

Coyle-Laura-20050309060001

To: Julie L. Sigall  
Associate Register for Policy & International Affairs

Date: 03/09/2005

From: Laura Coyle

Comment:

As an artist and illustrator who has had many of my works published in magazines, books and newspapers over the years, maintaining my copyright is crucial to maintaining my ability to make a living. In the past one particular piece of my work was stolen and used to enhance the website of another business. I know that this business might have had a difficult time in locating me, the author and copyright holder, because there was no signature on that particular piece. Perhaps this was the problem for the business that decided to steal my work, or perhaps they didn't really look very hard to find me. If they had, they would have seen a credit line with my full name that accompanied the work in the original place it was published on the web (where it still exists today). I get worried when Public Knowledge says they are trying to help creatives who are having a "difficult time" finding the owner of a copyright. What standard defines a "difficult time?" In my case, the infringer didn't really do their homework because they never wanted to pay me for the use of my work. In this case, I was able to take legal action. How many times since then has my work (which is readily available on the web) been used without my knowledge? Certainly it happens with unscrupulous people, but I hate to think there is a movement to give license for everybody to steal creative works just because it's hard to find the author. Maybe there are people who just don't want to be bothered with the effort. This would undermine the whole point of having copyrights in the first place. And those of us that toil away at our drawing boards or behind a camera, without an academic institution behind us or a full time job at a corporation, our livelihoods will suffer. The livelihoods of independent artists will suffer. Large institutions, businesses, corporations, the ones that actually have the budget to pay for what they use will be the beneficiaries of this movement.