

Google's Stock Photo Search?

[Google's Stock Photo Search?](#) [1] [Tweet](#) [2]

By Steve Gibson Tue, 2009-07-14 23:42

Google [recently announced](#) [3] the launch of some new features in their Google images search tool. Google previously provided a creative commons search but not integrated into Google images. The new filter allows users of Google images to search for images licensed for free use under creative commons licenses. Google is not the first to offer a creative commons image search [everystockphoto](#) [4] has been doing it for a while (although they only seem to show me results from flickr and [sxc](#) [5]).

Is this going to "[spell the end of image libraries like iStockPhoto](#) [6]"? I doubt that very much - not everyone wants a creative commons attribution plastered on their website or printed design. From my tests the results are nothing like as correctly matched as those on a stock photo website.

At present the new search filter is buried in "[Advanced Image Search](#) [7]" so most Google users won't see it unless they go looking. I'd prefer it if Google showed icons alongside each image to show their probable license status, perhaps defaulting to "copyright / unknown").

I thought I'd put it to the test and see what I could find. My favourite test search "apples":

The screenshot shows a Google Images search for 'apples'. The search bar contains 'apples' and the 'Search images' button is visible. Below the search bar, there are filters for 'SafeSearch: Moderate', 'Images', 'Show: Any size', 'Any type', and 'All colors'. The results show 'Results 1 - 20 of about 306 (0.09 seconds)'. Below the results, there are related searches: 'green apples', 'red apples', and 'strawberries'. A yellow banner indicates 'Showing only images labeled for commercial reuse with modification (show all images)'. The search results are displayed in a grid of 8 images, each with a caption and source information.

Image	Caption	Source
	green apples	500 x 375 - 85k - jpg www.flickr.com
	Apples ...	500 x 343 - 73k - jpg www.flickr.com
	Pommes pourries - Rotten apples	500 x 337 - 115k - jpg www.flickr.com
	Apples and oranges on Flickr - Photo ...	375 x 500 - 105k - jpg www.flickr.com
	Apples.jpg Český: Jablka jsou ...	1800 x 2700 - 932k - jpg commons.wikimedia.org
	apples by Gudlyf	500 x 333 - 82k - jpg www.flickr.com
	this apple is not fresh	500 x 360 - 90k - jpg www.flickr.com
	Green & Red Apples	500 x 332 - 168k - jpg www.flickr.com

Wow what a lot of flickr images! Getting a little more advanced made things very 'interesting', a search for "London" reveals that the tuning of this search is not that perfect. Far more concerning is the aerial photo showing third in the results:

The screenshot shows a Google Images search for "london". The search bar contains "london" and the "Search images" button is visible. Below the search bar, there are filters for "SafeSearch: Moderate", "Images", "Show: Any size", "Any type", and "All colors". The results show "Results 1 - 20 of about 267 (0.06 seconds)". A yellow banner indicates "Showing only images labeled for commercial reuse (show all images)". The results are displayed in a grid of 8 images:

- Image 1:** A red London bus on a street. Caption: "London bus on Flickr - Photo Sharing ... 500 x 333 - 146k - jpg www.flickr.com [More from flickr.com]".
- Image 2:** A night view of the Gherkin building. Caption: "Gherkin Stitch, London on Flickr ... 500 x 375 - 137k - jpg www.flickr.com".
- Image 3:** An aerial night view of London. Caption: "... turned for a moment to London, ... 500 x 321 - 125k - jpg www.vanshnookenraggen.com".
- Image 4:** A colorful, abstract image of a London Underground roundabout. Caption: "0407-london 1024 x 1365 - 339k - jpg johnleach.co.uk [More from johnleach.co.uk]".
- Image 5:** A group of people sitting on a bench. Caption: "0407-london 1024 x 768 - 171k - jpg johnleach.co.uk".
- Image 6:** A map of London boroughs. Caption: "London boroughs map 600 x 433 - 30k - png www.chengappa.demon.co.uk [More from www.chengappa.demon.co.uk]".
- Image 7:** Another map of London boroughs. Caption: "London boroughs map 600 x 433 - 68k - png www.chengappa.demon.co.uk".
- Image 8:** A stylized, abstract image of London. Caption: "London (For Evie) 200 x 200 - 44k - png robmyers.org".

There is no evidence I can see that the third result is creative commons in the blog that the result links to, Infact that blog then links to a [big picture page of aerial photos on boston.com](#) [8] the photos on which are **quite clearly copyrighted**. Until more pictorial content on the web is semantically tagged ([more about rdf and photography](#) [9]) services like this will remain useful but imperfect, searching for images with text is a difficult thing to do properly. This is not something of concern for people selling to the average stock photo buyer, but more the army of amateurs looking for something free who likely do no fully understand photography licensing.

We'd all like to think that people looking on Google images will read any terms and conditions that are shown with images that are found but sadly some, perhaps quite a lot of them, won't. A lot of bloggers now think it's "fine if you include a link", and while that's better than what people previously did (just to rip it off without attribution) it's no good if you as a photographer want to keep full control over your copyrighted and not [cc](#) [10] licensed photos.

Problems aside I have no doubt some enterprising photographers will leverage this feature to their advantage, It's just another step towards 'the internet' filtering photography by popularity. Those with creative commons images on flickr already have a head start. Popularity is one thing but converting that into cash is another, It appears that popular photos on flickr are more likely to be 'noticed' for the Getty collection, but it should also be noted that offering an image as creative commons blows any chance of Getty reselling it for you as [rights managed](#) [11] or you offering it as [exclusive microstock](#) [12]

Related Posts:

[Preventing Image Theft](#) [13]

[SEO For Photographers](#) [14]

[Promoting your Stock Image Portfolio](#) [15]

[Image Licensing and Creative Commons](#) [16]

0 Comments

It's quiet in here!

Source URL: <https://microstockinsider.com/news/googles-stock-photo-search>

Links:

- [1] <https://microstockinsider.com/news/googles-stock-photo-search>
- [2] <http://twitter.com/share>
- [3] <http://googleblog.blogspot.com/2009/07/find-creative-commons-images-with-image.html>
- [4] <http://everystockphoto.com>
- [5] <https://microstockinsider.com/glossary/term/51>
- [6] <http://www.pocket-lint.com/news/news.phtml/25443/google-image-search-licence-feature.phtml>
- [7] http://images.google.com/advanced_image_search
- [8] http://www.boston.com/bigpicture/2008/08/london_from_above_at_night.html
- [9] <http://www.microstockinsider.com/guides/geotagging-photography-and-semantic-web>
- [10] <https://microstockinsider.com/glossary/term/16>
- [11] <https://microstockinsider.com/glossary/term/13>
- [12] <http://www.microstockinsider.com/guides/exclusive-or-non-exclusive-a-microstock-dilemma>
- [13] <http://www.microstockinsider.com/guides/preventing-image-theft>
- [14] <http://www.microstockinsider.com/guides/photography-site-seo-search-engine-optimisation>
- [15] <http://www.microstockinsider.com/guides/promoting-your-stock-image-portfolio>
- [16] <http://www.microstockinsider.com/guides/introduction-licensing-images>