

The Self-Publisher's

**Quick & Easy
Guide to**

Copyright

***Everything You Need to
Know About Copyright
to Publish Your Book &
Protect Your Rights***

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Much of the content in this report was originally developed on my blog:

<http://www.TheBookDesigner.com>

By subscribing to the blog, you will receive articles like this in your email inbox, automatically. And if you visit the blog, you can participate in the ongoing conversation there about book design, self-publishing and the indie publishing life.

At **Marin Bookworks** I design and produce books for publishers and authors who decide to publish. To find out more about these services, contact me at: jfbookman@gmail.com

The Self-Publisher's *Quick & Easy Guide* to Copyright

by Joel Friedlander

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Self-Publishing Basics: A 5-Minute Guide to Copyright

Well, we're all busy and who has time to research copyright? This is the province of lawyers, big publishers with legal departments, and plagiarism trackers, isn't it?

No, every self-publisher needs to have a bit of information on copyright and the way the law works in the United States. Okay, I promised this would take 5 minutes, so let's get started.

Basic Copyright Information You Should Know

Copyright is a form of protection for intellectual property. It is based in the U.S. Constitution, and by law grants protection for original works fixed in any tangible medium of expression. Copyright covers both published and unpublished works.

You do not have to *apply* for copyright from any authority. The U.S. Government does not *issue* copyright. The law of copyright provides protection from others who might claim your work as their own, or seek to profit from your work without your permission.

When you create something original and fix it in some form that others can experience, (for instance, by writing a story that others can read, or painting a picture that others can view) your work is under copyright protection from the *moment it is created*.

Copyright protects original works of all kinds including literary, dramatic, musical, and artistic works, such as poetry, novels, movies, songs, computer software, and architecture. It will protect a greeting card you wrote, and the song you've created for a school play.

Copyright Does Not Protect Everything

Copyright doesn't protect facts, ideas, systems, or methods of operation. However, it will protect a book or operating manual that explains these ideas, systems or methods.

As publishers it's important to know that you cannot copyright the *title of your book*. If a title could be considered a trademark, you can use the trademark system to attempt to protect your title, but it will be an expensive, lengthy and uncertain process, and you may well be denied trademark protection.

A Few Copyright Questions

How is copyright different from patent or trademark? Copyright protects original works of authorship. Patent protects inventions or discoveries. Ideas and discoveries are not protected by the copyright law, although the way in which they are expressed may be. A trademark protects words, phrases, symbols, or designs that identify goods or services. The Fedex logo is a *registered trademark*, which provides protection. It is not *copyrightable*.

What is copyright registration? There is no requirement to register your copyright, which exists from the moment the work is created. Registration is a service provided by the Library of Congress as a means to record claims to copyright. If you ever have a dispute about your copyrighted work, your best evidence is going to be the registration you made, and the date it was entered, to show you are the originator of the work.

You definitely want to register your copyright, even though it isn't required.

- Copyright registration will put the facts of your copyright into the public record.
- You will receive a certificate of registration.
- In the event of litigation, your registered work may be eligible for statutory damages and attorney's fees.
- If you register your copyright within 5 years of publication, it is considered *prima facie* evidence (self-evident from the registration) in a court of law.

Can't you just mail your manuscript to yourself? This practice has been used for many years as kind of a "poor man's copyright."

Unfortunately, there is no provision in the copyright law for any such protection—it is not a substitute for registration.

Is my copyright good outside the United States? The United States has copyright relations with most countries throughout the world, and as a result of these agreements, we honor each other's citizens' copyrights. However, the United States does not have such copyright relationships with every country. For a listing of countries and the nature of their copyright relations with the United States, see Circular 38a, International Copyright Relations of the United States.

Well, there you have it. Considering the amount of time, effort and imagination you've put into your book, it makes sense to take the simple step of registering your copyright. Like putting a category on the back cover of your book, or getting your ISBN correct, this is another detail that self-publishers just have to attend to.

