

Copyright Registration of Single Serial Issues

This circular provides information about registering a single serial issue with the U.S. Copyright Office. It covers

- Definition of a serial
- Authorship in a serial
- Completing the application
- Submitting a deposit

For specific information, see **chapter 700**, section 712.2, of the *Compendium of U.S. Copyright Office Practices*¹.

A serial is a work that is issued or intended to be issued on an established schedule in successive parts bearing numerical or chronological designations that are intended to be continued indefinitely. Examples of serials include

- Periodicals
- Newspapers
- Magazines
- Newsletters
- Journals
- Bulletins
- Annuals
- Proceedings of societies

The author or copyright owner of a serial may register one issue of the serial with the Office, and in certain circumstances, may register multiple serials with one application, filing fee, and deposit. For information on these requirements and procedures, see *Group Registration of Serial Issues* (**Circular 62B**), *Group Registration of Newspapers* (**Circular 62A**), and **Help: Newsletters**.

NOTE: A claim to copyright in a single issue does not give blanket protection for other issues published under the same serial title. Each serial issue is considered a separate work for copyright purposes.

Serials as Collective Works

Most serials are collective works because they contain a number of contributions constituting separate and independent works in themselves that are assembled into a collective whole. A serial typically contains two different types of authorship:

- The authorship in the serial as a whole, including the selection, coordination, and/or arrangement of the separate contributions, as well as editing, annotation, or revision.
- The authorship in the separate and independent works that have been included within the serial, which may contain literary or artistic expression.

You may register a serial and the separate and independent works contained in it on one registration, as long as the claimant fully owns the copyright in both the serial and the contributions, and those contributions have not been previously published or registered and are not in the public domain.

NOTE: The online application for a “Single Serial Issue” may only be used to register an issue that both qualifies as a collective work and that has been published. If a serial does not satisfy these requirements, you should use the application for a “Literary Work” when registering the serial.

Copyright Registration

To register a claim to copyright in a single serial issue, you must submit the following to the Copyright Office: (1) a completed application form; (2) a nonrefundable filing fee; and (3) the required deposit copies of your work. This circular highlights issues common to registrations of published single serial issues. For more guidance on registering a published single serial issue, see **chapter 700**, section 712.3, of the *Compendium*. For general registration information, see *Copyright Registration (Circular 2)*.

NOTE: Copyright Office fees are subject to change. For current fees, see *Copyright Office Fees (Circular 4)*, available on the Office’s website at www.copyright.gov or call the Office at (202) 707-3000 or 1-877-476-0778 (toll free).

Mistakes in applications lead to delays in registration, so it is important to complete the application accurately. If the Copyright Office determines that the issue does not qualify for registration using a “Single Serial Issue” application, it will refuse to register the work. Instructions for completing an online application appear in the “help” text that accompanies the application. Here are some tips regarding common points of confusion when registering using the “Single Serial Issue” online application.

Type of Work

Select “Single Serial Issue” on the “Type of Work” screen if the issue qualifies as a collective work and is published. If the issue does not satisfy these requirements, you should select the online application for “Literary Work.” The questions presented in the application are based on the type of work you select, and if you select the wrong option, you will need to start over.

Title

- Provide the title that appears on the serial, as well as the volume number, issue number, and date that appears on the specific issue (if any).
- Provide the frequency of publication for the serial.

Author

- If the serial as a whole was created as a work made for hire, give the name of the employer or commissioning party as the author, rather than the individual(s) who actually created the work. For more information, see *Works Made for Hire* (**Circular 30**).

Type of Authorship

- To claim the selection, coordination, and arrangement of the issue as a whole, select “collective work authorship.”
- If you are claiming one or more individual contributions in addition to the issue as a whole, select “collective work authorship and component work(s) authored or fully owned by the Collective Work Author.”

Claimant

- When the same party has been named as both author and claimant, there is no need to complete the “transfer” space.
- If the claimant is not the author of the material included in the application, select an appropriate transfer statement to show how copyright was obtained.
- Alternately, provide a self-written transfer statement in the “Other” field.

Limitation of Claim

When completing the application, you should limit the claim if the serial issue contains an appreciable amount of preexisting, public domain, previously registered material, or material owned by another party. You should

- Identify the preexisting material in the “material excluded” field and briefly describe the new material in the “new material included” field.
- Include the previous registration number and year in the “previous registration” field if the preexisting material has been registered with the Copyright Office.

You do not need to complete the Limitation of Claim screen if you are only asserting a claim in the compilation.

Deposit Requirements

To register your serial issue, you must submit the work to the Copyright Office. Once a deposit has been submitted, it becomes part of the public record and cannot be returned. For full information regarding deposits of single serial issues, see **chapter 1500**, section 1509.1(K) of the *Compendium*.

Unpublished Works

When registering a serial issue that is unpublished using the application for “literary works,” the Copyright Office strongly encourages you to submit the deposit as a digital file uploaded through the online registration system. The deposit must contain one complete copy representing the entire copyrightable content. Each file must be uploaded in an acceptable file format and each uploaded file must not exceed 500 MB in size. Note: If you upload a digital file there is no need to submit a physical copy of the work.

Works Published Solely Online

In general, applicants registering a work published solely in electronic format may submit the deposit as a digital file uploaded through the online registration system. The deposit must contain one complete copy representing the entire copyrightable content. Each file must be uploaded in an acceptable file format and each uploaded file must not exceed 500 MB in size.

Separately, the Copyright Office may expressly demand the mandatory deposit of an electronic serial, requiring one complete copy of the work including all elements of the work in published form, including metadata and formatting codes that were published with the work, if any. You may respond to a mandatory deposit by registering your work according to the instructions in *Responding to a Mandatory Deposit Notice by Registering Your Work* (**Circular 7C**). For more information, see *Mandatory Deposit of Copies or Phonorecords for the Library of Congress* (**Circular 7D**).

Works Published in Physical Form

The specific nature of the copy you submit varies depending on whether the work was published in the United States or in a foreign country.

» *Works Published in the United States on or after January 1, 1978*

If the work was published in the United States on or after January 1, 1978, you must submit two complete copies of the best edition of the work. The best edition generally is the highest quality edition that has been publicly distributed in the United States. If the serial was published in both electronic and hard copy formats, you must submit a complete copy of the hard copy format.

» *Works Published in a Foreign Country on or After January 1, 1978*

If the serial was published solely in a foreign country on or after January 1, 1978, you must submit one complete copy of the work as first published.

If the serial was published first in a foreign country, and then in the United States, you may submit one complete copy of the work as first published in the foreign country or one complete copy of the best edition as first published in the United States, as long as the content of both foreign and U.S. editions are identical.

How to Obtain an ISSN

Obtaining an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) is separate from copyright registration. The Copyright Office does not assign ISSNs. For information concerning the procedure for obtaining an ISSN, please see www.loc.gov/issn.

NOTE

1. This circular is intended as an overview of copyright registration of a single serial issue. The authoritative source for U.S. copyright law is the Copyright Act, codified in Title 17 of the *United States Code*. Copyright 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
Publications Section
101 Independence Avenue, SE #6304
Washington, DC 20559-6304

