

Hearings, Hearings, and More Hearings Pay Off with General Revision of Copyright Law

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October 19, 1976, marks the day thirty years ago when President Ford signed into law the fourth general revision of the copyright law of the United States. His signature on Public Law 94-553 signified the end of years of reports, consultations, and hearings in which the Copyright Office was a key participant.



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In speaking about copyright revision in the Meyer Memorial Lecture in 2002, attorney Arthur Levine, who was an Office staffer during the revision process years, credited fellow staffer and future Register Barbara Ringer as working with the energy of a dozen people to write the Register's reports and draft committee reports and legislation. This picture shows that she also attended hearings.

Prior to World War II, the need for revision of the 1909 Copyright Act was apparent. Efforts toward revision took a back seat during the war years and the development of the Universal Copyright Convention (UCC), but were revived in 1955 after the United States adhered to the UCC. Under the leadership of Register of Copyrights Arthur Fisher, who obtained funding from Congress, the Copyright Office, together with outside specialists, produced thirty-four studies of the substantive issues that had to be addressed in a revision. The studies

were distributed among a group of experts for comment, and the Office developed initial recommendations, which appeared in a 1961 report to Congress by Register of Copyrights Abraham Kaminstein, *Report of the Register of Copyrights on the General Revision of the U.S. Copyright Law, 87th Congress, 1st Session*.

The Librarian sent the Register's report to numerous copyright experts, and a series of conferences took place in 1961 and 1962.

In 1964, the first revision bill, drafted by Kaminstein, was introduced in both the House and the Senate. Hearings began in 1965 and continued into 1966, with a total of 25 days of House and Senate hearings in 1965 and four Senate hearings in 1966. In 1967, the House and Senate introduced identical revision bills. They were followed by years of reports, remarks, articles, statements, and more hearings before the Senate introduced S. 22 in early 1975. In 1975, the House held eighteen days of hearings and, in 1976, conducted debates on S. 22 that continued for six days. Eventually, S. 22 as amended passed both houses of Congress and was sent to the President. ©