

# How to Investigate the Copyright Status of a Work

This Circular offers some practical guidance on what to look for if you are investigating the copyright status of a work. It is important to realize, however, that this circular contains only general information and that there are a number of exceptions to the principles outlined here. In many cases, it is important to consult with a copyright attorney before reaching any conclusions regarding the copyright status of a work.

## In General

### *Methods of Approaching a Copyright Investigation*

There are several ways to investigate whether a work is under copyright protection and, if so, the facts of the copyright. These are the main ones:

1. Examine a copy of the work for such elements as a copyright notice, place and date of publication, author and publisher. If the work is a sound recording, examine the disc, tape, cartridge, or cassette in which the recorded sound is fixed, or the album cover, sleeve, or container in which the recording is sold.
2. Search the Copyright Office catalogs and other records.
3. Have the Copyright Office conduct a search for you.

## **A Few Words of Caution About Copyright Investigations**

Copyright investigations often involve more than one of these methods. Even if you follow all three approaches, the results may not be conclusive. Moreover, as explained in this circular, the changes brought about under the Copyright Act of 1976, the Berne Convention Implementation Act of 1988, the Copyright Renewal Act of 1992, and the Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act of 1998 must be considered when investigating the copyright status of a work.

## How to Search Copyright Office Catalogs and Records

### *Catalog of Copyright Entries*

The Copyright Office published the *Catalog of Copyright Entries (CCE)* in printed format from 1891 through 1978. From 1979 through 1982, the *CCE* was issued in microfiche format. The *CCE* is divided into parts according to the classes of works registered. Each *CCE* segment covers all registrations made during a particular period of time. Renewal registrations made from 1979 through 1982 are found in Section 8 of the catalog. Renewals prior to that time are generally listed at the end of the volume containing the class of work to which they pertained.

A number of libraries throughout the U.S. maintain copies of the *CCE*, and this may provide a good starting point if you wish to make a search yourself. There are some cases, however, in which a search of the *CCE* alone will not be sufficient to provide the needed information. For example:

- Because the *CCE* does not include entries for assignments or other recorded documents, it cannot be used for searches involving the ownership of rights.
- The *CCE* entry contains the essential facts concerning a registration, but it is not a verbatim transcript of the registration record. It does not contain the address of the copyright claimant.

Effective with registrations made since 1982 when the *CCE* was discontinued, the only method of searching *CCE* volumes outside the Library of Congress is by using the Internet to access the online catalog. The online catalog contains entries from 1978 to the present. Information on accessing the catalog via the Internet is provided below. The Copyright Office has been digitizing the 660 volumes of the *CCE* and many are now available at [www.archive.org/details/copyrightrecords/](http://www.archive.org/details/copyrightrecords/).

### Individual Searches of Copyright Records

The Copyright Office is located in the Library of Congress, James Madison Memorial Building, 101 Independence Avenue SE, Washington, DC 20559.

Most Copyright Office records are open to public inspection and searching from 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM, eastern time, Monday through Friday, except federal holidays. The various records freely available to the public include an extensive card catalog, an automated catalog containing records from 1978 forward, record books, and microfilm records of assignments and related documents. Other records, including correspondence files and deposit copies, are not open to the public for searching. However, they may be inspected upon request and payment of a search fee.\*

**\*NOTE:** Copyright Office fees are subject to change. For current fees, please check the Copyright Office website at [www.copyright.gov](http://www.copyright.gov), write the Copyright Office, or call (202) 707-3000 or 1-877-476-0778.

If you wish to do your own searching in the Copyright Office files open to the public, you will be given assistance in locating the records you need and in learning procedures for searching. If the Copyright Office staff member actually makes the search for you, a search fee must be charged. The search will not be done while you wait.

In addition, Copyright Office records in machine-readable form cataloged from January 1, 1978, to the present, including registration and renewal information and recorded documents, are available for searching from the Copyright Office website at [www.copyright.gov](http://www.copyright.gov).

The Copyright Office does not offer search assistance to users on the Internet.

## Searching by the Copyright Office

### *In General*

Upon request and at the statutory rate for each hour or fraction of an hour used, the Copyright Office staff will search the records of registrations and other recorded documents concerning ownership of copyrights and will provide a written report. If you request a cost estimate, the Copyright Office will provide one. Estimates for searches are based on the information you furnish and are provided for a set fee that is applied toward the cost of the search and report. Fees for estimates are nonrefundable and may be applied to a search for up to one year from the date of the estimate. Requests must include an address and telephone number where you may be reached during business hours and an email address if available.

