You’ve found an image (photo, art, graphic) that you want to use in a paper, PowerPoint presentation, or other student project. There are three issues you need to consider:

1. **Is the image protected under Copyright Law?**
2. **Is it legal for me to reuse the image?**
3. **How do I cite the image?**

In the illustrated example, the image is a **scanned version of a lithograph** of advertisement of the original Grand Rapids Brewing Company building which took up an entire city block south of Michigan Street between Ottawa and Ionia Avenues. The print lithograph is owned by the Grand Rapids Public Museum, where a photographer scanned and uploaded a copy onto the Museum website.

### 1. Is the image protected by copyright?

- Copyright doesn’t last forever, and the **duration of copyright law** has changed over time. This image was created about 1910, before the company closed due to the enactment of Prohibition. The copyright law in effect for images created prior to 1923 says this original image is no longer under copyright protection. So, the original lithograph image is no longer under copyright.

- However, the scanned image of the lithograph is protected under copyright law – and the current law has a duration of between 95-120 years from the date of scanning! One must get permission to reuse this scanned image, and the copyright holder may charge you a fee for that privilege.

If you personally took a photograph or scanned the original lithograph yourself, you own the copyright to your scanned version only – provided you had permission to photograph or scan in the first place. The copyright holder has the right to charge you for that photographic / scanning privilege.

Copyright owners may give away their copyright totally by labelling an item as “in the public domain” which is often – but not always - the case for governmental entities. Recently, some copyright owners allow others total or partial rights to reuse their intellectual content under a **Creative Commons** license. Sadly, many (most) social media users disregard copyright law which exists to protect the intellectual property of the creator or owner.

### 2. Is it legal for me to reuse the image scanned by someone else?

- If you get permission to reuse the version, then you must follow the copyright holder’s directions in terms of labeling that image with a photo credit line, often, “Courtesy of ABCD”, or, “Photo used with the permission of ABCD”. If permission is denied, then obviously, it is not legal to reuse the image. If an item is reused under a Creative Commons license, take note how that particular attribution should be made. Notice the credit line I was directed to use on the Grand Rapids Public Museum graphic above.

### 3. How do I cite the image?

- In addition to the credit line next to the photo, ethical academics should always include a complete citation to the graphic image in a bibliography. How you do that depends on the citation style (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.) specified by your assignment, or in the publication where you intend to re-use the image. Remember, your GRCC librarians and your classroom professor want you to learn to cite correctly – so ask for help if you need it!
**MLA 8 CITATION FORMAT:** The *MLA Handbook* (8th edition) citing rules are less-prescriptive than before, as long as the item is cited with enough information that it can be re-discovered by another researcher. The *MLA Style Center* recommends the following style if you viewed a graphic item in its *original form*:


The *MLA Style Center* recommends this style if you viewed a graphic item on a *website*:


The *Purdue Owl MLA* website provides this example for *MLA citing an image found on a website* with similar instructions, but includes an accession date. *MLA* says an accession date is only required when you think the image is likely to disappear from a website.


Consequently, I constructed my MLA citation to look like this:


**APA CITATION FORMAT:** The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (aka APA Manual) does not provide strict guidelines for this type of resource either. The *APA Style Blog* provides these examples of the *original* and a *web image of the original*, respectively, as follows:


Consequently, I constructed my APA citation to look like this:


**REAL WORLD of a GRCC Classroom:** Your GRCC instructor will undoubtedly ask you to credit and/or cite an image correctly, but, since a paper is usually written for your personal educational use, you may not be required to get prior copyright permission. That step is totally up to the faculty member and the assignment guidelines. If you are not sure, ask your professor for assistance.

For more on citing, see the *CITING SOURCES Subject Guide* and *Ask-a-Librarian.*