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A Message from the Register

THIS ANNUAL REPORT for Fiscal Year 2004 highlights the Copyright Office's activities and accomplishments for one of its fullest years on record.

It was my privilege to be invited to deliver the 33rd Donald C. Brace Memorial Lecture before the Copyright Society in April 2004. In that lecture, entitled "Copyright Enters the Public Domain," I observed that in recent years copyright had entered the court of public opinion. In the digital age large numbers of individuals are able to engage in actions that implicate copyright. Copyright owners exhibit legitimate concern about widespread infringement, but the wisdom with which copyright owners exercise their rights, how law is framed in the future, and how the public experiences the effects of copyright law will determine how copyright is judged in the public arena. The Office's accomplishments during 2004 represent further steps in addressing the fundamental issues presented by the digital era.

During the fiscal year the Office provided testimony to Congress on significant legislative issues, including several relating directly to digital technologies and the Internet. These include issues such as services that facilitate infringements through peer-to-peer networks, software that filters out objectionable scenes on DVDs, and Internet streaming of radio broadcasts. The Office also testified several times relating to sections of the copyright law dealing with compulsory licenses.

We worked with the Executive Branch and international organizations to strengthen copyright systems around the world, thus contributing to the nation's cultural and economic well-being. The United States has made bilateral and multilateral trade agreements an increasingly important part of its trade policy. In Fiscal Year 2004 the Office participated in drafting and negotiating the intellectual property provisions of several such agreements.

In our key duty of administering the copyright law, the Office recovered from mail disruptions in Fiscal Year 2002 and February 2004. We significantly reduced the number of service requests in process and greatly improved service delivery times.

The Office received and disbursed tens of millions of dollars in licensing royalties, and issued necessary regulations. We finalized the second section 1201 rulemaking on October 28, 2003, and sent to Congress a study of the efficacy of the Vessel Hull Design Protection Act of 1998.

Our Reengineering Program is proceeding systematically. We continued setting the groundwork for implementation in Fiscal Years 2006–2007, preparing the final elements of an organization package, completing most space planning and facility design work, and developing a new information technology systems infrastructure for the Office. Particularly important during the year was the initiation of ongoing regular meetings with Library of Congress infrastructure units on whose support the facilities and information technology components of the Reengineering Program depend.

Our continuing progress would not be possible without the efforts of the Copyright Office staff, whose hard work sustained the accomplishments mentioned in this report. I extend to them my gratitude for their continued public service.



Marybeth Peters
Register of Copyrights