

Citizens' Summary

Commission Communication on Copyright in the Knowledge Economy

The Internet is fast becoming the portal through which knowledge is disseminated, accessed, distributed and shared. People are increasingly expecting to have instantaneous access to literary and artistic works in digital forms. Libraries and archives want to preserve Europe's rich cultural heritage and make it available online to the public. Persons with disabilities want to benefit from new technologies to enable them to have better access to Europe's collective knowledge. Research and teaching establishments want more flexibility to disseminate teaching materials. At the same time, it is necessary to reconcile these needs with the legitimate expectations of creators, authors and publishers to be adequately rewarded for their works.

The creation of mega digital libraries and bookstores such as the one being spearheaded by Google has only reinforced the urgency for Europe to ensure that its rich cultural heritage and intellectual creation is made available to researchers, scholars, consumers and the public at large.

The Communication addresses these issues. It outlines actions that the Commission intends to take to facilitate the mass-scale digitisation and dissemination of European library collections. This will provide researchers and consumers with new and exciting ways to gain access to knowledge. The Commission also intends to find a solution to the issue of so-called "orphan works", works whose authors are unknown or unlocatable or both. Their uncertain copyright status means that they cannot be utilised, depriving citizens of an important source of intellectual material. Improving the distribution and availability of works for persons with disabilities, particularly the visually impaired, is another cornerstone of the Communication.

In the immediate future (2009-2010) the Commission will tackle these matters through a series of stakeholder dialogues. On that basis, the Commission stands ready to take further initiatives, including legislative ones.

The Communication follows from last year's public consultation on the Green Paper on Copyright in the Knowledge Economy. It also builds on the Commission's ongoing work on digital libraries. It forms part of the Commission's agenda to foster innovation, protect copyright, reward creation and facilitate consumer access to knowledge and information in a rapidly evolving digital world.

More information is available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/copyright/copyright-info/copyright-info_en.htm