

Teaching Music Traders a Lesson

By [Katie Dean](#) | [Also](#) by this reporter

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A prestigious music school is encouraging musicians to swap audio and video clips of course material over peer-to-peer networks.

The [Berklee Shares](#) program at the [Berklee College of Music](#) offers 80 different online lessons for download -- and sharing -- on topics like writing music, producing, engineering, remixing and performing.

File sharing is a cost-effective way to distribute the rich musical knowledge of the school, according to David Kusek, the school's associate vice president.

With Berklee Shares, "We can enter the file-sharing debate in a very pro-active and positive way. We're demonstrating a legitimate use of the digital networks to distribute authorized content," Kusek said.

Kusek said the college does not condone stealing copyright works.

"We want to encourage a debate as to how we can best address file sharing as a music industry rather than try to sue it into submission, or pretend it doesn't exist, or let it grow and become even more disruptive than it has been already," he said. "We don't want the recording business to fall apart."

The Recording Industry Association of America, which represents the five major music labels, is trying to shut down file-sharing services Morpheus and Grokster because, the music trade group alleges, people use these tools to illegally distribute copyright songs. In May, a judge ruled against the RIAA and the case is on appeal.

The RIAA also has [sued](#) 341 individuals who allegedly have used peer-to-peer networks to distribute copyright songs.

"Berklee is choosing to share its music lessons; artists may choose to share their songs," said an RIAA spokesman. "What's important is that the choice is theirs, not the choice of some profiteer who is choosing to distribute their intellectual property without their permission."

The Boston school, which boasts talented alums like Quincy Jones, Diana Krall and Branford Marsalis, said the free lessons are a natural companion to the online courses available on its website and its traditional, on-campus college of 3,800 students. The course materials are available in QuickTime, MP3 and PDF

formats.

All of the lessons at Berklee Shares -- from Afro-Cuban conga drumming to setting up a recording studio -- are protected by a [Creative Commons](#) license. Anyone can use and trade the material provided she or he agrees to the [terms](#) set by the school: Users may not alter or sell the material, and must credit the original source.

Academic materials from [MIT OpenCourseWare](#) and Rice University's [Connexions Project](#) also are covered by flexible Creative Commons copyright licenses which protect the works while encouraging certain uses of them.

"Part of Berklee's mission is to disseminate knowledge about music as widely as possible," said Glenn Otis Brown, executive director of Creative Commons. "The cheapest, easiest way to do that is to use the built-in, free distribution of file-sharing networks."

Brown himself has been checking out the lessons.

"I play guitar and I've been really interested in learning how to record at home on my G4," Brown said.

"What's missing is a forum to explore the issues in a constructive way so at the end of the day, we might have some alternatives that don't appear very realistic at the moment," Kusek said.

"Let's figure out what to do to make the digital transformation of the music

industry work for everyone in a way that makes sense," he said.



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