



# STATE OF THE COMMONS | 2020



Artwork by [Marco Villar](#), CC BY

**Creative Commons' State of the Commons 2020**

Prepared by Victoria Heath | Designed by Francisco Vera | Edited by Eric Steuer

Except where otherwise noted, this document is published under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license, ([CC BY 4.0](#)).

This document is published under the CC BY 4.0 license which means you can copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format; and you can remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially. Under the following terms: Attribution — You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use. No additional restrictions — You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits.



# **BETTER SHARING**

# **BRIGHTER FUTURE**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Message from the CEO	5
Our Mission	6
Our Highlights	7
Discovery	8
Community and Outreach	9
Policy	12
Unlocking Knowledge	14
Our Collaborators	15
Our Financials	16
Our Supporters	17



# MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Hello and welcome to Creative Commons' annual report for 2020.

Despite the year's many challenges, CC made great strides in our mission to build and sustain a thriving commons of shared knowledge and culture.

We worked with the Smithsonian—the world's largest museum—to release nearly three million images and data into the public domain, so they can be accessed and used freely, without copyright restrictions.

Our first-ever virtual CC Global Summit hosted more people and conversations about openness than any previous CC event.

We helped create and lead the Open COVID Pledge, which resulted in more than half a million patents being made available to the public for use in the fight against the pandemic.

Through our CC Certificate program, we taught hundreds of people from all over the world to be sharing experts and ambassadors.

We also released a new [five year strategy](#) that plans for how CC's work can be most impactful in 2021 and beyond. It emphasizes that our objective is not necessarily only to promote more sharing, but to foster better sharing of knowledge and culture. The strategy was guided by hundreds of conversations with funders, advisors, and a wide range of individuals within the CC community, particularly members of the Creative Commons Global Network. I am grateful to CC staff members Sarah Pearson and Brigitte Vézina, who led the strategy development process.

I'm so proud of all our work together. As always, this work couldn't have been done without the collaboration of CC's many supporters and community members. A heartfelt thanks to all of you.