For more detailed information on copyright, visit the U.S. Copyright Office website at: <http://www.copyright.gov/>

Self-Publishing Basics: The Copyright Page

Let's take a minute to look at the role of the copyright page:

Copyright page—Usually the verso of the title page, this page carries the copyright notice, edition information, publication information, printing history, cataloging data, legal notices, and the book's ISBN or identification number. In addition, rows of numbers are sometimes printed at the bottom of the page to indicate the year and number of the printing. Credits for design, production, editing and illustration are also commonly listed on the copyright page.

Now I'd like to look at the all-important copyright page in a little more detail. This page and its contents are the way your book is represented to librarians, bibliographers, other publishers, quantity sales buyers, writers wishing to use quotations from your book, and production planners of future editions.

What Has to be on Your Copyright Page No Matter What

The single most important element on the copyright page is, no surprise, the copyright notice itself. It usually consists of three elements:

1. the © symbol, or the word "Copyright" or abbreviation "Copr."
2. the year of first publication of the work; and
3. an identification of the owner of the copyright—by name, abbreviation, or some other way that it's generally known.

Together, it should look like this:

© 2010 Joel Friedlander

At one time you actually had to print the copyright notice in an acceptable form to receive copyright protection in the U.S. but this is no longer the case.

Because the © symbol isn't available on typewriters or computer terminals with only lower-ASCII character sets, the copyright symbol is often approximated with the characters (c). Unfortunately, this form of notice may not stand up in court.

What Else You'll Find on the Copyright Page

Many of these items may not be applicable to your book, but this is where the publisher has to fit all the legal notices and other information for use by the book trade. Keep in mind that a reservation of rights is vital, and the publisher's contact information is practical and appropriate. So here's the rundown of other elements on the copyright page:

- Your reservation of rights, where you outline what rights you reserve and which you allow. Usually a nod is made to fair use, which can hardly be prevented in any event. Because further permissions will involve the publisher's approval, you will also find here...
- The publisher's editorial address. Larger publishers will likely include...
- Ordering information including quantity sales, individual sales, college textbooks or course adoption requests and orders by trade bookstores or wholesalers. In each case specific contact information may be included.
- Any trademark notices the publisher may hold to names and logos of the publishing company or its imprint,
- A statement regarding the environmental friendliness of the products and processes used to produce the book, like a notice that it is printed on recycled paper or with non-toxic soy inks.
- Cataloging-in-Publication Data, either from the Library of Congress for participating publishers, or from another source such as Quality Books, a distributor who will provide this data block for a fee. This is primarily of interest to library sales.
- An edition of the book. For instance, a second edition might or might not be noted on the title page, but will certainly be indicated on the copyright page.
- Printings and years indicators. These are the odd strings of "funny numbers" often seen near the bottom of the copyright page. Typically at the left margin will be years, and on the right a series of numbers to indicate printings. Next year, if a new printing is needed, the plates for the book do not need to be remade. The pressman simply erases one digit off each series of numbers, effectively updating the notice. This

is for the use of the publisher's production department, and is likely to become an artifact as digital printing takes a larger share of the publishing pie.

- Lastly, some enlightened publishers use the copyright page to credit the contributors to the book including designers, production managers, proofreaders, indexers, and editors.

Think of the copyright page as the place where the publisher tries to get all its work done, take care of legal and bibliographic necessities, before getting out of the way of the author.

When you come to creating your own copyright page, pick the elements that seem most suitable to your book. Keep the whole thing as unobtrusive as possible and you can't go wrong.

Top 10 Myths, Lies and Misinformation about Copyright

I used to run into this kind of call a lot, years ago when I had my own little publishing company. An author would be on the phone talking about his book and why I should publish it. “And you don’t have to worry about the copyright either,” he’d say with confidence. “I mailed myself a copy and I’ve got it locked up in a safe!”

This myth was so old it seemed to have the weight of tradition on its side. No amount of talking would convince him the package in his safe was worthless as copyright protection, and that he had copyright in his work from the time he wrote it.

But that’s just one of the myths, lies and misinformation about copyright you can run into. How many of these have you heard?

