



State of the Commons | 2021

"Sunflower. *Helianthus annuus*. Bessler, Basilius, Hortus Eystettensis, vol. 2, Quintus ordo collectarum plantarum aestivalium, t. 206 (1640)" by Swallowtail Garden Seeds is marked with CC PDM 1.0.



CELEBRATING 20 YEARS, LIGHTING UP THE GLOBAL COMMONS





# Table of Contents

<b>Mission .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Message from the CEO .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>CC Licenses, Legal Tools .....</b>	<b>5</b>
License Enforcement	
License Stewardship	
CC Search	
<b>Policy and Copyright Reform .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Beyond the Licenses .....</b>	<b>7</b>
20th Anniversary .....	8
Co-Chair Message .....	9
CC Global Network .....	10
CC Global Summit .....	11
Open Minds Podcast .....	12
<b>Unlocking Knowledge .....</b>	<b>13</b>
CC Certificate .....	14
Open Culture .....	15
Open Education .....	16
Open Science .....	17
<b>Financial and Supporters .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Board of Directors, Advisory Council and Anniversary Committee .....</b>	<b>19</b>



"Sunflower (1649-1659)" by Swallowtail  
Garden Seeds is marked with CC PDM 1.0.

*Creative Commons' State of the Commons 2021*  
*Prepared and Designed by Dee Harris*

*Except where otherwise notes, this document is published under a Creative Commons  
Attribution 4.0 International license, ([CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)).*

*This document is published under a CC BY 4.0 license which means you can copy and  
redistribute the material in any medium or format and you can remix, transform, and  
build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially, under the following terms:*

*Attribution: You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and  
indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in  
any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use.*

*No additional restrictions: You may not apply legal terms or technological measures  
that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits.*

## Mission

Creative Commons (CC) is an international nonprofit organization empowering individuals and communities around the world by equipping them with technical, legal, and policy solutions to enable sharing of knowledge and culture in the public interest.





## Message from the CEO

Dear Friends of Creative Commons,

In 2001, Creative Commons started with a simple, radical idea: to save the internet from “failed sharing” and create a world where everyone has access to knowledge and creativity. Twenty years later, CC continues this mission by providing legal, technical and policy solutions not only for equitable sharing, but better sharing of knowledge and culture that purposefully serves the public interest.

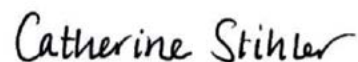
The founding commitment and values of CC continue to this day and are reflected in our daily work. In this annual report, we are excited to give you a glimpse of how we are advancing better sharing through innovations, achievements, collaborations, conversations, and partnerships. None of this work would be possible without our global community of advocates, activists, scholars, artists, and users committed to strengthening the Global Commons.

For the last 20 years, CC has empowered individuals and communities through our licenses, programs and policy work to address the real challenges they are facing. The result has been freeing over 2 billion pieces of content from restrictive standard copyright. CC is indebted to our founders – true visionaries – and so many global advocates who have laid the foundation for an alternative to all rights reserved copyright.

As we look towards the next two decades, we will continue to support and build the infrastructure for open sharing, working with global institutions and creators to share their creations and collections, and continuing to facilitate conversations with educators, creatives, scientists, technologists, policymakers, developers, and more.

We are immensely grateful to the team, Board, CC network and community. Thank you for celebrating our founding in 2021 and the birth of our licenses in 2022.

A heartfelt thanks to you all,



Catherine Stihler  
CEO, Creative Commons



**Since 2002**  
CC licenses have  
offered simple,  
standardized tools  
for people around  
the world to share

## CC Licenses and Legal Tools

In 2021, CC expanded its work to maintain and advance better sharing using CC's core suite of licenses, through license enforcement principles, a focus on stewardship, the launch of an open culture program, and work in open education, policy, and copyright reform.

### Principles for License Enforcement

After a [public consultation period](#), CC issued a statement of [Principles For License Enforcement](#). This document provides guidance to address and help resolve this evolving complex issue in a way that upholds the spirit and intent of the licenses.

