

The purpose of this paper is to provide a brief general introduction to the Open Licensing of content with a particular focus on the licensing of bibliographic information (metadata) about research publications. The paper highlights the use of the Creative Commons suite of licenses as the most widely used and understood standard for licensing open content.

Introduction

Each year institutions, researchers and practitioners generate thousands of reports, articles and datasets that have the potential to improve the way in which we address global development issues and challenges. The majority of these, although significantly not all, are now being published in digital formats. Yet much of this knowledge remains invisible and underused by broader development audiences online.

The Open Access movement seeks to unlock the social value of this knowledge by increasing the ability of third parties to access, share and reuse it effectively. Advocates argue that if we make this possible we ultimately increase the potential for action and impact resulting from that knowledge being shared.

For more on this see our [introduction to Open Knowledge](#).

A key aspect of opening up access to knowledge is the use of licensing to explicitly define how content can be reused, revised, remixed and redistributed.

Copyright and Licensing

The application of an open license to any intellectual property does not override or remove the authors or publishers copyright; it just sets out a more liberal framework for how that content can be re-used than that which a traditional 'all rights reserved' copyright statement would offer.

Authors retain moral rights to their work such as:

- attribution (to be recognised as the author of the work)
- integrity (the right for the author to object to derogatory treatment of the work)
- intellectual property rights (trademark/patents/etc)

Unless these rights are explicitly waived by the license.

Key definitions

For simplicity we will distinguish three types of open licensing:

- Content licensing – refers to a licence applied to a textual work or other content (including publications and software)
- Data licensing – refers to a licence applied to data or datasets
- Metadata licensing – refers to a licence applied to a descriptive (bibliographic) record of a work or object

Open Metadata

Open licensing of metadata is often implied or assumed rather than formally applied. Traditionally libraries have shared bibliographic records freely and they are not seen as copyrighted. However, cataloguing agencies and library vendors do sometimes assert the copyright on records they provide. Substantive metadata such as abstracts and subject indexing may especially be seen as subject to copyright.

So it is good practice to license your own metadata in a way which makes reuse rights clear, and to check the licensing on any records you reuse from elsewhere.

Licenses

CC BY Attribution	This is the most liberal licence, allowing others to distribute, remix, tweak, and build upon the work (even commercially) – provided they credit the author for the original creation and clearly indicate that changes were made to the work.
CC BY-SA Attribution Share Alike	Similar to CC BY, this licence ensures that others must licence new creations under identical terms (e.g CC BY-SA). All new works based on the original work will carry the same licence, so any derivatives will also allow commercial use.
CC BY-ND Attribution No Derivatives	This licence allows for redistribution – commercial and non-commercial – provided it is passed along unchanged and in whole, with credits to the author.
CC BY-NC Attribution Non Commercial	Similar to CC BY, this licence ensures that others must not remix, tweak or build upon the original work for commercial purposes. New works must acknowledge the author and be non-commercial although they do not have to licence their derivative works on the same terms.
CC BY-NC-SA Attribution Non Commercial Share Alike	This licence lets others remix, tweak, and build upon the author's work non-commercially, provided they credit the author and licence their new creations under the identical terms.
CC BY-NC-ND Attribution Non Commercial No Derivatives	This is the most restrictive of the six licences, only allowing others to download works and share them with others as long as they credit the author – and they cannot change the original work in any way or use it commercially.

Source: adapted from *Guide to Creative Commons for Humanities and Social Science Monograph Authors*, Baker, Eve and Priego.

The most widely used and understood open licences are the six Creative Commons licences. These are applied by the original author or copyright holder of a work (or with their permission), and allow for varying degrees of reuse.

Other open licences include the Open Data Commons Open Database Licence (for data and databases), the Open Government Licence (for public information) and the GNU General Public Licence (for software and documentation).

Which License to Choose

When selecting an open licence you should consider how you want other people to be able to reuse your content or metadata. The most 'open' of the open licences is Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY). Other licences with restrictions on the type of reuse offer more protection of the work in its original form, but may not meet the commonly agreed requirements for openness set by, for example, the Open Definition.

You can also waive the attribution requirement and use the Creative Commons Public Domain Dedication (CC 0) to mark your work as free from all copyright interests. This is well-suited to metadata and bibliographic records and is the approach taken by, for example, the British National Bibliography with their linked data records. It is important to choose the right licence from the start, because once assigned it is irrevocable.

How to Apply for an Open License

If you created a work or record, you can license it under Creative Commons with no registration or cost. Simply choose a licence and clearly display it on your work or in your record.

See <http://creativecommons.org> for instructions and display conventions.

How to Use Someone Else's Content/Records

If text, data or a bibliographic record does not have an explicit open licence, then it cannot be assumed to be available for reuse. This is true even if it is freely available to view online.

Where there is no explicit open licence you should ideally seek permission from the creator to reuse a record. To enable future reuse, suggest that the creator applies an open license rather than granting a one-off permission.

As mentioned above, bibliographic metadata is commonly accepted as reusable without an explicit open licence. But open licences should be used where possible for maximum reusability and clarity.

How to Attribute Open Licensed Content/Records

See https://wiki.creativecommons.org/Best_practices_for_attribution

A good rule of thumb for the elements to include in an attribution is the acronym TASL, which stands for Title, Author, Source, License.

Note that if you have created a derivative or modified work, this information must be included in the

Recommended Reading and Resources

To learn more, download these IDS training slides on Understanding Open Licensing by Shihaam Shaikh (2013):

- Part 1 <http://www.slideshare.net/idsknowledgeservices/understanding-open-licensing-day-one-the-open-landscape>
- Part 2 <http://www.slideshare.net/idsknowledgeservices/understanding-open-licensing-day-two-introducing-creative-commons>
- Part 3 <http://www.slideshare.net/idsknowledgeservices/understanding-open-licensing-day-three-taking-steps-forward>
- Creative Commons <http://creativecommons.org>
- The Open Definition <http://opendefinition.org/guide/>
- Choosing a license (Wikimedia) http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Commons:Choosing_a_license
- Publisher's Guide to Open Data Licensing (Open Data Institute) <https://theodi.org/guides/publishers-guide-open-data-licensing>
- Comparison of open licenses <http://freedomdefined.org/Licenses>
- Open Knowledge's Guide to Open Licensing: <http://opendefinition.org/guide/>
- The Open Data Institute's Publisher's Guide to Open Licensing: <http://theodi.org/guides/publishers-guide-open-data-licensing>
- Open Data Commons Licenses FAQ: <http://opendatacommons.org/faq/licenses/>
- Open Content - A Practical Guide to Using Creative Commons Licences: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Open_Content_A_Practical_Guide_to_Using_Creative_Commons_Licences_web.pdf



The Open Knowledge Hub project aims to improve the supply and accessibility of content that supports evidence-informed policy making and practice in international development. It builds on emerging approaches from the open access and open data movements to create a new open and collaborative “hub” for sharing of development knowledge whilst facilitating peer support and shared learning between project partners.

To find out more go to OKHub.org or email info@okhub.org. More learning resources are available at OKHub.org/learning.

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Institute of Development Studies, Brighton BN1 9RE UK
T +44 (0) 1273 606261
F + 44 (0) 1273 621202
E ids@ids.ac.uk W www.ids.ac.uk