

# New study to tackle piracy issues caused by growing use of 3-D printers

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Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

University of Exeter experts will work to develop a solution to the growing problem of piracy caused by the increasing use of 3D printers.

Academics will carry out research in China to resolve copyright issues posed by the new technology, which allows the copying of physical

objects by scanning them.

They hope to develop a single system for protecting intellectual property which could be used around the world.

This automated licensing platform framework will enable 3D printing companies to licence 3D printed content and files in new ways. This could be an online database, or digital versions of a watermark to prevent unauthorised copying.

Academics will analyse what the impact of this system would be on copyright law, in particular copyright law in China and internationally.

The use of 3D printing is rapidly growing, but innovation has become constrained because of the lack of clarity over legal rules.

The research project, which will run until December 2016, will be carried out in partnership with academics from the University of Nottingham Ningbo China, Durham University's Law School, the University of Sussex, and the Chinese University of Political Science and Law.

The study, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and many of the universities involved, will see academics collaborate with colleagues from around the world to establish a viable, technical and operational online licensing system and a workable legal framework for IP licensing.

The academics, who are specialists in IP law, international law and contract [law](#), will carry out interviews with 3D printing companies to discover how they operate and their needs, and spend time with one firm in particular to write a case study.

Dr James Griffin, from the Law School, who will lead the project, said: "We are in contact with 3D printing companies who wish to develop a new means of creating and disseminating 3D printed content utilising their 3D printing systems and to capture new business opportunities.

"However, to date they have been limited in their opportunities to do so because of the complex legal licensing environment and the lack of appropriate digital licensing standards. We can enable these companies to learn how to exploit their products."

In the UK, the relevant regulatory body called the Copyright Hub has set out a list of licensing standards to use in online licensing systems. Academics will explore the appropriateness of these guidelines in the development of the proposed licensing system in China.

The proposed [licensing system](#) will help companies develop their markets because they will be able to licence works in new ways. The system will also help the UK regulatory Copyright Hub find out how their system operates in practice both in the UK and in China.

Provided by University of Exeter

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