Principles can help platforms that host CC-licensed materials; creators who want to enforce their rights; re-users who want to know whether copyright enforcers might be trolling; and lawyers and other professionals who want to give informed advice to creators and users of CC-licensed works about enforcement of rights.

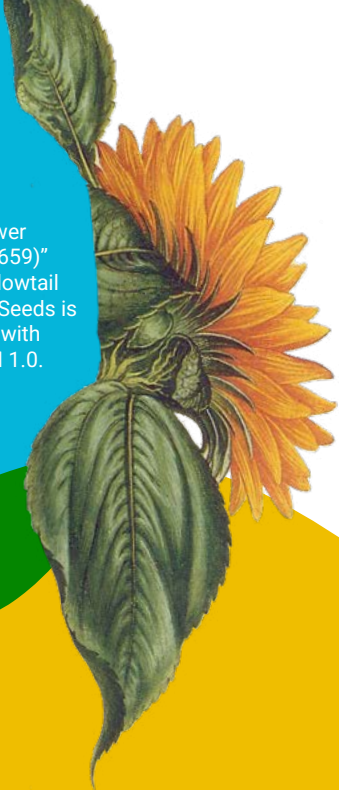
### [License Stewardship](#)

The work CC does with its legal tools doesn't end with the publication of a license. In 2021, CC set out a statement of what that ongoing stewardship work looks like, including commitments to the longevity and maintenance of those tools, to ongoing dialogue with the community, and to the values that underlie it all.

### CC Search moves to [Openverse](#) at WordPress

In 2021 we transitioned CC Search to WordPress, where it was relaunched as Openverse. This progression of the product helps users better share and discover over 600 million CC licensed works from multiple collections. Robust search filters, the addition of integrated audio search, and 40 language options, help users find works to reuse in meaningful ways.

"Sunflower  
(1649-1659)"  
by Swallowtail  
Garden Seeds is  
marked with  
CC PDM 1.0.



## Policy and Copyright Reform

CC licenses provide voluntary options for creators to share their material on more open terms than current copyright systems allow. To ensure the maximum benefits to both culture and knowledge in this digital age, CC continues efforts to reform copyright law to strengthen users' rights and expand the public domain.

### Copyright Platform Working Groups

In 2021, CC formed working groups for the Copyright Platform examining policy affecting the open ecosystem. Key findings about the Future of Open were reported and summarized in Position Papers:

- » Artificial Intelligence and Open Content  
lead by Max Mahmoud Wardeh
- » Internet Platform Liability  
lead by Emine Yildirim
- » Expectations and Limitations to address Global Challenges  
lead by André Houang
- » Beyond Copyright: the Ethics of Open Sharing  
lead by Josie Fraser

### CC Policy and Statement Highlights

In 2021, CC made statements on legislation and policies:

- » Should CC-Licensed content be used to train AI?
- » Response to Canada's Copyright Term Extension consultation
- » At the intersection of NFTs and Creative Commons
- » Creative Commons called for support waiving vaccine patents
- » DSA policy position statement
- » CC responded to WIPO application being blocked
- » CC submitted comments to the EU consultation on the Data Act



Max  
Mahmoud  
Wardeh



Emine  
Yildirim



André  
Houang



Josie  
Fraser

## Beyond the Licenses

While CC licenses and legal tools are prevalent across the globe, CC also supports a larger global community of people and organizations who are part of the open movement.

In 2021, CC celebrated its 20th birthday, facilitated conversations with the Global Network, organized the CC Global Summit, and launched the podcast, *Open Minds with Creative Commons*.



*“Let me say thank you, 20 years is forever and 20 years is just a beginning. The first 20 were extraordinary, but I think the next 20 could be so much, much more. Thank you so much for gathering to celebrate, and thank you for the inspiration and ideas that will make the next 20, even more important than the first.”*

–Lawrence Lessig, Creative Commons Founder for 20th Anniversary



Image: Steve Snodgrass, CC BY 2.0

better sharing  
brighter future

## 20th Anniversary

This milestone marked our commitment to Better Sharing, sharing that preserves a cooperative space of knowledge, equity, community, and culture to solve problems for public good.

