Final Plenary Meeting
Licences for Europe

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Building the rights Data Network – enabling user access

Today there are 2.4 billion Web content users and re-users from almost none only 20 years ago.

Users have become creators and re-users – there are around a billion “self-publishers” on file-sharing sites, blogs, and social media.

The point is that self-publishing is not just an “amateur” or social pastime. Web self-publishers, such as creators posting their new songs or videos online, are protected by copyright, but commonly can’t monetise their works, or stop infringements of their rights, if they want to. This content could be contributing to economic growth in the digital market.

Self-publishers often can’t (or can’t easily) yet identify their own works or get licences for re-using existing content. Even though copyright law is applicable online, it is difficult to implement due to the scale, speed and complexity of publishing, access and re-use in the Web.
Computers are good at dealing with scale, speed and complexity. Which is why EPC called our original Big Idea for the Digital Agenda “The answer to the machine is in the machine”

And it was this requirement, to find better ways to identify and communicate rights information on the network, that led to the formation of the Linked Content Coalition in 2012, a global multi-media project with support from 30 partners from all sectors and some tech companies.

The LCC technical Framework, published in April 2013, showed that all types of rights data, however complex, from any and all sectors can be expressed in a single, extensible format.

And through the effective use of interoperable identifiers and metadata across all media types and sectors we can facilitate and expand the legitimate use of content in the digital network.

Two key things need to happen next to “up-grade” the digital network. Firstly, Web Content Declarations of rights and licenses (“WCDs”) and secondly an interoperable Network of hubs to simplify user access to content.

First, the WEB CONTENT DECLARATION
This will provide a common or standard way, on either a global or sector basis, for a rightsholder to declare their rights in an authorised, machine-readable, accessible form on the Web.

The absence of the means to identify content and rights cripples any attempts to build up the network efficiently – in effect, the digital data supply chain is being ‘strangled at birth’.

Creative Commons is the best in class to date, but has no party or content IDs, and only states free use in machine-interpretable form, not in commercial terms. WCD will support CC licenses and expand the approach to cover commercial use.
The technical building blocks, web standards like html, xml, linked data standards etc, and name IDs all exist but what’s missing are interoperable profiles for each type of content, with different IDs and vocabularies, but using only one common schema, and a way of mapping databases for interoperability.

Scale, and interoperability at scale of identifiers and information about rights will ease discoverability, access, use and re-use.

So, GETTING WIDESPREAD ADOPTION OF WCDs WILL BE A KEY DRIVER OF GROWTH IN THE DIGITAL NETWORK, and this will happen in two main ways:

- Through hubs and
- Through new tools

First the tools: The huge self-publishing market (which without WCDs creates millions of “digital orphans” daily) provides new **commercial incentives** for the design of tools: such as WCD plug-ins, Apps - at the point of creation via content management systems, mobile devices including cameras, and at the point of upload and entry to the networks; and new registries or service hubs.

The established registries run by COs, or publisher databases can create WCDs automatically with relative simplicity. Through shared “creation identifiers” the WCDs can join existing linked data, and establish an open standard for search engines, and other processing tools, throughout the network.

The UK’s Copyright Hub launched July 2013, following the Hargreaves and Hooper reports, and other hubs, can be catalysts for adoption of WCDs.

So what do I mean by a hub? - A hub is simply a **tool for linking many potential users to many rightsholders. For example, content aggregators are hubs.**
The innovation of the UK COPYRIGHT HUB is that it is User-focussed: to make it easy for people to discover rights data of any kind, to enable licensing where appropriate. And although it focuses on UK users, it covers international rights and is rolling out in three key stages:

The Initial phase only provides information and linking around 35 sites at present.

Stage 2 in 2014 will introduce “federated search” to enable queries to be sent to multiple databases and for the results to be aggregated for users. Stage 3 in 2015 will provide links for people to register data about their content and rights.

Of course Rights hubs are not essential for Web user access as users can get access anywhere through Web tools and search engines but hubs will not only aid navigation of rights data, combine data from multiple sources but also enable Support services – such as licensing, tracking, payment, conflict resolution (etc) according to the nature of the hub.

Although the Web crosses borders, national or regional hubs can be ideal “points of entry” for local users especially if the hubs have access to global content like UK Copyright Hub, playing a significant role in the development of the rights Data Network.

There are also clear benefits in hubs serving local or language repertoires to an international user audience (e.g. new Danish Film Producers hub).

The UK’s hub is already a network of hubs, and a network is already developing naturally in the marketplace, but to be effective across the European Union or globally, hubs should be federated and avoid duplication of effort and function, and especially the maintenance of multiple unsynchronised datasets.
SO, WHAT CAN THE EU OR NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS DO TO HELP ADOPTION OF WCDS AND HUBS?

What we need is for governments to match our efforts. We in the content industry undertake to continue innovating and developing technology to overcome the obstacles that are currently holding the digital economy back.

Meanwhile, there are specific things that governments can help with:

i) National or international competitions or calls for tenders to develop tools and technology to support implementation of Web Content Declarations.

ii) Encourage national or regional hubs, and interoperability between them.

iii) Design or support initiatives to integrate “orphan works” and public domain registry services and databases with WCDS and the evolving Hub network.