To Whom it may concern,

I am writing in advance of actions that may be taken on the proposed Congressional changes to our current Copyright laws.

As a professional artist and illustrator since 1996 I am a small business owner, and my work has appeared in many venues including editorial art, games, magazine and book publishing and the non-profit sector garnering awards in both the public and private sectors. I am the scholarship committee chairperson for the Pittsburgh Society of Illustrators, which is a group of professional illustrators that is now the second largest in the US.

I have experienced many changes in both pre-press and printing technology during this time and now understand quite well that in this digital era, my creative inventory is more valuable than ever before. In fact, everything that artists like me create becomes part of our business inventory.

I also have seen changes in Copyright Laws evolve into those enacted for our benefit (1976) and am now very concerned that the proposed makeover of this complex body of law with the 2015 Orphan Works Act and Mass Digitization at its core will wreak havoc with our intellectual properties as well as with our financial security as small business owners.

Please understand that the copyrights that we have legitimately been granted over the years are an important component of our creations. They are our 'products', enabling us to license our creations and derive income from them.

Contrary to the proposed argument that published work loses it value, I can attest to just the opposite because work that has been published continues to generate interest from parties other than the original publication and is often licensed for entirely new purposes.

It is my understanding that according to the Orphan Works Act complicated by the permitted mass digitization by public and private organizations, our intellectual properties would easily become subject to infringement by anyone who claims to have done a mere cursory search for a property's owner without clear legal or financial consequences to that infringer. This is akin to stealing our money! Imagine a thief walking into a small shop, casually looking around to see if anyone was watching, then simply helping himself of any item on display without paying for it. How would you feel if you were that shop-owner who had invested much time, money and effort into his merchandise so that it could be sold and insure the well-being of his family?

Furthermore, the impracticality of pursuing each incident of infringement or theft would boggle the minds of all creators and certainly bankrupt us.

Even were the majority of my income not derived from illustration, I would certainly not welcome someone else monetizing my work for their own profit without my knowledge or consent.

The changes proposed for Copyright law may be the official response to outside business interests in the guise of bringing the Copyright Office into the 21st century digital era, yet by implementing these changes, Congress would willfully ignore the wide-ranging moral and financial consequences to creators like myself across the United States.

In conclusion, while I understand that each of us wishes to leave a legacy of what we have accomplished for future generations, I ask that before implementing these proposed changes, you carefully consider the potential consequences of these changes to Copyright law for those future generations of creators.

The works we create must be legally protected from unauthorized infringement in order to retain their value as our business inventory. This means that copyright laws must remain affordable and accessible for us as creators, thereby providing incentive for us to continue producing works that make and keep civilization vital and vibrant.

Thank you!

Rhonda Libbey