

annual report



 **creative
commons**

2025

About this Open Work

"Globe" by [A S Morton](#) is
licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#).



About this Open Work

"colorful umbrellas" by [Ashwin John](#) is licensed under [CC BY-SA 2.0](#).

About Us

Creative Commons (CC) is the global nonprofit organization behind the CC licenses and public domain tools, which power open sharing on popular platforms like Wikipedia, Flickr, YouTube, Medium, Vimeo, and Khan Academy. Since 2002, the CC licenses have served as an alternative to traditional copyright, providing a simple, standardized, and legal way for individuals and institutions to freely share images, music, research, educational resources, and cultural artifacts.

Chief Executive Officer
Anna Tumadóttir

General Counsel
Sarah Pearson

2025 Board of Directors

Alwaleed Alkhaja
Marta Belcher
Glenn Otis Brown
James Grimmelmann

Lawrence Lessig **Emeritus*
Angela Oduor Lungati
Melissa Hagemann
Melissa Omino

Colin Sullivan
Jeni Tennison
Luis Villa

Except where otherwise noted, “Annual Report 2025” by [Creative Commons](#) is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#).

A Note from our CEO

The commons did not emerge by accident. It was built through coordinated investments in legal tools, technical infrastructure, and shared norms. CC played a central role in that transformation, helping establish the systems that made open sharing scalable and sustainable.

What 2025 taught us is that to protect sharing in this AI-mediated world, we need the next generation of legal, technical, and social systems to ensure that creators and institutions remain active participants in how knowledge is produced, shared, and used.

The work we accomplished in 2025 is a testament to sustaining our CC license infrastructure while building for the future.

We published *[From Human Content to Machine Data](#)* and released a paper prototype of our [CC signals framework](#). Now, we're working with our community and partners to vet priority sectors and implementers, while researching how to bring legal enforceability to CC signals.

In 2025, we also expanded our Open Heritage Coalition (OHC) to 70 member organizations across 25 countries, and CC was declared an official UNESCO NGO partner (consultative status). In October, the OHC officially launched the [Open Heritage Statement](#), an important step toward the adoption of a UNESCO Recommendation on Open Heritage.

We worked with some of the world's largest intergovernmental climate data organizations to implement our climate data sharing recommendations. We also saw meaningful growth in researchers choosing CC BY licenses for their research preprints.

As we head into 2026, our 25th anniversary, we'll carry this momentum forward, committed as ever to a commons powered by reciprocity and community.

Anna Tumadóttir, CEO



About this Open Work

"Anna Tumadóttir portrait at WikiPortraits Studio at SXSW 2025 01" by [Bea Phi](#) is licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](#).



About this Open Work

"bed of flowers" by Pixabay is marked with [CC0](#).

Licenses and Public Domain Tools

The first CC licenses were released in 2002. Today, we steward six CC licenses and two public domain tools, setting a global standard for sharing.

In 2025, we addressed technical debts and modernized our resources, to make both the frontend use and the backend management of the CC licenses more streamlined and accessible. We also launched a new version of our Chooser tool, revamped the infrastructure for our FAQ page, and evolved our overall web design system.