Top 10 Myths, Lies and Misinformation about Copyright

1. *I didn’t see a copyright notice. It must not be copyrighted.* Copyright occurs when the work is created. If you see no copyright notice, you can assume the work is protected. This has been the law in the United States since April 1, 1989, when we adopted the Berne Conventions.
2. *It has a copyright notice. It must be copyrighted.* Publishers have been known to knowingly print a copyright notice in a work that was not eligible for copyright. Without specific information about the particular work, the notice itself isn’t enough to determine whether the work is protected. Be safe—assume it is.
3. *I only used part of it. I should be fine.* “Fair Use” requires a test of four different elements to determine whether you have violated the creator’s copyright. Unless you are writing a review or engaged in satire, it’s likely you will need permission to quote from another person’s work.
4. *I had my nephew do it while he was working for me. Therefore, I own the copyright.* If you can prove it was a work “made for hire” and have a contract to that effect, you may be right. Lacking an agreement or proof that you requested the work specifically, it could belong to your nephew.

5. *I didn't charge any money for it, so it's okay.* Whether you profited from copying a protected work is secondary to the copying itself. That's what's illegal. You can still harm someone's rights in a property by giving away unauthorized copies.
6. *If you post it on the internet, you put it into the public domain anyway.* Since copyright begins when you create a work, you can only "put" something into the public domain by an actual statement to that effect. Posting it to a website—assuming it was posted by the copyright owner herself—does nothing to the rights of the creator of the work.
7. *I want to copyright the title of my book so nobody steals it.* Titles cannot be copyrighted, nor can names. You can trademark a title or the name of an imprint, but that's a different process requiring patent and trademark attorneys and several hundred dollars.
8. *I just used her characters and made up my own story.* Unless you have specific permission from the author, you cannot create a work derived from someone else's protected work. Rights to the characters and story belong to the originator.
9. *Copyright violations are just business. It's not a crime.* Copyright violations with over 10 copies involved, or valued at over \$2500 are felonies.
10. *I'm actually spreading the work, it's like marketing. They should thank me.* If you don't have the right to copy a protected work, it doesn't matter how many reasons you can think up that the owner should be happy. You still don't have the rights.

Copyright protects everyone who creates content of any kind. By protecting your rights to your own work, I'm protecting my rights at the same time. And that's no lie.

Copyright Page Samples You Can Copy and Paste Into Your Book

One of the most common questions I get from new self-publishers is, “What do I put on the copyright page?” For some reason, the copyright page has the power to intimidate some people, with its small print and legalistic language, not to mention all those mysterious numbers.

But it doesn’t have to be that way. There are a few necessary items on the copyright page, and others that publishers add for various reasons.

The only elements required on a copyright page are the copyright notice itself:

© 2009 Joel Friedlander

And some statement giving notice that the rights to reproduce the work are reserved to the copyright holder.

All Rights Reserved.

Next you’ll see two versions of the copyright page, one long page with a CIP data block and a short version. Feel free to copy and paste these into your book file. Just remember to put your own information in.

Sample of a Long Copyright Page with CIP Data Block

Here’s an example of a copyright page that has the necessary elements, then adds ordering information, web address, CIP Data block (I’ve put this in gray so you can identify what is included; replace this with your own or delete it if you’re not obtaining CIP), edition information, and printing numbers (the string at the bottom) and dates for future editions.

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A Short Copyright Page Example

Here's a very short and to the point copyright page. It gives the necessary elements and not much more:

Copyright © 2010 by Wily E. Coyote

All rights reserved. This book or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever without the express written permission of the publisher except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

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Scottsdale, AZ 00000

www.FallingAnvilBooks.com

This is the quick and easy way to get generic copyright page language into your book. Even with this short example, your copyright page will do the job it's supposed to do, and give interested parties the means to contact you for publishing-related questions.

6 Copyright Page Disclaimers to Copy and Paste, and Giving Credit

We've looked at examples of long and short copyright pages that you can use in your book. Next I have two types of information you might want to add to your copyright page: disclaimers and credits. Let's look at disclaimers first.

Examples of Disclaimers

The copyright page is the place publishers put disclaimers. Here's my disclaimer: I am not a lawyer, and by presenting to you these sample disclaimers—all taken from published books—I am not suggesting you cut and paste them into your book. Only with the advice of a competent attorney can you decide which disclaimers your book may or may not need. Here are some disclaimers other publishers found useful, and the kinds of books they might logically be used in.

