THE FREE CULTURE PROJECT: USING FREE SOFTWARE AS A GATEWAY TO EDUCATE DIGITAL NATIVES ABOUT FREE CULTURE TO PROMOTE AN OPEN AND FREE SOCIETY.

by

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The Free Culture Project teaches free software and content to enable the Digital Native generation to become creators of culture and change the dynamic from passive consumers of mass media to active producers. The strategy is to deliver the content through a website and workshops designed to educate children about free culture with the goal to become responsible citizens that produce and consume information in the digital era. This paper provides background information about the project, documents the workshops, and website usability testing.

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INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, affordable prices of digital technology such as computers, video cameras, audio recorders, mobile devices and software have enabled individuals to participate in the creation of media products and have contributed to the evolution of culture. These technological advances, combined with the power of the Internet to disseminate information, create amazing opportunity for individuals to develop a participatory culture, where content can be created and shared instantly over the Internet. As Lawrence Lessig explains, the 20th Century was characterized by a read-only (RO) culture in which creativity was consumed, but the consumer was not a creator (para. Lessig, 2007, presentation). Today digital technology and the Internet are revitalizing the read-write (RW) culture and democratizing culture making, which was the norm for the majority of human history.

Consequently, the content industry, alarmed by the democratization of media, has lobbied policy makers for support in protecting their media products and business model. This is making it increasingly difficult for individuals to use content to create and understand culture without breaking the law.

As Lessig (2004) states:

> For the first time, the law regulates ordinary citizens generally. For the first time, it reaches beyond the professional to control the amateur -to subject the amateur to a control by the law that the law historically reserved to professionals. This is the most important point to recognize about the relationship between the law and RW culture. For the first time, the law reaches and regulates this culture. Not because Congress

> deliberated and decided that this form of creativity needed regulation, but simply because the architecture of copyright law interacted with the architectural of digital technology to produce a massive expansion of the reach of the law (p. 103).

These laws are criminalizing ordinary citizens, especially Digital Natives, who naturally express themselves through remixing media.

As Palfrey and Gasser (2008) explain,

> These young people are not passive consumers of media that is broadcast to them, but rather active participants in the making of meaning in their culture. Their art form of the remix, where digital files are combined to create a new video or audio file, is already having an effect on cultural understanding around the world (p. 131-132).

While digital technology is enabling our children to become active producers of culture, copyright laws are inhibiting their creativity by criminalizing their drive to innovate. In short, in a time when digital technology is most conducive to allow us to become active producers of culture, copyright laws are strangling our creativity (Lessig, 2004).

This is the reason why *The Free Culture Project* was conceived; to educate about free culture, current copyright law and alternatives to promote a free, participatory culture in the digital age. To strengthen its message, the project will use free software and content with the aim to empower children, to become creators of culture, and change the dynamic from passive consumers of mass media to active producers. The content is delivered through workshops and a companion website designed to educate children about free culture with the goal of helping Digital Natives become responsible citizens that produce and consume information in the digital era. The workshops will present children with

tools such as free software and resources to empower them to participate in the creation of culture, introduce alternative paths to licensing their work so they can share and remix with their friends. The website will support the workshops by providing access to free resources, inspiration, and additional information about the concepts presented during the workshops.

METHOD

This research report will document the workshops and website usability testing, as well as explore the free culture movement and its efforts to develop alternative paths to copyright. These alternative paths would enable us to continue creating and sharing content freely in the digital age. In order to illustrate this argument, the research report will explore the history of copyright law from its beginning to present day in the United States. The objective is to build a claim against the current adverse effects of copyright law on the creation and evolution of culture. The copyright section will be followed by the history of the Internet and its conception as a platform for sharing. The emphasis will be on the current net neutrality battle to keep the Internet true to its original values of "openness, transparency and freedom." (Lessig, 2008, presentation) Furthermore, it will present the efforts of the Free Software Foundation (FSF) and Free Software Movement (FSM) to create an alternative model to promote a participatory and sharing society, through the use of Copyleft and the General Public License (GPL), which will lead us to explore Creative Commons licenses (CC).

Moreover, the report will answer questions such as "what is free culture?" "why is it important?" and "who benefits from it?." The answers to these questions will help illustrate the importance of keeping content free to be remixed in the fair use and non-commercial realm, to promote an innovative culture and society. Finally, the research report will conclude with a call to reform copyright law to meet the demands of digital technologies. The *Free Culture Project* will be presented as a solution for children to learn, develop, and promote free culture towards a creative and innovative society.

FREE CULTURE

What is free culture? and why is it important? To quote the Free Culture Movement student organization (2010) definition of free culture; "A free culture is one where all members are free to participate in its transmission and evolution, without artificial limits on who can participate or in what way."

The organization seeks to promote free culture through four principles:

1) creativity and innovation;

2) communication and free expression;

3) public access to knowledge;

4) and citizens' civil liberties.

Additionally, to understand the meaning of free culture, it is important to define the English term "free." Programmer, philosopher and Free Software Foundation founder Richard Stallman (2004) explains "it is a confusing and ambiguous word. The English Language has more words and nuances than any other, but it lacks a simple, unambiguous word that means “free,” as in freedom—“unfettered” being the word that comes closest in meaning. Such alternatives as “liberated,” “freedom,” and “open” have either the wrong meaning or some other disadvantage" (p. 20). His most famous quote to clarify the term "free" when referring to free software is: “free” as in “free speech,” not as in “free beer” (p. 43).

During the workshops Stallman's description of "free" is introduced to the children with a slight modification. The quote is made relevant to the children by changing the word beer for cookies; “free” as in “free speech,” not as in “free cookies.” Furthermore,

the concept of free software is presented by explaining that the software is not only free because it does not cost money, but it also grants users the freedom to copy, modify and distribute the source code as long as the code always remains open.

The open source audio editor Audacity's "repeat effect" is used during the audio editing workshop as an example of a community contributing to free software. The Repeat Effect allows the user to loop a sample of music. While introducing Audacity to the participants, a demo of the repeat effect was demonstrated. Once the repeat effect window opens there is a message that states: "Repeat by Dominic Mazzoni and Vaughan Johnson." This example served to illustrate the concept of community supported software and the benefits of sharing code towards the common goal of free software.

The free culture movement arose as a reaction to current copyright law, which over the last century has lost its original purpose of advancing the "progress of science and the useful arts," to become a system that does just the opposite. So how did copyright get to this point? The explanation to the current state of copyright law is a combination of the rise to power of big media corporations during the latter half of the twentieth century, and the emergence of new digital technologies that allow individuals to create infinite copies at merely no cost. These technological advances on copying mechanisms endanger the current media industry business model, who in turn protect themselves by lobbying the government to enact stricter copyright laws. The influence of media corporations on policy making translates into longer copyright terms through laws such as the Copyright Term Extension Act (CTEA) and technology security measures against piracy, such as the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DCMA).

