

Lecture #15: Copyright

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For University of New Haven's Fall 2023 CSCIxx51 Course



Let's say you make some form of art or work, like a book, painting, or code?

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In a zero-law world, what is stopping me from taking that work and re-publishing it?

Wouldn't it be nice if you owned the work you made?

Copyright

This is where we have copyright, which is *a type of intellectual property that gives its owner the exclusive right to copy, distribute, adapt, display, and perform a creative work, usually for a limited time.*¹

Almost every country has and enforces laws regarding protecting the copyright of a work.

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TL;DR: When you make a creative work, you have exclusive right over that work by law.



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Time

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Ehhh....no

Time

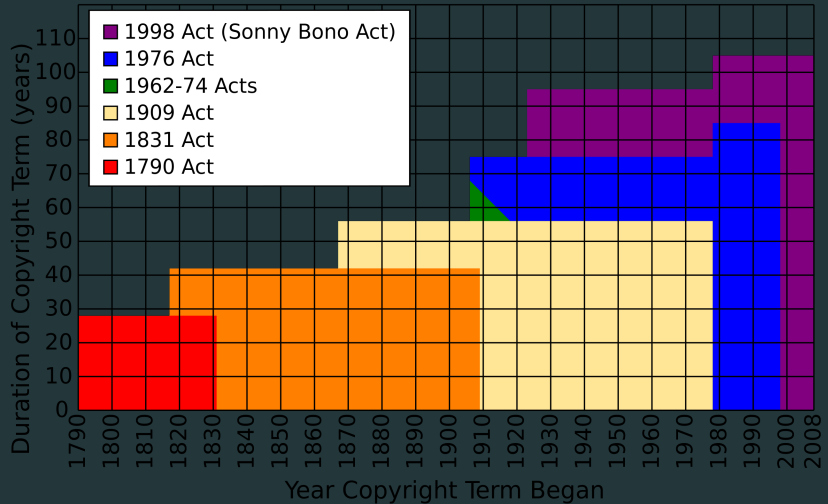
So if you made something, can you own the copyright on it forever??

Ehhh....no

Copyright law set a duration before the work becomes into the *Public Domain*. The idea is to have society build upon copyright work after the author benefits from the exclusive right.

The time has been extended (here in the US) many times thanks to the Disney corporation (think Mickey Mouse)‘.

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What if you want to put your work out publicly for humanity to use, but with some restrictions?

The answer is yes, as copyright gives the author exclusive rights over the work, including the right to just publish it as public domain, or publish it freely with restrictions. You can use that power to ensure your copyright work is published freely, and nobody is able to use it without the ability modify, share, copy, or redistribute (under the same or similar license) your work.

This concept is known as copyleft.



Most licenses (if not all) only apply when you *distribute* the works. So if you are using a copyleft work for an internal non-distributed work, you may not need to follow it's license clauses (see GPL for example).

CC Licenses

For generate creative works, the *Creative Commons license* are several licenses that you can use in your work. The license enables free usage of your work.

There are restrictions in the different licenses which you can choose for your work (single or in combination), which includes:

- (BY) Attribution
- (SA) Share-Alike (Required for works to be considered copyleft)
- (NC) Non-Commercial
- (ND) Non Derivative Works

There is also a CC0 license, which is just a license to put your work in the public domain.

Software License: GPL

Somebody, in around the 1990s, wanted to guarantee the following software freedoms to the users²

- The freedom to run the program as you wish, for any purpose (freedom 0).
- The freedom to study how the program works, and change it so it does your computing as you wish (freedom 1). Access to the source code is a precondition for this.
- The freedom to redistribute copies so you can help others (freedom 2).
- The freedom to distribute copies of your modified versions to others (freedom 3). By doing this you can give the whole community a chance to benefit from your changes. Access to the source code is a precondition for this.

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That person was Richard Stallman (also the maker of the GNU project and a contributor to GCC), and he formed the GPL license (GNU General Public License).

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GPL

GPL is the one of the list restrictive copyleft licenses. It guarantees the freedoms by ensuring that

- Any GPL source code is accessible freely to the user
- Any published result of a modified GPL source code must also have the source code available to the users
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Did you know that these slides are under a GPLv3 license? (Source code is on Github, link on Canvas)

Lesser-GPL is a version of GPL which removes the restriction of requiring the software using GPL licensed code to publish their own code, which is suitable for some libraries.

The MIT license is one of the most permissive permissive licenses, the only clauses being attribution and lack of warrantee.

MIT is not copyleft, as someone can take MIT code, modify it, and publish the modification without releasing the source code.

Lots More

There are a lot of software licences out there, with different clauses and varieties.

If you are using some software (such as a library) in your company's code, check the license of the works.

If you are making software, you have the freedom to keep the code as "All Rights Reserved", or use that power to ensure software freedom to the extent you want.