

Maria Pallante, Register of Copyright  
U.S. Copyright Office  
Library of Congress

Dear Ms. Pallante;

As a librarian/author/reader/citizen, I feel like I have a fourfold interest in this topic. Thank you for giving me the chance to speak about it.

A few years ago I co-authored a book which included many excerpts of writing from a particular part of our country. We were offered a contract but the publisher backed out, frightened by the task of gathering all the permissions – even though I was willing to take it on myself.

There were many examples of books from the 1920s and 1930s, from authors presumably long dead and publishers vanished without a trace. Fear of being sued makes it impossible to use their work – surely not what the authors would have wanted?

I have seen some of my fellow authors fretting that any revision to the law would give people carte blanche to swipe copyrighted material, but that's nonsense. The law could make it clear what would be necessary to prove you made a good faith effort to find the copyright owner. Certainly one step would be setting up a register on the web where copyright owners and copyright seekers could find each other.

I know photographers have a special concern about their works being misused. That is no reason to keep written texts in the orphanage; it would be easy enough to make separate rules for words v. art.

Good luck and thank you for your efforts.

Robert Lopresti