
Intellectual Property: Copyrights



Copyrights

“A Copyright is a form of protection provided to the authors of ‘original works of authorship’ including literary, dramatic, musical, artistic, and certain other intellectual works, both published and unpublished. The 1976 Copyright Act generally gives the owner of copyright the exclusive right to reproduce the copyrighted work, to prepare derivative works, to distribute copies or phonorecords of the copyrighted work, to perform the copyrighted work publicly, or to display the copyrighted work publicly.”

USPTO web site

What Copyright Protects

“The copyright protects the form of expression rather than the subject matter of the writing. For example, a description of a machine could be copyrighted, but this would only prevent others from copying the description; it would not prevent others from writing a description of their own or from making and using the machine. Copyrights are registered by the Library of Congress’ Copyright Office.”

USPTO web site

Getting a Copyright

- An eligible work is copyrighted as soon as it is “fixed” in tangible form
- No forms, paperwork, formal statements, etc., are necessary
- Your diaries are copyrighted. Your homework assignments are copyrighted. Your computer programs are copyrighted.
- But the song you compose while singing aloud in the shower isn’t, until you write it down or record it

Registering a Copyright

- You do not have to register your copyright
- However, you cannot sue for damages until you do
- There are advantages (such as being able to collect attorney fees) to registering soon after publication

Who Owns a Copyright?

- Generally, the creator owns it
- Copyright can be sold, given away, etc.
- Some works can be in the *public domain*
- In “works for hire”, the employer owns the copyright
- (But that can be changed by agreement—CU, for example, does not claim copyright in faculty’s courses, scholarly writings, etc.)

Copyright Term

- Works created since 1978 are protected for 70 years after the author's death
- Works for hire last 95 years from publication or 120 years from creation, whichever is shorter
- The time limit has been extended several times in recent years
- Works created by U.S. government employees are *never* copyrighted

What Isn't Copyrightable?

- Facts are not copyrightable
- Lists of facts in, say, alphabetical order are not copyrightable—phone books are one example. (Why? Insufficient creativity. Copyright protects creativity, not just hard work.)
- Titles, names, short phrases, unrecorded performances, etc., are not protected
- A listing of ingredients in a recipe is not copyrightable; if there is “substantial literary expression in the form of an explanation or directions”, it may be protectable
- But a “compilation copyright” can protect a cookbook

The Berne Convention

- An international copyright compact
- Fundamentally, gives foreign works the same protection as locally-produced works
- Sets certain minimum standards for national copyright laws
- The US only joined in 1988

Pre-Berne Problems

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Fair Use

- Small excerpts can be taken from copyrighted works for various purposes
- Originally a judicial construct; now recognized by statute
- The law is deliberately vague—it just gives factors to consider
- Determination must be made on a case-by-case basis

Fair Use Criteria

In determining whether the use made of a work in any particular case is a fair use the factors to be considered shall include:

1. the purpose and character of the use, including whether such use is of a commercial nature or is for nonprofit educational purposes;
2. the nature of the copyrighted work;
3. the amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole; and
4. the effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work.

17 USC 107

The Purpose of Fair Use

- Permit “transformative use”
- Permit quotation for scholarship, teaching,
- Permit criticism—balance First Amendment rights against copyright protection
- Note that vicious criticism that uses quotations to discourage readership of a book is still protected
- Fair use involves balancing different interests

Turnitin.com

- An anti-plagiarism service
- Students—on the orders of their instructor—submit homework assignments via the web site
- The assignment is compared against a large database of previously-submitted assignments
- New assignments are then added to the database
- Does this site infringe the students' copyright? No—A.V. v. iParadigms, 562 F.3d 630 (2009)
- Why not? Fair use

Analysis of Turnitin.com

1. the purpose and character of the use
Use is transformative: detecting plagiarism, not republishing
2. the nature of the copyrighted work;
The use by Turnitin.com doesn't rely on creative character of the homework
3. the amount and substantiality of the portion used
All of the homework was used—but in a highly transformative way
4. the effect of the use upon the potential market
The only market for most homework is to plagiarists. . .

