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**Learning**  
from the December 16, 2003 edition



**FINGERS LIKE THIS:** Jim Kelly offers a Berklee student instruction on the guitar. Mr. Kelly teaches classes at the school in person, but his lessons are also available on the Internet. Berklee students not only download lessons, but sometimes also upload their own music in order to reach a wider audience.

BILL GALLERY

## File-sharing goes to school

By [Elizabeth Armstrong](#) | Staff writer of *The Christian Science Monitor*

The sun shines cold and bright in the days following Boston's first big snowfall. Scores of students, bundled in winter coats, juggle unwieldy musical instruments, cellphones, and laptops as they trudge through the city's slushy streets.

It is an age of reckoning for many of these students as virtual schooling gains momentum nationwide.

Here at the Berklee College of Music, enrollment in the new online school is already above 800, and students who've opted to walk to classes instead of simply logging on to them are running up against a harsh reality: Trekking to class in a town like Boston can be brutal.

So it does not come as a surprise that Berklee, among the country's most prestigious music institutions, is at the front of a small but influential pack of schools moving unprecedented amounts of content online.

After the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) filed almost 400 lawsuits against music file-sharers in America this past fall, the music school launched Berklee Shares, a program that places more than 100 music lessons on the Internet free of charge and encourages those who download the video, audio, and text files to share the minilessons with as many people as possible.

The goal is threefold: spread the Berklee name around the world as quickly and cheaply as possible; further the Berklee goal to educate and develop students to excel in music as a career; and encourage a healthy discussion about file-sharing, which the school considers to be a legitimate distribution model for the music industry and beyond.

"Berklee is in a unique position in the music business," says Dave Kusek, associate vice president of the school.

The school's job, he explains, includes training not only musicians and songwriters, but also the industry's business leaders, managers, publishers, and record-label executives.

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 **Negative Population Growth**

"We're very aware that there are problems with the recording business at the moment, but we're also aware that the number of people appreciating music and the number of artists creating music is at an all-time high," Mr. Kusek says. "And it's our mission to train them to excel in careers in music across those 360 degrees."

To many Americans today, file-sharing signals little more than pirated music and lawsuits. To academic institutions, however, it could be the best educational and marketing tool ever invented.

Berklee is not the only academic institution dabbling in the world of file-sharing. Rice University's Connexions Project and Massachusetts Institute of Technology's OpenCourseware also encourage the file-sharing of certain academic material online.

Along with Berklee, they use copyright licenses covered by San Francisco-based Creative Commons, licenses that protect the university-originated material without preventing viewers from downloading and sharing their own versions. Creative Commons calls it "some rights reserved."

"The stigma that's been attached to file sharing is really unfair," says Glenn Otis Brown, executive director of Creative Commons.

File-sharing itself isn't illegal, he says; sharing material when all rights are reserved is. Through the Creative Commons license, Berklee grants everyone the rights to "copy, distribute, display, and perform the work" as long as the material is used for noncommercial uses, attribution to the Berklee Shares program is given, and no derivatives are made from the work.

Mr. Brown adds that music schools are the obvious early adopters of file-sharing as a distribution model, and that more are sure to follow Berklee's lead because the method offers several compelling advantages.

"One, it's free and easy - the best proven way to get your stuff widely disseminated right now," Brown says.

"Two, it's their audience. A lot of people using these networks are music lovers, so they know they're getting the attention of groups inclined to listen. This project really demonstrates that file-sharing is basically just a great communication tool, and there are very legitimate uses of this kind of technology."

The Berklee Shares lessons cover a wide range of content, including lessons on Afro-Cuban conga rhythms, double picking for guitar shredders, and cuing for turntable DJs, as well as tips on production, songwriting, and music improvisation.

The target audience, says Debbie Cavalier, dean of continuing education at Berklee's online school, isn't college students but high schoolers looking for tips before college or 25- to 55-year-olds interested in music as a hobby or a career.

Though Berklee's file-sharing campaign was launched quietly on Nov. 10, the lessons have spread to more than 10,000 websites and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, Ms. Cavalier says.

"There have been 100,000 downloads so far, and the Berklee brand is touching people every time," she says. "We see this as a way for music education to really flourish."

Derek Slater, an affiliate at Harvard Law School's Berkman Center for Internet and Society, says file-sharing will enable Berklee to meet one of the biggest challenges facing universities today: how to distribute knowledge widely while maintaining a selective admissions policy.

"The key is that this is not an either/or, and Berklee gets that," says Mr. Slater, a junior at Harvard and a former intern at Creative Commons. "People are realizing that absolute control is unwarranted and counterproductive. To sustain its existence, it doesn't need to have complete control over its learning environment and resources."

But what about those students walking to class in the snow, paying an arm and a leg for tuition?

As Berklee considers releasing possibly hundreds of files over the Internet in the coming months, it must remember that it would be

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disadvantageous to share everything, says Jeffrey Matsuura, director of the law and technology program at the University of Dayton School of Law. "If a university puts too much of its material out, it could make students wonder what they're actually paying tuition for," he says.

Berklee's Kusek disagrees.

"What happens on campus in a classroom with a Berklee faculty member and other students, or what happens in our online school in an online class with a Berklee faculty and other online students ... is the essence of the Berklee experience," he says.

"We're not attempting to duplicate Berklee and give it away. It's a taste of what happens at Berklee, a window into the experience here.

"We found that our students on campus - all interested in careers in music - were downloading music [from file-sharing services]," adds Kusek.

But what surprised Kusek and other Berklee faculty is that they were also uploading their own songs, using file-sharing as a way to expand their audiences and promote their own music. "When you look at the big picture, most musicians, if they're not songwriters, make most of their money performing," Kusek explains.

"It's a great way for new artists to get exposure for nothing. This is an example of when you want to use the network to distribute, when you want access to your material to be free. That's a choice you can make that has a lot of power."





With millions of people around the world downloading music around the clock, many industry analysts and education experts believe file-sharing to be the best marketing and distribution model today.

Schools such as Berklee, ultimately interested in marketing and boosting an industry their students hope to thrive in, seem to agree, and are hastening to take advantage of an enormously popular service.

"I think Berklee is smart," Mr. Matsuura says. "Is it actually going to work the way they think it will? I don't know. But I think they're right to try."

When it comes to file-sharing, the former attorney adds, "The genie's not going back in the bottle."

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