

made when the act becomes effective [Jan. 1, 1978], the period for renewal registration may in some cases be extended. If, as the bill provides, the act becomes effective on January 1, 1978, a copyright that was originally secured on September 1, 1950, could have been renewed by virtue of the present statute between September 1, 1977, and December 31, 1977; if not, it can still be renewed under section 304(a) of the new act between January 1, 1978, and December 31, 1978.

CHAPTER 4—COPYRIGHT NOTICE, DEPOSIT, AND REGISTRATION

Sec.	
401.	Notice of copyright: Visually perceptible copies.
402.	Notice of copyright: Phonorecords of sound recordings.
403.	Notice of copyright: Publications incorporating United States Government works.
404.	Notice of copyright: Contributions to collective works.
405.	Notice of copyright: Omission of notice on certain copies and phonorecords.
406.	Notice of copyright: Error in name or date on certain copies and phonorecords.
407.	Deposit of copies or phonorecords for Library of Congress.
408.	Copyright registration in general.
409.	Application for copyright registration.
410.	Registration of claim and issuance of certificate.
411.	Registration and civil infringement actions.
412.	Registration as prerequisite to certain remedies for infringement.

AMENDMENTS

2008—Pub. L. 110-403, title I, §101(b)(2), Oct. 13, 2008, 122 Stat. 4258, inserted “civil” before “infringement” in item 411.

1988—Pub. L. 100-568, §§7(g), 9(b)(2), Oct. 31, 1988, 102 Stat. 2859, inserted in items 405 and 406 “on certain copies and phonorecords” and substituted in item 411 “Registration and infringement actions” for “Registration as prerequisite to infringement suit”.

§ 401. Notice of copyright: Visually perceptible copies

(a) GENERAL PROVISIONS.—Whenever a work protected under this title is published in the United States or elsewhere by authority of the copyright owner, a notice of copyright as provided by this section may be placed on publicly distributed copies from which the work can be visually perceived, either directly or with the aid of a machine or device.

(b) FORM OF NOTICE.—If a notice appears on the copies, it shall consist of the following three elements:

(1) the symbol © (the letter C in a circle), or the word “Copyright”, or the abbreviation “Copr.”; and

(2) the year of first publication of the work; in the case of compilations, or derivative works incorporating previously published material, the year date of first publication of the compilation or derivative work is sufficient. The year date may be omitted where a pictorial, graphic, or sculptural work, with accompanying text matter, if any, is reproduced in or on greeting cards, postcards, stationery, jewelry, dolls, toys, or any useful articles; and

(3) the name of the owner of copyright in the work, or an abbreviation by which the name can be recognized, or a generally known alternative designation of the owner.

(c) POSITION OF NOTICE.—The notice shall be affixed to the copies in such manner and location as to give reasonable notice of the claim of copyright. The Register of Copyrights shall prescribe by regulation, as examples, specific methods of affixation and positions of the notice on various types of works that will satisfy this requirement, but these specifications shall not be considered exhaustive.

(d) EVIDENTIARY WEIGHT OF NOTICE.—If a notice of copyright in the form and position specified by this section appears on the published copy or copies to which a defendant in a copyright infringement suit had access, then no weight shall be given to such a defendant’s interposition of a defense based on innocent infringement in mitigation of actual or statutory damages, except as provided in the last sentence of section 504(c)(2).

(Pub. L. 94-553, title I, §101, Oct. 19, 1976, 90 Stat. 2576; Pub. L. 100-568, §7(a), Oct. 31, 1988, 102 Stat. 2857.)

HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

HOUSE REPORT NO. 94-1476

A requirement that the public be given formal notice of every work in which copyright is claimed was a part of the first U.S. copyright statute enacted in 1790, and since 1802 our copyright laws have always provided that the published copies of copyrighted works must bear a specified notice as a condition of protection. Under the present law the copyright notice serves four principal functions:

(1) It has the effect of placing in the public domain a substantial body of published material that no one is interested in copyrighting;

(2) It informs the public as to whether a particular work is copyrighted;

(3) It identifies the copyright owner; and

(4) It shows the date of publication.

Ranged against these values of a notice requirement are its burdens and unfairness to copyright owners. One of the strongest arguments for revision of the present statute has been the need to avoid the arbitrary and unjust forfeitures now resulting from unintentional or relatively unimportant omissions or errors in the copyright notice. It has been contended that the disadvantages of the notice requirement outweigh its values and that it should therefore be eliminated or substantially liberalized.

The fundamental principle underlying the notice provisions of the bill is that the copyright notice has real values which should be preserved, and that this should be done by inducing use of notice without causing outright forfeiture for errors or omissions. Subject to certain safeguards for innocent infringers, protection would not be lost by the complete omission of copyright notice from large numbers of copies or from a whole edition, if registration for the work is made before or within 5 years after publication. Errors in the name or date in the notice could be corrected without forfeiture of copyright.

Sections 401 and 402 set out the basic notice requirements of the bill, the former dealing with “copies from which the work can be visually perceived,” and the latter covering “phonorecords” of a “sound recording.” The notice requirements established by these parallel provisions apply only when copies or phonorecords of the work are “publicly distributed.” No copyright notice would be required in connection with the public display of a copy by any means, including projectors, television, or cathode ray tubes connected with information storage and retrieval systems, or in connection with the public performance of a work by means of copies or phonorecords, whether in the presence of an audience or through television, radio, computer transmission, or any other process.