

# THE NEW WORLD OF DIGITAL COMMONS

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Jonathan Rowe eloquently describes the commons as “the air and oceans, the web of species, wilderness and flowing water—all are parts of the commons. So are language and knowledge, sidewalks and public squares, the stories of childhood and the processes of democracy. Some parts of the commons are gifts of nature, others the product of human endeavor. Some are new, such as the Internet; others are as ancient as soil and calligraphy.”<sup>1</sup>

In **Made with Creative Commons**, we focus on our current era of digital commons, a commons of human-produced works. This commons cuts across a broad range of areas including cultural heritage, education, research, technology, art, design, literature, entertainment, business, and data. Human-produced works in all these areas are increasingly digital. The Internet is a kind of global, digital commons. The individuals, organizations, and businesses we profile in our case studies use

Creative Commons to share their resources online over the Internet.

The commons is not just about shared resources, however. It’s also about the social practices and values that manage them. A resource is a noun, but *to common*—to put the resource into the commons—is a verb.<sup>2</sup> The creators, organizations, and businesses we profile are all engaged with commoning. Their use of Creative Commons involves them in the social practice of commoning, managing resources in a collective manner with a community of users.<sup>3</sup> Commoning is guided by a set of values and norms that balance the costs and benefits of the enterprise with those of the community. Special regard is given to equitable access, use, and sustainability.