

Google-Getty deal is good, but more needs to be done

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Safrea applauds the partnership between Google and Getty Images that was announced earlier this month with a view to preventing photographic copyright infringement.

The two digital media giants signed an agreement that provides Google with a multi-year licence allowing the use of Getty's images in its products, with a few conditions attached.

For one thing, Google has to more clearly display copyright attribution for the images that are found in its search tool. For another, its "View Image" option falls away – a change that will ostensibly see fewer illegal downloads of photographs and illustrations.

The deal has been finalised partly in response to a complaint Getty had made to the European Commission in 2016. Google's image search had, it was said, facilitated the simple viewing and downloading of copyrighted images (including many from Getty's library).

While Google has long allowed the filtering of images according to the licencing rights they carry, it was fairly easy to ignore copyright and download the works of others without checking where they were being used, or by whom.

It is hoped that the agreement will go some way towards preventing such piracy, and encourage users to visit the website that a particular image appears on.

While the partnership is a positive step in the direction of building better protection for photographers' copyright, it is clear that much more needs to be done in the digital realm.

Honouring the rights of media professionals, photographic and otherwise, is still largely the responsibility of the internet user, and piracy remains rampant. With just a few clicks and detours, it is still possible to download copyrighted images – and this needs to be addressed.

For example, by right-clicking on an image in Google and opening it in a new tab, one seems to be able to save it. And in other search engines like Bing, "View Image" buttons continue to be displayed.

Safrea, as an organisation that includes many freelance photographers, would like to see further steps being taken to uphold copyright online.

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