Siva Vaidhyanathan (2001) warns us:

> Many of our cultural products will soon be "triple protected" by copyright, contracts or licenses, and code. Therefore, they will be "closed systems," limited in their ability to enhance the public domain and enrich the public sphere. (p. 179)

There is an extensive body of literature in defense of free culture to promote an open and free society, but we cannot ignore their opponents. The opposition voices in the United States are embedded in our history's tradition. Voices such as literary author Mark Twain who in 1900, after suffering economic loses from the copying of his literary works, appeared in front of the House of Lords to propose the idea of perpetual copyright (Vaidhyanathan, 2001, p. 46). In the present day, the most fervent proponents of extended copyright law protections, are owners of media corporation's and their employees, who naturally defend their assets with the pretext of defending author's rights. A famous example of an argument by a big media corporation against free culture and sharing is Time Warner former CEO Richard Parsons. When speaking to Congress against peer-to-peer sharing technology he (2001) states it:

> …isn't just about a bunch of kids stealing music. It's about an assault on everything that constitutes the cultural expression of our society. If we fail to protect and preserve our intellectual property system, the culture will atrophy. And corporations won't be the only ones hurt. Artists will have no incentive to create. Worst case scenario: The country will end up in a sort of cultural Dark Ages. (as cited in Litman, 2001, p. 151)

Unfortunately, technology often cannot discern between the sharing of copyrighted works and public domain works. Shutting down peer-to-peer networks also shuts down

the sharing of public domain works. In his book *Copyrights and Copywrongs,* Siva Vaidhyanathan (2001) explains that: "during the 1990's the public interest surrendered to private interest with pleas to end piracy and theft in defense of the markets" (p. 160). He continues to explain: "There was little public discussion about copyright as a public good that can encourage a rich public sphere and diverse democratic culture" (p. 160). It is fair to say that "enriching the public sphere and promoting a diverse and democratic culture" was the original purpose of the founders of the United States Constitution, who aimed at achieving this balance, by framing copyright as an artificial right granted by Congress to protect an author's work for a limited time. This clause ensured that copyright was not a natural right, but an artificial privilege to be granted by Congress.

It is this necessary balance between copyright protection and the public interest that *The Free Culture Project* is designed to restore. The strategy to accomplish this goal is to present children with accurate information about the current copyright system and alternative paths such as Copyleft and Creative Commons, to generate a discussion about their ideas for the future of this system. During the workshops, examples such as Shepard Fairey's Obama Hope poster and Andy Warhol's Mickey Mouse and Marilyn Monroe portraits, were presented to spark a discussion based on their opinions of copyright and its effects on artistic expression. In the case of the Obama Hope poster by Shepard Fairey, the children were presented with the account of the events as follows. The Obama poster artwork was created by utilizing Mannie Garcia's photograph assignment for the Associated Press (AP) as a template or inspiration. The AP upon recognizing and concluding that the artwork was inspired by a photograph of one of their

freelance photographers, deemed the artwork as a copyright infringement and demanded that the artist pay to use the photograph, as well as share the profits from its sale.

In the AP website the Media Relations Director Paul Colford (2009) stated: "AP believes it is crucial to protect photographers, who are creators and artists. Their work should not be misappropriated by others" (Press Release page). While the photographer Mannie Garcia stated that even though he did not support people taking things online for free without permission, in this case, he thought it was remarkable and he felt proud to inspire Fairey to create this iconic grassroots image for 2008 Obama campaign. Mannie Garcia (2009) stated: "If you put all the legal stuff away, I'm so proud of the photograph and that Fairey did what he did artistically with it, and the effect it's had" (The New York Times, 2009).

Additionally, this case also provided with an opportunity to present the children with the concept of fair use which was used by Fairey's lawyers in his defense. The artist was represented by Anthony T. Falzone Stanford professor and *Fair Use Project* executive director who invoked the Fair Use Doctrine to reproduce the photograph with the purpose of "criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching, scholarship, and research" (U.S. Copyright Office).

During the workshop presentation the children received the Obama poster slide with enthusiasm and were eager to present their opinions and discuss them with one another. After presenting both sides of the argument to the children, their discussion led to a consensus that Fairey's artwork made the photograph more valuable and created an icon which will forever represent the 2008 Obama campaign and victory. In this case the

balance between private interests and public interest was swayed not by the author demands for copyright to protect his work, but by a media corporation to defend their assets. This is a clear example of a corporation using the pretext of defending author's rights to demand a monetary compensation for their content or assets.

Subsequently, the children were asked if they knew what copyright was?. They had many ideas of what copyright meant to them, but they all used the same words to describe their idea of copyright, those words were "pirating" and "stealing." Next we will explore copyright law and history in order to understand its purpose.

COPYRIGHT

"The idea of copyright did not exist in ancient times, when authors frequently copied other authors at length in works of non-fiction. This practice was useful, and is the only way many authors' works have survived even in part. The copyright system was created expressly for the purpose of encouraging authorship. In the domain for which it was invented--books, which could be copied economically only on a printing press--it did little harm, and did not obstruct most of the individuals who read the books" (Stallman, 2004, p. 45). As we have seen in Fairey vs. AP case, it is only recently that copyright law is being used by powerful media corporations to protect their interests by lobbying legislators to turn against the original purpose of copyright. These corporations are using the pretext of defending author's rights to secure works with stricter copyright law, for longer periods (Stallman, 2004). When the original purpose of copyright was not only to protect private interest but to promote the progress of science, the useful arts and the encouragement of learning (Samuels, 2002, para. 14-15).

As James Boyle (2008) states:

> The rights that were supposed to be limited in time and scope to the minimum monopoly necessary to ensure production become instead a kind of perpetual corporate welfare—restraining the next generation of creators instead of encouraging them. The system that was supposed to harness the genius of both the market and democracy sometimes subverts both. Worse, it does so inefficiently, locking up vast swaths of culture in order to confer a benefit on a tiny minority of works (p. 8-9).

What is copyright? The United States Copyright Office definition (2010) states: "Copyright is a form of protection provided by the laws of the United States (title 17, *U. S. Code*) to the authors of "original works of authorship," including literary, dramatic, musical, artistic, and certain other intellectual works" (U.S. Copyright Office). Since copyright law has evolved with copying technologies, it is important to understand the origins of copyright, in order to be able to understand it's current state as applied to digital technologies.

The origins of copyright law date back to England in 1476, when Caxton introduced the printing press (Patterson, 1968, p. 4). Originally, copyright was set up by the Company of Stationers of London to protect their interests and not those of the author. Copyright law was practiced within the Company's members; bookbinders, printers and booksellers or publishers (Patterson, 1968, p. 5). The sole purpose of copyright, at that point, was to protect publishers works from being copied and printed by other publishers. At that point in the history of copyright the law only applied to publishers but not readers. Therefore, it is important to stress that these laws were created not to protect the author's rights, but to protect industrial interests, in this case the book publishing trade (Lessig, 2004, p. 90). In the United States, the original purpose of copyright, as envisioned by the founders of the U.S. Constitution, (1787) states, "[Congress shall have the power] to promote the progress of science and the useful arts, by securing for limited times to authors and inventors the exclusive right to their respective writings and discoveries" (Article I, Section 8).

Copyright in the United States was created to strike a balance between the rights of the

private and public interests, with the goal of encouraging learning and promoting an innovative society. Patterson (1968) states: "Thus, if the dominant idea is the promotion of learning, the primary purpose of copyright is to promote learning, and the rights of the author are recognized only as an aid in furtherance of this purpose. The interest of the public is paramount, and copyright is only a statutory privilege, limited in time to prevent monopoly" (p. 196).

In conclusion, as outlined by the founders, copyright is not an author's natural right, but an artificial right granted "to promote the progress of science and the useful arts."

