

China's internet courts are stepping up their use of blockchain to protect writers and creative content creators. This has mainly been beneficial to authors who publish their works online and have faced problems in safeguarding their legal rights owing to the difficulty in collecting evidence.

Blockchain is solving this evidentiary issue for content creators in Hangzhou, the capital of China's Zhejiang province. Writers upload their literary works or articles to a blockchain-based database, which automatically generates a string or electronic ID for the content.

The blockchain stores related data such as the time, location and identity of the content creator, Wang Jiangqiao, executive vice president of the Hangzhou Internet Court told Xinhua, China's state press agency. As data on the blockchain is protected by cryptography, it becomes easier for copyright owners to protect their work from piracy.

In fact, a reasonable proportion of Chinese articles on the internet now include a marker showing they're "protected by blockchain".

The Internet Court in Hangzhou is one of the three in China dedicated to dealing with disputes relating to e-commerce, online contracts and internet copyright infringements. Last year, the Hangzhou Internet Court adopted a blockchain platform for evidence.

With a digital ID of their literary works, writers can claim Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) easily. When a dispute arises, they can hand over the blockchain data to the judiciary as proof. Until now, copyright owners had to pay a high price for protecting their rights, which involved notarization, forensic appraisal, and filing a lawsuit.

Even if content creators did get compensation, it might not be enough to cover the cost of the traditional IPR claim process. That's apart from the lost income from someone stealing your proprietary work.

The internet is a virtual world where data can be easily tampered with.

This makes it difficult to prove the authenticity of the data. "But data on the blockchain is

tamper-proof, traceable and verifiable, and it can help save the evidence for handling internet IPR disputes," Gao Fuping, dean of the School of Intellectual Property at the East China University of Political Science and Law told Xinhua.

The internet courts in Hangzhou, Beijing and Guangzhou have all launched judicial applications of blockchain technology. The Hangzhou court's judicial blockchain has collected 2.1 billion pieces of data since its establishment.

In August, the Supreme People's Court of China decided to build a unified judicial blockchain platform to bring together courts, notary offices and forensic centres, said Xinhua.

Earlier this month, a court in Shaoxing gave the first criminal sentence in China based on blockchain stored evidence.

Ledger Insights previously reported on Hangzhou Internet Court adopting smart contracts on the judicial blockchain platform to automate filings, trials and outcomes.