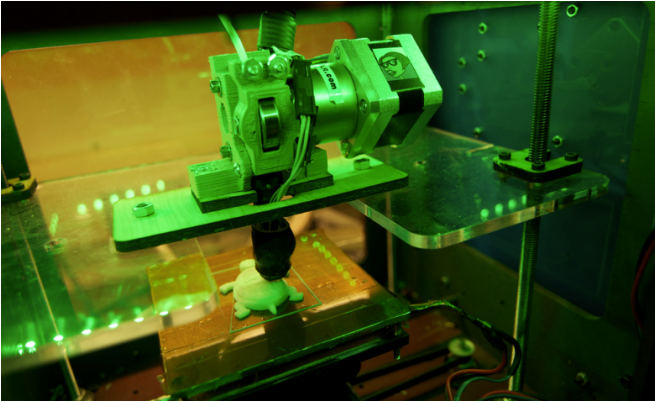


# Guide launched on the boundaries of 3-D printing

27 July 2016, by Anne Rahilly



A new guide to 3D printing prepares us for the risks and responsibilities of new technologies. Credit: University of Melbourne

A new guide 3-D Printing Rights and Responsibilities: consumer perceptions & realities, has been launched to explain what consumers need to know before printing in 3-D, including the potential risks in creating and sharing 3-D printable files, and what kinds of safeguards are in place.

The website "Everything you need to get started in 3-D [printing](#)" was developed by staff at the University of Melbourne in response to the growing number of users keen to find, share, and create 3-D printed goods online.

A team from the School of Culture and Communications at the University of Melbourne designed the website [3DPrintingInfo.org](#) which includes a scorecard for various 3-D printing sites, as well as some useful tips for those getting started in the 3-D printing world.

Project leaders Dr Luke Heemsbergen and Dr Robbie Fordyce were keen to offer [consumers](#) a range of easy to understand guides and information to help safeguard their work and take

advantage of this emerging technology.

"The free resources are the result of extensive multidisciplinary research in Australia, and beyond, that identified emerging issues and trends within the consumer 3-D printing space such as who owns the designs you share, the ones you modify and how they can be used by others," Dr Heemsbergen said.

"Interviews with experts and industry leaders, and complex modeling of the sharing patterns of objects online also raised a number of new issues for consumers," said Dr Fordyce.

Focus groups have shown that despite 3-D printing becoming increasingly popular, consumers still have some gaps in their know-how. It is important that consumers make effective use, can call upon their rights and take account of their responsibilities as they design, share and print 3-D files. Quality of 3-D printing files found online, the long term social impact of the proliferation of 3-D printed objects and the legal protections relevant to the sharing and using of 3-D printable files are all issues that Australian consumers will have to face in the near future.

"3-D printing is a social practice that is built on a specific set of technologies, how people 3-D print, what they print, and how society understands and decides this becomes a social and political concern," Dr Heemsbergen said.

"Worrying about copyright and other Intellectual Property Rights is necessary, but not sufficient - there are ethical, cultural and social aspects of what we make that tell us who we are as a society."

The internet decentralises control of media - whether digital or, with 3-D printing, physical, and Australians are working towards understanding their rights and their risks regarding such processes.

"We are used to viewing things - anything and everything - out in cyberspace, but when that barrier breaks down, and the digital is made physical in your own home, people have new concerns," Dr Fordyce said.

"Our scorecard at 3DPrintingInfo.org offers simple advice and information on the extent that various popular 3-D printing websites protect consumers who want to start 3-D printing."

Provided by University of Melbourne

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