Creative Commons was founded in 2001. At that time, the internet was a budding universe with high potential. CC's founders were keen to hit the ground running, building on their work to ensure that, as the internet continued to grow, safeguards to knowledge, culture, and creativity were firmly in place.

Over the last 20 years, CC licenses and public domain tools have become the global standard for sharing. Every day, creators, institutions, nonprofits, foundations, and governments use CC licenses to switch copyright's all rights reserved to CC's some rights reserved. And as we enter the third decade of the digital century, sharing has evolved.

*CC was founded December 19, 2001.*





## Letter from 20th Anniversary Committee Co-Chairs

It has now been 20 years since the creation of the first CC licenses, a seemingly impossible dream which has transformed how the world thinks about sharing and copyright, spurring more access to and creation of human ingenuity than ever before.

The CC licenses and public domain tools are crucial elements, which exist in a rapidly evolving technological, legal, and social environment. CC has built and stewarded a responsive infrastructure to safeguard, advance, and adapt the licenses so that they are accessible, applicable, and equitable. Together, we have developed four iterations of the license suite, advocated for copyright policy reform to protect open access, grown technical expertise, and ensured the licenses' relevance in diverse sectors and communities worldwide.

None of this would be possible without a global community of partners and supporters. Like you, we also have our own CC stories.

Paul's first engagement with CC came in his early days at the Hewlett Foundation, when program director Mike Smith proposed making grants to support Open Educational Resources. Since then, his own publications have been CC licensed wherever feasible, and he has served in many advisory capacities over the years. Ruth's introduction to CC was through her work as a young copyright scholar writing about problems of access to educational materials in the Global South. She observed that copyright-enabled barriers to textbooks and other literature added a tax on learning such that many students were unable to reach their full intellectual potential. CC licenses offer developing countries the opportunity to strengthen the supply of knowledge goods critical for cultural development and human flourishing. Like Paul, Ruth has since been a supporter, board member, and a CC licensor herself.

The past two decades have brought unique new challenges to all elements of sharing. CC believes—and time has proven—that we are all at a disadvantage when the wealth of human knowledge is divided and restricted.

“Infrastructure” can be the battery nobody thinks of until it needs replacing, but it is what powers community, institutional, and policy change, the rebalancing of access and ownership, and more. To accelerate progress towards challenges like vaccines or climate change, or to implement open science and education on the ground, we need to nurture the core of what makes openness work.

We are proud to be co-chairing the 20th Anniversary Committee to help CC once again answer the call. Our anniversary campaign aims to sustain and strengthen CC's foundational work, while securing resources for continued innovation and growth. We hope you will join us in supporting our effort to fulfill a sustainable, community-centric vision of openness for all.

Onwards,  
Paul Brest & Ruth Okediji  
20th Anniversary Committee co-chairs



**684**  
**individual**  
**members**

**68**  
**institutional**  
**members**

**50**  
**country**  
**chapters**



**2021 new chapters: Sweden and Malaysia,  
Morocco and Belgium**

**New and returning Global Network Council  
Executive Committee and Membership  
Committee members: Algeria, Uganda, South  
Africa and Nigeria**

## CC Global Network

Members of the CC global community – under the umbrella of the CC Global Network (CCGN) – are vital to the success, health, and longevity of the CC movement.

This community is made up of people working together and separately, locally, regionally, or globally, from diverse backgrounds and socio- and geographical spaces, who advocate for the adoption of CC licenses, develop free-to-access open educational resources and scientific literature, preservation of cultural heritage, facilitation of advocates and so much more.

The global community is made up of creators, academics, legal professionals, and scientists who have come to view open licenses as an essential tool in the effectiveness and distribution of their work and creativity.

2021 marked new leadership in the [Global Network Executive Committee](#) who will be working throughout 2022 and beyond by supporting the Network, fostering and strengthening connections, and encouraging activities around the [CC's 2021-2025 Strategy](#).



