

## **A Note about Podcasting and Copyright**

Podcasting is all about the content; the technology is merely a means to get the content to the user – or to bring the user to the content. In the case of libraries, bringing the user to the content hopefully exposes the user to other facets of the library. But content is the draw.

Thus, finding content for your podcasts is the first order of business, and finding content that is legal to use can be confusing and time-consuming. Here, in a nutshell, is what you need to know to get started finding or creating content to suit your particular podcast needs.

## **Copyright**

The copyright laws of the USA are complex and have changed over the years. Beware of general statements such as “anything written before 1923 is in the public domain.” It might be, but it might not. It depends on if it was actually published rather than just passed around. Some of the “finger plays” used in library storytimes have been passed around for years, but never published. However, someone created them, and they have rights regarding their creation. Also, copyright laws in other countries differ. What might be in the public domain in the USA could still be protected in Great Britain, France, or Germany. For a thorough, yet simple discussion of copyright and other legal issues related specifically to podcasting, the [Legal Guide to Podcasting](#) on the Creative Commons Wiki, is invaluable. It is included as one of the tools in our toolset.

## **Finding Content**

There are three choices for content: material that is currently under copyright, material from the public domain, and content that you create yourself.

For items currently under copyright, you’ll have to go directly to the copyright holder, which may or may not be the author. Publishers are the point of contact to find out about published works. They vary in their responses, from no response, to allowing a podcast of copyrighted material. Just be aware that this avenue takes time and tact. Most publishers of children’s books, for instance, have a “permissions” link on their website, but some do not. [Houghton Mifflin](#) allows fax or email requests,

while [Candlewick](#) and [HarperCollins](#) ask that you write to them via snail mail. Random House doesn't show any links for inquiries along those lines. If you're certain that you want to reproduce a particular book or story via podcast, and you need permission, give yourself plenty of time, and be sure to have "Plan B" in case you're not allowed to use your first choice.

Public Domain material can be found on the internet, but you may need to change your expectations if you have a particular need. Once you begin to survey the offerings, you'll see what type of content there is, and how you might make use of it. To get some ideas, here is a list of sites that are already making use of public domain literature:

<http://infomotions.com/alex/>

<http://www.worditude.com/ebook/pubdom.html>

<http://www.ibiblio.org/eldritch/>

<http://librivox.org/>

[http://www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Main_Page)

<http://www.authorama.com/>

Content that you create yourself is, of course, free. Its drawback is that someone needs to take the time to create it. Some ideas that libraries have used include teen podcasts on various subjects, book reviews by librarians and others, and interviews of authors. Examples of libraries that are already podcasting are shown on the [Library Success: A Best Practices Wiki](#) site. The wiki keeps an updated list of libraries that podcast with links to the libraries' podcasts. Sampling a few of these just might be the spark that gets you started on a podcast of your own.

The resources listed in these notes are just a starting point in your search for legal content. The only real limitation is the imagination of you and your fellow podcasters.