

## **'The unit of the commons: a discussion of metrics for online commons quantification'**

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The basic problem that this paper addresses is that the current concept of online commons quantification takes for granted that what we are counting is URLs (web addresses) of commons documents. That is, the assumption is that any image file, any HTML file, any sound file, etc., constitutes as much of the commons as any other. Or at least, within specific media this is true (any HTML file contributes as much as any other, all images contribute equally, etc.). This is an invalid statement, or at the very least if it used then the results are not very useful. In fact, it is worse than just stated: multiple URLs may map to the same actual file, so if we count URLs of licensed works we may in fact be counting some files multiple times. There are also other problems such as the problem of dynamically generated content, where the content delivered to a user can be computer generated (i.e. not actually a copy of any pre-existing file) based on the URL that the user request. As such, there are in fact limitless URLs that could be counted as part of the commons.

One paradigm that can be used to conceptualise the problem is that of a distinct work in copyright law. It may be possible to determine where the boundaries between such copyright works are, and hence quantify the online commons on that basis. The dual difficulties with this paradigm are: what constitutes a single copyright work on the Web, from a legal perspective? and, how can this definition be implemented in a computer system, so that concrete data can be gathered?

After discussing why online commons quantification is important, this paper will iterate over and address the issues relating to metrics, aiming to get a handle on how significant they might be, and provide examples of where this would happen in the Australian web space. Many alternative metrics for quantification will be discussed, and, where practical, explored experimentally.