As Stallman (2004) states:

> All intellectual property rights are just licenses granted by society because it was thought, rightly or wrongly, that society as a whole would benefit by granting them. But in any particular situation, we have to ask: are we really better off granting such license? What kind of act are we licensing a person to do?" He continues to say; "For example, the patent system was established to encourage inventors to disclose the details of their inventions. Its purpose was to help society rather than to help inventors" (p. 45).

In May 1790, the first copyright law was enacted allowing authors or owners of books, maps and charts to "print, reprint, publish or vend" their work for 14 years with a 14 year additional renewal privilege. In order to acquire protection, the authors had to register their work at the district court where they resided. (U.S. Copyright Office, 2010) This law was modeled after the 1710 Statute Anne and was titled "An Act for the encouragement of learning" (Samuels, 2002, p. 15). In June of that year the first

copyrighted work was filed in Pennsylvania. In 1802, prints were added to protected works. In 1831, music was added to protected works which extended for 28 years with a renewal privilege of 14 years. In 1856, dramatic compositions were added to the list of protected works. In 1865, photographs and photographic negatives were added to the list of protected works (U.S. Copyright Office, 2010).

Over the last century, copyright protection has been continually extended. In 1909, Congress passed an extension of twenty-eight years with a renewal option of an additional twenty-eight years (U.S. Copyright Office, 2010). In 1976, copyright protection was again extended to life of the author plus fifty years and finally in 1998 the Copyright Term Extension Act (CTEA) also known as the Sonny Bono Copyright Act granted copyright for the life of the author with an additional seventy years and extended existing copyrighted works for an additional twenty years to a total of 95 years from their publication date (U.S. Copyright Office, 2010).

In 1998, Congress passed the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) to prevent users sharing digital content (U.S. Copyright Office, 2010). This law forbids the circumvention of electronic locks that regulate access to copyrighted material sometimes erasing first sale doctrine making sharing our favorite books or music with friends illegal (Stallman, 2004). The first sale doctrine as it is described by the U.S. Copyright Office allows for the sale, lending and rental of a legitimate purchased copy.

The DMCA makes no distinction between uses of content for piracy or on a non-commercial and fair use basis so access is illegal no matter the users intentions. Vaidhyanathan (2001) explains "Before 1998 copyright was a public bargain between

producers and users. It was democratically negotiated, judicially mediated, and often messy and imperfect. Now the very presence of even faulty technology trumps any public interest in fair use and open access" (p. 160). Litman (2001) agrees: "The DMCA imposes liability on ordinary citizens for violation of provisions that they have no reason to suspect are part of the law, and to make noncommercial and non-infringing behavior illegal on the theory that it will help to prevent piracy" (p. 145).

Today, ordinary citizens are constantly breaking copyright laws without their knowledge. Due to many changes in copyright law, it is very difficult to determine if works are copyrighted. For example, in January 1978 following European copyright law, the United States copyright law became automatic. Prior to 1978, in order to copyright a work, it was necessary to perform a series of steps such as registration, copyright notice and renewal (Litman, 2001, para. 15). Considering this many copyright infringements are due to the lack of a good system of registration of copyrights and the fact that works are not required to be registered contributes to the confusion (Lessig, 2008, para. 261).

As Lessig (2008) states:

> There is no registry for identifying the owners of copyrighted works, nor a list of what works are copyrighted" (p. 261).

Works that enter the public domain, but their status remains unclear, are labeled as orphans. Since copyright protection is granted automatically to authors, this has in turn loosened the copyright owner's responsibility to register works and manage the work's rights (Litman, 2001, para. 64). This is due to the 1989 decision by Congress, to not require a works' copyright notice to be copyrighted. This made it even more complicated

to identify copyrighted works.

In 2008, Patrick Leahy, a Democratic Senator from the state of Vermont, proposed a bill cosponsored by two Republican senators from Utah. The bill proposed to allow creators to use orphan works after efforts to locate the copyright owner failed. The law passed the Senate unanimously, but was not presented to the House for vote (Government Watchdog, 2010). As a solution, Lawrence Lessig proposes (2008) that the U.S. Copyright Office creates a website where authors can register their works, funded by $1 copyright renewals (p. 251).

There is much debate about the future of copyright law. Lessig (2009) presents two current extremes. One side, representing the youth who are tired of being accused of being pirates and thieves, want to see copyright abolished. The other side, consisting of media corporations who demand more extensions and stronger punishments for copyright law infringement, often invoke physical property rights, in order to defend their claims to perpetual ownership of creative works or intellectual property (Lessig, 2009, presentation). An example of an intellectual property advocate is former Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) Jack Valenti, who (1982) testified to Congress that: “Creative property owners must be accorded the same rights and protections resident in all other property owners in the nation" (Jack Valenti, 1982, as cited in Lessig, 2004). The convergence of copyright law and property law emerged due to our long tradition of physical property rights. Subsequently, today there is a growing consensus that intellectual property rights should be equal to physical property rights (Boyle, 2008).

Lastly, there is the middle of the argument, a more balanced argument that originates

not from a counter action situation or from the will to protect media product assets, but to defend free speech and the public good. Neil Weston Netanel's work, which is (2008) described in his book *Copyright's Paradox,* argues that copyright law is infringing upon our free speech rights and constraining our ability to construct messages by excluding elements under copyright (Netanel, 2008, para. 112). To build his argument, he also turns to the U.S. Constitution founders who viewed copyright as an "engine of free expression." This idea he explains has "fostered a broad range of original expression, subsidized a robust sector of authors and media enterprises independent from government subsidy and highlighted the value of individuals' creative expression in our public discourse" (p. 37). This creates a struggle between media corporations' control of content and of the public's ability to access and distribute content freely. Vaidhyanathan (2001) states "copyright stands in tension with the need to borrow and build upon prior work" (p. 63). As already stated *The Free Culture Project* aims at restoring the balance between private interests and the public good by educating the participants about free culture and the benefits of contributing to the public domain.

To give an example of the benefits that releasing works into the public domain can offer for creativity and innovation, I would like to present a slice of Lessig's extensive research into Walt Disney's borrowing of ideas and use of public domain works, to create the popular Walt Disney Corporation. The most famous case being Walt Disney's use of Buster Keaton's Steamboat Bill, as inspiration to create Steamboat Willie, which gave birth to Mickey Mouse. Furthermore, there is an extensive list of public domain works which inspired the Disney Corporation. The list goes on to include Snow White (1937),

Fantasia (1940), Pinocchio (1940), Dumbo (1941), Bambi (1942), Song of the South (1946), Cinderella (1950), Alice in Wonderland (1951), Robin Hood (1952), Peter Pan (1953), Lady and the Tramp (1955), Mulan (1998), Sleeping Beauty (1959), 101 Dalmatians (1961), The Sword in the Stone (1963), The Jungle Book (1967), The Hunchback of Notre Dame (1995), Tarzan (1999), Treasure Planet (2003). As Lessig (2004) points out: "Disney's great genius, the spark of creativity, was built upon the work of others" (p. 22).

In 1998, the Sonny Bono Copyright Extension Act granted the Walt Disney Corporation another twenty years holding of Mickey Mouse's copyrights. The great irony of this story is that in today's copyright law environment Walt Disney's creativity would not have been able to flourish. To explain the Mickey Mouse's copyright extensions story *The Free Culture Project* presentations include Andy Warhol's Mickey Mouse portrait to facilitate a discussion about the origins of Mickey Mouse and the influence of the Disney Corporation to enact the 1998 Copyright Term Extension Act, also known as the Mickey Mouse Protection Act.

