

Lesson: Copyright



You have probably heard your teacher in the traditional classroom use the term, copyright, especially during a research project. Did you know that copyright issues have been around since 1790 when George Washington signed the Copyright Act into a law?

So what is copyright? Copyright, according to Dictionary.com, is "the legal right granted to an author, a composer, a playwright, a publisher, or a distributor to exclusive publication, production, sale, or distribution of a literary, musical, dramatic, or artistic work." The Copyright Act of 1790 was the first act of Congress to protect the original works of individuals. Copyright is a form of protection provided by the laws of the United States (title 17, U.S. Code) to the authors of "original works of authorship," including literary, dramatic, musical, artistic, and certain other intellectual works. This protection is available to both published and unpublished works.

All of the following materials are protected under copyright laws:

- library books
- musical works such as sound recordings and lyrics
- movies
- images, clipart, photographs, and graphics
- art work such as sculptural and architectural works
- software
- content on web pages

Copyright laws do not cover ideas or facts, short phrases (slogans), works that lack originality, or works not in a tangible form.

- A copyright lasts for life plus 70 years for individuals for anything on or after 1978.
- A copyright lasts for 95 years for corporate authors after publication for anything on or after 1978.
- A copyright lasts for 120 years after creation if not published.

Resources

Conference on Fair Use (1996) Interim Report

<http://www.uspto.gov/web/offices/dcom/olia/confu/report.htm>

Educator's Guide to Copyright and Fair Use by Hall Davidson

<http://www.csus.edu/indiv/p/peachj/edte230/copyright/#article>