

# Openlaw

<http://eon.law.harvard.edu/openlaw/>

Openlaw is an experiment in crafting legal argument in an open forum. With your assistance, we will develop arguments, draft pleadings, and edit briefs in public, online. Non-lawyers and lawyers alike are invited to join the process by adding thoughts to the 'brainstorm' outlines, drafting and commenting on drafts in progress, and suggesting reference sources.

Building on the model of open-source software, we are working from the hypothesis that an open development process best harnesses the distributed resources of the Internet community. By using the Internet, we hope to enable the public interest to speak as loudly as the interests of corporations. Openlaw is therefore a large project built through the coordinated effort of many small (and not so small) contributions.

Openlaw continues to experiment with various collaboration tools to connect its participants.

## Copyright's Commons

<http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/cc/>

Copyright's Commons is a coalition devoted to promoting a vibrant public domain. It is a group of students, teachers, authors, filmmakers, archivists, publishers, and other members of the public who believe in widespread access to creative works. We maintain the web site as a forum for discussion of the public domain. We welcome all comments.

## The importance of the public domain

Public access to literature, art, music, and film is essential to preserving and building on our cultural heritage. Many of the most important works of American culture have drawn upon the creative potential of the public domain. Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* is a classic example of a film that did not enjoy popular success until it entered the public domain. Other icons such as Snow White, Pinocchio, Santa Claus, and Uncle Sam grew out of public domain figures.

Copyright's Commons seeks to invigorate the public domain through a number of projects:

### > **Promoting access to the public domain**

The public domain grows richer as it becomes more accessible. Copyright's Commons provides links to sites that provide widespread dissemination of public domain materials.

> **Fighting against unlimited copyrights**

Last May, Copyright's Commons joined as a plaintiff in the Eldred vs. Reno lawsuit challenging the recent Copyright Term Extension Act. The statute has restricted access to thousands of works that helped define the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and that had been at last slated to enter the public domain.

> **Finding open space**

Cyberspace greatly expands the boundaries – and the creative potential – of the public domain. The 'open-code' and 'openlaw' projects are pioneer efforts to expand the public domain into cyberspace.

> **Launching a counter-copyright campaign**

By marking their works with a [cc], and a link to the Copyright's Commons web site, authors invite others to use and build upon their works. A counter-copyright does not replace a copyright, but strips it of its exclusivity.

**About counter-copyrights [cc]**

<http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/cc/cc.html>

As an alternative to the exclusivity of copyright, the counter-copyright invites others to use and build upon a creative work. By encouraging the widespread dissemination of such works, the counter-copyright campaign fosters a rich public domain.

The idea surrounding the counter-copyright campaign is fairly easy to understand. If you place the [cc] icon at the end of your work, you signal to others that you are allowing them to use, modify, edit, adapt and redistribute the work that you created.

The counter-copyright is not a replacement for an actual copyright; rather it is a signal that you as the creator are willing to share your work. The counter-copyright strips away the exclusivity that a copyright provides and allows others to use your work as a source or a foundation for their own creative ideas. The counter-copyright initiative is analogous to the idea of open-source in the software context.

[cc]