The copyright laws that were handed as British legacy, are today the basis of a convoluted, overly complicated "intellectual property" system, which privileges are constantly being extended (Lessig, 2004, p. 221). Therefore, there is a need to rethink these laws to reflect technological advances and societal needs. Vaidhyanathan (2001) states: "When properly balanced, copyright allows users to enjoy the benefits of cultural proliferation at relatively low cost through a limited state-granted monopoly" and goes on to say "But when constructed recklessly, copyright can once again be an instrument of

censorship, just as it was before the Statute of Anne" (p. 182).

Therefore, copyright law as it is applied to digital technologies, does not only control the copies we purchase, but also what we can do with those copies. Often the first sale doctrine does not apply to digital technology, hence sharing becomes illegal even on a fair use or non-commercial basis. As Lessig (2004) points out: "Enabling technology to enforce the control of copyright means that the control of copyright is no longer defined balanced policy. The control of copyright is simply what private owners choose" (p. 147). A Wired magazine article *The End of an Era,* Science writer Steven Johnson (2010) states: "For decades futurists have dreamed of the "universal book": a handheld reading device that would give you instant access to every book in the Library of Congress. In the tablet era, it's no longer technology holding us back from realizing that vision; it's copyright holders." Because copyright law was designed for the book industry during the time of the printing press, the Internet creates a new paradigm for copyright law. For example, when we access a website through our browser we produce a copy which is stored in a folder on our computer. This is called cache and it is designed to speed download time of a website during a future visit. For example, the information displayed in the browser window, such as text and graphics, are downloaded to the browser's memory which is stored on a folder for future use. As Lessig (2004) points out: "Because each use of the Internet produces a copy, use of the Internet becomes subject to the copyright owners control. The technology expands the scope of effective control, because the technology builds a copy into every transaction" (p. 146).

The project based learning style approach used during the workshops introduced the

children to concepts without requiring them to pay attention to a lecture style presentation. The children were introduced to copyright infringement ideas while they searched for resources online to create artwork. They often wondered off from the sources that were provided by the website's curriculum to *Google Search* instead, where they found and used copyrighted images. Following the project based approach, the children were introduced to copyright infringement while they browsed the Internet for sources to create the collages.

THE INTERNET

The Internet network was designed by the United States government during the Cold War as a strategy to prevent vital information from being lost in the event of a nuclear attack (Abbate, 1999, p. 39). The network would keep information backed up in many locations so in the event of one location going offline, the information could still be retrieved from another location within the network. This created a decentralized system in which each node was equally relevant (Hafner and Lyon, 1996. p. 58).

In 1992, this network allowed the academic field to develop the World Wide Web (WWW), to share academic papers. The WWW was designed and developed by Tim Berners-Lee with one goal in mind, to easily share information. The basic principle of the architecture of the Internet is to offer equal access to information, distributed over the network of servers (Zittran, 2008, p. 33). The end-to-end architecture of the Internet allows for information to be transported from devices at the end of the network and keeps the network simple. In Tim Berners-Lee's (1999) own words: "There's a freedom about the Internet: as long as we accept the rules of sending packets around, we can send packets containing anything to anywhere". New applications "can be brought to the Internet without the need for any changes to the underlying network" (Berners-Lee, 1999, as cited in Lessig 2001). Lawrence Lessig (2001) points out that "the end-to-end principle renders the Internet an *innovation commons* where innovators can develop and deploy new applications or content *without the permission of anyone else"* (Lessig, 2001, p. 40). This medium, built on an end-to-end architecture, presents endless opportunities to access information and share culture.

Today the decentralized end-to-end architecture of the Internet is at stake. The battle to conserve the original design of the architecture of the Internet through net neutrality is being lost to Internet service providers who want to exert more control over the network. The Free Press non-profit organization is at the forefront of the fight to keep the Internet's core principles of equality, openness and freedom for all it's users alive. The Free Press provides the following definition of net neutrality: "Net Neutrality means no discrimination. It prevents Internet Service Providers from speeding up or slowing down Web content based on its source, ownership or destination. It ensures that we can connect online with anyone we want, share any content, get any information, visit any site and say what we want online, free from discrimination or interference. With Net Neutrality, the network's only job is to move data – not to pick and choose which data to privilege with better service" (The Free Press, 2010). On the other hand, Internet Service Providers such as Comcast, Verizon and AT&T want to de-regulate the Internet so they will be able to change the first come first serve principle of the Internet.

The Internet, as Lawrence Lessig (2001) explains, has produced "something fantastic and new" but because big media corporations feel threatened by this new medium, they are pushing the government to change the laws to protect the old against the new and in the process they are "destroying something very old" (Lessig, 2001, para. 29). In Lawrence Lessig's (2004) own words: "The law's role is less and less to support creativity, and more and more to protect certain industries against competition" (p. 33).

THE FREE SOFTWARE MOVEMENT

As previously noted, the *Free Culture Project* is inspired by the free software movement philosophy and values. The Free Software Movement is the brainchild of programmer, activist and writer Richard M. Stallman. In 1984, while working at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Richard M. Stallman, upon finding himself helpless trying to access the source code to fix a computer software flaw of a printer, decided to found the Free Software Foundation (FSF). Therefore he started the foundation with the goal of developing an operating system that would be free and open for everybody to use and contribute. The vision that Stallman had was to create a community of programmers that would contribute to the development of free software (Moody, 2002, p. 19). To protect the code from being closed, Stallman wrote a General Public License (GPL) which enabled programers to release software source code and ensure that it would remain free and open for others to use (Sustein, 2006, p. 169).

To make sure the operating system would succeed, Stallman used the basic structure of AT&T's system Unix as a template. By doing this, he made sure it was compatible with Unix applications which were highly disseminated at the time (Moody, 2002, p. 61). He released the software under the name GNU (GNU is Not Unix) and licensed it with the GPL. While he developed the software, he kept releasing the code so others could contribute to the project. Subsequently, in 1991 due to the availability of the GNU tools, a Swedish computer science student at the University of Helsinki by the name of Linus Torvalds, developed the Linux kernel and posted the source code back on the Internet so others could use it and contribute to it's evolution. Linus's contribution to the GNU

project become known as the Linux/GNU operating system (Moody, 2002, p. 296). Today, this operating system, built upon collaboration, has become a highly sophisticated operating system which can be found in many video devices, cellular phones and cars and it runs approximately more than one third of servers that make up the Internet (Sustein, 2006, p. 169). This success can be partly attributed to the communitarian nature of free software development. Eric S. Raymon (1999) explains in his book *The Cathedral and the Bazaar* that the bazaar style of developing software allows more minds to access, test and debug the source code, stating that: "Given enough eyeballs, all bugs are shallow." While the cathedral style of development is described a closed process where only a limited amount of programers have access to the code (p. 8).

To ensure that free software would not be turned into proprietary software Richard M. Stallman conceived Copyleft.

> In Stallman's own (1996) words: "To copyleft a program, we first state that it is copyrighted; then we add distribution terms, which are a legal instrument that gives everyone the rights to use, modify, and redistribute the program's code or any program derived from it but only if the distribution terms are unchanged. Thus, the code and the freedoms become legally inseparable" (p. 97).

