



The Register of Copyrights of the United States of America  
United States Copyright Office · 101 Independence Avenue SE · Washington, DC 20559-6000 · (202) 707-8350

Friday, December 5, 2008

Carl Malamud  
President & CEO  
Public.Resource.Org  
1005 Gravenstein Hwy North  
Sebastopol, CA 95472

Dear Carl,

As you know, all of the information included in the copyright registration record comes from 1) the application submitted and signed by the applicant, and 2) the copy of the work submitted with the application. Birth dates, when provided, are useful in differentiating among authors with the same or similar names. If the birth date is included in the application, it does become part of the permanent record, which is available online, through our website. (Birth dates are optional information).

Publicly disclosing the personally identifying information that appears in our registration records is permitted by the Privacy Act; it is a routine use, which is a permissible exception to the Privacy Act's Prohibitions. A routine use means that an agency may disclose personally identifying information without first seeking written permission from the owner when the disclosure is done in a manner that is consistent with the purpose for which it was collected. The purpose for collecting personally identifying information in our application form is to provide public notice about the author and owner of a work, or information about who controls uses of a work, and how that person or entity may be contacted.

We have received a number of inquiries/complaints about inclusion of birth dates, addresses, or the legal name of an author, especially when such information is obtained through Google or Yahoo. The Office, however, has no control over how others use or distribute information taken from our public registration records.

We now have information on our website (in various places including FAQs) that makes it clear that information appearing in the application will appear in our online records that are in the public domain and that are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week throughout the world.

The only information that we put online is that which is related to the copyright itself. If bank information, credit card numbers, etc. appear on the application we block this information so that it doesn't appear on the scanned application form that is a permanent record. With respect to documents, such as notifications from online service providers, which are posted online, signatures are blocked out.

To sum up, we are not changing any practices; we are, however, trying to make it clear to those who submit applications what the policies are, with respect to personally identifying information that is provided.

Sincerely,

Marybeth Peters  
Register of Copyrights