- Some names and identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.

(for a memoir or recent history)

- This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, places, events and incidents are either the products of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

(for novels, short stories)

- I have tried to recreate events, locales and conversations from my memories of them. In order to maintain their anonymity in some instances I have changed the names of individuals and places, I may have changed some identifying characteristics and details such as physical properties, occupations and places of residence.

(for memoir, autobiography)

- Although the author and publisher have made every effort to ensure that the information in this book was correct at press time, the author and publisher do not assume and hereby disclaim any liability to any party for any loss,

damage, or disruption caused by errors or omissions, whether such errors or omissions result from negligence, accident, or any other cause.

(for advice, how-to)

- This book is not intended as a substitute for the medical advice of physicians. The reader should regularly consult a physician in matters relating to his/her health and particularly with respect to any symptoms that may require diagnosis or medical attention.

(use in health, alternative healing)

- The information in this book is meant to supplement, not replace, proper (name your sport) training. Like any sport involving speed, equipment, balance and environmental factors, (this sport) poses some inherent risk. The authors and publisher advise readers to take full responsibility for their safety and know their limits. Before practicing the skills described in this book, be sure that your equipment is well maintained, and do not take risks beyond your level of experience, aptitude, training, and comfort level.

(for sports, training)

Give Credit Where Credit Is Due

The last use of the copyright page is to give credit to the people who contributed to the making of the book. Most books today do not use a colophon, so if the publisher is going to credit the editor, designer, or others, this is the place to do it. Here are some examples:

Cover Illustration Copyright © 2010 by Road Runner

Cover design by Augustus Smith, BookStitchers, Inc.

Book design and production by John Do, www.dobookdesigns.com

Editing by EditGnome

Chapter opening illustrations © 2010 Joanne Sargeant

Author photograph by Eliza Emulsion

Poetry of Dev Nadev used by permission of the Dev Nadev Foundation.

This rounds up the elements of the copyright page that most self-publishers will need in their books.

How to Copyright Your Book

Next I'm going to show you how to get a copyright application, fill it out, determine how much to pay, and exactly how to send your application and books into the Copyright Office. This is not a difficult process, but since you're dealing with your creative work and the government at the same time, it pays to be cautious and do it properly.

One of the most common questions I hear from self-publishers hasn't changed over the years: "How do I copyright my book?" Authors are concerned that someone might appropriate the book on which they've worked so long and hard.

I usually give them the 5 minute guide to copyright and advise them to wait until their book is back from the printer to register the copyright. Of course, we've made sure we have an accurate and complete copyright page in the book to begin with.

But now, book in hand and still a sparkle in the eye, you are ready to register your copyright. Let's get started.

Visiting the Copyright Office—Online, That Is

The Copyright Office, a branch of the Library of Congress, is located in the James Madison Memorial Building in Washington, D.C. However, we're going to their online location at <http://www.copyright.gov/>.

Here's what you'll find when you get there:



Look for the **Register Online** link

Copyright Registration Basics

You will need three things to complete your registration:

1. A completed copyright application
2. A (nonrefundable) filing fee
3. A (nonreturnable) deposit, which means a copy or copies of your book

There are also three different ways to register your copyright:

1. **Online Registration**—This is done through the electronic Copyright Office (eCO). The Copyright Office recommends this method as the

preferred way to register books. They cite these advantages:

- A lower filing fee (\$35 as opposed to \$50 or \$65 for the other methods)
- Online tracking of the status of your copyright application,
- Faster processing time and secure payment.
- Option to upload your book or mail it in.

How to do it: Use this link:

<http://www.copyright.gov/>

It will take you to the electronic Copyright Office and register for an account to get started. You'll then follow the prompts to register your book.

How long it takes: "Most online filers should receive a certificate within nine months. Many will receive their certificates earlier."

2. **Registration with Fill-In Form CO**—This option uses the fill-in Form CO. This uses the technology of Adobe PDF forms to create scannable barcodes on the electronic form depending on your input. When the form is printed out and sent to the Copyright Office, they are able to scan the forms and can consequently process these applications much faster than forms that must go through data entry first.