Consequently, "copyleft" guarantees that free software always remains free and transparent for others to contribute. This applies as well to derivative work created from free software. Lawrence Lessig explains it best in the introduction to the *Free Software, Free Society: Selected Essays of Richard M. Stallman*. he (2004) says:

> If you use and adapt a free software program, and then release that adapted version to

> the public, the released version must be as free as the version it was adapted from. It must, or the law of copyright will be violated. (p. 12)

The term "free" refers to freedom and not to price.

> Stallman outlines the four principles of free software as:
>
> 1) You have the freedom to run the program, for any purpose.
>
> 2) You have the freedom to modify the program to suit your needs.
>
> 3) You have the freedom to redistribute copies, either gratis or for a fee.
>
> 4) You have the freedom to distribute modified versions of the program, so that the community can benefit from your improvements. (p. 20)

Copyleft and Stallman's communitarian and sharing principles are the source of inspiration of Creative Commons licenses. Next we will explore their history and contribution.

CREATIVE COMMONS

To promote creativity and innovation within a legal framework, a new movement that builds upon copyright law has emerged. This movement is inspired partly by the Free Software Foundation's GNU General Public License (GNU GPL), and builds upon the system of copyright to grant permissions to share creative works.

Creative Commons (CC) was founded in 2001 by Lawrence Lessig, Hal Abelson and Eric Eldred with the support of the Center for the Public Domain with the purpose to provide free tools to license works to be shared and remixed. The CC website defines CC as a "nonprofit corporation dedicated to making it easier for people to share and build upon the work of others, consistent with the rules of copyright. We provide free licenses and other legal tools to mark creative work with the freedom the creator wants it to carry, so others can share, remix, use commercially, or any combination thereof." (About page)

Creative Commons currently offers six licenses:

- Attribution, Attribution-NoDerivs,
- Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs,
- Attribution-NonCommercial,
- Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike,
- Attribution-ShareAlike.

The system is set up with a series of easily identifiable icons that denote the status of the work published under the Creative Commons license. The descriptions to the icons are as follows:

- Attribution: "You let others copy, distribute, display, and perform your copyrighted

work — and derivative works based upon it — but only if they give credit the way you request."

- Share Alike "You allow others to distribute derivative works only under a license identical to the license that governs your work."
- Non-Commercial "You let others copy, distribute, display, and perform your work — and derivative works based upon it — but for non-commercial purposes only."
- No Derivative Works "You let others copy, distribute, display, and perform only verbatim copies of your work, not derivative works based upon it."

The success of Creative Commons Licenses, since their conception in 2001, is estimated at an approximate three hundred and fifty million licensed works (Lessig, 2009, presentation). For the purpose of the workshops, the participants will only be introduced to the Share Alike Attribution license, but will be encouraged to visit the Creative Commons website for more information about other available licenses.

THE FREE CULTURE PROJECT

As a possible solution to the problems outlined, I propose *The Free Culture Project.* *The Free Culture Project* is designed to educate children about free culture through project based learning to allow them to generate free culture and contribute to enriching their culture. The methodology of the project is to deliver the message in a series of workshops, where the participants use free software and resources available for download from the Internet, to create free culture and share it. The goal of the workshops is to get children involved in participating in the creation of a culture that is free from the draconian constraints of current copyright law.

While sharing and community values are essential to a healthy society, today large media corporations are criminalizing the act of sharing and labeling users who share with their neighbors and friends as pirates and thieves. The same actions that in the physical world were covered by the first sale doctrine, in the digital world are considered a crime. These laws are relegating and alienating a whole generation of authors by accusing them of being pirates and thieves and creating an underground culture that breaks the law daily. Therefore, the project will educate children of the Digital Native Generation about free culture through project based learning, by offering them the opportunity to use free software and content. These tools will allow them to liberate their culture from the constraints of copyright by producing and sharing free content to publish under alternative licenses or release it to the public domain. Next will examine the Digital Native Generation.

DIGITAL NATIVES

The project is designed for teenagers and younger adults, also known as the Digital Native generation. Therefore, to gain some insight into the Digital Native generation, we will turn to Palfrey and Gasser's book "*Digital Natives: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives"* and to Mark Prensky's 2001 pivotal article "*Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants*". In this article, Prensky coined the term Digital Natives and described them as the generation born after 1980, when digital technologies had already been developed. He describes this generation as growing up surrounded by and immersed in new digital technologies such as personal computers, the Internet, mobile phones and video games. For this generation, digital technology is an inherent part of their daily life. In his 2005 book "Don't bother me mom I am learning" Marc Prensky describes the life of Digital Natives as a "wireless, multi-user, creative, collaborative, full of exciting experiences, experiences that they get everywhere but in school" (Prensky, 2005, p. 139). Therefore, in order to create an engaging environment and retain Digital Natives, attention and interest. *The Free Culture Project* presents free software to remix media as well as draw inspiration from YouTube videos.

There are two main reasons why I choose Digital Natives to be the recipients of the *The Free Culture Project's* message. First, 93% of teenagers in the United States are online as major content creators and consumers of online media. In 2007, the Pew Internet & American Life Project found that "64% of online teens ages 12-17 have participated in one or more among a wide range of content-creating activities on the internet, up from 57% of online teens in a similar survey at the end of 2004" (p. 25).

Second, there is something fundamentally wrong with teaching our children to share but when they share online accuse them of piracy. Palfrey and Gasser (2008) state that today: "the vast majority of Digital Natives are breaking copyright laws on a regular basis" (p. 132). Unfortunately, there is much confusion about what is considered an online piracy crime, partly due to the differences between property rights and intellectual property rights in new digital delivery platforms. Therefore there is a need for teenagers to learn about copyright law and its constraints in order to become responsible citizens.

The *Free Culture Project* provides a gateway to learn about basic concepts of copyright law and provides the tools to research further such as The Electronic Frontier Foundation project *Teaching Copyright. Teaching Copyright* provides teachers with a curriculum to educate teenagers about copyright law in a positive manner instead of delivering the common messages of the dangers of piracy which are so prevalent in the advertising campaigns produced by the media industry. The curriculum introduces students to the relationship between copyright, technology and law (Teaching Copyright, 2010).

The *Free Culture Project* aims at engendering a participatory culture in which sharing and community values allow individuals to explore the possibilities of human collaboration and it's benefits to culture and society. Palfrey and Gasser (2008) define participatory culture as "A culture in which people are encouraged to share their innovations and creativity" (p. 348). Henry Jenkins, co-director of the MIT Comparative Media Studies Program, (2006**)** states five key points about participatory culture:

1. There are relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement;

2. There is strong support for creating and sharing what you create with others;
3. There is some kind of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced gets passed along to newbies;
4. Members feel that their contributions matter; and
5. Members feel some degree of social connection with each other, at least to the degree to which they care about what other people think about what they have created (Mac Arthur Foundation).

Ultimately, the goal of the project is to help Digital Natives generate free culture and help them restore copyright law to it's original purpose by reinstating the balance between public and private interests.

FREE CULTURE PROJECT WORKSHOPS

The workshop curriculum engages participants through a four step process; create, share, remix, and publish. The steps are designed to help the participants learn concepts at each step of the way but always allow room for or openness and for improvisation during the progress of the workshop.

