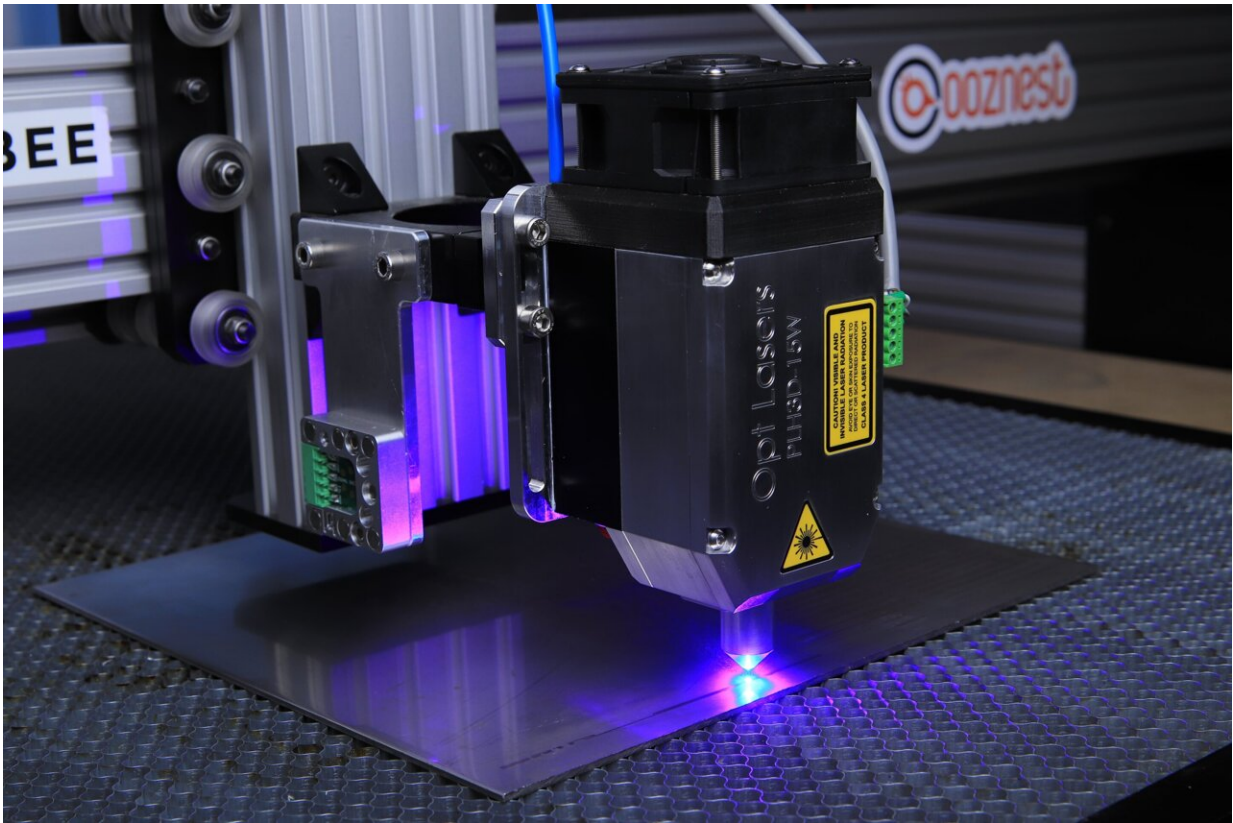


Blockchain to play a key part in ensuring copyright laws can be used for 3D printing

April 21 2022



Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

Blockchain technology will soon be able to be applied within items produced by 3D printers thanks to pioneering work by experts.

The research will revolutionize how 3D printed objects can be distributed, traced and searched for. This will enable new forms of distribution and open up new possibilities for licensing around the world.

The use of 3D printing is rapidly growing in a range of industries—including aeronautics, car manufacturing and dentistry—but innovation has become constrained because of the lack of clarity over legal rules.

A team of experts led by Dr. James Griffin from the University of Exeter Law School, have patented watermarking technology for use with 3D printing. They are now working to link this watermarking technology to [blockchain](#), to allow the licensing of 3D printed objects.

The technology will help companies to license their products for 3D printing properly for the first time, allowing them to develop new markets.

Intellectual property is currently protected by Copyright Law, Design Law, Patent Law, Trade Mark Law, Passing Off Law, Misrepresentation, Moral Rights, and Technical Protection Measures. Contractual and jurisdictional issues between countries (e.g., China and the UK) as well as broader international laws and regulations also affect the operation of application of licenses and contracts.

Many people using 3D printing recruit a company to print using a file which they download. Licensing and watermarking this download will lead to [intellectual property](#) being able to be authenticated, traded and stored.

Incorporating blockchain into this process will allow copyright information to be included and give creators an extra layer of legal protection as well as the watermark.

Dr. Griffin said: "Our work will have a significant impact on the use of 3D [printing technology](#). By using blockchain you can enable new technical standards for licensing and use around the world by creators and companies.

"Blockchain is an easy way for copyright data to be stored, and a means by which [licensing](#) of 3D printed content could be standardized."

Provided by University of Exeter

Citation: Blockchain to play a key part in ensuring copyright laws can be used for 3D printing (2022, April 21) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2022-04-blockchain-key-copyright-laws-3d.html>

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