



**BTB #286: John Howkins Keynotes [OnCopyright 2012](#)**

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KENNEALLY: New ideas, not money or machinery, are the source of success today. So observes author and business consultant John Howkins, who first called attention to the economic value of creative people, creative industries, and creative cities in his seminal work, *The Creative Economy: How People Make Money From Ideas*. In that book and his subsequent writing and research, Howkins has revealed how we live in an era when intellectual property propels prosperity.

On Friday, March 30, the nonprofit Copyright Clearance Center presents OnCopyright 2012: Advancing the Creative Economy with John Howkins as keynote speaker. He joins us now from his office in London with a preview, and welcome to the program, John.

HOWKINS: Chris, hi, it's good to speak with you.

KENNEALLY: Well, we're happy to have you join us, and we are looking forward to meeting you in person in about a week's time in New York City. We should tell our audience about you. John Howkins is Chairman of BOP Consulting and has advised global corporations, international organizations, governments, and individuals in over 30 countries, including Australia, Canada, China, France, Greece, Italy, Japan, Poland, Singapore, UK and USA. In 2010, he organized special forums in London and Shanghai to mark the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the world's first copyright law.

John Howkins's business career has been spent in television, film, digital media, and publishing. He was associated with HBO and Time Warner from 1982-1996 with responsibility for TV and broadcast businesses across Europe. He's Deputy Chairman of the British Screen Advisory Council and is a former Chairman of the London Film School. He's also a Visiting Professor at the City University, London, England, and Vice Dean and Visiting Professor, Shanghai School of Creativity, Shanghai Theatre Academy in China, of course.

And John, with that as background and sort of a setup, we want to tell people about what you are going to be talking about at OnCopyright 2012. And I suppose a good place to start is with this central thesis to all of your work, and that is the importance of the creative economy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Can you briefly define what you mean by that term, creative economy?



HOWKINS: A creative economy, to me, it's using creativity, which is using ideas to make new ideas. It's as simple as that. Using ideas to make new ideas, and then turning those ideas into goods and services that have some value in the marketplace. So it's not just the creativity itself, but it's the turning of that creativity into something that you can buy and sell.

KENNEALLY: And I think an important point to stress is that creativity isn't limited, in your definition, to the arts. It also includes the sciences as well.

HOWKINS: It goes into really everything. There are people that limit it to arts and culture, I take a much wider view to that. To me, creativity's something we do with our brains to change things. And so we can use it to change, often, culture, we can use it to create innovation in manufacturing industries. The Chinese last month held a meeting on creativity in agriculture, and I happen to know that the US Coast Guard had a discussion at their last general meeting on creativity and the Coast Guard operations. So yes, in answer to the question, it just feeds into everything, whether it's art or science or innovation. Everything.

KENNEALLY: Right. And in our time especially, although I suppose it's been true to some extent throughout time, creativity is more of a business than ever, and business relies more on creativity.

HOWKINS: It's always been there, given particular words like R&D or new technology or innovation. But now, it's become probably the most important factor in every economic sector, every business sector, because it's that that enables you to come up with new ideas to put in front of the consumer, and it's that that gives you a competitive edge. And increasingly, it gives you a competitive edge not only in your own domestic market, but globally as well. So in a way, it's the most important factor in international competition.

KENNEALLY: And give us a sense of the scale here, John, for the US economy, for example, or perhaps for others that you're familiar with. What place does the creative economy have within the macroeconomy?

HOWKINS: We tend to talk about two different categories. There's the core industries, which are the ones that we're all familiar with, and they do generally inhabit this world of culture, media, entertainment, and that's music, and it's film, and it's television, publishing, design, arts and crafts. And that, in the big countries, can be 10%, 12%, 15% of GDP. But actually, if you look at creativity in the sense that I'm talking about it, then it's very hard to find an area of the economy, if it is sustainable and growing, that is not dependent upon creativity. So when you apply that sort of yardstick, you're getting way above those 10-15% figures, you're getting way over 50% of the population.



And there's a very interesting survey that McKinsey used to do for several years, so 2006, 2007, 2008. They interviewed people and asked them whether their job required them to see if their job could be done better, and if it could be, to make an immediate change to make it better. And they were coming up with figures of 40%, 50% of the working population with those sorts of jobs, and as many as 70% of new jobs.