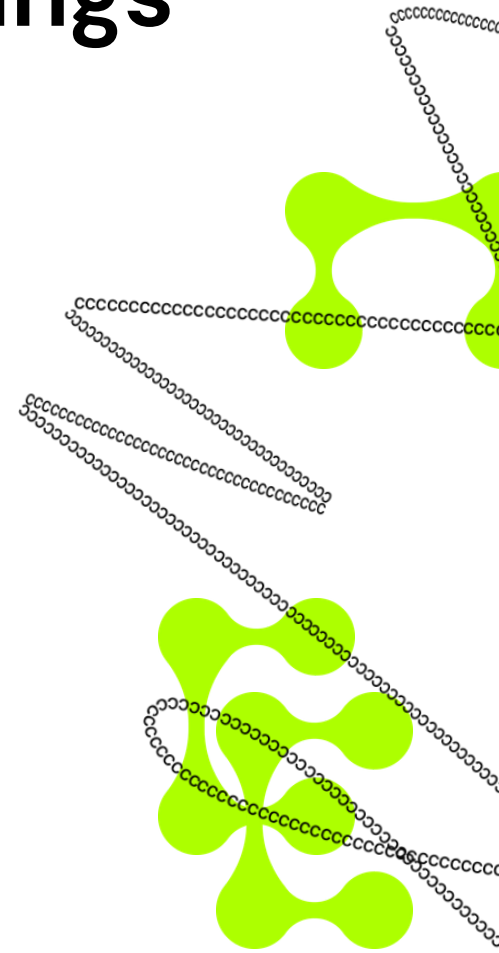
Our Open Infrastructure Circle (OIC) provides vital funding for this work. OIC members support the technical and legal maintenance of our legal tools, which are critical to everything we do.

Thank you to Arcadia Fund, the Gates Foundation, Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, Filecoin Foundation for the Decentralized Web, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Wellcome Trust, William + Flora Hewlett Foundation, Endless, Google Open Source, Siegel Family Endowment, Stanford University Libraries, Microsoft, hmk, Ben Adida, John Seely Brown, Michelson 20MM Foundation, Colin Sullivan, Delia Browne, Glenn O. Brown, and James Grimmelmann for your support in 2025.

CC Certificate & Trainings

Capacity building in how to use CC licenses is key to their adoption. To build capacity with our communities in 2025:

- We offered a ten-week [CC Certificate](#) program tailored to the education and library sectors, as well as galleries, libraries, archives, and museums. We also hosted two CC Certificate bootcamps designed to meet specific institutional goals for the Oklahoma State Regents of Higher Education, and Northland Pioneer College and the Arizona OER consortium. We were able to offer 13 scholarships to community members from 11 countries. To date, we've certified 2,311 graduates across 73 countries. After completing the CC Certificate, alumni engage with the community through advocacy, training, and network building. Read about some of their excellent work in 2025 [shared on Medium](#).
- We partnered with institutions such as MHEC, Library Juice Academy, and BCcampus, which helped us reach new audiences for our CC Certificate courses and 38 additional trainings.
- We also explored new options for microcredentials in 2025. In partnership with Novare Library Services, we offered Niche Academy microcredential courses: "[Novare: The Basics of Copyright, Creative Commons, and Open Licensing with Jennryn Wetzler](#)," and "[Novare: Creative Commons Licenses in Detail with Shanna Hollich](#)." We launched our second Library Juice Academy course, "[Creative Commons Licenses and Copyright: From Concepts to Practice](#)."
- Finally, we provided consulting services to help institutions develop and implement open licensing policies.



About this Open Work

"[library books](#)" by [timetrax23](#) is licensed under [CC BY-SA 2.0](#).





Our Impact

Open Heritage Coalition

Our work in open culture continues to thrive thanks to generous funding from [Arcadia Fund](#).

In 2024, we launched the Open Heritage Coalition (formerly TAROCH, or Towards a Recommendation on Open Cultural Heritage), a global initiative promoting equitable access to public domain heritage in the digital environment. The Coalition's goal is the development and adoption of a UNESCO Recommendation on Open Heritage. Since its launch, the Coalition has grown to 70 organizational members across 25 countries.

In October 2025, the Coalition released the [Open Heritage Statement \(OHS\)](#), which affirms core values, identifies barriers to access, and highlights policy actions. The Statement aims to foster international dialogue and lay the groundwork for a future UNESCO standard-setting instrument.

We marked the launch with a [virtual event](#) on October 14, which was attended by over 200 participants worldwide. Today, more than 90 institutions have [signed](#) the Statement.

Open Climate

In 2023, we secured support from the [Patrick J. McGovern Foundation \(PJMF\)](#) to help open large climate datasets.

