Rich Diesslin, Cartoonist
Out to Lunch Cartoons, KNOTS Scout Cartoons, and the Cartoon Gospel
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Re: Notice of Inquiry, Copyright Protection for Certain Visual Works, Docket No. 2015-01

Dear U.S. Copyright Office,

I have been a full-time freelance cartoonist since 1999 (and part-time prior to that). I have over a dozen cartoon related books in print (and/or e-books), have about 15,000 items for sale on Amazon.Com and Cafe Press, and I am syndicated in weekly newspapers. You can reference my works on my web site at www.the-cartoonist.com.

The current copyright law is critical to my livelihood since selling the usage rights in the form of royalties, licensing fees and for image use on merchandise is the sole basis of my income. Using my artwork without permission is essentially stealing. Copyright infringement is not allowed in other product/value-added markets and should not be allowed for artwork. There is something called a Creative Commons license for those who would wish to make their work available to others to repurpose (aka free derivative works or out and out copies). The rest of us who work at creating original artwork need a strong copyright law that protects our work so that we can protect our work and compete in the market place with our works. We, the creators, need to be the ones to determine what is a fair price for our work and who can use it.

Some might suggest that once something is published it loses some of its value, but that depends on the use, the market and many other factors. Often it can be more valuable in subsequent uses. For me, over 90% of my income is generated post first-publication. An example of this might be merchandise use of a cartoon. Even though my cartoon may be on my web site and/or a newspaper, it may increase in value for other uses such as t-shirts, coffee mugs, text books, business presentations, advertising, etc. Everything I create becomes another product in my inventory of cartoons - another item I can control the rights to in many ways. I need to be able to negotiate use rights work with a customer to determine its value since there are so many different variables (including my artistic freedom to not allow its use).

I have been on the internet and web almost since its inception and I can assure you that it is even more important in this digital age (e-books, internet, etc) to have strong copyright protections in place to keep my business viable. The copyright is for the visual artists is like a patent is for many other industries - it's what gives us control over the marketing and use of our work.

Please keep the copyright law strong and a tool for the individual creator to control how their work is used (or not used) and valued.

Sincerely,
Rich Diesslin