



MJRodriguez

Transcription | Captioning
Social Media Management

Important Note:

Actual transcripts provided do not contain any business logo. The logo present on this cover sheet and on the transcript header is only for branding purposes. Transcripts are delivered in a clean, professional format to ensure clarity and ease of use. This is a general transcription sample transcript in the default format, which is clean verbatim without timestamps and with first names only as speaker IDs.

[music]

Eric: Welcome to the first episode of Open Minds, a podcast from Creative Commons. If you're new to Creative Commons, or CC as we call it, we're a non-profit organization that works globally to build and sustain a thriving commons of shared knowledge and culture. We work with partners all around the world to make information, creativity, research, and educational resources open and accessible to everyone without legal barriers. We're especially focused on sharing and openness that positively impact people and their communities.

It's CC's 20th anniversary this year, and to celebrate, we decided to launch this podcast, a series of conversations with people working on the issues we're involved with and excited about. That includes open culture, open education, open science, and open technology. We'll be bringing on folks with interesting ideas to share about sharing. My name is Eric Stoyer. I'm CC's Creative Director, and I'll be one of the voices you'll hear on the show. You'll also hear from several of my colleagues. We'll be sharing hosting and interview duties.

For our debut episode, I talked to Catherine Stihler, who is Creative Commons CEO. Catherine started at CC in 2020 after many years as a mentor of the European Parliament for Scotland, and then more recently as the CEO of the Open Knowledge Foundation. It seemed like a good place to start for this podcast, hearing from CC's new leader about her career and her vision for what's next for the Creative Commons movement. I hope you enjoy the conversation, and if you've got ideas for people we should be talking to on this show, send us a note, info@creativecommons.org. And now, Catherine Stihler.

[music]

Eric: Like all of us, you didn't start your career in this space because it's still a relatively new space. So, can we talk about where you did start your career?

Catherine: Sure. I started my career in politics. I don't think I ever thought I would ever be a politician, but in 1999, I was elected to serve Scotland in the European Parliament, and I held that position for 20 years. Before that, I actually worked in the House of Commons for the first wheelchair-using member of the British Parliament, Dame Anne Begg, which was an incredible experience to work there, too. Politics was

something that I never thought I would be elected to, and therefore, it was a bit of a surprise to some of my family and friends that I ended up being a politician for so long, Eric.

Eric: From there, how did you get interested in the kinds of work that you've been doing for the last couple of years?

Catherine: In the European Parliament, I was vice-chair of the Single Market Committee. In that capacity, I worked on digital policy and became what's called the Rapporteur. That's just the MEP responsible for a piece of law, and I was responsible for copyright. It was through that journey in copyright that I became familiar with Creative Commons, but also could see the unfairness, the inequity, the power dynamics, and I wanted to have reformed copyright rules at the European Union level and fought very hard for those. Sadly, on many levels, we didn't achieve that, and that was a lesson learned.

I also was involved in the book famine work, which was led by the European Blind Union and other organizations fighting for blind and visually impaired people. That got me interested in e-books, and so I actually ran a campaign called the Open Knowledge Campaign, which little did I know that that would be what I'd be working in seven, eight years later when I was working in that. It got me interested in issues around inequity, access to knowledge, and the unfairness that I could see and the injustices that I could see that were affecting individuals and communities.

Eric: What did that Open Knowledge Campaign consist of? Was it sort of an awareness campaign?

Catherine: Yes. It was actually really interesting because it came about from, as I say, the work I was to do with the book famine that was attached to the Marrakesh Treaty work that we were doing to try and make sure that people who were blind and visually impaired had access to the same books and knowledge that we took for granted. Sadly, at that point, and it's still much to do in this space, there was huge challenge to overcome, but then it got me interested about e-book lending in public libraries.

For some reason, in Scotland, one particular local authority was doing superbly well in terms of e-book lending, and it wasn't the local authority. It was a very, very poor area. It turned out the person that was the key

librarian happened to be really interested in technology, was really versed with new ways of thinking, and so really revolutionized the library system in this particular local area. He actually was headhunted for another local area. It made me think, well, if they can do this and make sure people have access, then why is this not happening in other places?

It then became the situation where you start to understand about how licenses are important, about decision making at local areas, and who gets access to what was not very equitable. Therefore, our campaign was to make sure that everyone in Scotland had the same e-book access across the country. It's still a campaign I was still very interested in, but there was clearly politics attached to that, also the way that publishers had so much power over libraries, and so it's my attachment to the public libraries and the need that we support public libraries in our communities as places and spaces for people to access knowledge and culture, regardless of income, became even more important.

I live in Dunfermline, which is where Andrew Carnegie was born. In fact, we have the first Carnegie Library in Dunfermline. Above every Carnegie Library are the words, "Let there be light, not just the light of knowledge, but the light of public spaces." I think to this day, we still live with that legacy of the importance of libraries that Carnegie led with that which we still benefit till today.

Eric: Were libraries a big part of your life growing up?

Catherine: Yes. My mom and dad were both teachers. My grandmother had to go and work when she was 14 because her father passed away and the family had very little money. My gran was very much about the importance of education, the importance of knowledge, and to really, really value learning. Although my gran left school without qualifications and worked in a grocery shop, she was one of the most literate people I've ever met.

In fact, when my husband, who is from California, met my grandmother and was talking to him and found out that, at that point, his parents were living in Salinas, she could quote John Steinbeck directly to my husband, who was quite shocked that this granny in East Kilbride was able to quote text from John Steinbeck, that he couldn't even quote. So, it's important that we value culture and knowledge, and I had that from a very early age.

Eric: What excited you about coming to work with us here at Creative Commons at this point in your career?

Catherine: Well, it's a number of things. I think that Creative Commons, for me, is giving practical solutions to some of the thorny problems that I faced as a lawmaker and copyright. That was one aspect. It was also the global community that was attached to Creative Commons and also the culture, the public-minded, public interest, openness that is Creative Commons. I don't know of any other organization, I think, that some of them make cookies after they've been in a training session over a CC certificate, would create a CC-branded cookies for the person that was the trainer. That's just the tiny aspect of the generosity, the giving that is part of this movement. It's such an honor and privilege to not just be part of this community now, but also to lead the community.

Eric: We recently had the Creative Commons Summit, our annual event. This year, we obviously did it a bit differently and did a virtual event, but it was, I think, a big success. What did you learn from meeting people at that event? What were some of your impressions of the kinds of things that people were discussing?

Catherine: At the summit, I was struck by the number of people who were part of the conversation. The fact that because it was our first virtual summit, and although, our in-person summits are so important, that actually our first virtual summit allowed more people than ever before to engage with us in ways which was not possible when it was an in-person event. I also thought the diversity of those involved in terms where people come into the conversations from, their different perspectives.

The fact that we've got this global community working to try and open knowledge and culture at local levels is so important. Also, the summit is very much community driven. It was really fulfilling the needs in a more local and attuned way to be able to address the concerns and the passions of the people who we value most, which is our community and our network.

[End 00:10:26]