The cost to file this form is \$50, and you'll need to have Adobe Acrobat Reader 8.0 or better on your computer. If you don't have it you can use the link to get a copy for free.

How to do it: [Download the Form CO by clicking through this link](#), and follow the instructions. At the end you'll print out the form, which should have barcodes that look like this and which are clear, not wrinkled or smudged. You'll then mail it with your check and 2 copies of your book to the address indicated on the form.

How long it takes: "Most of those who file on these forms should receive a certificate within 22 months of submission. Many will receive their certificates earlier."

The Copyright Office also offers the following important guidelines for using fill-in form CO:

- You must submit the original 2D barcode form only. Do not send a photocopy.
- Never alter the form by hand after you print it out. The information you enter is stored in the barcodes on the form.
- Both single- and double-sided printing are acceptable.
- To achieve best results, use a laser printer. Inkjet printer copies require enlarging if you use the shrink-to-fit-page option. Dot-matrix printer copies are not acceptable.



- Inspect your printed form to confirm that 2D barcodes appear clear and free of any distortions, smudges, or fading. If such problems appear and cannot be corrected after checking your printer, do not submit the form.

3. **Registration with Paper Forms**—

The traditional method, which the Copyright Office is planning to phase out altogether. This uses Form TX and charges a fee of \$65. However, in an apparent effort to discourage the use of these paper forms, the Copyright Office does not even offer a download of these forms from its website. Instead, you must fill out a [Request for Copyright Forms by Mail](#) to have a staffer at the CO mail you a copy of the form.

How to do it: Click the link above to request a copy of form TX. Fill out the form and mail it with your fee of \$65 along with copies of your book to the address indicated on the form.

How long it takes: “Most of those who file on these forms should receive a certificate within 22 months of submission. Many will receive their certificates earlier.”

Keep in mind when using any of these methods that no matter how long it takes to get your copyright certificate, your copyright registration is effective the date that the Copyright Office receives the complete submission, whatever form it takes.

A Digression and a Visit from Pete Masterson

I noticed while navigating the Copyright Office website that there was a

strange notice appearing here and there. It said: Please note that our mail service is severely disrupted. I had read about serious backlogs at the Copyright Office, so I used the terrific [Yahoo Self-Publishing discussion list](#) to find out what others knew about the situation. Here is the response I received from Pete Masterson. Pete is a longtime book designer, currently the president of BAIPA (Bay Area Independent Publishers Association) and the author of [Book Design and Production for Authors and Publishers](#). With his permission, I reprint his response here:

An interesting historical note. Shortly after the Arab terrorists attacked us on 9/11, there were various threats and attacks including the Anthrax attacks and scares. For security reasons, the copyright office had all incoming packages sequestered somewhere by the Postal Service. (In an old salt mine or cavern, I think) It took ages for the Postal Service to get around to checking the packages and processing them, and finally delivering them to the copyright office.

The Postal Service had not bothered stamping "received" dates on the parcels, or even tossing them in bags marked with the "received" dates. Or properly organizing them by dates received in any way. Many of the parcels were sent with stamps, and many cancelations were illegible.

Thus, there were real issues with the effective dates of copyright registrations, and many registrants were unfortunately stripped of their ability to sue infringers. The copyright office eventually used some pretty sloppy "Kentucky Windage" to guesstimate effective dates for many thousands of registrations, by adding a given number of days to the mailing date and figuring THAT would be the date when the thing SHOULD have been delivered. The guesstimated effective dates were based on legible postmarks. For those with no postmarks . . . tough luck; THEIR effective date was as much as a year or more later than the legitimate effective date would have been.

Having been warned – by both a Postal Service and copyright office employee – years before that, my own registrations were not affected much.

I haven't used UPS to send in registrations.

Not an answer to the question — but a side issue. If you send a package to the Copyright Office (or any Federal agency), use a courier service — either FedEx or UPS. (Doesn't matter if you use a ground or air service.) All packages via the USPS are irradiated (to kill biological threats) and the treatment is damaging to many books, especially those printed as digital color copies. More importantly, the service adds a significant delay to the process.

