

Limitations on Information and Services

Provided by the Copyright Office

The Copyright Office cannot

- Provide legal advice
- Enforce copyright
- Assist in the use of copyrighted works
- Compare works
- Grant access to certain records

As part of its mission to administer the nation's copyright law, the Copyright Office provides records of copyright registration and transfer of ownership and information regarding general copyright matters and procedures.¹ There are, however, limitations regarding the information and services the Office can provide.

Legal Advice

The Copyright Office cannot provide specific legal advice on individual rights related to copyright. Legal advice provides opinions regarding the substance or interpretation of the law as it relates to a specific situation. Areas of inquiry that might involve legal advice are assessing whether the use of a work is a fair use, drafting or interpreting contract terms, evaluating publication status, weighing registration options, or providing an opinion on alleged foreign or domestic copyright infringement. Similarly, the Office cannot provide the names of practicing copyright attorneys. Your local or state bar association may be able to provide a recommendation.

Copyright Enforcement

The Copyright Office administers federal copyright law. The Office serves as an office of record and does not enforce the law. Infringement is generally a civil matter, which means the copyright owner must pursue a remedy in federal courts. Under certain circumstances, an infringement may also constitute a criminal misdemeanor or felony, which would be prosecuted by the U.S. Department of Justice. If there is a dispute between two or more parties involving a claim to copyright, it is the responsibility of each party to pursue its claims in the appropriate forum.

Assistance Using a Copyrighted Work

The Copyright Office cannot assist with publication, performance, or production of a work, and does not provide names of publishers, agents, services, or other similar information. The Office cannot grant permission to use a copyrighted work and cannot assist in bringing a work to market. The Office does not issue ISBN, ISSN, or ISRC numbers.

Analyzing and Comparing Records

The Copyright Office does not compare works submitted for registration to determine if a work contains infringing material or is substantially similar to another work. The Office will not certify records maintained by any person or organization other than the Office. This limitation includes works held in the collections of the Library of Congress.

Restricted Records

The Office is an office of public record where claims to copyright are registered and documents related to copyright are recorded. These records are available to the public; however, in most cases, the following records will not be made available:

- Correspondence, memoranda, reports, opinions, and similar material relating to internal matters of personnel and procedures, Office administration, or security matters.
- Correspondence, memoranda, reports, opinions, and similar material relating to internal consideration of policy and decisional matters, including the work product of any attorney.
- Records relating to pending applications or pending documents, except to certain persons meeting Office eligibility requirements. For more information, see [chapter 2400](#), sections 2407.1(B)(2), 2407.1(B)(3), and 2407.1(B)(4) of the *Compendium*.
- Any financial or accounting records, including those related to deposit accounts.
- A certified or uncertified copy of the deposit or identifying material for a copyright claim to any party except the copyright claimant, a designated agent of the claimant, the owner of any of the exclusive rights, or certain parties involved in litigation. For more information regarding these requirements, see [chapter 2400](#), section 2407.1(A) of the *Compendium*.

NOTE

1. This circular is intended as an introduction to the limitations on services and information provided by the Copyright Office. The authoritative source for U.S. copyright law is the Copyright Act, codified in Title 17 of the *United States Code*. Copyright Office regulations are codified in Title 37 of the *Code of Federal Regulations*. Copyright Office practices and procedures are summarized in the third edition of the *Compendium of U.S. Copyright Office Practices*, cited as the *Compendium*. The copyright law, regulations, and the *Compendium* are available on the Copyright Office website at www.copyright.gov.

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.

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