Certification of a search report is available for an additional fee. Certified searches are frequently requested to meet the evidentiary requirements of litigation.

Preferred payment is by personal check or credit card. Contact the Copyright Office for information regarding payment with money orders or by overseas banking institutions.

For information, correspondence, or payment, contact:

*Copyright Office GC/I&R/RRC*

*Attn: RCC*

*P.O. Box 70400*

*Washington, DC 20024*

**PHONE:** (202) 707-6850 (M–F, 8:30–5:00 eastern time)

**FAX:** (202) 252-3485

**EMAIL:** [copysearch@copyright.gov](mailto:copysearch@copyright.gov)

### *What the Fee Does Not Cover*

The search fee does *not* include the cost of additional certificates, photocopies of deposits, or copies of other Office records. For information concerning these services, see *Obtaining Access to and Copies of Copyright Office Records and Deposits (Circular 6)*.

### *Information Needed*

The more detailed information you furnish with your request, the less expensive the search will be. Please provide as much of the following information as possible:

- the title of the work, with any possible variants
- the names of the authors, including possible pseudonyms
- the name of the probable copyright owner, which may be the publisher or producer
- the approximate year when the work was published or registered
- the type of work involved (book, play, musical composition, sound recording, photograph, etc.)
- for a work originally published as a part of a periodical or collection, the title of that publication and any other information, such as the volume or issue number, to help identify it
- the registration number or any other copyright data

Motion pictures are often based on other works, such as books or serialized contributions to periodicals or other composite works. *If you want a search for an underlying work or for music from*

*a motion picture, you must specifically request such a search. You must also identify the underlying works and music and furnish the specific titles, authors, and approximate dates of these works.*

### ***Searches Involving Assignments and Other Documents Affecting Copyright Ownership***

For the standard hourly search fee, the Copyright Office staff will search its indexes covering the records of assignments and other recorded documents concerning ownership of copyrights. The reports of searches in these cases will state the facts shown in the Office's indexes of the recorded documents but will offer no interpretation of the content of the documents or their legal effect.

## **Limitations on Searches**

In determining whether or not to have a search made, you should keep the following points in mind:

**No Special Lists** · The Copyright Office does not maintain any lists of works by subject or any lists of works that are in the public domain.

**Contributions Not Listed Separately in Copyright Office Records** · Individual works such as stories, poems, articles, or musical compositions that were published as contributions to a copyrighted periodical or collection are usually not listed separately by title in our records.

**No Comparisons** · The Copyright Office does not search or compare copies of works to determine questions of possible infringement or to determine how much two or more versions of a work have in common.

**Titles and Names Not Copyrightable** · Copyright does not protect names and titles, and our records list many different works identified by the same or similar titles. Some brand names, trade names, slogans, and phrases may be entitled to protection under the general rules of law relating to unfair competition. They may also be entitled to registration under provisions of trademark laws. For general questions about the federal trademark registration process contact: **Trademark Assistance Center**, 1-800-786-9199 (select option #1), [TrademarkAssistanceCenter@uspto.gov](mailto:TrademarkAssistanceCenter@uspto.gov), or 600 Dulany Street, Madison East, Concourse Level, Alexandria, VA 22314. Possible protection of names and titles under common law principles of unfair competition is a question of state law.

**No Legal Advice** · The Copyright Office cannot express any opinion as to the legal significance or effect of the facts included in a search report.

## **Some Words of Caution**

### ***Searches Not Always Conclusive***

Searches of the Copyright Office catalogs and records are useful in helping to determine the copyright status of a work, but they cannot be regarded as conclusive in all cases. The complete absence of any information about a work in the Office records does not mean that the work is unprotected. The following are examples of cases in which information about a particular work may be incomplete or lacking entirely in the Copyright Office:

- Before 1978, unpublished works were entitled to protection under common law without the need of registration.