**1600+**  
attendees

**330**  
speakers

**5**  
keynotes

**9**  
panels

**10**  
Hack4Open  
GLAM workshops

**10**  
musical  
showcases

**172**  
sessions

**90+**  
countries



Artwork: Sonaksha Iyengar (<https://www.sonaksha.com/>), CC BY 4.0

## CC Global Summit

The CC Global Summit is a highlight for the CC vast global community. Due to COVID-19 safety concerns, the Summit was virtual for the second year in a row which decreased the geographical barriers of attendance and increased a diverse audience. There was plenty of excitement, especially surrounding CC's 20th anniversary – more broadly a milestone year for the open movement. As a result, the Summit was our biggest and boldest event yet. Compared to the 2020 Summit, **attendance grew 23%** and represented **countries increased over 50%**.

Pathways to virtual participation is crucial, so this year we introduced the Summit Access Fund and were able to support 22 community members and presenters who needed financial support to access our tools and platforms, including reliable internet.

The week was filled with engaging and thought-provoking sessions promoting open access and better sharing.

### FUN FACT

The first CC Global Summit was originally called iCommons Summit and was held at Harvard Law School in 2005. This was followed by a 2006 Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil that brought 250+ participants and presenters like Wikipedia founder Jimmy Wales.



*The value of open “was always to be able to include many hands in the work we have to do to make this live on into perpetuity.”*

— From episode with Effie Kapsalis,  
The Smithsonian Senior Digital Program Officer

## Open Minds Podcast

The [Open Minds from Creative Commons](#) podcast was launched in 2021 as part of CC’s 20th anniversary celebration to expand conversations with people working to make the internet and our global culture more open and collaborative.

Our podcast takes the form of conversational interviews and gives us an opportunity to go beyond the surface on issues and topics that are connected to Creative Commons, in a more intimate format than some of our other outlets.

We release an episode once a month, and sometimes we have bonus episodes. The show is available on all major podcast platforms.

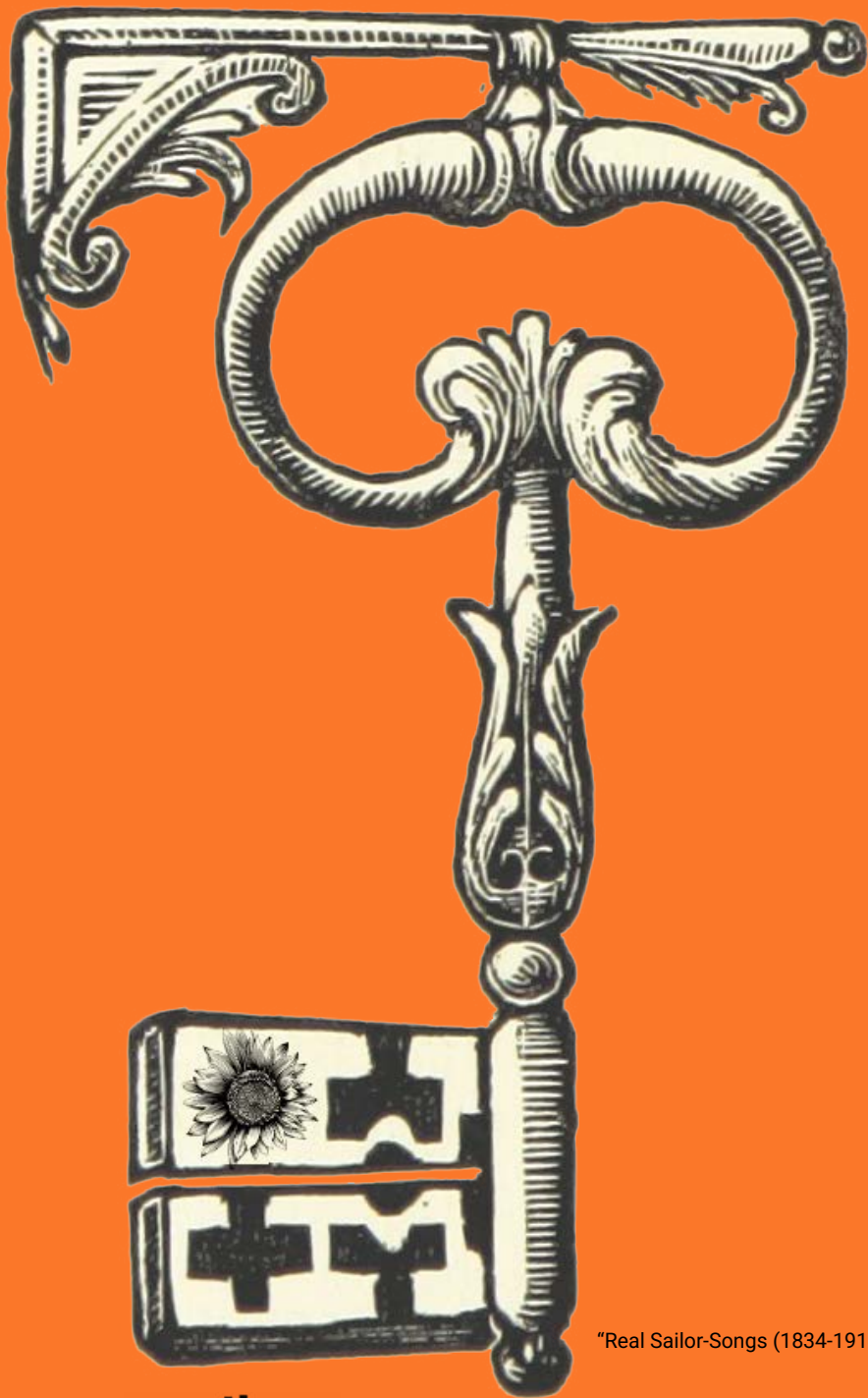
Here are some highlights from Open Minds in 2021:

