Transcript: Collections and Adaptations

[upbeat music featuring a mandolin]

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

In the last podcast, we discussed adaptations. I gave a few examples of adaptations: novels adapted for film, works translated from one language to another, and images manipulated in various ways, including cropping, adding text, and desaturation.

In this podcast, let’s go into more detail about adaptations. Understanding adaptations is crucial to using and sharing CC-licensed works appropriately. Remember that the SA (or Share Alike) element asks that adaptations be shared with the same or a compatible license. Additionally, remember that the ND (or No Derivatives) element prohibits adaptations altogether.

You might sometimes wonder about the difference between an adaptation or remix   
on one hand and a collection on the other. In other words, when you bring different works together to make something new, when is that new thing an adaptation or remix, and when is it a collection?

An adaptation is a new creation that, as Creative Commons explains, is “sufficiently original to itself be protected by copyright.” When adapting CC-licensed work, I first need to make sure that the works I’m using have CC licenses that permit adaptations. I also need to make sure that I license my adaptation in a way that is compatible with the CC licenses on the work I’ve incorporated into the adaptation.

I would say, for example, that my use of music in this podcast constitutes an adaptation. I’m not making a new song, true; but I am talking over the music. One might say that I have transformed or built upon the song. My vocal track and the song have been blended together, as in a smoothie. I could not use ND-licensed music in this way in my podcast. Additionally, if I were to use SA-licensed music in this way in my podcast, I would need to release my podcast with a compatible SA license or other compatible license.

As it is, “Molly Molly” by Blue Dot Sessions is licensed CC BY-NC, and so is my podcast. The license on my podcast is compatible with the CC-licensed work I’ve incorporated.

[music fades out]

A playlist of different songs, where each song is a distinct and separate track, would be a collection. The songs have not been blended together. Unlike the ingredients of a smoothie, each song retains its integrity. Whereas I cannot incorporate ND-licensed music in a remix, I can certainly include ND-licensed music in a playlist and freely share the playlist—as long as I share the ND-licensed music “unchanged and in whole,” as the Free Music Archive explains, and of course give credit to the artists.

Creative Commons explains, “When you create a collection, you must provide attribution and licensing information about the individual works in your collection.” Additionally, Creative Commons explains, “When you combine material into a collection, you may have a separate copyright of your own that you may license. However, your copyright only extends to the new contributions you made to the work.”

In the show notes for this podcast, for example, you’ll see that I created a collection of three images. My contributions to this collection include the selection of images, sequence of images, and introductory text. Like this podcast and the website where the podcast is hosted, the collection is licensed CC BY-NC. But this license applies only to my contributions to the collection, and not to the individual images in the collection.

[upbeat music fades in]

I hope that these explanations and examples help to clarify the distinction between remixes and collections. Check out the show notes to see my collection and other information, including charts that illustrate license compatibility and a link to Nate Angell’s explanation of remixes as smoothies and collections as TV dinners.

Until next time, take care!

[music concludes]