- Works published with notice prior to 1978 may be registered at *any* time within the first 28-year term.
- Works copyrighted between January 1, 1964, and December 31, 1977, are affected by the Copyright Renewal Act of 1992, which automatically extends the copyright term and makes renewal registrations optional.
- For works under copyright protection on or after January 1, 1978, registration may be made at any time during the term of protection. Although registration is not required as a condition of copyright protection, there are certain definite advantages to registration. For further information, see *Copyright Basics* (**Circular 1**).
- Since searches are ordinarily limited to registrations that have already been cataloged, a search report may not cover recent registrations for which catalog records are not yet available.
- The information in the search request may not have been complete or specific enough to identify the work.
- The work may have been registered under a different title or as part of a larger work.

### ***Protection in Foreign Countries***

Even if you conclude that a work is in the public domain in the United States, this does not necessarily mean that you are free to use it in other countries. Every nation has its own laws governing the length and scope of copyright protection, and these are applicable to uses of the work within that nation's borders. Thus, the expiration or loss of copyright protection in the United States may still leave the work fully protected against unauthorized use in other countries. For further information, see *Obtaining Access to and Copies of Copyright Office Records and Deposits* (**Circular 6**); *Renewal of Copyright* (**Circular 6A**); and *Duration of Copyright* (**Circular 15A**).

### ***Impact of the Copyright Act on Copyright Investigations***

On October 19, 1976, the President signed into law a complete revision of the copyright law of the United States (title 17 of the United States Code). Most provisions of this statute came into force on January 1, 1978, superseding the Copyright Act of 1909. These provisions made significant changes in the copyright law. Further important changes resulted from the Berne Convention Implementation Act of 1988, which took effect March 1, 1989; the Copyright Renewal Act of 1992 (P.L. 102-307) enacted June 26, 1992, which amended the renewal provisions of the copyright law; and the Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-298) enacted October 27, 1998, which extended the term of copyrights for an additional 20 years.

If you need more information about the provisions of either the 1909 or the 1976 law, write or call the Copyright Office. Both laws are available on the Copyright Office website. For information about renewals, see *Renewal of Copyright* (**Circular 6A**). For paper copies of the law, order *Copyright Law of the United States* (**Circular 92**), from:

*U.S. Government Printing Office  
P.O. Box 979050  
St. Louis, MO 63197-9000*

**WEB:** <http://bookstore.gpo.gov>  
**PHONE:** (202) 512-1800 [toll free: 1-866-512-1800]  
**FAX:** (202) 512-2104  
**EMAIL:** [contactcenter@gpo.gov](mailto:contactcenter@gpo.gov)

Or go to the Copyright Office website at [www.copyright.gov/title17](http://www.copyright.gov/title17).

For copyright investigations, the following points about the impact of the Copyright Act of 1976, the Berne Convention Implementation Act of 1988, and the Copyright Renewal Act of 1992 should be considered.

### ***A Changed System of Copyright Formalities***

Some of the most sweeping changes under the 1976 Copyright Act involve copyright formalities, that is, the procedural requirements for securing and maintaining full copyright protection. The old system of formalities involved copyright notice, deposit, and registration; recordation of transfers and licenses of copyright ownership; and U.S. manufacture, among other things. In general, while retaining formalities, the 1976 law reduced the chances of mistakes, softened the consequences of errors and omissions, and allowed for the correction of errors.

The Berne Convention Implementation Act of 1988 reduced formalities, most notably making the addition of the previously mandatory copyright notice optional. It should be noted that the amended notice requirements are not retroactive.

The Copyright Renewal Act of 1992, enacted June 26, 1992, automatically extends the term of copyrights secured between January 1, 1964, and December 31, 1977, making renewal registration optional. Consult *Renewal of Copyright* (**Circular 6A**) for details. For additional information, contact the Copyright Office by phone at (202) 707-3000 or 1-877-476-0778 (toll free).

### ***Automatic Copyright***

Under the present copyright law, copyright exists in original works of authorship created and fixed in any tangible medium of expression, now known or later developed, from which they can be perceived, reproduced, or otherwise communicated, either directly, or indirectly with the aid of a machine or device. In other words, copyright is an incident of creative authorship and is not dependent on statutory formalities. Thus, registration with the Copyright Office generally is not required, but there are certain advantages that arise from a timely registration. For further information on the advantages of registration, see *Copyright Basics* (**Circular 1**.)

### ***Copyright Notice***

The 1909 Copyright Act and the 1976 Copyright Act as originally enacted required a notice of copyright on published works. For most works, a copyright notice consisted of the symbol ©, the word “Copyright” or the abbreviation “Copr.,” together with the name of the owner of copyright and the year of first publication. For example: “© Joan Crane 2004” or “Copyright 2008 by Abraham Adams.”