- » 12 Episodes Released
- » 7 hours 20 minutes of Open Conversations
- » 25K+ Plays
- » 110 Countries Reached

### TOP 10 COUNTRIES OF LISTENERS

**United States • Canada • United Kingdom  
Australia • Germany • Taiwan  
Vietnam • Brazil • France • India**





## Unlocking Knowledge

This year, CC continued our commitment to equitable and ethical access to knowledge and culture by expanded global learning through CC's Certificate program, working with governments to implement the UNESCO Recommendation on Open Educational Resources, developing an Open Culture program, and establishing partnerships for future work surrounding the climate crisis.

"Real Sailor-Songs (1834-1911)" collected and edited by J.Ashton is marked with CC PDM 1.0

## CC Certificates

**2018**  
program launched

**1089**  
graduates

**56+**  
countries

The Creative Commons Certificate is a global learning program offering in-depth courses about CC licenses, open practices and the ethos of the Commons. Participants join the courses for not just the training on copyright and open licensing, but the personalized support and network; they engage with expert facilitators, copyright lawyers and the network of thousands of community members and advocates in Open Education, Academic Librarianship, and Open GLAM. The CC Certificate program has graduated 1089 participants from 56 countries. [Participation in this professional development](#) training had a far-reaching impact on graduates.

In addition to courses for both educators and academic librarians, CC alpha tested and beta tested the GLAM Certificate course, enabling it's official launch in January 2022.

By December of 2021, the CC Certificate course content was translated into Yorùbá, Burmese and Turkish, in addition to the Arabic and Italian translations from prior years. This was possible because of community members from the Open Education movement, CC Nigeria, and CC Turkey.







## Open Culture

Access to culture and knowledge is essential to sustain vibrant and thriving societies. Galleries, libraries, archives, and museums (GLAMs) have been the gate openers to the world's culture and knowledge for centuries, and play a fundamental role for the communities that they serve.

CC received a generous, [multi-year gift from Arcadia](#) (a charitable fund of Lisbet Rausing and Peter Baldwin) and launched [CC's Open GLAM/Open Culture](#) program to advance open access.

