

Innovating tool makes copyright searches easier

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In the digital age, how does one determine the copyright status of a book, song, picture ? or any creative work? An online tool to make searches easier is being developed by [Elizabeth Townsend Gard](#), associate professor in the Tulane University Law School, her husband, Ron Gard, an adjunct assistant professor of communication, and their team.



“We have a social mission, but we also think we can be self-sustaining. Students feel it and understand it, and I think that makes them better attorneys,” says Elizabeth Townsend Gard, who hopes to launch Durationator this academic year. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Their goal is to connect with innovators struggling to understand how their original ideas may be copyright-protected, scholars and artists wanting to use an old idea for another purpose and preservationists pushing to digitize cultural works.

“We want to empower people, we want to teach people and we want copyright to be less confusing,” says [Townsend Gard](#), who holds the Jill H. and Avram A. Glazer Professorship in Social Entrepreneurship for her approach to community service through scholarship.

Townsend Gard's “Durationator,” Web-based software in the fine-tuning stage, aims to simplify copyright status searches, taking into account a maze of laws, legal decisions and treaties to determine whether a cultural work is restricted or in the

public domain.

Townsend Gard and Gard combined grants and more than 5,000 student research hours to build their first software prototype. With research funding through the Glazer professorship, they have partnered with Logicnets, a software company in Washington, D.C., to develop Durationator 2.0.

Tulane recently licensed the software to Limited Times, a Louisiana company started by Gard, who teaches New Media and Internet Studies at the university.

Students continue to be involved in the research and development of the product. "We've had so many dedicated and hard-working students over the years, and each student adds an important intellectual component to solving a real-world problem," Townsend Gard says.

Gard and Townsend Gard were named 2013-14 Social Venture Accelerator Fellows by Propeller, a New Orleans incubator program that provides 10 months of resources and support for innovative projects.