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A protected past and an open future, copyright, the library mission, and the 21st century

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Around the world, and with no exception in Australia, libraries have become involved in the last 20 years, quite centrally, in public policy debates about law reform with reference to the law of copyright. This is a natural outcome of the library's essential mission in the digital age. Considering the potential economic tension between content owner interests on the one hand and the essential mission of access on the other, this is no surprise.

But the extraordinary rate of change with the sheer force that it has exerted on this tension has demanded creative responses. In the context of the essential mission of libraries, the case for preserving and supporting access has demanded systematic and methodical attention within the law. Two manifestations of





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this attention has been: first, the development of the Creative Commons and related open content licensing initiatives; and second, the imperative of providing radically increased access to content which is not generated in an income contingent way, i.e. which is produced/created by entities and individuals who do not seek direct economic support from its sale.

This keynote describes these responses in the Australian context, and offers a mixed report card on the library response here.

