Tech Transfer Office

IP management
and knowledge
valorisation



Why IP and valorisation matter

Research only creates impact when its results are **used** - by museums, municipalities, companies, communities and other researchers.

1

Your results are assets

Datasets, 3D scans, photo archives, software, methods and know-how are more than publications.

2

Default: others may copy

Without a right, a licence or an agreement, anyone can reuse what you make - and you cannot control how.

3

Protect first, then share

A clear IP strategy lets you publish safely, collaborate with industry and attract funding.



What we will cover in 30 minutes

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1. **Valorisation**
   What it is and which routes exist for heritage research
2. **IP essentials**
   The main rights and what they mean for your work
3. **IP in practice**
   Ownership, agreements, lifecycle and timing
4. **Open and digital**
   Open source, Creative Commons and AI
5. **Take-aways**
   Key messages

Valorisation: what does it mean?

Knowledge

Scientific and technological results

Use

Applied by others, not only published

Value

Societal and economic value

Valorisation is the process that turns knowledge into value:

- commercially viable products, processes or services (money)
- societal value from scientific and technological knowledge
- making sure available knowledge and means are actually used and applied
- valuation: knowing what your results are worth

Heritage research: value is often cultural, educational or touristic as well as economic.

Valorisation routes in heritage research

Route	Heritage examples (illustrative)	IP at stake
Funded and collaborative projects	EU or regional projects with museums, cities, SMEs	Consortium agreement; background and foreground knowledge
Contract and service research	Documentation, 3D scanning or analysis for a site owner	Contract terms; who owns the results
Licensing	Datasets, 3D models, software or images licensed to a platform or company	Licence terms; copyright; database right
Spin-off	Digital heritage app, XR experience, conservation technology	Transfer of IP; shares or licence
Open sharing	Open data, open-source tools, open access publications	Choice of open licence; attribution

Licence terms to agree

- Remuneration, geographic scope, warranties
- Improvements; exclusive or non-exclusive

Spin-off: how it works

- Knowledge transferred by in-kind contribution for shares, or by licence
- Fair compensation: shares, royalties, profit certificates



IP in a nutshell

Intellectual property = creations of the mind: products of human intellect, not tangible property.

Default

Freedom to copy

You may freely use and reproduce creations of others.

Exception: an IP right

Permission needed

An exclusive right: a conditional monopoly, limited in time and geography.

Freedom to operate

You can develop, make and sell without liability to third parties. It is presumably safe, but you are never 100% certain that you do not infringe someone else's rights.



A clear IP strategy is not closed science

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Protect first, then publish safely and keep control.

1

Enables industry collaboration

Partners invest when results can be protected and licensed.

2

Opens funding

Horizon Europe, ERC Proof of Concept and regional schemes reward a sound IP and exploitation plan.

3

Prepares your career

Researchers who manage IP well are better placed for the next project.

As open as possible, as closed as necessary

IP rights at a glance

Right	Protects	Formalities	Duration	Heritage example
Copyright	Original works: texts, photos, drawings, software	None (keep proof)	Life + 70 years	Photo series, report, scan software
Patent	A new, inventive, industrially applicable technical solution	Application, examination	Up to 20 years	Sensor, restoration material
Database right	A database built with substantial investment	None	15 years, renewable	Digitised collection, sensor dataset
Trade mark	A distinctive sign for goods or services	Registration (check EUIPO, BOIP)	10 years, renewable	Name of an app or heritage route
Design right	The appearance of a product (2D drawing, 3D model)	Registration	Up to 25 years	Shape of a device or object
Trade secret	Undisclosed know-how with commercial value	None, but keep it secret	While secret	Traditional craft know-how

Chip topography and plant variety rights exist but are rarely relevant here.

Copyright: the right most researchers meet

What is protected?

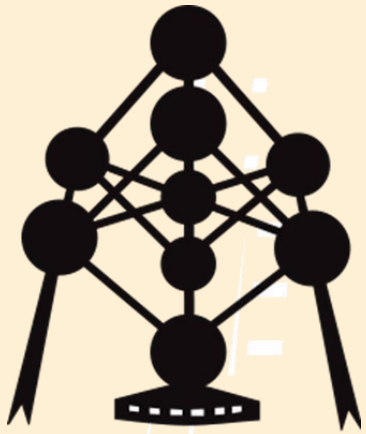
- Literary and artistic works: a very wide range, almost anything original
- The author's own intellectual creation; it need not be beautiful or new
- Expression, not the idea itself

Rights and limits

- Economic: reproduce, distribute, lend, adapt, translate
- Moral: be named as author; object to distortion
- Exception for education and research, with source acknowledgement
- No formalities; keep proof

Idea vs expression

✗ Idea of enlarging an iron crystal 165 billion times: not protected



✓ The specific design of the Atomium: protected



Copyright pitfalls in heritage work

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Third-party images, maps, texts

Found online is not free to reuse. Clear the rights or rely on a valid licence or exception.