FedEX and UPS packages are not irradiated (because you can't anonymously send packages as you can via USPS) and are not delayed.

A publisher I know sent off a copy of a book to a friend who works for a Federal Agency to his business address. Since it was a package, the government routed it through the irradiation process.

During irradiation, the book is exposed to ionizing radiation at a level that will kill all biologic organisms. It also, as a side effect, heats the target of the radiation. The result for a moderate sized (150 page) book printed in digital full color was to melt the toner, causing the book to become one solid mass — and the edges of many pages showed signs of scorching.

The book, as received, was completely unreadable and unusable.

In this case, the book was a gift to a friend. Think of how damaging to your reputation it could be if that was what was received when submitting a book for consideration by a Federal Agency!

Okay, back to work.

Q and A with the Copyright Office

Last, I'm going to reprint here some of the useful questions and answers from the Copyright Office website. I've found that authors who are thinking about self-publishing have enormous trepidation when it comes to copyright, and are subject to all kinds of superstitions and misinformation. The cure is accurate information. Here it is, from "the horse's mouth."

Do I have to send in my work? Do I get it back?

Yes, you must send the required copy or copies of the work to be registered. Your copies will not be returned. If you register online using eCO eService, you may attach an electronic copy of your deposit. However, even if you register online, if the Library of Congress requires a hard-copy deposit of your work, you must send what the Library defines as the "best edition" of your work. ... Upon their deposit in the Copyright Office, ... all copies and identifying material, including those deposited in connection with claims that have been refused registration, are the property of the U.S. government.

Will my deposit be damaged by security measures in place on Capitol Hill?

To avoid damage to your hard-copy deposit caused by necessary security measures, package the following items in boxes rather than envelopes for mailing to the Copyright Office:

- electronic media such as audiocassettes, videocassettes, CDs, and DVDs
- microform
- photographs
- slick advertisements, color photocopies, and other print items

May I register more than one work on the same application? Where do I list the titles?

You may register unpublished works as a collection on one application with one title for the entire collection if certain conditions are met. It is not necessary to list the individual titles in your collection. Published works may only be registered as a collection if they were actually first published as a collection and if other requirements have been met. See Circular 1, Copyright Basics, section "Registration Procedures."

Do I have to use my real name on the form? Can I use a stage name or a pen name?

There is no legal requirement that the author be identified by his or her real name on the application form. For further information, see FL 101, Pseudonyms. If filing under a fictitious name, check the "Pseudonymous" box when giving information about the authors.

Will my personal information be available to the public?

Yes. Please be aware that when you register your claim to a copyright in a work with the U.S. Copyright Office, you are making a public record. All the information you provide on your copyright registration is available to the public and will be available on the Internet.

Can I submit my manuscript on a computer disk?

No. Floppy disks and other removal media such as Zip disks, except for CD-ROMs, are not acceptable. Therefore, the Copyright Office still generally requires a printed copy or audio recording of the work for deposit. However, if you register online using eCO eService, you may attach an electronic copy of your deposit. However, even if you register online, if the Library of Congress requires a hard-copy deposit of your work, you must send what the Library defines as the "best edition" of your work. For further information, see Circular 7b, Best Edition of Published Copyrighted Works for the Collection of the Library of Congress, and Circular 7d, Mandatory Deposit of Copies or Phonorecords for the Library of Congress.

Can I submit a CD-ROM of my work?

Yes. The deposit requirement consists of the best edition of the CD-ROM package of any work, including the accompanying operating software, instruction manual, and a printed version, if included in the package.

Does my work have to be published to be protected?

Publication is not necessary for copyright protection.

How much do I have to change in my own work to make a new claim of copyright?

You may make a new claim in your work if the changes are substantial and

creative, something more than just editorial changes or minor changes. This would qualify as a new derivative work. For instance, simply making spelling corrections throughout a work does not warrant a new registration, but adding an additional chapter would. See Circular 14, Copyright Registration for Derivative Works, for further information.

Do you have special mailing requirements?

