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# IN ANSWER TO YOUR QUERY

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LIBRARY  
OF  
CONGRESS

## INTERNATIONAL COPYRIGHT

COPYRIGHT  
OFFICE

101 Independence  
Avenue, S.E.

Washington, D.C.  
20559-6000

There is no such thing as an “international copyright” that will automatically protect an author’s writings throughout the world. Protection against unauthorized use in a particular country basically depends on the national laws of that country. However, most countries offer protection to foreign works under certain conditions which have been greatly simplified by international copyright treaties and conventions. There are two principal international copyright conventions, the Berne Union for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Property (Berne Convention) and the Universal Copyright Convention (UCC).

The United States became a member of the Berne Convention on March 1, 1989. It has been a member of the UCC since September 16, 1955. Generally, the works of an author who is a national or domiciliary of a country that is a member of these treaties or works first published in a member country or published within 30 days of first publication in a Berne Union country may claim protection under them. There are no formal requirements in the Berne Convention. Under the UCC, any formality in a national law may be satisfied by the use of a notice of copyright in the form and position specified in the UCC. A UCC notice should consist of the symbol © (C in a circle) accompanied by the year of first publication and the name of the copyright proprietor (example: © 1995 John Doe). This notice must be placed in such manner and location as to give reasonable notice of the claim to copyright. Since the Berne Convention prohibits formal requirements that affect the “exercise and enjoyment” of the copyright, the United States changed its law on March 1, 1989 to make the use of a copyright notice optional. U.S. law however, still provides certain advantages for use of a copyright notice; for example, the use of a copyright notice can defeat a defense of “innocent infringement.”

Even if the work cannot be brought under an international convention, protection may be available in other countries by virtue of a bilateral agreement between the U.S. and other countries or under specific provision of a country’s national laws. (See generally Circular 38a International Copyright Relations of the United States.)

An author who wishes copyright protection for his or her work in a particular country should first determine the extent of protection available to works of foreign authors in that country. If possible, this should be done before the work is published anywhere, because protection may depend on the facts existing at the time of first publication.

There are some countries that offer little or no copyright protection to any foreign works. For current information on the requirements and protection provided by other countries, it may be advisable to consult an expert familiar with foreign copyright laws. The U.S. Copyright Office is not permitted to recommend agents or attorneys or to give legal advice on foreign laws.

Sincerely yours,

Register of Copyrights

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Enclosures

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International Copyright  
June 1999—10,000

## How Long Does Copyright Registration Take?

A copyright registration is effective on the date of receipt in the Copyright Office of all required elements in acceptable form, regardless of the length of time it takes to process the application and mail the certificate of registration. The length of time required by the Copyright Office to process an application varies from time to time, depending on the amount of material received. Remember that it takes a number of days for mail to reach the Copyright Office and for the certificate of registration to reach the recipient after being mailed from the Copyright Office.

You will receive no acknowledgement that your application for copyright registration has been received (the Office receives more than 500,000 applications annually), but you may expect:

- A letter or telephone call from a Copyright Office staff member if further information is needed; and
- A certificate of registration to indicate the work has been registered, or if the application cannot be accepted, a letter explaining why it has been rejected.

You might not receive either of these until approximately 8 months after submission.

If you want to know when the Copyright Office received your material, send it via registered or certified mail and request a return receipt.

For further information, write:

Library of Congress  
Copyright Office  
Information Section, LM-401  
101 Independence Ave., S.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20559-6000

If you need additional application forms for copyright registration, call (202) 707-9100 at any time. Leave your request as a recorded message on the Copyright Office Forms and Publications Hotline in Washington, D.C. Please specify the kind and number of forms you need. If you have general information questions and wish to talk to an information specialist, call (202) 707-3000, TTY (202) 707-6737.

You may also photocopy blank application forms; **however**, photocopied forms submitted to the Copyright Office must be clear, legible, on a good grade of 8½-inch by 11-inch white paper suitable for automatic feeding through a scanner/photocopier. The forms should be printed, preferably in black ink, head-to-head (so that when you turn the sheet over, the top of page 2 is directly behind the top of page 1). **Forms not meeting these requirements will be returned to the originator.**

All U.S. Copyright Office application forms are available from the Copyright Office Website at [www.loc.gov/copyright](http://www.loc.gov/copyright). They may be downloaded and printed for use in registering a claim to copyright or for use in renewing a claim to copyright.

You must have Adobe Acrobat Reader installed on your computer to view and print the forms. The free Adobe® Acrobat® Reader may be downloaded from Adobe Systems Incorporated through links from the same Internet site at which the forms are available.

Print forms head to head (top of page 2 is directly behind the top of page 1) on a single piece of good quality, 8½-inch by 11-inch white paper. To achieve the best quality copies of the application forms, use a laser printer.

Frequently requested Copyright Office circulars, announcements, and recently proposed as well as final regulations are also available from the Copyright Office Website.

Copyright Office circulars and announcements are available via fax. Call (202) 707-2600 from any touchtone telephone. Key in your fax number at the prompt and the document number of the item(s) you want to receive by fax. The item(s) will be transmitted to your fax machine. If you do not know the document number of the item(s) you want, you may request that a menu be faxed to you. You may order up to three items at a time. Note that copyright application forms are *not* available by fax.