

ship, or duration of the copyright for the original term.”

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 1992 AMENDMENT

Amendment by Pub. L. 102-307 effective June 26, 1992, but applicable only to copyrights secured between January 1, 1964, and December 31, 1977, and not affecting court proceedings pending on June 26, 1992, with copyrights secured before January 1, 1964, governed by section 304(a) of this title as in effect on the day before June 26, 1992, except each reference to forty-seven years in such provisions deemed to be 67 years, see section 102(g) of Pub. L. 102-307, as amended, set out as a note under section 101 of this title.

§ 410. Registration of claim and issuance of certificate

(a) When, after examination, the Register of Copyrights determines that, in accordance with the provisions of this title, the material deposited constitutes copyrightable subject matter and that the other legal and formal requirements of this title have been met, the Register shall register the claim and issue to the applicant a certificate of registration under the seal of the Copyright Office. The certificate shall contain the information given in the application, together with the number and effective date of the registration.

(b) In any case in which the Register of Copyrights determines that, in accordance with the provisions of this title, the material deposited does not constitute copyrightable subject matter or that the claim is invalid for any other reason, the Register shall refuse registration and shall notify the applicant in writing of the reasons for such refusal.

(c) In any judicial proceedings the certificate of a registration made before or within five years after first publication of the work shall constitute prima facie evidence of the validity of the copyright and of the facts stated in the certificate. The evidentiary weight to be accorded the certificate of a registration made thereafter shall be within the discretion of the court.

(d) The effective date of a copyright registration is the day on which an application, deposit, and fee, which are later determined by the Register of Copyrights or by a court of competent jurisdiction to be acceptable for registration, have all been received in the Copyright Office.

(Pub. L. 94-553, title I, § 101, Oct. 19, 1976, 90 Stat. 2582.)

HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

HOUSE REPORT NO. 94-1476

The first two subsections of section 410 set forth the two basic duties of the Register of Copyrights with respect to copyright registration: (1) to register the claim and issue a certificate if the Register determines that “the material deposited constitutes copyrightable subject matter and that the other legal and formal requirements of this title have been met,” and (2) to refuse registration and notify the applicant if the Register determines that “the material deposited does not constitute copyrightable subject matter or that the claim is invalid for any other reason.”

Subsection (c) deals with the probative effect of a certificate of registration issued by the Register under subsection (a). Under its provisions, a certificate is required to be given prima facie weight in any judicial proceedings if the registration it covers was made “be-

fore or within five years after first publication of the work”; thereafter the court is given discretion to decide what evidentiary weight the certificate should be accorded. This five-year period is based on a recognition that the longer the lapse of time between publication and registration the less likely to be reliable are the facts stated in the certificate.

Under section 410(c), a certificate is to “constitute prima facie evidence of the validity of the copyright and of the facts stated in the certificate.” The principle that a certificate represents prima facie evidence of copyright validity has been established in a long line of court decisions, and it is a sound one. It is true that, unlike a patent claim, a claim to copyright is not examined for basic validity before a certificate is issued. On the other hand, endowing a copyright claimant who has obtained a certificate with a rebuttable presumption of the validity of the copyright does not deprive the defendant in an infringement suit of any rights, it merely orders the burdens of proof. The plaintiff should not ordinarily be forced in the first instance to prove all of the multitude of facts that underline the validity of the copyright unless the defendant, by effectively challenging them, shifts the burden of doing so to the plaintiff.

Section 410(d), which is in accord with the present practice of the Copyright Office, makes the effective date of registration the day when an application, deposit, and fee “which are later determined by the Register of Copyrights or by a court of competent jurisdiction to be acceptable for registration” have all been received. Where the three necessary elements are received at different times the date of receipt of the last of them is controlling, regardless of when the Copyright Office acts on the claim. The provision not only takes account of the inevitable timelag between receipt of the application and other material and the issuance of the certificate, but it also recognizes the possibility that a court might later find the Register wrong in refusing registration.

REGISTRATION OF CLAIMS TO COPYRIGHTS AND RECORDATION OF ASSIGNMENTS OF COPYRIGHTS AND OTHER INSTRUMENTS UNDER PREDECESSOR PROVISIONS

Pub. L. 94-553, title I, § 109, Oct. 19, 1976, 90 Stat. 2600, provided that: “The registration of claims to copyright for which the required deposit, application, and fee were received in the Copyright Office before January 1, 1978, and the recordation of assignments of copyright or other instruments received in the Copyright Office before January 1, 1978, shall be made in accordance with title 17 as it existed on December 31, 1977.”

§ 411. Registration and civil infringement actions

(a) Except for an action brought for a violation of the rights of the author under section 106A(a), and subject to the provisions of subsection (b),¹ no civil action for infringement of the copyright in any United States work shall be instituted until preregistration or registration of the copyright claim has been made in accordance with this title. In any case, however, where the deposit, application, and fee required for registration have been delivered to the Copyright Office in proper form and registration has been refused, the applicant is entitled to institute a civil action for infringement if notice thereof, with a copy of the complaint, is served on the Register of Copyrights. The Register may, at his or her option, become a party to the action with respect to the issue of registrability of the copyright claim by entering an appearance within sixty days after such service, but the Register’s failure to become a party shall

¹ See References in Text note below.