For sound recordings published on or after February 15, 1972, a copyright notice might read “© 1994 XYZ Records, Inc.” See below for more information about sound recordings.

For mask works, a copyright notice might read “© SDR Industries.” See *Federal Statutory Protection for Mask Works* (**Circular 100**), for more information.

As originally enacted, the 1976 law prescribed that all visually perceptible published copies of a work, or published phonorecords of a sound recording, should bear a proper copyright notice. This applies to such works published before March 1, 1989. After March 1, 1989, notice of copyright on these works is optional. Adding the notice, however, is strongly encouraged and, if litigation involving the copyright occurs, certain advantages exist for publishing a work with notice.

Prior to March 1, 1989, the requirement for the notice applied equally whether the work was published in the United States or elsewhere by authority of the copyright owner. Compliance with the statutory notice requirements was the responsibility of the copyright owner. Unauthorized publication without the copyright notice, or with a defective notice, does not affect the validity of the copyright in the work.

Advance permission from, or registration with, the Copyright Office is not required before placing a copyright notice on copies of the work or on phonorecords of a sound recording. Moreover, for works first published on or after January 1, 1978, through February 28, 1989, omission of the required notice, or use of a defective notice, did not result in forfeiture or outright loss of copyright protection. Certain omissions of, or defects in, the notice of copyright, however, could have led to loss of copyright protection if steps were not taken to correct or cure the omissions or defects. The Copyright Office has issued a final regulation (37 CFR 201.20) that suggests various acceptable positions for the notice of copyright. This regulation is available on the Copyright Office website at [www.copyright.gov/title37/201/index.html](http://www.copyright.gov/title37/201/index.html). For further information, see *Copyright Notice (Circular 3)*.

### ***Works Already in the Public Domain***

In general, once a work enters the public domain, copyright protection cannot be restored. However, certain exceptions apply to works of foreign origin. For eligible foreign works, copyright protection is automatically restored under the provisions of the Uruguay Round Agreements Act (URAA) and section 104(a) of the copyright law. Previous to the URAA, the North American Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act (NAFTA) contained copyright restoration provisions for certain Canadian and Mexican works.

Under the copyright law in effect prior to January 1, 1978, copyright could be lost in several situations. The most common were publication without the required notice of copyright, expiration of the first 28-year term without renewal, or final expiration of the second copyright term. The Copyright Renewal Act of 1992 automatically renews first term copyrights secured between January 1, 1964, and December 31, 1977.

### ***Scope of Exclusive Rights Under Copyright***

The present law has changed and enlarged in some cases the scope of the copyright owner's rights. The new rights apply to all uses of a work subject to protection by copyright after January 1, 1978, regardless of when the work was created.

## **Duration of Copyright Protection**

### ***Works Originally Copyrighted On or After January 1, 1978***

A work that is created and fixed in tangible form for the first time on or after January 1, 1978, is automatically protected from the moment of its creation and is ordinarily given a term enduring for the author's life plus an additional 70 years after the author's death. In the case of "a joint work prepared by two or more authors who did not work for hire," the term lasts for 70 years after the last surviving author's death. For works made for hire and for anonymous and pseudonymous works (unless the author's identity is revealed in the Copyright Office records), the duration of copyright will be 95 years from publication or 120 years from creation, whichever is less.

Works created before the 1976 law came into effect but neither published nor registered for copyright before January 1, 1978, have been automatically brought under the statute and are now given federal copyright protection. The duration of copyright in these works will generally be computed in the same way as for new works: the life-plus-70 or 95/120-year terms will apply. However, all works in this category were guaranteed at least 25 years of statutory protection.

### ***Works Copyrighted Before January 1, 1978***

Under the law in effect before 1978, copyright was secured either on the date a work was published with notice of copyright or on the date of registration if the work was registered in unpublished form. In either case, copyright endured for a first term of 28 years from the date on which it was secured. During the last (28th) year of the first term, the copyright was eligible for renewal. The copyright law extends the renewal term from 28 to 67 years for copyrights in existence on January 1, 1978.

However, for works copyrighted prior to January 1, 1964, the copyright still must have been renewed in the 28th calendar year to receive the 67-year period of added protection. The amending legislation enacted June 26, 1992, automatically extends this second term for works first copyrighted between January 1, 1964, and December 31, 1977. For more detailed information on the copyright term, see *Duration of Copyright* ([Circular 15A](#)).