Catherine Stihler  
CEO, Creative Commons



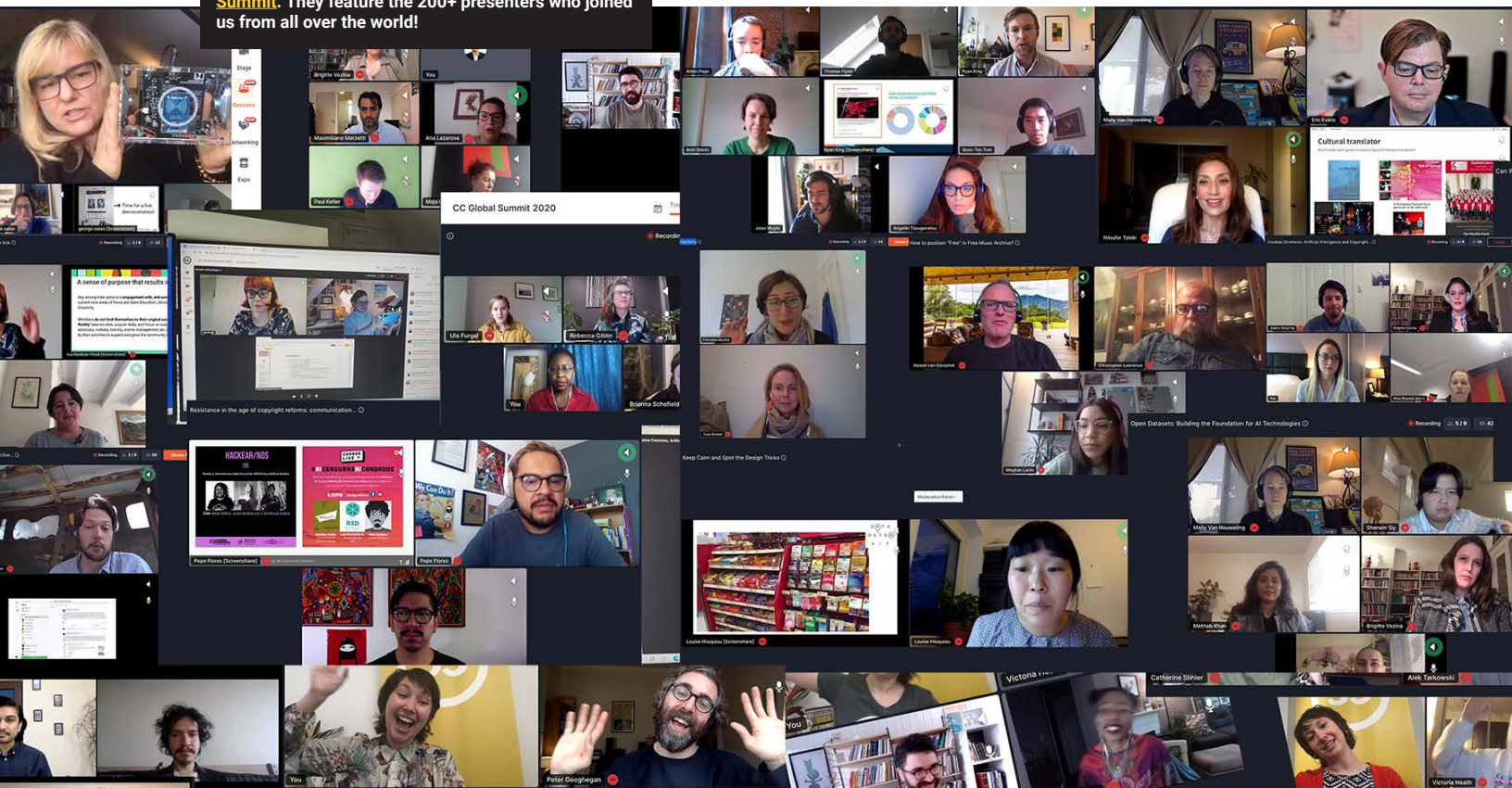
# OUR MISSION

Creative Commons (CC) is an international nonprofit organization dedicated to helping build and sustain a thriving commons of shared knowledge and culture. Together with an extensive member network and multiple partners, we build capacity, we develop practical solutions, and we advocate for better open sharing of knowledge and culture that serves the public interest.

Throughout 2020, promoting and facilitating open access in collaboration with members of the open community felt more important than ever. The urgent need for scientific research and data on COVID-19, open educational resources for students forced to stay home, open-source medical hardware due to personal protection equipment (PPE) shortages, and more motivated us to carry onward.

That context makes this year's big accomplishments uniquely meaningful, and we're excited to share just a few of them with you in this report.

These images were taken during the **2020 CC Global Summit**. They feature the 200+ presenters who joined us from all over the world!



# OUR HIGHLIGHTS

In 2020, Creative Commons...

- 1 Collaborated with the Smithsonian on Smithsonian Open Access, [releasing 2.8 million images and data into the public domain](#) using Creative Commons Zero!
- 2 Submitted statements to WIPO on artificial intelligence (AI) and intellectual property (IP) [explaining why](#) we're against copyright protection for AI-generated output.
- 3 Helped create and lead the Open COVID Pledge, resulting in [over 30 Pledgors](#), including Founding Adopters Facebook, Amazon, Intel, IBM, Microsoft, and more.
- 4 Presented in front of the Mexican Senate [addressing copyright exceptions](#) and limitations and the fundamental rights of access to knowledge and culture.
- 5 Welcomed three new chapters to the CC Global Network and supported 32 projects across 20 countries through the [Community Activities Fund](#).
- 6 Held the first-ever virtual CC Global Summit, which [included](#) over 1300 participants, 200 presenters, and 170 sessions across 60 countries.
- 7 Joined the UNESCO OER Dynamic Coalition and the Network of Open Organizations, who are both working to help national governments and education institutions [implement the UNESCO Recommendation](#) on OER.
- 8 Graduated hundreds of new CC Certificate participants, raising the total number of [CC Certified experts](#) to 813 people from 56 countries!
- 9 Launched the new CC Open Source Community Team initiative, a [team of volunteers](#) to help us develop and maintain our open source projects and community.
- 10 Completed four open source internship programs with [13 interns total](#) from Turkey, Nigeria, Brazil, India, Australia, Venezuela, Zimbabwe, and Malaysia.

