: Stranded" by Peter E. Lee is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0.

creative commons Annual Report 2024

"The Market Street Railway Mural" by Mona Caron is published under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

About Us

Creative Commons (CC) is the global nonprofit organization behind the CC licenses and public domain tools, which power open sharing on popular platforms like Wikipedia, Flickr, YouTube, Medium, Vimeo, and Khan Academy. Since 2002, the CC licenses have served as an alternative to traditional copyright, providing a simple, standardized, and legal way for individuals and institutions to freely share images, music, research, educational resources, and cultural artifacts.

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Anna Tumadóttir

General Counsel
Sarah Pearson

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A Note from Leadership

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2024 marked a year of wins and future planning for Creative Commons. We expanded our **Open Infrastructure Circle**, resourcing our CC license and training work. We advocated for open licensing in the Culture, Science, and Education sectors and consulted with key stakeholders around a possible intervention in service of public interest Artificial Intelligence.

Finally, in October, the Board approved a new 2025-2028 Strategy. This was preceded by a ten month collaborative process that engaged staff, key stakeholders, and the CC global community. I humbly thank all who participated. We couldn't have done this without you.

Much awaits us in 2025. I look forward to this next phase at CC, and I hope you do, too.

Anna Tumadóttir, CEO

Licenses and Public Domain Tools

The first CC licenses were released in 2002. Today, we boast **six CC licenses** and two public domain tools, setting a global standard for sharing.

In 2024, our legal and technology staff continued to make key infrastructure updates and manage daily maintenance to ensure our licenses work for everyone.

We expanded the Open Infrastructure Circle (OIC) to ensure consistent funding for this work.

OIC support allowed us to ensure frontend use and backend management of the CC licenses is streamlined and accessible. We redesigned and updated our website, including the platform and server, making the site more user-friendly. Most importantly, we replaced the legacy application serving the CC licenses (fittingly called “ccEngine”) with a new and simpler CC Legal Tools application, which is better equipped to manage the 30,000 documents that underpin our six licenses and CC0 public domain tool.

Thank you to the **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation**, **Filecoin Foundation for the Decentralized Web**, **Robert Wood Johnson Foundation**, **William + Flora Hewlett Foundation**, **Endless**, **Google Open Source**, **Chan Zuckerberg Initiative**, **Siegel Family Endowment**, **Flickr**, **Microsoft**, **DuckDuckGo**, Paul & Iris Brest, Meister Family Foundation, hmk, John Seely Brown, Marta Belcher, **Curationist Foundation**, **Michelson 20MM Foundation**, **BCcampus**, Ben Adida, Colin Sullivan, Delia Browne, Dr. Jay M. Tenenbaum, Gabriel Levin, Glenn O. Brown, James Grimmelmann, Jennifer Wilson & Andrew Gass.

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"Scrabble Tiles - from above" by mjecker is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Training in how to use CC licenses is key to their adoption.

We offer a ten-week **CC Certificate** program tailored to the education and library sectors, as well as galleries, libraries, archives, and museums. As of 2024, we've certified 1,890 graduates across 68 countries.

We provided 35 scholarships to enable more community members access to the CC Certificate training and partnered with **BCcampus** to support subsidized CC Certificate training for 25 public institutions and 21 private institutions within British Columbia, Canada; and US Midwest Higher Education Compact (**MHEC**), enabling subsidized CC Certificate training for faculty and staff from higher education institutions in 48 US states.

We also continue to expand our CC license training and education offerings:

In 2024, we facilitated 31 trainings and presentations for national governments, journals, librarians, cultural heritage professionals, web developers, higher education faculty and staff, as well as open advocates, spanning at least seven different countries.

We also launched our first professional development microcredential course at the University of Nebraska at Omaha on "**Introduction to Open Educational Resources**."