### **Works First Published Before 1978: the Copyright Notice**

#### ***General Information About the Copyright Notice***

In investigating the copyright status of works first published before January 1, 1978, the most important thing to look for is the notice of copyright. As a general rule under the 1909 law, copyright protection was lost permanently if the notice was omitted from the first authorized published edition of a work or if it appeared in the wrong form or position. The form and position of the copyright notice for various types of works were specified in the copyright statute. Some courts were liberal in overlooking relatively minor departures from the statutory requirements, but a basic failure to comply with the notice provisions forfeited copyright protection and put the work into the public domain in this country.

#### ***Absence of Copyright Notice***

For works first published before 1978, the complete absence of a copyright notice from a published copy generally indicates that the work is not protected by copyright. For works first published before March 1, 1989, the copyright notice is required, but omission could have been cured by registration before or within five years of publication and by adding the notice to copies published in the United States after discovery of the omission. Some works may contain a notice, others may not. The absence of a notice in works published on or after March 1, 1989, does not necessarily indicate that the work is in the public domain.

**Unpublished Works** · No notice of copyright was required on the copies of any unpublished work. The concept of “publication” is very technical, and it was possible for a number of copies lacking a copyright notice to be reproduced and distributed without affecting copyright protection.

**Foreign Editions** · In the case of works seeking ad interim copyright,\* copies of a copyrighted work were exempted from the notice requirements if they were first published outside the United States. Some copies of these foreign editions could find their way into the United States without impairing the copyright.

**\*NOTE:** “Ad interim copyright” refers to a special short term of copyright available to certain pre-1978 books and periodicals. For further information on ad interim copyright, see page 11.



**Accidental Omission** · The 1909 statute preserved copyright protection if the notice was omitted by accident or mistake from a “particular copy or copies.”

**Unauthorized Publication** · A valid copyright was not secured if someone deleted the notice and/or published the work without authorization from the copyright owner.

**Sound Recordings** · Reproductions of sound recordings usually contain two different types of creative works: the underlying musical, dramatic, or literary work that is being performed or read and the fixation of the actual sounds embodying the performance or reading. For protection of the underlying musical or literary work embodied in a recording, it is not necessary that a copyright notice covering this material appear on the phonograph records or tapes on which the recording is reproduced. A special notice is required for protection of the recording of a series of musical, spoken, or other sounds that were fixed on or after February 15, 1972. Sound recordings fixed before February 15, 1972, are not eligible for federal copyright protection. The Sound Recording Act of 1971, the present copyright law, and the Berne Convention Implementation Act of 1988 cannot be applied or be construed to provide any retroactive protection for sound recordings fixed before February 15, 1972. Such works, however, may be protected by various state laws or doctrines of common law.

### ***The Date in the Copyright Notice***

If you find a copyright notice, the date it contains may be important in determining the copyright status of the work. In general, the notice on works published before 1978 must include the year in which copyright was secured by publication or, if the work was first registered for copyright in unpublished form, the year in which registration was made. There are two main exceptions to this rule.

1. For pictorial, graphic, or sculptural works (Classes F through K under the 1909 law), the law permitted omission of the year date in the notice.
2. For “new versions” of previously published or copyrighted works, the notice was not usually required to include more than the year of first publication of the new version itself. This is explained further under *Derivative Works* below.

The year in the notice usually (though not always) indicated when the copyright began. It is, therefore, significant in determining whether a copyright is still in effect; or, if the copyright has not yet run its course, the year date will help in deciding when the copyright is scheduled to expire. For further information about the duration of copyright, see *Duration of Copyright* ([Circular 15A](#)).

In evaluating the meaning of the date in a notice, you should keep the following points in mind:

**Works Published and Copyrighted Before January 1, 1978** · A work published before January 1, 1978, and copyrighted on or after January 1, 1928, may still be protected by copyright in the United States if a valid renewal registration was made during the 28th year of the first term of the copyright. If renewed by registration or under the Copyright Renewal Act of 1992 and if still valid under the other provisions of the law, the copyright will expire 95 years from the end of the year in which it was first secured.