# DISCOVERY

CC Search continued to be an important tool for the broader CC community in 2020, consistently serving around 300,000 users per month, the majority of whom were using CC Search for educational purposes. We heard from students, educators, and librarians throughout the year, detailing how valuable the service was to the teaching and learning taking place. Strong involvement from our Open Source community, in part through internships, resulted in major accessibility improvements to the user experience, and many more sources being integrated for users to search, including the cultural heritage aggregated by our friends at Europeana. An additional value was the introduction of Meta Search to the CC Search tool, allowing users to quickly search vetted third party providers of reusable audio and video content from a single starting point.

As a result of the new strategy approved by the CC Board of Directors in December 2020, the decision was made to put CC Search into maintenance mode, while determining the next iteration of the product. The team will work towards a community-centered solution in 2021, prioritizing the needs of our user base.

## SEARCH FOR CONTENT TO REUSE

Browse over 500 million images, available for reuse



All our content is under Creative Commons licenses or in the public domain. [Learn more](#) about CC licenses and tools.

I want something I can

☐ Use commercially ☐ Modify or adapt

awpixel\*

Bē

D M

flickr

TIE  
MET

RIJKS MUSEUM

PHYI

000

000

000

000

000



## COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

**“There is a need to further advocate for the introduction of copyright and open licenses in our educational systems to promote widespread understanding and adoption of [the] licenses.”**

Using funding from the CCGN Community Activities Fund, CC Nigeria member Isaac Oloruntimilehin launched a social media advocacy project to “educate and enlighten Nigerians on the nature of copyright, application of open licenses, sharing creative works and how to use open licensed works.” His initiative reached over 267,000 people across Instagram and Facebook!

[learn more](#) →



# COMMUNITY AND OUTREACH

To effectively remove the legal and technical obstacles to sharing, we steward and support a global community of people and organizations who use and actively support CC licenses and tools. In 2020, we continued to focus on four community and outreach initiatives: the CC Global Network, the CC Global Summit, the CC Certificate, and CC Open Source.

## CC Global Network

The CC Global Network (CCGN) is an exciting and dynamic aspect of CC's global work. It's the home for a global community who share CC's vision and values. In 2020, we proudly increased the number of CC Country Chapters to 46, welcoming [CC Peru](#), [CC Austria](#), and [CC Czech Republic](#), and grew the individual and institutional membership to over 700! We also supported 32 projects across 20 countries—from Argentina and Bangladesh to Uruguay and Venezuela—through the CCGN Community Activities Fund totaling \$30,000 USD! Finally, we launched the [CCGN Medium publication](#), publishing 11 articles written by the community. *Many of which are featured throughout this report!*



Image of CCGN member and 2020 CC Global Summit keynote speaker [Irene Soria Guzmán](#) by [Sebastiaan ter Burg](#), CC BY

***“We proudly increased the number of CC Country Chapters to 46...and grew membership to over 700!”***

## COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT



**“The pandemic is affecting almost every aspect of everyone’s life...[Businesses must be] more creative for their own survival, and this includes artists in Indonesia.”**

After the pandemic forced the Indonesia Netaudio Forum (INF) to cancel their biannual festival, members, including CC Indonesia’s Hilman Fathoni, quickly pivoted to using SWGBBO (a derivative version of an open source video game) to meet virtually—providing a space for solidarity and fun!

[learn more](#) →

## CC Global Summit

Due to COVID-19, the [2020 CC Global Summit](#) was entirely virtual and free for the first time ever. This adapted format allowed us to accommodate community members worldwide, with sessions taking place across various time zones and languages. Over 1300 community members, from Canada to El Salvador to Nigeria and New Zealand, chose to spend a week with us to discuss the future of open, the unknowns of artificial intelligence, the possibilities of open GLAM (galleries, libraries, archives, and museums), and more.