Our Impact

CC believes that opening up knowledge is key to addressing the world's most pressing challenges. Today, we steer campaigns, programming, and training in Culture, Science, and Education:

Open Culture

We gathered nearly 50 experts from every continent at the **Open Culture Strategic Workshop** in Lisbon, Portugal, to chart a course for a UNESCO Member State agreement that promotes open and equitable access to cultural heritage worldwide. We also launched the Towards a Recommendation on Open Cultural Heritage (TAROCH) Coalition, a collaborative effort to achieve the adoption of a UNESCO standard-setting instrument to improve open access to cultural heritage. We invite you to read "**CC Open Culture: Year in Review**" to learn more.

Our Open Culture work is funded by Arcadia.

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"Beautiful Landscape of Glacier NP (High-Res)" by Bernd Thaller is licensed under CC BY 2.0.

Open Science

We worked with the largest preprint repositories to make it easier for researchers to adopt CC BY licenses for their preprints. We also published **Recommendations for Better Sharing of Climate Data**, a resource to help national and intergovernmental agencies ensure climate data is accessible, shareable, and reusable. We concluded our Open Climate Campaign, which in its two years, made significant strides in raising awareness of the current lack of access to research on climate science and biodiversity. We invite you to read "**CC Open Science: Year in Review**" to learn more.

Our Open Science work is funded by the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, Patrick J. McGovern Foundation, and Arcadia.

Open Education

We funded five Open Education Platform projects, spanning Brazil, Ghana, Nepal, and Nigeria. We also served on UNESCO's OER Advisory Group, where we helped to draft the Dubai Declaration on Open Education Resources (OER) and attended the Hewlett Education Grantee Conference with UNESCO in Atlanta, Georgia. We invite you to read "**CC Open Education: Year in Review**" to learn more.

Artificial Intelligence & the Commons

We're a leader in the copyright space, and given this, have actively monitored legal and policy issues raised by Artificial Intelligence.

With the launch of consumer-facing Large Language Models (LLMs) in late 2022, we recognized the urgent need to engage. These LLMs have crawled significant portions of the publicly accessible web to collect training data, including mass quantities of CC-licensed work.

In 2024, we zeroed in on a possible intervention, *preference signals*, a framework that empowers creators to indicate the terms by which their work can be used for AI training.

Our goal is to improve data governance in the commons, combining open licensing with reuse preferences as key components to a holistic data governance approach. We hosted numerous workshops to solicit feedback from key stakeholders in diverse sectors and geographies. We will continue to host workshops throughout 2025, with the aim to pilot with early partners by year's end.

"The great growling engine of change - technology" by Alvin Toffler is licensed under CC BY 2.0.

2025-2028 Strategy

A new path forward

In March 2024, CC announced a strategic refresh process with the goal of updating its current strategic plan to reflect the shifting nature of technology and the commons.

This process was highly collaborative, engaging CC staff, board, and other key stakeholders, including our longstanding community. We launched a community survey, receiving nearly 300 survey responses, and hosted eight virtual consultations.

The 2025-2028 Strategy was approved by the CC Board of Directors in October 2024 and is available here.

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2024 Financial Health

Income

Foundations $4,163,843*
Corporate Sponsors $276,500
Major Donors $168,812
Small Dollar Donors $91,811
Program Income $194,325
Consulting $94,058
In-Kind $488
Other $141,175

Total: $5,131,012 *includes cash from multi-year gifts

Expenses

CC Licenses & Training $763,604
Programs $1,756,751
Operations $1,351,579

Total: $3,871,933

Our Supporters

We thank you all for your steadfast support of our work. In 2024, we received contributions from 20 foundations and companies and over 850 individual donors.

Thank You!

Alvy Ray Smith
Amateur Radio Digital Communications
Ben Adida
Brewster & Mary Kahle
Colin Sullivan
David Johnson
Delia Browne
Douglas Van Houweling
Eric Saltzman
Gabriel Levin
Garrett Camp
John Dove
Marta Belcher
Meister Family Foundation
Paul and Iris Brest
Stack Overflow
Ted and Michele Wang
Zahavah Levine and Jeff Meyer

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Support our fight for an open global commons

Creative Commons

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