Therefore, the U.S. copyright in any work published or copyrighted prior to January 1, 1928, has expired by operation of law, and the work has permanently fallen into the public domain in the United States. On January 1, 1997, copyrights in works first published or copyrighted before January 1, 1922, expired; on January 1, 1998, copyrights in works first published or copyrighted before January 1, 1923, expired. Unless the copyright law is changed again, no works under protection on January 1, 1999, will fall into the public domain in the United States until January 1, 2019.

**Works First Published or Copyrighted Between January 1, 1923, and December 31, 1949, But Not Renewed** · If a work was first published or copyrighted between January 1, 1923, and December 31, 1949, it is important to determine whether the copyright was renewed during the last (28th) year of the first term of the copyright. This can be done by searching the Copyright Office records or catalogs as explained previously. If no renewal registration was made, copyright protection expired permanently at the end of the 28th year from the year date it was first secured.

**Works First Published or Copyrighted Between January 1, 1923, and December 31, 1949, and Registered for Renewal** · When a valid renewal registration was made and copyright in the work was in its second term on December 31, 1977, the renewal copyright term was extended under the latest act to 67 years. In these cases, copyright will last for a total of 95 years from the end of the year in which copyright was originally secured. Example: Copyright in a work first published in 1925 and renewed in 1953 expired on December 31, 2020.

**Works First Published or Copyrighted Between January 1, 1950, and December 31, 1963** · If a work was in its first 28-year term of copyright protection on January 1, 1978, it must have been renewed in a timely fashion to have secured the maximum term of copyright protection. If renewal registration was made during the 28th calendar year of its first term, copyright would endure for 95 years from the end of the year copyright was originally secured. If not renewed, the copyright expired at the end of its 28th calendar year.

**Works First Published or Copyrighted Between January 1, 1964, and December 31, 1977** · If a work was in its first 28-year term of copyright protection on June 26, 1992, renewal registration was optional. The term of copyright for works published or copyrighted during this time period was extended to 95 years by the Copyright Renewal Act of 1992 and the Sonny Bono Term Extension Act of 1998. There was no need to make the renewal filing to extend the original 28-year copyright term to the full 95 years.

However, there were several advantages to making a renewal registration during the 28th year of the original term of copyright. If renewal registration was made during the 28th year of the original term of copyright, the renewal copyright vested in the name of the renewal claimant on the effective date of the renewal registration; the renewal certificate constitutes prima facie evidence as to the validity of the copyright during the renewed and extended term and of the facts stated in the certificate; and, the right to use the derivative work in the extended term may be affected. See *Extension of Copyright Terms* ([Circular 15T](#)) for further information.

**Unpublished, Unregistered Works** · Before 1978, if a work had been neither “published” in the legal sense nor registered in the Copyright Office, it was subject to perpetual protection under the common law. On January 1, 1978, all works of this kind, subject to protection by copyright, were automatically brought under the federal copyright statute. The duration of copyright for these works can vary, but none of them expired before December 31, 2002.

### ***Derivative Works***

In examining a copy (or a record, disc, or tape) for copyright information, it is important to determine whether that particular version of the work is an original edition of the work or a “new version.” New versions include musical arrangements, adaptations, revised or newly edited editions, translations, dramatizations, abridgments, compilations, and works republished with new matter added. The law provides that derivative works, published or unpublished, are independently

copyrightable and that the copyright in such a work does not affect or extend the protection, if any, in the underlying work. Under the 1909 law, courts have also held that the notice of copyright on a derivative work ordinarily need not include the dates or other information pertaining to the earlier works incorporated in it. This principle is specifically preserved in the present copyright law. Thus, if the copy (or the record, disc, or tape) constitutes a derivative version of the work, these points should be kept in mind:

- The date in the copyright notice is not necessarily an indication of when copyright in all the material in the work will expire. Some of the material may already be in the public domain, and some parts of the work may expire sooner than others.
- Even if some of the material in the derivative work is in the public domain and free for use, this does not mean that the “new” material added to it can be used without permission from the owner of copyright in the derivative work. It may be necessary to compare editions to determine what is free to use and what is not.
- Ownership of rights in the material included in a derivative work and in the preexisting work upon which it may be based may differ, and permission obtained from the owners of certain parts of the work may not authorize the use of other parts.

### ***The Name in the Copyright Notice***

Under the copyright statute in effect before 1978, the notice was required to include “the name of the copyright proprietor.” The present act requires that the notice include “the name of the owner of copyright in the work, or an abbreviation by which the name can be recognized, or a generally known alternative designation of the owner.” The name in the notice (sometimes in combination with the other statements on the copy, records, disc, tape, container, or label) often gives persons wishing to use the work the information needed to identify the owner from whom licenses or permission can be sought. In other cases, the name provides a starting point for a search in the Copyright Office records or catalogs, as explained at the beginning of this circular.