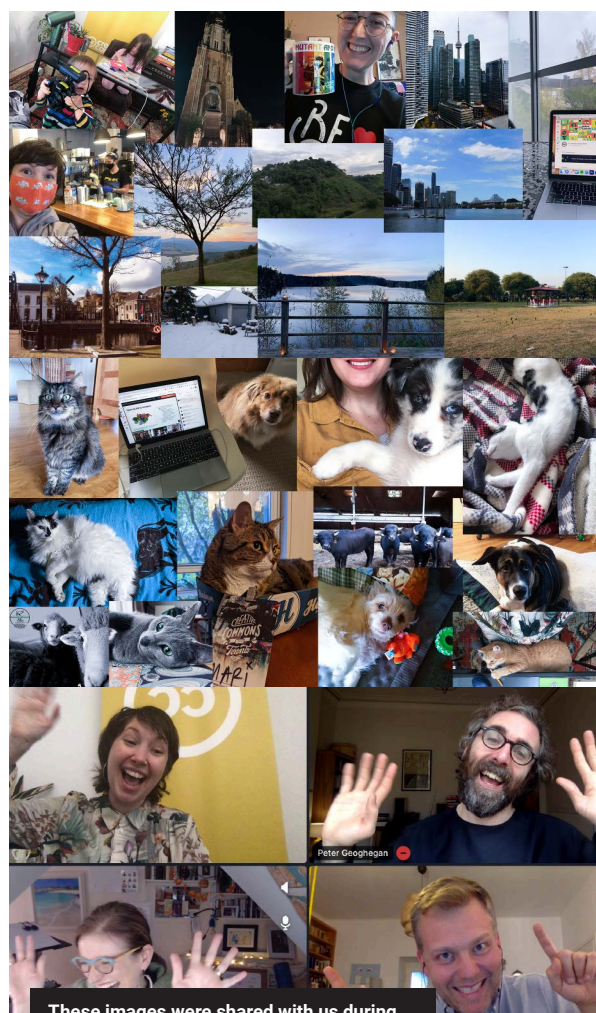
***“Over 1300 community members, from Canada to El Salvador to Nigeria and New Zealand, chose to spend a week with us...”***

In total, the event featured:

- Three [keynotes](#)
- 170+ individual sessions
- 200+ presenters
- 1300+ participants
- 60+ countries
- One global [concert](#)
- Four DJs/performance artists

## CC Certificate

To help our community build capacity in open licensing, we launched the CC Certificate in 2018. The [CC Certificate](#) provides global training in copyright, open licensing, the public domain, and the ethos of sharing in open movements.



## CC Open Source

CC Open Source is an initiative that enables members of the open community to contribute to the technical projects that CC maintains. In 2020, we welcomed 13 interns via Google Summer of Code (GSoC) and Outreachy from Turkey, Nigeria, Brazil, India, Australia, Venezuela, Zimbabwe, and Malaysia. Thanks to their efforts, we were able to launch the [CC Legal Database](#), the new CC Open Source [website](#), the [CC Linked Commons](#), and [much more](#)!



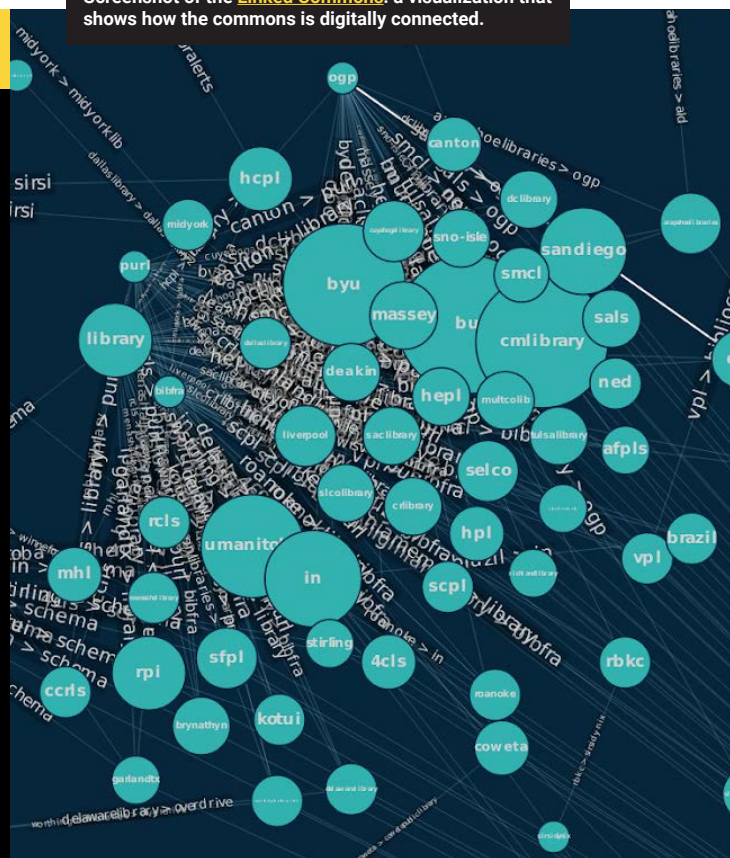
## COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

