A landscape photograph of a green field under a blue sky with white clouds. The field is a mix of green grass and patches of grey rock. In the distance, there are some trees and a small structure. The sky is filled with large, fluffy white clouds.

# Free Culture and the University: Innovation, Information Sharing, and the Future of the Academy

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# Origins

a concern and an idea

# Concern

Have universities learned the lessons of  
free culture?

# Free Culture



# Free Culture

- social movements
  - arising from and catalyzed by information technology
- *e.g.*
  - open source & free software
  - Wikipedia
  - open access research
  - Creative Commons

# Free Culture

- new methods
- new models of social organization
- in the intellectual, cultural, and innovative arenas

# Free Culture

- “the way our culture gets made”
- “A free culture supports and protects creators and innovators. It does this directly by granting intellectual property rights. But it does so indirectly by limiting the reach of those rights, to guarantee that follow-on creators and innovators remain *as free as possible* from the control of the past.”

# Free Culture

- “A free culture is not a culture without property”
- But
- “Free cultures are cultures that leave a great deal open for others to build upon”



# Free Culture

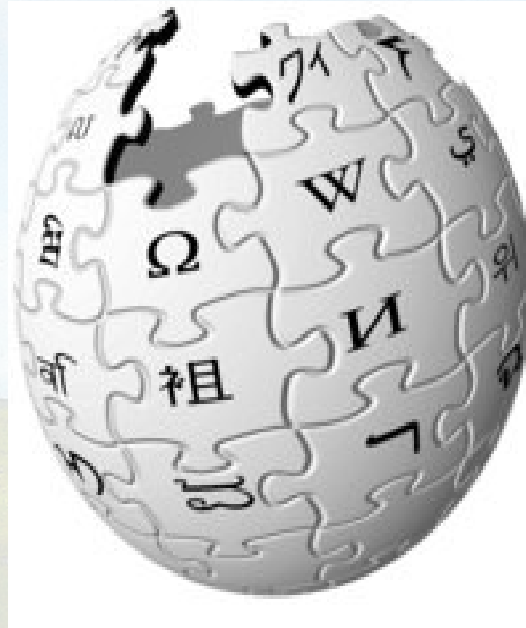
- Open spaces
  - Public park
  - Bazaar
  - Public square
- No ownership  $\neq$  no value
- Balance
  - Between owned and unowned
  - Between regulated and unregulated

# Free Culture

- What should be free?
- Guiding principle: *promote the progress of science*
- Certain uses, despite any other factors
  - Fair use
  - Statutory exemptions
- Government works
- Older works

# Free Culture

- We can build our own free works



# Free Culture

- Building free works creates tremendous value for society
- Can be decentralized
- Growing consensus that for some types of work, this is a superior mode of production

# Concern

- Why are universities spending millions on closed-access Elsevier subscriptions?
- Why are universities spending millions on proprietary Microsoft software?

# Idea

- Universities are not just places to credential future workers
- Universities are not just places to prepare young adults for professional and civic life
- R&D are not just peculiar or parochial activities
- R&D are not just revenue-generating activities or ways to attract top faculty and students

# Observation

- Universities are powerful actors in the intellectual, cultural, and innovative arenas of society

# What does a university do?

- “Erecting and maintaining a university entails a huge investment of social resources ... The returns from this investment are different from other more tangible forms of production, yet it is not at all well understood just what sort of returns society does get – or should – from these institutions and from the people connected to them.”



# Investment

- 1862 Morrill Act: 17.4m acres of land -> \$7.55m
- Today: Billions annually from federal & state governments and philanthropic funding to support higher education and university research

# Return

- Thousands of journal articles and books published
- Hundreds of patents granted
  - Including key medicines to treat diseases such as AIDS
- Greater knowledge base & training
- 2004-5: Research at Canadian universities contributed more to GDP than pulp & paper or automotive sectors

# Values

- Public investment, public service
  - Extension programs
- “To create and share knowledge for the benefit of society”

# In the 21<sup>st</sup> century

- *Scientia potentia est*

# Vision

- An institution to address the needs of the knowledge society
- Universities as the intellectual, cultural, and innovative infrastructure of society
- Like public roads & parks, their product should be free

# The Free University

- Open access to research publications & proceedings
- Open access to research data
- Open educational resources
- Free & open source software
- Open access to library holdings
- Open standards & file formats
- Socially responsible patent policies

# Praxis

- The values of free culture are the values of academia
- To fulfill their mission, universities must put their values into practice in their own administration

# Questions?

Thank you!

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