Since inception, the program has virtually presented at conferences and workshops all over the world, laid the groundwork for a [CC public domain tools needs assessment](#), and assisted GLAMs by providing advice on open access to cultural heritage. As a result, CC's Open Culture program has worked to transform a diverse range of institutions from closed to open, thanks in part to the [CC GLAM Certificate](#) and suite of training and consulting activities.

Building on the stories of success, CC launched an open call for [open GLAM case studies](#) from low-capacity, non-Western institutions or marginalized, underrepresented communities to highlight the needs and expectations of communities and institutions.

The program also worked in policy to reform the global copyright system and encouraged purposeful policy discourse celebrating open culture and the importance of open access and sharing of cultural materials.

"1941P404Kennet (1883)"  
by William Morris, photo by  
Birmingham Museums is  
marked with CC0



# Open Education

CC's Open Education program works to minimize barriers to effective education using open licenses and open policies to maximize the benefits of open education (content, practices, and policy).

In 2021, CC continued its open education policy work through UNESCO's Dynamic Open Educational Resources Coalition and the [Network of Open Organizations](#), with the goal of creating materials and direct support services to help national governments and education institutions implement the [UNESCO Recommendation on Open Educational Resources \(OER\)](#).

CC also partnered with the [SDG Academy](#) to introduce the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) community to open education, and share OER about the SDGs with global educators, learners, and policy makers.

Finally, CC co-coordinated an open education mentoring hub for the OE4BW program, which resulted in five new OER projects developed to address SDGs, and a forthcoming paper for Open Praxis.

## More Open Education Highlights

- » Partnered with California Governor's office, State Legislature and 20MM to support [\\$115M of state funds](#) for "zero textbook cost degrees"
- » Worked with partners to increase spending (to \$21M) on the US Department of Education's [Open Textbooks Pilot program](#).
- » Helped write a new open policy with the [Global Book Alliance](#) in requiring open licensing on early childhood reading investments.
- » The [CC Open Education Platform](#) hosted a series of 24 open education "[Lightning Talks](#)" in which open education practitioners discussed their work and answered questions with a global audience.



[Tetiana Korniichuk](#) for ArtistsForClimate.org: CC-BY-NC-SA

## Did you know?

CC's Open Education Platform, brings together **1000+** open education leaders from **93+** countries to identify, plan and coordinate multi-national open education content, practices, and policy activities to foster better sharing of knowledge.



## Open Science

It was a big year for CC and Open Science.

Catherine Stihler, CC's CEO, presented a keynote at the University of St. Andrews [Power to the People: St. Andrews' journey to net-zero and the future of energy.](#) This fringe event was part of the United National Climate Change Conference, officially known as the 26th Conference of Parties, or [COP 26](#).

During her keynote, Catherine announced CC's new partnership with the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC) and the Electronic Information for Libraries (EIFL) to [Create a Campaign to Increase Open Access to Research on Climate Science and Biodiversity](#). This promising new campaign, funded by the Open Society Foundations, underlines the urgent need for Open Access to research, data, educational resources, software and hardware in addressing the climate crisis.

In other efforts to solve big, complex problems through open access to knowledge, CC was honored to have been part of the global community that drafted, reviewed and revised the [UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science](#) which was [ratified late 2021](#). Better sharing of scientific articles, data and science educational resources is a necessary condition to make progress on solving the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the global grand challenges we face today.

Both our Open Access campaign partnership and adopting the Recommendation for Open Science are just the first steps. The work now is to help national governments implement the Recommendation and other international frameworks that lead us to Open Science. CC stands ready to partner with national governments, IGOs, NGOs, environmental organizations, universities and institutes, activists, and the global science research community to implement the actions that will promote better sharing and a brighter future for everyone, everywhere.

