Finding and Citing Creative Commons Images

Primary Learning Outcome:
   Create appropriate citations for sources, demonstrating respect for the original ideas of others. (5.2)

Additional Learning Outcome:
   Develop and apply topic-specific vocabulary throughout the research process. (2.1)

Time Needed:
   30-45 minutes, depending on the length of class discussion

Brief Description:
   In this activity, students are asked to think visually as they search for Creative Commons images. Many students are already familiar with different citation styles, but Creative Commons licenses and attributions may be a new concept. While Creative Commons does allow for more flexibility in the format of the attribution, instilling best practices ensures that students have the necessary tools to properly provide credit for creative work. The first part of this activity focuses on developing keywords for an image search, while the second part asks students to identify the Creative Commons license for an image and create an attribution for it.

Outline:
   1. Introduce activity and explain some differences between image searches and traditional text/research searches. Encourage students to think concretely and visually, rather than conceptually. They should think about what they want to find in the images (people, places, things, etc.) and how the image might be described.
   2. Students spend a few minutes generating image search terms on the worksheet.
   3. Briefly explain copyright and Creative Commons, with an emphasis on Creative Commons as a solution to the limitations of copyright in a digital environment (Slide #2).
   4. Have students go to https://search.creativecommons.org/. Tell them to make sure “modify, adapt, and build upon” is selected; “use for commercial purposes” should not be selected. Explain that commercial purposes aren’t necessary, since they won’t be making money off of their assignment, but by cropping, adding text, adjusting the color, etc., they will be modifying the image. Before typing in a search term, students should make sure Google Images is selected. It’s possible to search for images, video and audio through the Creative Commons search engine by selecting the appropriate website, such as Google Images or Flickr for images and YouTube for videos.
   5. Use the CC search engine to demonstrate an image search in Google Images using different keywords. Think of a mock topic related to the assignment that will make sense to the students. Show how to locate image resolution and website on the Google Images search results by hovering over the image. Emphasize finding images that are in the 1000s of pixels. Suggest starting with images from Flickr and Wikimedia Commons for ease of locating information for the attribution.
6. Students spend a few minutes searching for CC images via Google Images. Have them select at least two images that might work for their project. They should open each image in a new window and complete the image description section of the worksheet.

7. Students pair with partner to discuss their experience with developing search terms, evaluating the image results, and modifying their terms to get better results. Discuss the results and any difficulties as a class.

8. Explain CC licenses and what the different elements of a license mean (Slides #3-5), as well as how to create an attribution for an image (Slides #6-7). Suggested: Use one of the images from the previous search demonstration to show students how to identify the title, creator, and license and then create an attribution with those elements.

9. Students select one of their images and complete the second part of the worksheet (checklist and attribution). Students can work in pairs to help one another and then discuss their results, or they can work individually and then pair to discuss their results. Suggested: Leave the Creative Commons Attribution Formula slide on display while students work on this section.

10. Discuss as a class what was difficult to determine about the license; whether any information for the attribution was hard to find; whether they understood what the license meant, etc. Ask for volunteers to explain the license for their image and how they found the information needed for the attribution.

Instructor’s Notes:
While many of the Creative Commons slides contain minimal text, there are notes in individual slides that provide further information, such as explanations of the license conditions and license types.

Multimedia Connections:
While we evaluate and interpret images daily, this process can often feel removed from the academic search process. By searching for and citing Creative Commons images, students can begin to see other types of sources, such as images, audio, and video, as legitimate and worthy of academic analysis. Throughout this lesson, it is possible to draw connections to traditional text-based research, in terms of generating search terms and creating citations. This lesson could also be applied to finding and citing Creative Commons video and audio.

More Information:
- Creative Commons
- Best practices for attribution
  - The following activities provided inspiration for this lesson: Preparing for Image Searching (Activity 2.1), Finding Creative Commons Images (Activity 2.3), and Interpreting Terms of Use (Activity 4.3).

Questions about this activity? Contact Amanda McCollom (ammcoll@udel.edu).