The concepts are:

1. Create: Free Software, Free Resources, Free Culture.
2. Share: The Internet, Net Neutrality, Free Software Movement.
3. Remix: Public Domain, Fair Use.
4. Publish: Copyright, Copyleft, Creative Commons.

The objective of the project is to educate through project based learning while having fun creating artwork or music.

The first workshop consisted of ten children ranging ages ten to fifteen years old who were recruited at the local Boys and Girls Club after school program in Carbondale, IL. The workshops were scheduled for two sessions of two hours each as part of a yearly Math, Arts, Science and Technology (MAST) Festival organized by the Club. The workshops were conducted at the Mass Communication and Media Arts New Media Center at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale. Originally, the workshops were scheduled for the Boys and Girls Club computer lab, but due to technical difficulties with outdated computers they were moved to the Southern Illinois University facilities. This partially changed the plan for the workshops by changing the operating system from the free software Linux to proprietary Macintosh.

The first workshop instructed the children to use the free image editing software Gimp to create a collage with free images and graphics downloaded online. Additionally, the children were given a 1GB USB drive set up to boot from any Intel machine manufactured after 2003. The USB drives were preinstalled with Puppy Linux and Gimp so they could use the software at the Boys and Girls Club computer lab. Macintosh live CDs were also offered to the children that owned an Apple computer, only one child took one to use on their sibling's computer. The USB drives were donated by the Southeast Missouri Hospital of Cape Girardeau, Missouri.

The workshop started with a brief presentation of the project and website. The website served as a gateway to talk about free software and free resources while following the workshop's project curriculum. The curriculum consisted of the creation of a collage to explain a story visually. The participants were required to use a minimum of three public domain images to tell their story. The story topics included but were not restricted to, social commentary, your favorite things, a personal story, an abstract self-portrait or a portrait. Once they decided the theme, they proceeded to search for images online which proved to be a distracting task.

During the first workshop the children had a hard time focusing during the task of retrieving images to compose their collage. Instead they wandered online, took photos with the Macintosh *Photo Booth* application and checked their *Facebook* accounts. Therefore, for the second workshop, the children were asked to gather around a central table to discuss the themes and ideas for their projects. The children were given a pen and a piece of paper so they could write down while they brainstormed ideas and possible

resources that would help them convey their message graphically. It is worth noting, that during this process, most participants preferred using copyrighted images such as their favorite comic characters, musicians and products. This provided an opportunity to introduce the concept of fair use.

Once the participants had written their ideas, they proceeded to browse for content on the resources section provided in the website. A brief introduction to the most useful tools in Gimp was given along with demonstrations. Some of the participants had previous experience with the software and during the second workshop they chose to volunteer to present their work and share their knowledge and skills with each other. In total, four of the ten the students chose to demonstrate their favorite tools and present some useful features of the program, while showing the work they accomplished during the first workshop session. This willingness to share their previous acquired knowledge and listen to each other was in no small part the success of the workshops.

After the brainstorming session reached its end the participants sat at the computers and visited the project website to find the links to the public domain images. This was a fun experience as they downloaded images and discussed their decisions with each other. Nevertheless, it was hard to reach a point in where they had enough material to start remixing in the image editing software Gimp given the time constraints. The results of the workshop were thus unsatisfactory if we evaluate them following the project and curriculum goal. The children each had two sessions lasting two hours, but they did not manage to accomplish enough work to be shared upon completion. The idea for the workshop was to create a collage during the first session and share it and remix it during

the second session. The software learning process took longer than expected and keeping the participants focused while having access to the web was a challenge. Nonetheless, the basic goal of introducing concepts such as free culture, free software and the original design and architecture of the Internet in a project based learning environment was successful. During the first workshop sessions the concept of free software, free resources, public domain, copyright, copyleft, and fair use were introduced.

The last two steps of the curriculum were dismissed due to the lack of completed works. In the event that the digital collages had been completed, the participants would have been given the choice to upload their artwork to *The Free Culture Project* Flickr account and have their remixed images showcased in *The Free Culture Project's* website homepage. Furthermore, during this phase the participants would also be introduced to Creative Commons Attribution-Share-Alike license. The Flickr "online photo management and sharing application" provides participants with an easy system to license their graphics under Creative Commons licenses. Therefore, publishing the art pieces online opens an opportunity to learn about Copyright, Copyleft and Creative Commons Licenses.

The resources section will include links to websites with shareware, freeware, and other resources to aid the children in the process of creating multimedia pieces that will describe how they understand the idea of free culture and the future of the Internet.

In conclusion, the *The Free Culture Project* outcomes were unexpected. As previously stated, the participants were recruited from the after school program at the Boys and Girls Club in Carbondale with the aim to offer under privileged children the

opportunity to acquire skills to express themselves. Although the participants had a lot of fun with the workshops, educating Digital Natives proved more challenging than I had imagined. There were minor difficulties due to their short attention span and a constant distraction due to the uncensored and unlimited access to the Internet. Nevertheless, the project based learning approach was very successful due to the high engagement levels with the creative projects. The children were able to take breaks from their projects to discuss concepts, ask questions and interact with each other.

WEBSITE DESIGN & USABILITY TESTING

The website goal is to serve as a companion tool to the workshops. The main challenge for the design of the website was to engage the N-Gen (Network Generation), or Digital Native generation, who are avid Internet surfers with extremely short attention spans. Therefore, the target audience online behavior was taken into consideration when designing the information and as a content delivery strategy. To capture their attention the website uses Web 2.0 technologies to minimize loading times and whenever possible offers a one-click path to essential content. Additionally, the home page presents two entryways to the workshop companion resources to give the user multiple choices and reinforce the websites message.

The logo is positioned diagonally to direct the user towards the main focal point which contains the introductory message. The introduction explains the purpose of the Free Culture Project and actively engages the user by speaking directly to them with appropriate language. The message says: "What's this all about? Let's make something together! Using free resources available online we can create free culture, share it with our friends and have fun remixing."

The information is divided into four sections which are mirrored in the main navigation located in the main container, which serves as a focal point and the sub navigation bar. The purpose of this strategy is to have two entry points to the information and provide additional information of what it is to be expected from clicking on a section. The sections are divided into "about", "create", "share", and "tools."

The "about" section explains the purpose of the project and invites the users to

participate in the creation of free culture. Furthermore, the section provides information about Free Culture, the Internet, Public Domain and the Open Source Movement. Free Culture is presented by providing an explanation of the current state of free culture: "Today keeping culture free and open is increasingly difficult due to the excessive power of copyright law in the hands of corporations. Technological advances such as the Internet and the Web combined with our outdated copyright law make sharing and creating culture online a crime. This project aims to return culture to the hands of people from the current corporate lock down." Also provided is a link to the free culture student organization website is provided so the users can acquire information and get involved.

The Internet is presented with a brief explanation that states: "The Internet was created with the idea in mind to share information and knowledge and in 1994 the World Wide Web was born empowering users to share even more. Today due to outdated copyright laws the same sharing that is perfectly legal in the physical world is considered a crime online." Also provided is a link to Melih Bilgil *The History of the Internet* animation. The author accomplished the animation with icons he designed as a way to find a "standard and reduced sign system for electronic communication" (Melih Bilgil, 2010). The icons are available to download for free online under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike license.

The concept of public domain is presented with a brief definition that states: "In the United States copyright is automatic. This means that when you create a piece of art, music or other creative work, the law automatically copyrights/protects your work. By current law your creative work will be protected during your life plus 70 years. If you

want to share your work and allow others to use it, you can donate it to the public domain or utilize a Creative Commons license."