Reproductions of public-domain art

In the EU, faithful reproductions of public-domain visual art should not create new copyright. Check national rules and the collection's terms.

Orphan and out-of-commerce works

Special EU rules exist for cultural heritage institutions. Check the conditions before relying on them.

Oral history and community knowledge

Personal data (GDPR), consent and community expectations apply on top of IP.

Not legal advice: check national rules and ask your TTO.



Patents: protecting technical solutions

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New

Not in the state of the art

Inventive

Not obvious

Applicable

Usable in industry, trade or agriculture

20 years

Maximum term

Not patentable

- Discoveries, scientific theories, mathematical methods
- Software "as such"
- Note: publishing before filing can destroy novelty

Research exemption: narrow

- **Allowed:** experiments to study or test the patented invention
- **Not allowed:** development, prototyping, commercial intent
- **Tip:** Espacenet and Google Patents are free

Trade secrets and know-how

Three conditions

- Not generally known or easily discovered
- Commercial or economic value because it is secret
- Reasonable steps to keep it secret: need-to-know access, encryption, contractual limits, NDAs

What to remember

- No registration, no exclusive right
- Lawful: independent development, reverse engineering of public products
- Lost once disclosed, even in a talk or paper
- Fits: traditional craft know-how, process knowledge

Publishing a method ends its secrecy: decide before you present.

Open licences: software, content and data

Open ≠ free. An open licence lets others use your work under conditions; the copyright stays with the creator.

Software: open source

1. Read the licence of every open-source component you build on
2. Talk to your promotor or business developer if you plan to valorise
3. Choose a compatible licence for your own tool (choosealicense.com)

Content and data: Creative Commons

- **BY** credit the creator
- **SA** share alike
- **NC** non-commercial only
- **ND** no derivatives

Combine them: CC BY, BY-SA, BY-NC, BY-NC-SA, BY-ND, BY-NC-ND. Other combinations are possible.

Copyleft (e.g. GPL): works based on the program must carry the same licence.
Creative Commons does not automatically mean "no commercial use"; it is not recommended for software.
No licence = no right to use it.



Who owns what?

Rules differ per country and institution: check yours. Examples below: UHasselt.

Researchers

- Economic rights → university
- Moral rights → inventor or author
- Copyright on works other than software and databases stays with the author

Collaborations

- The contract decides
- Agree before sharing results
- Involve your business developer early

Students

- No transfer of IPR by default
- Not bound by professional confidentiality
- Declaration on honour: confidentiality and IPR transfer

In doubt? Ask your TTO before you share or sign.



Agreements that manage IP

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Background knowledge: existing, or developed outside the project

Foreground knowledge: results and findings from the project

Agreement	Use it when	Typically settles
NDA	Sharing confidential information	Scope, duration, permitted use
Data or material transfer (MTA)	Exchanging samples, scans, datasets	Use and ownership of derived results
Consortium agreement	Funded collaborative project	Background, foreground, access rights
Contract research	Work for a paying client	Ownership and use of results
Declaration on honour	Students involved in research	Confidentiality and IPR transfer



IP management along the research lifecycle

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1 Identify

Spot results with potential: tool, dataset, method

2 Protect

Choose a right or secrecy before you publish

3 Agree

Settle ownership and confidentiality before sharing

4 Assess

Users, market, maturity, freedom to operate

5 Exploit

Licence, contract, spin-off or open release

6 Maintain

Monitor, renew, update, report

Involve your TTO or business developer early

Publish or protect? Timing matters

Result with potential? Talk to your TTO before you publish or present.

Public disclosure (paper, poster, abstract, thesis, talk, social media) can destroy novelty for a patent and ends a trade secret.

Then decide together:

A

File, then publish

Protect the invention first, then share safely

B

Keep as know-how

Share only under NDA

C

Publish openly

Under a deliberately chosen licence



AI and IP: what to consider

Input: before you use it

- Rights of third parties: may you use this material as input?
- Will the system reuse or train on your confidential data?
- Personal data: GDPR obligations

Output: after you use it

- Quality: facts and references correct?
- Acknowledge AI use where policies require it
- Protectable only if sufficiently human-created

Online availability ≠ permission to train. Open source and open data still carry licence conditions.

Disclose planned AI use before a funded project or collaboration starts: contracts and funders may restrict it.

Take-aways and contact

1. **Protect first, then publish: talk to your TTO before you share**
2. **Know who owns what: contracts decide in collaborations**
3. **Choose licences deliberately: open ≠ free-for-all**
4. **Check before you reuse third-party content or use AI**

Contact

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Questions? And contact your own institution's TTO.

Thank you!

