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Overview of the Copyright Office



The United States Copyright Office, and the position of Register of Copyrights, were created by Congress in 1897. The Register directs the Copyright Office as a separate federal department within the Library of Congress, under the general oversight of the Librarian, pursuant to specific statutory authorities set forth in the United States Copyright Act. Earlier in the Nation's history, from 1870-1896, the Librarian of Congress administered copyright registration (at that time mostly books) directly, and earlier still, from 1790-1896, U.S. district courts were responsible for doing so. Today, the Copyright Office is responsible for administering a complex and dynamic set of laws, which

include registration, the recordation of title and licenses, a number of statutory licensing provisions, and other aspects of the 1976 Copyright Act and the 1998 Digital Millennium Copyright Act. By statute, the Register of Copyrights is the principal advisor to Congress on national and international copyright matters, testifying upon request and providing ongoing leadership and impartial expertise on copyright law and policy.

Congress relies upon, and directs, the Copyright Office to provide critical law and policy services, including domestic and international policy analysis, legislative support for Congress, litigation support, assistance to courts and executive branch agencies, participation on U.S. delegations to international meetings, and public information and education programs. The past few years have been particularly active, as Copyright Office lawyers assisted Congress with more than twenty copyright review hearings and prepared numerous timely reports, including for example, *The Making Available Right in the United States* (/docs/making_available/making-available-right.jpg), *Copyright and the Music Marketplace* (</policy/musiclicensingstudy/copyright-and-the-music-marketplace.pdf>), and *Orphan Works and Mass Digitization* (</orphan/reports/orphan-works2015.pdf>).

As of 2016, the Copyright Office has approximately 400 employees, the majority of whom examine and register hundreds of thousands of copyright claims in books, journals, music, movies, sound recordings, software, photographs, and other works of original authorship each year. The Office issued over 443,000 registrations in fiscal year 2015. The Office's registration system and the companion recordation system constitute the world's

largest compilation of copyright data. The Office also acts as a conduit for the Library, providing certain works of authorship, known as copyright deposits, to the Library for its collections. In fiscal year 2015, the Office forwarded more than 615,000 works, worth a net value of \$29.3 million, to the Library.

In recent years, the Register has focused on modernizing the Copyright Office by examining through a set of public discussions the relationship between the law, regulations, registration practices, technology, access to data, and the evolving copyright marketplace.

The Copyright Office works regularly with the Department of Justice, the Department of State, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, the Department of Commerce, including the Patent and Trademark Office, and the Office of the Intellectual Property Enforcement Coordinator.

Mission Statement of the U.S. Copyright Office

To administer the Nation's copyright laws for the advancement of the public good; to offer services and support to authors and users of creative works; and to provide expert impartial assistance to Congress, the courts, and executive branch agencies on questions of copyright law and policy.

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USCO Webmaster (<mailto:copyweb@loc.gov>)

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