In the case of works published before 1978, copyright registration is made in the name of the individual person or the entity identified as the copyright owner in the notice. For works published on or after January 1, 1978, registration is made in the name of the person or entity owning all the rights on the date the registration is made. This may or may not be the name appearing in the notice. In addition to its records of copyright registration, the Copyright Office maintains extensive records of assignments, exclusive licenses, and other documents dealing with copyright ownership.

### ***Ad Interim***

Ad interim copyright was a special short-term copyright that applied to certain books and periodicals in the English language that were first manufactured and published outside the United States. It was a partial exception to the manufacturing requirements of the previous U.S. copyright law. Its purpose was to secure temporary U.S. protection for a work, pending the manufacture of an edition in the United States. The ad interim requirements changed several times over the years and were subject to a number of exceptions and qualifications.

The manufacturing provisions of the copyright act expired on July 1, 1986, and are no longer a part of the copyright law. The transitional and supplementary provisions of the act provide that for any work in which ad interim copyright was subsisting or capable of being secured on December 31, 1977, copyright protection would be extended for a term compatible with the other works in which copyright was subsisting on the effective date of the new act. Consequently, if the work was first published on or after July 1, 1977, and was eligible for ad interim copyright protection, the provisions

of the present copyright act will be applicable to the protection of these works. Anyone investigating the copyright status of an English-language book or periodical first published outside the United States before July 1, 1977, should check carefully to determine:

- whether the manufacturing requirements were applicable to the work, and
- if so, whether the ad interim requirements were met

## **For Further Information**

### ***By Internet***

The copyright law, the *Compendium*, electronic registration, application forms, regulations, and related materials are available on the Copyright Office website at [www.copyright.gov](http://www.copyright.gov).

### ***By Email***

To send an email inquiry, click the *Contact Us* link on the Copyright Office website.

### ***By Telephone***

For general information, call the Copyright Public Information Office at (202) 707-3000 or 1-877-476-0778 (toll free). Staff members are on duty from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm, eastern time, Monday through Friday, except federal holidays. To request application forms or circulars by postal mail, call (202) 707-9100 or 1-877-476-0778 and leave a recorded message.

### ***By Regular Mail***

Write to

Library of Congress  
U.S. Copyright Office  
Outreach and Education Section  
101 Independence Avenue, SE #6304  
Washington, DC 20559-6304





# Search Request Form

Library of Congress  
Copyright Office  
101 Independence Avenue SE  
Washington, DC 20559

Records, Research, and  
Certification Section  
8:30 am to 5:00 pm eastern  
Monday through Friday,  
Phone: (202) 707-6850  
Fax: (202) 252-3485

## TYPE OF WORK

- Book  Music  Motion picture  Drama  Sound recording  Computer program  
 Photograph/artwork  Map  Periodical  Contribution  Architectural work  Mask work

## SEARCH INFORMATION YOU REQUIRE

- Registration  Renewal  Assignment  Address

## SPECIFICS OF WORK TO BE SEARCHED

Title \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Author \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Copyright claimant \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name in © notice)

Approximate year date of publication/creation \_\_\_\_\_

Registration number (if known) \_\_\_\_\_

If you need more space, please attach additional pages.

*The fee for a search report is based on a set statutory fee\* for the hour(s) or fraction of an hour consumed. The more information you furnish as a basis for the search, the better service we can provide. The time between the date of receipt of your fee for the search and your receiving a report will vary, depending on the method of payment (personal check, money order, or credit card) and on the workload. If you want an estimate for the cost of the search and report, indicate your preference by checking the box below. There is a separate fee for an estimate.*

Names, titles, and short phrases are not copyrightable.

Please read Circular 22 for more information on copyright searches.

Your name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Daytime telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Convey results of estimate/search by telephone?  Yes  No

Fee enclosed?  Yes: amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_  No

**\*NOTE:** Copyright Office fees are subject to change. For current fees for estimates or searches, check the Copyright Office website at [www.copyright.gov](http://www.copyright.gov), write the Copyright Office, or call the Records, Research, and Certification Section at (202) 707-6850.

cut here