**“Climate action requires every part of human society to act — the open movement could be part of that too.”**

Open community members Scann and Alex Stinson led a session during the 2020 CC Global Summit outlining “the underlying implications of open culture in a warming world.” Afterwards, they outlined several issues and opportunities for the open and climate movements to work together—and also led an effort to discover existing projects already working to fill this gap.

[learn more](#) →

Screenshot of the **Linked Commons**: a visualization that shows how the commons is digitally connected.





***“...we submitted statements to WIPO on artificial intelligence (AI) and intellectual property (IP) explaining why we’re against copyright protection for AI-generated output...”***



A remix of the 1870 engraving of Jane Austen in the public domain via the University of Texas and the collage titled “Brain Scandal” by Kollage Kid, CC BY-NC-SA.

## POLICY

While the CC licenses have proven successful in unlocking creativity and knowledge globally, they’re not enough to solve many of the unnecessary obstacles to sharing embedded in the copyright system—the regulatory framework that shapes how the world shares creative content. This is why we work closely with governments and institutions around the world to support them in unlocking their works through Copyright, Open Education, and Open GLAM Policy.

### Copyright

CC regularly engages in copyright reform debates by issuing statements and/or submitting official comments on proposed legislation and policies. In 2020, we submitted statements to the World Intellectual Property Organization on artificial intelligence (AI) and intellectual property (IP) [explaining why](#) we’re against copyright protection for AI-generated output; we also contributed comments on consultations on AI and copyright at the [European Union](#) and the [UK Intellectual Property Office](#).

In 2020, we [presented](#) in front of the Mexican Senate addressing copyright exceptions and limitations, GLAMs, and the fundamental rights of access to knowledge and culture. We submitted [comments](#) on the EU review of digital cultural heritage policy as well as comments on consultations regarding open access policy, including to the [UK Research and Innovation](#) and the [US Office of Science and Technology Policy](#). Finally, we developed an internal strategy to plan our work on policy and coordinated policy activities under the [CC Copyright Platform](#).

## Open Education

In 2020, [we joined](#) the UNESCO Open Educational Resources (OER) Dynamic Coalition and the Network of Open Organizations, who are both working to help national governments and education institutions implement the UNESCO Recommendation on OER. We participated in open education campaigns and initiatives, including the [Free the Textbook Campaign](#) and [Translate a Story](#).

We joined the [UNESCO Global Education Coalition](#), an international response to ensure the continuity of education for all learners during and after COVID-19. We also contributed to the draft [UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science](#), supported open education advocacy and mentorship through [funding six](#) CC Open Education Platform projects, and co-coordinating a mentorship hub with the [Open Education for a Better World](#) mentoring program.



Image by Alliance for Excellent Education and Allison Shelly, CC BY-NC 4.0

## Open GLAM

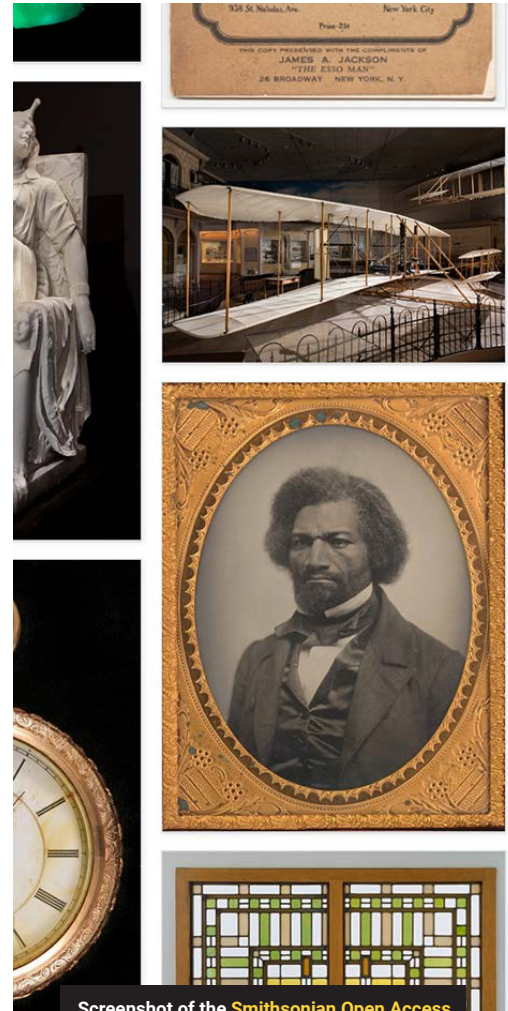
In February we celebrated the announcement of [Smithsonian Open Access](#). This initiative released 2.8 million images and data into the public domain using Creative Commons Zero. This came after years of collaborative efforts from CC staff and CC Global Network members. Later in the year, we [completed research](#) on sharing Indigenous cultural heritage online, advocating that GLAMs should acknowledge that access and reuse restrictions might be justified in certain situations.

