Transcript: What Is Creative Commons?

[upbeat music featuring a mandolin]

This is Learning About Creative Commons. I’m Rachael Nevins.

[music fades out]

I’m an LIS student at Queens College of the City University of New York, or CUNY, and as an OER Fellow at the Office of Library Services and an adjunct librarian at the Borough of Manhattan Community College, I work with librarians and faculty throughout CUNY to help them find, adopt, adapt, and create open educational resources, or OER.

Open licenses make it possible for OER to be shared freely for others to adopt and adapt. Creative Commons licenses are by far the most frequently used open licenses. They are designed to resolve the conflict between the restrictions of copyright law and the possibilities opened up by the World Wide Web and other digital technologies. Because of Creative Commons, creators are able to retain their copyright while sharing their work and letting other people know how it can be used.

In this podcast, first I’m going to tell you about the origins of Creative Commons. And then I’m going to tell you what Creative Commons has become today.

The story of Creative Commons begins in 1998, when the U.S. Congress passed the Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act, which added 20 years to the term of copyright for works in the United States. Lawrence Lessig, a law professor, who believed that this law was unconstitutional, represented Eric Eldred, a web publisher, in a case that went to the U.S. Supreme Court. The first among their arguments was that the extension of copyrights violated Article I, Section 8, Clause 8 of the Constituion, which states that Congress has the power “to promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writings and Discoveries.” Unfortunately, Lessig and Eldred lost their case, known as Eldred v. Ashcroft.

Fortunately, after this loss, Lessig, Eldred, and Hal Abelson, an MIT computer science professor, founded the nonprofit organization called Creative Commons, and in 2002, they published the Creative Commons licenses.

So, as you’ve heard, Creative Commons is a nonprofit organization that recently celebrated its twentieth birthday. Creative Commons is also a set of licenses that, as you’ve heard, make it possible for creators to retain their copyright while also sharing their work and letting other people know how it can be used. Finally, Creative Commons is also a worldwide movement striving for copyright reform and open access, organized via the CC Global Network.

Today, nearly 2 billion works are available under Creative Commons licenses, including music, videos, photographs, open educational resources, among many other kinds of creations. This podcast has a Creative Commons license—CC BY-NC—as does the website where I’ve posted this podcast. The music I’m using in this podcast, "Molly Molly" by Blue Dot Sessions, also has a CC BY-NC license.

Are you interested in using CC-licensed works in your own creations, or in licensing your work with CC licenses—both of which I’ve done in this podcast? And are you interested in open scholarship or open educational resources?

[upbeat music fades in]

Follow along at this website as I share what I learn about Creative Commons, and see the links posted with this podcast to find out how else you can get involved.

Take care until next time!

[music concludes]