The Free Software Movement presents it's origins and goals. The description states; "Richard Stallman created the free software movement and foundation as an alternative to proprietary software. The free software foundation promotes access to software and the ability to contribute, modify and distribute software freely." Also provided, is a link to the Free Software Foundation website.

The "create" section contains the curriculum, inspiration and resources for the workshops. Currently there are two available workshops; a digital art project to make a collage by gathering free public domain images and combining them with the image editing software Gimp and another to compose a song using the sound recording and editing software Audacity. The free resources include links to websites with free photography.

The "tools" section introduces the participants to free resources such as the operating system GNU/Linux, the web browser Firefox, the sound recording and editing software Audacity and the image editing software Gimp.

Due to the children's requests during the first workshop to create music, a curriculum was developed to use the free software Audacity and samples from the *Free Sound Project*, to compose a sound collage or piece of music. The workshop started with a presentation of the *Free Culture Project*, free software and the project curriculum. During this session, the children's engagement levels were much higher than the previous image editing workshop. This fact can be attributed partly due to their common interest

in music as well as the limitation of the Web sources to just the *Free Sound Project* sample library.

During the first audio editing workshop a demonstration of the *Free Sound Project* website was followed by an audio editing demo with Audacity. The children learned how to download and save samples from the *Free Sound Project* website and import them into Audacity, where they mixed them to create their own compositions. During the presentation, a slideshow of inspirational pieces was presented with mashup videos from YouTube. The mashup videos ranged from a song made from tutorials on how to play an instrument to a techno remix of the movie Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.

During the first workshop session, the participants were able to accomplish the curriculum goals and during the second session they created more songs as well as remixed their peer's pieces from the previous session. The participants requested that all the songs be arranged together as a soundtrack for the images created during the image editing workshop and uploaded to YouTube. To assemble the images and audio into a video, the free video editing program Kino for Linux was used. The final piece can be found at *The Free Culture Project* website along with the individual music and image pieces. YouTube did not only serve as an inspiration during the curriculum presentation but was also a big distraction while they worked on their image editing pieces as well as their audio pieces.

For the third workshop there were nine participants ranging from ages ten to thirteen years old. The session started by introducing the children to the project curriculum in the website followed by examples and inspirational pieces. Some of the children had already

participated in previous workshops where they had learned the skills to create artwork using the image editing software Gimp. For those that had no experience using Gimp, a quick intro to the basic tools was demoed. The children quickly learned new tools on their own and shared their discoveries with each other. By the end of the session they had accomplished a collage which was saved for them to show their peers during the second workshop. Just as in the first image editing workshop, while the children showed their artwork they taught their peers the tools used to achieve the end results. The goal of the workshop was to remix the work of others, yet during the second workshop the children preferred to create new pieces or continue to work on their own pieces from the previous workshops. The culmination of the project is to offer the children the opportunity to upload their work to a Flickr account and license their work with Creative Commons. Although the children were introduced to Creative Commons and their licenses, due to time constraints, they did not upload their pieces to the Web. They were very enthusiastic about sharing their pieces with others and granted their permission to upload the pieces to *The Free Culture Project* website, Flickr account and YouTube. While the workshops were in session, the Boys and Girls Club received new computers as a donation by a local company. Therefore, the *Free Culture Project* will continue to offer workshops at the club during the month of July as well as Sunday mornings during the Fall 2010. The new computer lab will offer the opportunity to use USB drives to boot Linux to run free software available to download from the resources area in the website.

The website works as a companion tool for the workshops where participants can find inspiration, resources and additional information about the topics covered during the

sessions. The website is designed with a modernist, minimalist approach which merges Swiss modernism design and the Swiss grid with post modern grunge style which is designed to capture Digital Natives short attention spans. This design approach is best described by Curt Cloninger as a "A personal working out of modernist principles as they inform a new way of making in a new post-print medium" (Cloninger, 2008, p. 45). He refers to this style as the Late(st) Modern and defines it's creators as: "A new genre of designers arise who are bored with the anarchy of postmodern design. They seek to reclaim the beauty and intention of Swiss modernism, but playfully, without all of its quasi-religious regulations and inhibitions. Their design style might be called neomodern or post-postmodern, but I call it Late(st) Modern. My term is meant to indicate the "latest," most contemporary approach to modernism. Any contemporary designer working experimentally (and not merely imitatively) in a properly modernist style is a Late(st) Modern designer." The author provides an example of this design approach, with the work of Wolfgang Weingart who, "took the established rules of modernism and began purposefully and rigorously breaking them-not to irreverently and anarchically destroy modernism, but to it to a place of greater freedom and beauty" (Cloninger, 2008, p. 45).

The web usability testing was conducted through emailing a link to the website and a link to an online questionnaire form to Southern Illinois University students who had not previously been exposed to the website or project. The questionnaire was designed to identify design and communication flaws by asking the users to consider the following statements and rate them from strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, to strongly disagree.

The statements include:

1. The website's home page communicates it's purpose and mission.
2. It is easy to navigate through this website.
3. It is easy to find what I want on this website.
4. This website loads too slowly.
5. The graphics on this website are pleasing.
6. It is easy to use this site upon my first visit.
7. Clicking on links takes me to what I expect.
8. The organization of information on the website is clear.
9. The website sections and subsections are clear.
10. I often felt lost while navigating through the website.
11. The website's copy is hard to decipher.

Below are the statement answers with a explanation for the :

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	xxxxxxx	xxxxx	x	x	
2	xxxxxxxxxx	xx	xx		
3	xxxxx	xxxxxxxxx			
4				xxxxx	xxxxxxxxx
5	xxxxxxxxxx	xxx	x		
6	xxxxxx	xxxxxx	xx		
7	xxxx	xxxxxxx	xxx		
8	xxxxxx	xxxxxxx			x
9	xxxxxx	xxxxxxx		x	
10			x	xxxxxxxxx	xxxx
11			x	xxxxx	xxxxxxxx

Below are listed the results for the questionnaire statements and question.

Statement #1: "The website's home page communicates it's purpose and mission."

Strongly agree 7

Agree 5

Neutral 1

Disagree 1

Strongly disagree 0

Interpretation: In general, the users understood the purpose of the website, but two persons answered neutral and disagree, which denoted a need to re-write the copy to clarify the website's purpose. The comments section of the questionnaire provided more insight into user A confusion. User A states: "The only thing I felt could use some work is the about on the home page. Without clicking the learn more link it's kind of unclear what we can create here. Are we creating websites, graphics, audio files or all of the and above." The comment was taken into consideration and changed from: "What's this all about? Let's make something together! Using free resources available online we can create free culture, share it with our friends and have fun remixing. Click here to learn more..." to "What's this all about? *The Free Culture Project* invites you to attend free software workshops where we use free software and free resources to create free culture and share it with our friends. Click here to learn more..."

Statement #2: "It is easy to navigate through this website."

Strongly agree 10

Agree 2

Neutral 2

Disagree 0

Strongly disagree 0

Interpretation: The neutral answers were reflected by this comment: "Very well done, I really like the simplicity and graphics of the website! Only one comment -when you click on sub menu on the main page, the layout changes, and it takes couple of minutes to figure out what is what. Other than that, it's very impressive!." Which prompted the addition a side navigation into the interior page layout.