*"Open access to research and data, and the ability to widely share context-specific approaches, is the key to unlock sustainable solutions for every facet of climate change and preservation of biodiversity."*

*-Catherine Stihler during COP26 Fringe Event at St. Andrews*



## Financials

### Expenses in 2021 (USD)

Licenses	\$129,007.00
Beyond the Licenses	\$499,468.00
Capacity Building	\$566,857.00
Administration	\$1,610,921.00
Fundraising	\$369,181.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$3,175,434.00</b>

### Income in 2021 (USD)

CC Certificate	\$154,228.00
Corporations	\$582,015.00
Foundations	\$8,141,000.00
Global Summit	\$218,971.00
Individuals	\$382,886.00
Consultation	\$39,450.00
Other Income	\$494,835.00
In-Kind Donations	\$26,312.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$10,039,696.00</b>

Creative Commons is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization as defined by the Internal Revenue Service. Any donations made to Creative Commons are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

## Supporters and Funders

In 2021, Creative Commons was generously supported by nearly 6,000 individual donors, organizations, foundations, and companies who share our commitment to open knowledge and creativity.

Foundation funding and major gifts accounted for over two-thirds of CC's budget. The remaining support came from individuals, organizations, and companies.

### Thank you for strengthening our work!

A special thank you to our major donors whose collective impact is key to sustaining our work.

- » Ben Adida
- » Derek Slater & Lila Bailey
- » John Seely Brown
- » Diane Cabell
- » John Dove
- » Stewart Guss
- » Lawrence Lessig
- » Alvy Ray Smith
- » Molly Shaffer Van Houweling
- » Ted Wang

And to these organizations, foundations, and companies – our deepest gratitude.

- » The Arcadia Fund, a charitable fund of Lisbet Rausing & Peter Baldwin
- » Argosy Foundation
- » The William & Flora Hewlett Foundation
- » Coil
- » The Samuel H. Kress Foundation
- » Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- » Open Society Foundations
- » Graspale
- » Automattic
- » MHz Foundation
- » Red Hat
- » Patreon
- » Flickr
- » Nearpod
- » The Michelson 20MM Foundation
- » Microsoft Open Innovation
- » Filecoin
- » Google
- » Google News Initiative
- » Internet Society
- » Hochschule Luzern
- » CouponFollow
- » Anspar Foundation

Interested in becoming a CC Supporter? Please contact our development department at [development@creativecommons.org](mailto:development@creativecommons.org) or [DONATE HERE](#).

Thank you for your support of Creative Commons!



# Board, Council, and Committee

Creative Commons couldn't do what we do without the support of our Board of Directors, Advisory Council and the 20th Anniversary Committee. We are grateful everyday for their support and guidance.

## Board of Directors

Molly Van Houweling, *Board Chair*

Carolina Botero

Amy Brand

Glenn Otis Brown

Delia Browne

Angela Oduor Lungati

Mari Moreshead, *CC Chief of Staff and Board Secretary*

Ruth Okediji

Sarah Hinchliff Pearson, *CC General Counsel*

Bilal Randeree, *Audit Committee Chair*

Catherine Stihler, *CC CEO*

Alek Tarkowski

Jeni Tennison

## Board Member Emeritus

Lawrence Lessig

## Advisory Council

Hal Abelson

Ben Adida

Renata Avila

Paul Brest

Michael Carroll

Josh Elkes

Dorothy Gordon

Paul Keller

Lawrence Lessig

Ryan Merkley

Johnathan Nightingale

Laurie Racine

Thomas Rubin

Eric Saltzman

Christopher Thorne

Jimmy Wales

Esther Wojcicki

Jongso Yoon



## Anniversary Committee

Paul Brest, *Co-Chair*

Ruth Okediji, *Co-Chair*

Hal Abelson

Peter Baldwin

James Boyle

Glenn Otis Brown

John Seely Brown

Diane Cabell

Michael Carroll

Joshua Elkes

Robert Glushko

Dorothy Gordon

Brewster Kahle

Ronaldo Lemos

Lawrence Lessig

Zahavah Levine

Kent McGuire

Alek Tarkowski

Laurie Racine

Eric Saltzman

Esther Wojcicki





State of the Commons | 2021

"Sunflower. *Helianthus annuus*. Bessler, Basilius, Hortus Eystettensis, vol. 2, Quintus ordo collectarum plantarum aestivalium, t. 206 (1640)" by Swallowtail Garden Seeds is marked with CC PDM 1.0.