



Frequently Asked Questions

QuestionCopyright's mission is to highlight the economic, artistic, and social harm caused by distribution monopolies, and to demonstrate how freedom-based distribution is better for artists and audiences. We do so by reframing copyright, through viral videos like the Minute Memes [1], programs like the Sita Distribution Project [2] and the Creator-Endorsed Mark [3], and tools (like the BookLiberator [4]) that cause people to directly experience the full force of copyright restrictions.

Q: Wasn't copyright invented by writers and artists, to protect themselves?

Actually, it was a printing industry regulation negotiated between publishers and the English parliament around 1700, and based on an earlier censorship statute. See [5] for more information.

Q: Don't musicians, writers, and artists depend on copyright to earn a living?

Mostly no. Treating the few who do as representative of artists in general would be to confuse marketing with reality.

Q: Without copyright, how will artists get credit for their work?

People who download songs from the Internet do not hide the artist's identity (except when afraid of being sued for illegal copying!). Sharing works is simply unrelated to claiming credit for their authorship. See [6] for more.

Q: Isn't copying a copyrighted work the same as stealing it?

If I steal your bicycle, now you have no bicycle. If I copy your song, now we both have it.

Q: Won't creativity dry up without copyright?

There was no shortage of creativity before copyright, so there's no reason to believe there would be one after.

Q: So are you advocating the abolition of copyright?

We're trying to make it possible for people to consider what abolition would actually mean, by changing the way copyright is thought about and debated. Real understanding will lead to better policy; if abolition is that better policy, then so be it.

We do advocate, at the very least, a drastic reduction in the scope and duration of copyright terms; we've found it hard to avoid that conclusion after looking closely at the effects of copyright in the Internet Age. But whether outright abolition is preferable to simply taming copyright is a more complex question, and one we don't pretend to be able to answer with certainty.

[1] http://questioncopyright.org/minute_memes

[2] http://questioncopyright.org/sita_distribution

[3] http://questioncopyright.org/creator_endorsed

[4] <http://bookliberator.com/>

[5] <http://questioncopyright.org/promise#history>

[6] <http://questioncopyright.org/promise#plagiarism-vs-copying>