

For Immediate Release

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## **PUBLIC DOMAIN DAY 2010**

<http://www.publicdomainday.org>

Traditionally *New Year's Day* is an occasion for great celebrations worldwide. However, there is a special reason to celebrate that goes sometimes neglected: **Public Domain Day!** This day marks the expiration of copyright protection terms on creative works produced by authors who died several decades earlier. Therefore such works enter the Public Domain, and their content is no longer owned or controlled by anyone but it rather becomes available for anyone to freely use for any purpose. In other words, on each year's January 1st an impressive wealth of knowledge, information and beauty becomes freely available to humankind.

Today *COMMUNIA*, the European Thematic Network on the Digital Public Domain, and its coordinator member, Politecnico of Torino's *NEXA Research Center for Internet and Society*, announce the launch of a new website devoted to **Public Domain Day**: <http://www.publicdomainday.org>. This project aims at increasing the public awareness of this celebration and educating about the Public Domain concept and its potentialities for spreading culture and knowledge worldwide. The website is particularly focused on this **Public Domain Day 2010**, providing useful resources (Countries' copyright terms, Public Domain calculators, related sites and databases, etc.) and a detailed list of authors and artists who died in 1939 and now enter the Public Domain (only in certain countries, since copyright regulations differ in the various countries and often require a lawyer opinion). Among the over 600 names included in that list, at least in selected jurisdictions, there are *Sigmund Freud*, the father of psychoanalysis; *William Butler Yeats*, one of the foremost figures of 20th century literature; *Alphonse Maria Mucha*, a renowned Czech Art Nouveau painter and decorative artist.

Indeed, what are the potential benefits for the public when a certain work enters the public domain? Among other things, people can transform a poem into song lyrics, or make a movie based on a public domain novel. Literary works can be published on personal website and/or printed for friend or school distribution. Of course, you can even print out a beautiful hardcover leather-bound edition of a public domain book and sell it for a profit, while the book content will remain available for anyone to use freely. And the same goes for images, art works and other kinds of creative works entering the public domain under the same term expiration rule.

Depending on each country "intellectual property" laws, the copyright protection terms are typically described as the life of the author plus a certain number of years after his/her death. In many countries, including the USA and European Union member countries, the copyright terms expire 70 years after an author's death, while in other countries, including Canada and New Zealand, they last "just" 50 years. In any case, the crucial fact is that everyone can eventually access and use such Public Domain works for any purpose, completely free and without any need for prior authorization.

The wider scope of today's Public Domain ("open access" policies, alternative licensing options such as Creative Commons licenses, increasing resort to fair use, etc.) and the broad penetration of digital technologies are making **Public Domain Day** more and more relevant for citizens across the world—increasing the common goods with a freely-accessible pool of knowledge, information and beauty. One more reason to celebrate and cherish this New Year's Day!

#### *About COMMUNIA*

The *COMMUNIA* Thematic Network focuses on theoretical analysis and strategic policy discussion of existing and emerging issues concerning the public domain in the digital environment. Its activities cover several related topics, including, but not limited to, alternative forms of licensing for creative material; open access to scientific publications and research results; management of works whose authors are unknown (i.e. "orphan works"). Funded by the European Commission within the *eContentplus* framework, the 2007-2010 project expects to provide policy guidelines that will help each stakeholder involved - public and private, from the local to the European and global level. The network includes 51 members and is coordinated by Politecnico of Torino's *NEXA Research Center for Internet and Society*.  
More info: <http://communia-project.eu/>

#### *About the Public Domain*

In the strict copyright law realm, "Public Domain" refers to those works which are no longer or have never been protected by copyright. But in today's digital networked Information Society, the definition of Public Domain essentially covers any cultural material that can be used without restriction, absent copyright protection - broadening its range to include close relations with open access, open licensing, fair use, and orphan works (see above *COMMUNIA*).

#### *About the NEXA Center for Internet & Society*

Founded in November 2006, the *NEXA Center for Internet and Society* at the Politecnico di Torino is an independent research center, focusing on quantitative and multidisciplinary analysis of the nature of the Internet. The Center emerged from the activities of a multidisciplinary group - with expertise in technology, law and economics - active in Torino since 2003 and responsible for designing and implementing several initiatives, including: Creative Commons Italia (2003-present), CyberLaw Torino 2004, Harvard Internet Law Program Torino 2005, SeLiLi - free legal advice on open licenses for creators and programmers (2006-present) - and *COMMUNIA*, the European Commission-funded thematic network of 51 partners aimed at studying and promoting the digital public domain (2007-2010). More info: <http://nexa.polito.it>

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