In support of these efforts, in 2025 we worked to implement our [Recommendations for Better Sharing of Climate Data](#) with several intergovernmental climate data organizations, including the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the Group on Earth Observations (GEO), and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), as well as the University of Ghana. In May 2025, we attended the GEO Global Forum in Rome to present to world delegations about openly licensing climate data in accordance with our Recommendations. We also met with the UNCCD Chief to make key updates to their data policy, provide open licensing guidance to their country parties, and increase open licensing via improvements to their platform user interface.

About this Open Work

"MPj04394190000[1]" by [albertogp123](#)
is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#).

Openly Licensed Preprints

In 2023, CC secured funding from the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative (CZI) to help make openly licensed preprints the primary vehicle of scientific dissemination.

The 18-month grant enabled CC to collaborate with CZI on a project focused on significantly increasing use of the CC BY 4.0 license on preprints in the life sciences, by working with funders, preprint servers, and other preprint stakeholders. Thanks to this project, four leading preprint servers (arXiv, bioRxiv, medRxiv, and Research Square) now either use CC BY by default, or are updating their content and submission systems to prioritize the selection of CC BY.

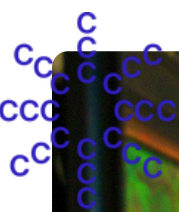
In partnership with 14 funders of open science, we developed a model policy framework for open preprints that affirms that funder policies should strongly recommend or require CC BY licenses. Researchers can also reference a new Wikipedia page on funder licensing policies, as well as educational resources, videos, and webinars to help them choose CC BY for their preprints.

The CZI preprints grant ended in 2025, but our work on openly licensing preprints continues thanks to support from Microsoft and the Gates Foundation.



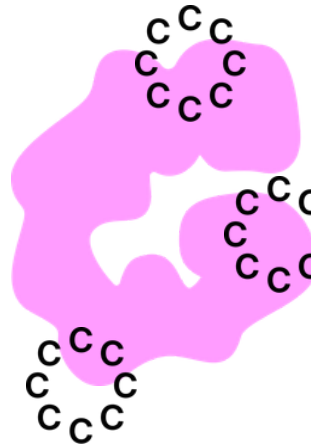
About this Open Work

"Wooden bridge on the Delta Old Growth Nature Trail" by Only in Oregon is licensed under CC BY 2.0.



About this Open Work

"Delaware Art Museum" by -Jeffrey- is licensed under [CC BY-ND 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/2.0/).



2025 Financial Health

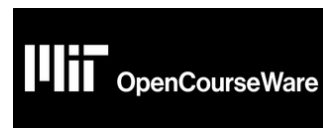
Income

- Foundations** \$3,972,914
- Corporate Sponsors** \$325,000
- Major Donors** \$197,908
- Small Dollar Donors** \$81,516
- Program Income** \$140,967
- Consulting** \$43,612
- In-Kind** \$1,740
- Other** \$191,463
- Total:** \$4,955,120

Expenses

- CC Licenses & Training** \$829,441
- Programs** \$1,584,468
- Operations** \$2,263,294
- Total:** \$4,677,203

Our Supporters



Thank you!



Amateur Radio Digital
Communications
Ben Adida
Brewster & Mary Kahle
Colin Sullivan
Delia Browne
Douglas Van Houweling
Garrett Camp
Gilbert and Tesla
Giving Fund
Holger Kienle
James Grimmelman
Jeff Atwood
John Lloyd
John Seely Brown

Julie Savastopoulos
Lawrence Lessig
Marc Coram
Milo Martin
Nina Stawski
Reid Borsuk
Ted Wang
Ulfried Maiborn
Villa-Nichols Family
Zahavah Levine & Jeff
Meyer

About this Open Work

"Flowers" by [Nouhailer](#) is licensed under [CC BY-SA 2.0](#).



Creative Commons

PO Box 1866
Mountain View CA 94042 USA

+1 415 429 6753
info@creativecommons.org

"Creative Commons Annual Report 2025" is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#).