

Finding Public Domain and “Some Rights Reserved” Materials for Projects

There are so many great images and sounds available out there on the web. It can be tempting to just grab one and put it in your presentation or on your website. Remember, though, that almost all of the materials you find are protected by copyright. Though it is often possible to use the things you find without breaking the law, why not consider using materials in the public domain or available with “some rights reserved” licenses? Below are some resources to help you get started.

General

Creative Commons

(<http://creativecommons.org>)

CC licenses allow photographers, artists, educators, etc to license their work with only “some rights reserved”. Basically, these licenses give you permission in advance to use the works.

The Internet Archive

(<http://www.archive.org>)

All manner of images, sounds, and texts are available here.

Photos/Images

OpenPhoto (<http://openphoto.net>)

Hundreds of stock photos licensed for free commercial and non-commercial use.

Flickr Creative Commons Pool

(<http://www.flickr.com/creativecommons/>)

Thousands of Creative Commons photos are available on this popular photo-sharing site.

PD Photo (<http://pdphoto.org/>)

Thousands of photos contributed to the public domain.

Open Clip Art (<http://www.openclipart.org/>)

Public domain clip art.

Sounds

FreeSound

(<http://freesound.iua.upf.edu/>)

An archive of freely available, “some rights reserved” sound clips.

Video

The Prelinger Archive

(<http://www.archive.org/details/prelinger>)

Thousands of films from the Prelinger archive of “ephemeral” films.

Bare-bones Copyright Information

Copyright is complex and, to most people, pretty boring. When you’re putting together a presentation, the last thing you want to do is spend a lot of time brushing up on your copyright law.

Here’s what you need to know:

- Copyright is automatic. No notice of copyright is required.
- It lasts a LONG time – 70 years after the death of the author or 95 years for works owned by companies.
- The copyright owner has the *exclusive* right to copy, distribute, display, and perform their work.
- There are exemptions to that exclusive right built into the law but it can be really tricky to figure them out.