KENNEALLY: Well John, with that rather wide-open definition of creativity, it's important to discuss what we mean now by originality and original ideas. Is that an evolving definition as well?

HOWKINS: I think there are many different ways of measuring what's original. There's something that is the first, as far as one is aware, like if someone writes a new song, sings a new song, or performs an old song in a new way, that's original. It doesn't matter very much, it's just nice that it's new. We enjoy it because it's new. It soon becomes an old favorite. We don't stop enjoying it because it's very familiar to us.

And then there's the kind of originality that is looked at in copyright law. Although again, if two people write the same book at the same time, correctly they both claim copyright. If you're looking at engineering innovations, and say it's for patents, then there's a much stricter judgment about what's original. And then, if you like, there's top-level originality, which is when something is just world-shattering, and is so original and so wonderful, and it means something new to everybody, and it becomes a truly important event or a new device or a new story.

And so there are different yardsticks that we use all the time. And sometimes novelty and originality is truly important, and sometimes it's just rather fun and it's an amusing thing, someone changing a color, changing a shape. It's new for the moment, for the day, for the week, for the season, it has no lasting impact on anything at all. And we play around with these different notions of novelty and originality. Copyright, passing law, always trying to keep up, and doing quite a good job of that, actually. I think most people are aware that they're playing around with different notions of originality and novelty.

KENNEALLY: Well, I think you make an important point though, John. It's something that we need to appreciate, since today, everyone's a copyright holder of some form or another. We all have smartphones in our pockets, and we all take pictures on the fly in ways that we never did in the past, and we create videos, we send e-mails and publish blogs. So copyright holding is something that every individual does, it's not to a limited few as it was in the past.

HOWKINS: Yes, yes, I agree with that. Everybody is practicing it all the time.



KENNEALLY: That's right, which is, I think, very important to the central thesis here about how the creative economy is allowing people to make money from ideas. We are chatting with author and business consultant John Howkins, who will be the Keynote Speaker at Copyright Clearance Center's OnCopyright 2012: Advancing the Creative Economy, coming up on Friday, March 30 in New York City at the Columbia Law School. And John, copyright today is often equated with making money. But the kinds of incentives that you think are important to creativity aren't simply financial ones.

HOWKINS: The money is important, I don't want to say it's not important. But if you look around at people who are being creative, they're doing it partly because it just gives them a buzz. They just like coming up with new ideas, they like expressing those new ideas, and they like sharing them. And I was talking to a friend of mine who's a very successful TV producer over here in London. And he was saying to me a few days ago, the reason he started his company was because he wanted to be in control. He was having ideas for programs and he was getting those programs commissioned and made and produced and broadcast. And he was negotiating all the time with the network, and he wanted to be in control. And he started his own company for that reason, to be in control.

So there's the sheer joy of having ideas and fighting for them, there's the determination to manage the ideas in the way you want to so they keep their integrity, if you like, and then there's the wish and the need to make money at the end of the day.

KENNEALLY: Well, I think that's a tremendous way to introduce, to kind of tee up the conversation that everybody at Copyright Clearance Center is looking forward to having, and to having you spark it. John Howkins is an author and business consultant, author of the work *The Creative Economy: How People Make Money From Ideas*, as well as several other books, including *New Technologies*, *New Policies* and *Four Global Scenarios for Information*. John Howkins, joining us today from London, we appreciate having you on the program.

HOWKINS: Thank you very much. It was good to speak with you, and thank you for your questions.

KENNEALLY: And again, we look forward to seeing you in New York City, Friday, March 30 at the Columbia Law School for the biannual event OnCopyright 2012. It'll focus on the health and future of the global creative economy at a time of changing technology, economic uncertainty, and a mixed prognosis for artists, authors, publishers, musicians, filmmakers, and other creators.

Also appearing with John Howkins is Robert Levine, former Executive Editor of *Billboard Magazine* and author of *Free Ride: How Digital Parasites are*



*Destroying the Culture Business, and How the Culture Business Can Fight Back.* Program host is best-selling author Ellis Henican, columnist for Newsday, and a political analyst at the Fox News Channel and Fox Business Network. The program can be seen live on the Web. For full details, visit [oncopyright2012.com](http://oncopyright2012.com).

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