

Support the Commons



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Background

The Framers of the U.S. Constitution understood that copyright was about balance — a trade-off between public and private gain, society-wide innovation and creative reward. In 1790, the U.S.'s first copyright law granted authors a monopoly right over their creations for 14 years, with the option of renewing that monopoly for another 14. We want to help restore that sense of balance — not through any change to the current laws — but by helping copyright holders who recognize a long copyright term's limited benefit to voluntarily release that right after a shorter period.

How it Works

Rather than adopting a standard U.S. copyright that will last in excess of 70 years after the author's lifetime, the Creative Commons and a contributor will enter into a contract to guarantee that the relevant creative work will enter the public domain after 14 years, unless the author chooses to extend for another 14. To re-create the functionality of a 14- or 28-year copyright, the contributor will sell the copyright to Creative Commons for \$1.00, at which point Creative Commons will give the contributor an exclusive license to the work for 14 (or 28) years. During this period, Creative Commons will list all works under the Founders' Copyright, along with each projected public domain liberation date, in an online registry.

Is It Right For Me?

Any type of intellectual property eligible for a copyright (video, audio, text, images, etc.) can qualify for a Founders' Copyright. If you want exclusive rights to your work, but for a lesser period of time than a full copyright would give you, a Founders' Copyright could be a good fit for you. If you wish to share your work today, you may prefer a [Creative Commons license](#), or [public domain dedication](#).

How to Get a Founders Copyright

If you are interested in a Founders' Copyright you can start the application here by entering some preliminary information about you and your work. As the Founders' Copyright involves Creative Commons' entering into a contract with you, we must do some due diligence to verify your identity. Though it is unlikely, we may also require you to register your work with the U.S. Copyright office.

Here's how the application process works:

1. Fill out our web form.
2. When our due diligence is complete, we will send you a contract and full application for you to fill out.
3. Send us the completed contract, application, and a physical or digital copy of your work.
4. We'll put a record of your Founders' Copyright in our online registry.

Interested in contributing your work to the Founders' Copyright project?

[Tell us about yourself and your work in our application form.](#)

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