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## **Book Review**

### **Creative Commons for Educators and Librarians**

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## BOOK REVIEW

*Creative Commons for Educators and Librarians*

2020 | Creative Commons | ISBN-13: 978-0-8389-1946-0 | Print: \$44.99; [CC-BY PDF](#): \$0.00

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*Creative Commons for Educators and Librarians* encapsulates material from the “Creative Commons Certification Course” (Creative Commons, 2020) to provide a brief and approachable guide to applying Creative Commons (CC) “open licenses” to scholarship and creative work. It conveys this instructional content in well-organized fashion, using straightforward language and a minimum of legalistic jargon without oversimplifying the information. The book’s content strikes a careful and appropriate balance between breadth and depth of coverage. Each section manages to provide enough introductory information for a true novice to understand the use and range of applications for CC, while also covering technical specifics and details of use that are helpful to anyone not a seasoned expert in this topic.

As open-access (OA) publishing is increasingly present in the scholarly publishing landscape, a firm understanding of CC and other open licensing systems is a critical skill for librarians and educators. The book covers those foundations and touches on some of the more complicated aspects of copyright law, such as international intellectual property treaties, commercial use, and the always thorny topic of fair use/fair dealing. It also extends its coverage to key movements in OA publication and open educational resources (OER), which apply the concepts of open licensing to enable creation, reuse, and adaptation of instructional materials and new pedagogical methods.

The Creative Commons Organization (CCO) has, since its inception in 2001, striven to create a simple and easy-to-use copyright licensing infrastructure, one that is understandable by anyone wishing to share their creative work with the world or to reuse the work of others (with permission) in creative and productive ways. Such an infrastructure would empower the effort to build on knowledge and creativity by more freely repurposing, reframing, and extending previous work to the greater benefit of society and the academy (Lessig, 2005, 2009; Wiley, 2015).



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It is this need to reuse, remix, and reshare that motivated the creation of the CC-licenses, a collection of legally valid licenses operating within the standards of copyright law to enable a more permissive culture of reuse. Under traditional copyright, as the early chapters of the book explain, certain usage rights, legally protected for the rights-holder, can overly constrain many beneficial applications, hindering even those uses that a rights-holder may wish to permit. CC-licenses provide easy-to-use notifications that rights-holders can apply to their work in order to grant prior and specific permissions to use, share, even to excerpt and adapt their work under clearly understandable conditions.

The initial chapter of the book outlines the ideology and history that lie behind the creation of the CC infrastructure. Following this introduction, a chapter on copyright basics offers a solid but digestible primer on the legal protections afforded to all creators/rights-holders under copyright law. Educators looking for a more in-depth view of copyright law would do well to consult Kenneth Crews' treatment of that topic (Crews, 2020). As CC licenses operate in a global context, this overview of copyright law takes a more international perspective, not limiting itself to standards of the United States. This content provides an important foundation for understanding how such usage rights can be granted or withheld under a CC-license.

The central chapters of the text cover the mechanics of CC-licenses and provide straightforward instructions for applying them. Here is a thorough discussion of the various components of CC-licenses—Attribution, NonCommercial, ShareAlike, and NoDerivs—how these elements relate to the various protections of copyright, and how they can be combined to grant licenses enabling more open use of copyrighted works.

While the introductory and central chapters are equally beneficial for both a general audience and for educators, the final section of the book gives particular focus to educational and library contexts and comprises nearly a third of the whole. In addition to offering an outline of the contribution of CC to OA scholarship and the benefits of OA for learners and educators, this section offers information on the importance of understanding the author's own rights when publishing. Here the librarian has a significant role to play in educating faculty and student authors about how best to deploy those rights to meet author needs, as well as in debunking the many myths about OA publishing. A firm understanding of the use of CC-licenses is a key element of that instruction.

This final chapter also explores the use of CC to enable Open Educational Resources (OER) and open pedagogy. Here the discussion of the importance of open licenses is particularly strong. It is quite easy, even when utilizing CC-licenses, to fall into familiar habits of restrictive copyright protection and, perhaps unintentionally, constrain usage just as tightly

as might occur under traditional copyright. Such constraint has the potential to limit many beneficial uses that the author may actually value and wish to enable. The power of this important aspect of “open” is difficult to overstate. A well-known analogy in OER literature has compared the lack of recognition for the potential of OA to the wasted potential of only driving an airplane on the road (Wiley, 2015). There is so much more that can be done when the full potential of a new technology is not held back by traditional views of how things operate—when the plane is allowed to leave the asphalt. To facilitate that potential, this section expends significant effort to explain the use of CC for OER, including ample discussion of the many venues for locating, adapting, and publishing OER materials. Further resources supplied here include links to archives of OER, OER creation software, and additional web sites listing recommended resources. Since these external sites can be regularly updated, there is no danger of a fossilized list printed in the book becoming outdated.

In keeping with a strong commitment to OA, the book itself has been released under a Creative Commons Attribution license, one of the most open licenses available, and an accessible CC-licensed digital version is available online in PDF format at no cost. This enables the work to be adapted and redistributed under the relatively liberal terms of attribution as defined in the CC-BY-4.0 license (Creative Commons, n.d.).

Since the book’s content is grounded in the “CC-Certification Course,” it is clearly structured with effective pedagogy in mind and employs established strategies for improved learning. Brief introductory frames titled “The Big Question” provide an overview of the concepts of each section, and individual learning outcomes are presented in bullet-point format at the beginning of each chapter. These provide clear objectives and a scaffold for facilitating comprehension. Also dispersed throughout are brief reflective questions that engage the reader in the practicalities of using copyrighted works and CC-licenses in a personally relevant way.

Possibly the most useful feature of the book is its consistent redeployment of CC-licensed works throughout. These come in the form of images, tables, charts, and links to videos, the latter facilitated in the digital edition by direct embedding. Not only are these resources illustrative in the usual sense of accompanying figures, each resource is reusable and adaptable under its own CC-license, providing valuable resources that can be added to one’s own instructional toolkit. These embedded works serve also to illustrate best practices for attribution and linking that meet the terms of CC-license conditions. While both U.S. and international courts have repeatedly found that the CC-licenses constitute legally enforceable agreements, legal expectations for attribution and license display practices have varied (Herr, 2020). Thus, these *in situ* examples serve as an important complement to the text and are of immense value for their model of attribution practices, particularly to the novice user of CC-licenses.

As librarians increasingly embrace roles as publishing and scholarly communication consultants, often managing library-based publishing of OA journals and OER programs, a firm grasp of copyright and OA licenses has become a critical skill in these positions. Indeed, instructing both faculty and students in these realms has been identified as a critical emerging role for librarians, with copyright and licensing at the heart of information literacy (Association of College and Research Libraries, 2013). Thus, there is a great need for instruction that can present this important information succinctly and effectively. This volume meets that need in multiple ways. It certainly serves as a concise and effective text for librarians and educators with a need to inform themselves more deeply on this topic, but it also sets its own best example, leveraging the CC system to provide numerous resources and instructional materials to be adopted, adapted, and redeployed by those who would educate others on these topics.

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## **BIOGRAPHY**

Eric Robinson is the Scholarly Communications Librarian for the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences, where he manages the university's SOAR@USA institutional repository (<https://soar.usa.edu>) and provides instruction on issues of copyright, open access, and scholarly publication.