Google

- Is Google's database fair use? Google Images?
- The use is highly transformative
- It isn't hurting the market, because it's only indexing things that are freely available
- Probably covered by the DMCA, too
- What about cached copies? Probably ok, according to *Field v. Google*, 412 F.Supp.2d 1106 (2006)
- But what about Google Books, which can show many pages?

Google Books

- The Author's Guild sued Google in 2005
- The judge rejected two proposed out-of-court settlements
- Eventually, the judge ruled for Google: all four factors favor fair use
- The Author's Guild has appealed to the 2nd Circuit—but in a similar case (Author's Guild v. Hathitrust), the 2nd Circuit ruled for Hathitrust

Computer Programs and Copyright

- Computer programs posed interesting questions
- Was executing a program from disk a copyright infringement? The Supreme Court said “yes”—it was copied into RAM first. . .
- What about the Internet? Copy protection?

The Digital Millennium Copyright Act

- The DMCA (1998) was intended to adapt copyright law to the computer age
- It also implements WIPO treaties in the US
- Provides “safe harbor” provisions for some activities
- Anti-circumvention clauses. . .

Safe Harbor

- General principle: passive carriers are not liable for copyright infringement
- Example: if personal web pages on an ISP site or content uploaded by users to a Web 2.0 site infringe, the site owner isn't liable, the creator is
- But—the site owner must respond to DMCA “takedown notices”

Takedown Notices

- A copyright owner can notify a site of infringing content
- Under the law, the site must promptly remove the allegedly-infringing material and notify the user who posted it
- If the user asserts that the infringement claim is mistaken, the content must be restored unless the claimant files suit

Abuses

- Copyright owners often claim too much
- They ignore fair use
- Their notices aren't always accurate
- They don't always do the right thing when the user responds

Prof. Wendy Seltzer vs. the NFL

- Seltzer claims that the copyright warning at the start of NFL games is improper
- She posted it to Youtube
(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a4uC2H10uIo>; the NFL sent a takedown notice
- She filed a response; they sent another takedown notice
- She blogged about it...

The NFL's Text

“This telecast is copyrighted by the NFL for the private use of our audience. Any other use of this telecast or of any pictures, descriptions, or accounts of the game without the NFLs consent, is prohibited.”

What is wrong?

What's Wrong?

- It bars fair use
- It bars “descriptions” or “accounts” of the game—but copyright protects *expression*, not underlying facts
- Seltzer’s use was clearly protected: educational, criticism, non-commercial, etc.
- The NFL abused its rights under the DMCA

Digital Rights Management

- A lot of digital content (most movies, many books) is protected with a Digital Rights Management (DRM) mechanism
- Consumer rights are limited: time, number of viewings, copying, etc.
- But—verifying rights is often privacy-invasive
- Content isn't sold, it is *licensed*—which guts the “first sale doctrine”
- (First sale doctrine: once you've legitimately purchased a copy of a copyrighted work, you can lend it, sell it, etc., without consent of or compensation for the copyright owner.)
- Most DRM technologies are trivial to bypass—but that's illegal in the US

Anti-Circumvention

- “No person shall circumvent a technological measure that effectively controls access to a work protected under this title.” (17 USC 1201(a)(1)(A))
- “No person shall manufacture, import, offer to the public, provide, or otherwise traffic in any technology, product, service, device, component, or part thereof, that is primarily designed or produced for the purpose of circumventing a technological measure” (17 USC 1201(a)(2)(A))
- Lots of trouble...

Rights Taken Away

- The anticircumvention measure bars devices for making copies that are legal as fair use
- The “analog hole”
- Block new technologies before they even exist
- Discourages security analysis
- “Hardware makes policy”

Purpose of Copyright

“The primary objective of copyright is not to reward the labor of authors, but [t]o promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts. To this end, copyright assures authors the right to their original expression, but encourages others to build freely upon the ideas and information conveyed by a work. This result is neither unfair nor unfortunate. It is the means by which copyright advances the progress of science and art.”

Feist Publication, Inc. v. Rural Telephone Service Co., 499 U.S. 340, 349-50 (1991)

Taken from the *Internet Law Treatise*, <http://ilt.eff.org/index.php/Copyright>

The Trouble with the DMCA

- The DMCA has tilted too far towards protecting copyright owners
- The balance of rights is being ignored
- Technology is being impeded