Statement #3: "It is easy to find what I want on this website."

Strongly agree 5

Agree 9

Neutral 0

Disagree 0

Strongly disagree 0

Interpretation: These results confirmed the design decision to make all information accessible in less than two clicks.

Statement #4: "This website loads too slowly."

Strongly agree 0

Agree 0

Neutral 0

Disagree 5

Strongly disagree 9

Interpretation: No additional comments were made in regards to the speed of the graphics loading.

Statement #5: "The graphics on this website are pleasing."

Strongly agree 10

Agree 3

Neutral 1

Disagree 0

Strongly disagree 0

Interpretation: This statement was relative to the aesthetic taste of the users. Most of the answers were satisfactory except one neutral answer.

Statement #6: "It is easy to use this site upon my first visit"

Strongly agree 6

Agree 6

Neutral 2

Disagree 0

Strongly disagree 0

Interpretation: This statement had two neutral answers. Additionally, in the comments section user C stated: "With the horizontal navigation at the top, I didn't get right away that you had to click on the images to get to that section (i.e. for create, click on the laptop). I think it's cool to have that on the main page as an overview of everything and the image rollovers are really cool, but as it is it's a little confusing the first time. (Even though the images say "click here," on first glance I didn't catch that." In this response the user implies that the website required a learning curve to get acquainted with the design layout and the information architecture.

Statement # 7: "Clicking on links takes me to what I expect"

Strongly agree 4

Agree 7

Neutral 3

Disagree 0

Strongly disagree 0

Interpretation: The replies to this statement prompted another design change as three users answered neutral which lead to the conclusion that they were confused about the website structure and layout.

Statement #8: "The organization of information on the website is clear"

Strongly agree 9

Agree 5

Neutral 0

Disagree 0

Strongly disagree 0

Interpretation: No additional comments were made in regards to the speed of the graphics loading.

Statement #9: "The website sections and subsections are clear"

Strongly agree 6

Agree 7

Neutral 0

Disagree 1

Strongly disagree 0

Interpretation: The same user that disagreed with the statement was labeled user E. The offered advice to ease the navigation of the website's sub-sections. The advice was taken into consideration by adding a side navigation to the interior pages. This side navigation is designed to hold all the content from the home page bottom bar sub-section navigation. User E stated: "When visiting a subcategory page (i.e. Under 'About', I clicked on 'Free Culture'), it would be much easier if the entire About-Crete-Share-Tools directory was still present (on the side, on the bottom) of the subcategory page. I was forced to return to home to re-navigate the subdirectory pages."

Statement #10: "I often felt lost while navigating through the website"

Strongly agree 0

Agree 0

Neutral 1

Disagree 9

Strongly disagree 4

Interpretation: User B answered "neutral" and stated: "Very well done, I really like the simplicity and graphics of the website! Only one comment -when you click on sub menu on the main page, the layout changes, and it takes couple of minutes to figure out what is what. Other than that, it`s very impressive!." This lead to the conclusion that adding a side navigation to the interior page layout would smooth the design change transition. The users' answers to statement number eleven, "The website's copy is hard to decipher" were: 0 strongly agreed, 0 agree, 1 neutral, 5 disagree, 8 strongly disagree.

The last form field was labeled "Additional Comments" and it is designed to provide users with a field to send their written opinions. The participants sent a mixture of useful critique style comments which were taken into account and positive feedback style comments which did not serve to improve the website. Below are the comments which were implemented to the design.

User A stated: "The only thing I felt could use some work is the about on the home page. Without clicking the learn more link it's kind of unclear what we can create here. Are we creating websites, graphics, audio files or all of the and above."

User B stated: "Very well done, I really like the simplicity and graphics of the website! Only one comment -when you click on sub menu on the main page, the layout changes, and it takes couple of minutes to figure out what is what. Other than that, it's very impressive!

User C stated: "With the horizontal navigation at the top, I didn't get right away that you had to click on the images to get to that section (i.e. for create, click on the laptop). I think it's cool to have that on the main page as an overview of everything and the image rollovers are really cool, but as it is it's a little confusing the first time. (Even though the images say "click here," on first glance I didn't catch that)."

User D stated: "On the workshop pages, I think it could be cool to integrate the slideshows into that page, instead of having to click on a link to see the slideshow. If I wanted to upload something in the sound workshop, how would I do that?"

User E stated: "When visiting a subcategory page (i.e. Under 'About', I clicked on 'Free Culture'), it would be much easier if the entire About-Crete-Share-Tools directory was still present (on the side, on the bottom) of the subcategory page. I was forced to return to home to re-navigate the subdirectory pages."

In conclusion, conducting web usability testing proved to be extremely helpful to identify flaws that were not detected by the small group of people who had access to the website. Since the testing was sent by email and submitted through a anonymous online questionnaire the users were free to criticize the website without feeling intimidated. The website was modified according to the feedback received during the testing which improved the effectiveness to communicate to the audience.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, my aim is not to advocate or abolish copyright. I agree with Lessig, Litman, Vaidhyanathan, Netanel and the U.S. Constitution founders that when copyright law is well balanced with the public interest, it is an essential tool to grant authors incentives to produce works and promote the progress of art and science. Unfortunately, today the influence of media corporations is constantly expanding the scope of reach of copyright laws and eroding the necessary balance between private interest and the public good. For the last decade the balance has been tipping in favor of the protection of media corporation's interests and their business models at the expense of the evolution of culture towards an innovative and creative society. As Lessig (2001) states: "In the push to give copyright owners control over their content, copyright holders also receive the ability to protect themselves against innovations that might threaten existing business models. The law becomes a tool to assure that new innovations don't displace old ones—when instead, the aim of copyright and patent law should be, as the U.S. Constitution requires, to "promote the progress of science and useful arts."

These events have translated into a lock down on culture due to the effective nature of digital technologies as tools not only to copy but to control. This control enables media corporations to extend copyright further than ever before in history. Furthermore, the present state of copyright law when combined with the current net neutrality battle to control the means to distribute culture freely over the Internet, create an environment that strangles creativity and innovation. Therefore, as a possible solution, I propose *The Free Culture Project,* which offers tools to educate the youth about the basics of copyright law

while participating in the creation of free culture with the end goal of offering them a path to their own alternative system. This would be a system that allows Digital Natives to practice their natural talents for remixing and sharing freely.

Moreover, the project aims to educate through constructive means, instead of the current the media industry fear tactics that label individuals that create non-commercial media, for the love of creating media, as pirates and thieves. Hence, instead of teaching copyright law through the media industry's advertisement campaign based approach, a project based learning approach would prove more effective to engage Digital Natives who thrive remixing media. *The Free Culture Project* initiative can be transferred from after school programs to schools to encourage young children to explore copyright law through curriculums such as the previously introduced Electronic Frontier Foundation *Teaching Copyright Project.*

Ultimately, *The Free Culture Project* goal is to empower our children to become creators of culture, and change the dynamic from passive consumers of mass media to active producers so they can become responsible citizens that produce and consume information in the digital era.

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APPENDICES


MASTFEST
BOYS & GIRLS CLUB
OF CARBONDALE
Let's create
artwork together using FREE
software & resources
available online!
Thursday & Friday
JOIN US
April 15&16
@ the computer lab!
www.freeculturepro ject.org
free
culture
project