Finally, we collaborated with the European Fashion Heritage Foundation and the Onassis Foundation on the 2020 symposium [exploring issues](#) regarding the tensions between digitizing fashion cultural heritage and remaining mindful and respectful of cultural rights and values. We lead the development of the Open GLAM Declaration and coordinated GLAM-related activities through our [Open GLAM platform](#). Finally, we hosted webinars on important topics like copyright, OpenGLAM, and open access with other actors, including [Europeana](#), the [Museum Computer Network](#) and the UNESCO-Bangkok/[Memory of the World](#) Committee Asia Pacific.

# UNLOCKING KNOWLEDGE

To help realize the potential of sharing knowledge and creativity to solve some of our most pressing challenges, CC has been removing legal and technical obstacles to sharing both online and offline since 2001, creating the keys used to unlock works around the world. In 2020, this work continued through two primary areas: CC License Suite and Public Domain Tools, and Guidance and Translations.

We continued to work on the [CC Legal Database](#) in 2020, launching the new website in December! This community-sourced database compiles legal decisions involving CC licenses, as well as legal scholarship about CC licenses and the legal ecosystem in which they operate. In order to ensure CC licenses are used and implemented correctly, we engage with governments and institutions who are adopting the tools and/or reusing CC-licensed work and also coordinate translations.



Screenshot of the [Smithsonian Open Access Gallery's homepage](#)



## COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

**“What’s next? An animated feature film? A musical? Why not? After all, that’s the Creative Commons spirit: creating, building upon other works, disseminating freely, educating!”**

CC Romania member George Hari Popescu used funding from the CCGN Community Activities Fund to translate the graphic novel “Theft! A History of Music” into Romanian. To make the book even more accessible, he also built a website where it could be read and downloaded freely, and translated the book’s trailer.

[learn more](#) →



## OUR COLLABORATORS

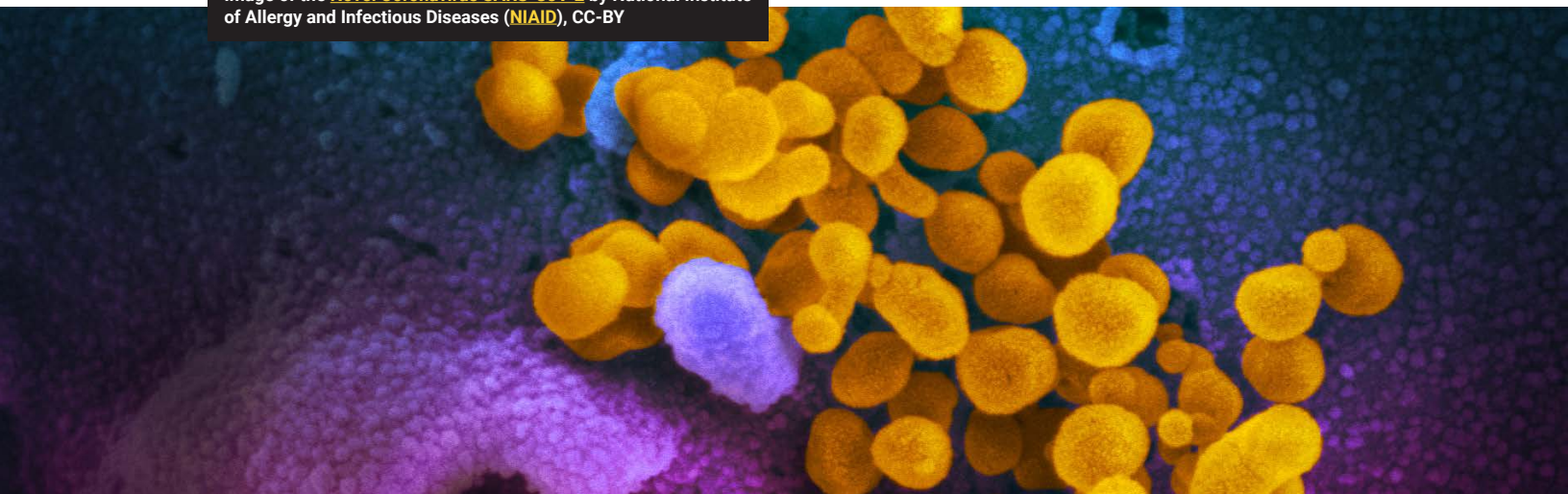
Like the rest of the world, the COVID-19 pandemic threw a wrench in our plans for 2020. However, we quickly pulled together as a team and identified opportunities for collaboration with others in the open community to ensure we had a positive impact. One collaborative initiative was the [Open COVID Pledge](#). Originally developed by an international group of researchers, scientists, academics and lawyers, we helped lead the Pledge, resulting in over 30 Pledgors, including Facebook, Amazon, Intel, IBM, Microsoft, and more, effectively unlocking hundreds of thousands of patents to the public to help combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

We also worked with experts in the medical field, education, medical hardware, and intellectual property law to write [several articles](#) related to COVID-19, including “[Now Is the Time for Open Access Policies—Here’s Why](#),” which was translated into Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian thanks to efforts by the CC Global Network. Finally, through our work in the [Bassel Khartabil Fellowship](#), we supported [Dr. Tarek Loubani](#) in his efforts to use open manufacturing to make urgently needed medical supplies and gear more [easily and inexpensively available](#).



***“...the [Open COVID Pledge] effectively unlocked hundreds of thousands of patents to the public to help combat the COVID-19 pandemic.”***

Image of the [Novel Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2](#) by National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases ([NIAID](#)), CC-BY



# OUR FINANCIALS

## Expenses in 2020 (USD)

1. Administration	\$1,474,024
2. Education	\$318,069
3. Fundraising	\$358,108
4. Network & Policy	\$417,721
5. Technology	\$1,168,476
6. Legal	\$291,301

## Income in 2020 (USD)

1. CC Certificate	\$141,758
2. Corporations	\$26,000
3. Foundations	\$265,000
4. Global Summit Income	\$26,010
5. Individual	\$400,779

Other Income \$155,086

In-Kind Donations \$37,656



Image is a remix by [Rikasso](#) of Man Ray's 1924 "Le Violon d'Ingres" commissioned by CC for the [2020 Public Domain Day](#) celebration!



## COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

**"As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic in Tanzania, all schools were forced to close...Our initiative emerged to focus on enabling technologies and tools for teachers to teach online."**

With funding from the CCGN Community Activities Fund, CC Tanzania members, including Emmanuel Malongo created an open capacity building training aimed at equipping educators with "ICT soft skills" so they could effectively teach online. They trained 14 teachers and built a growing virtual network of educators to continue sharing resources, advice, and more!

[learn more](#) →

## OUR SUPPORTERS

Creative Commons is generously supported by individual donors, foundations, and corporations who share our commitment to open knowledge and creativity. We gratefully acknowledge past and present supporters, including:

- HMK
- John Lilly and Kathy Howe
- Paul and Iris Brest
- Ron Conway
- Stewart J. Guss, Attorney at Law
- Ted Wang



Coil



**Interested in becoming a CC Supporter? Please contact our Director of Development Jami Vass at [jami@creativecommons.org](mailto:jami@creativecommons.org), or [donate here](#). Thank you!**

*Creative Commons is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization as defined by the Internal Revenue Service. Any donations made to Creative Commons are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law.*



Creative Commons' State of the Commons 2020