If you register online, you may attach an electronic copy of your deposit unless a hard-copy deposit is required under the “Best Edition” requirements of the Library of Congress. See Circular 7b. If you file using a paper application, our only requirement is that all three elements—the application, the copy or copies of the work together with the shipping slip printed when you fill out Form CO online, and the filing fee—be sent in the same package. Please limit any individual box to 20 pounds. Many people send their material to us by certified mail, with a return receipt request, but this is not required.

A Final Word on Copyright

Well, there you have it. In practice, this is not a complicated process. Most people will simply log onto the Copyright Office website, create an account and fill out the online form. It doesn't take long and it's not very intimidating. In the interest of being thorough, I like to give you all the options so you can decide which suits you best.

But don't neglect this important task. Although your book will still be copyrighted, if you don't send in the forms and the filing fee, your copyright will not be registered. And it's the registration that will be critical if there's any dispute about your copyright in the future.

Takeaway: The simplest way to [copyright your book](#) is through the online facility provided by the Copyright Office. Be aware of your choices in registering your copywrite, but don't fail to get it done.

CIP: What It Means, How to Read It, Who Should Get It

There is one place in printed books where we look for all kinds of editorial, bibliographic, legal, promotional and production information: **the copyright page**. But among all this information, data, legal notices and marketing and contact information, there's one piece of content on the copyright page that is obscure to most people who pick up the book: the **CIP data block**, issued by the Library of Congress' Cataloging in Publication program.

According to the Library of Congress, the CIP program allows catalogers to

complete the descriptive cataloging ..., assign subject headings ..., and assign full Library of Congress and Dewey decimal classification numbers. ... A machine-readable version of the record is distributed to large libraries, bibliographic utilities, and book vendors around the world.

This transmission of data is what makes participation in the program useful for selling books. Being listed in the databases of large libraries and book wholesalers thanks to the Library of Congress program eliminates one of the obstacles to achieving library sales for a book. And for many books, libraries are a critical part of their market.

The Problem with the Program

Unfortunately, the CIP program excludes self-publishers from participating, and that applies to authors who have published with one of the "subsidy" presses like LuLu or Createspace. It also excludes publishers who have issued less than 3 books by authors other than themselves. This effectively bars self-publishers from the program, even those whose books would be of great interest to libraries.

The good news is that participation in the Library of Congress' Preassigned Control Number (PCN) program is open to all publishers who list a U.S. place

of publication on the title or copyright page, and who maintain an office inside the U.S. where they can answer questions from the catalogers. And once you have a PCN you can pay for your own CIP to be created.

CIP data blocks created by the Library of Congress are known as LC-CIP. Those created by a publisher, or by a third party on behalf of a publisher, are known as P-CIP. The chief source for P-CIP for many years has been Quality Books, a distributor of small press books to libraries. Their fee for this service is \$100.

As with the Library of Congress, you will have to fill out their forms and supply information about your book. A cataloger will analyze your submission and produce a P-CIP data block to be printed in your book. Of course, the downside is that this record will not be distributed to large libraries and wholesalers, the way the Library of Congress' record is distributed.

This leads to the question of whether it's worth it for a self-publisher to go through the time and expense of having a P-CIP data block produced for his or her book. And the answer is actually quite simple: If you anticipate making any appreciable sale to libraries, it's probably well worthwhile to get P-CIP. Having this cataloging information simply makes librarians' jobs that much easier, reducing their resistance just a bit to acquiring your book for their collection.

Particularly if you publish reference books, histories, books about local events that would be of interest to libraries in your region, travel books, directories, how-to books on popular topics, or similar books, you could well have a good sized market with the thousands of libraries, both public and private, throughout the country.

What Does it All Mean?

This brings us to the data block itself, and our attempts to decode the arcane notation of the catalogers. Here's a line by line guide to what's in the CIP in this illustration (and this is a complete invention, just for illustration).

A Publisher's Cataloging-in-Publication data
B Doe, John, 1950–
C Terrific Business : how publishing became the driver of our society / John Doe ; with Joan Doe.
D p. cm.
E Includes index.
F ISBN 978-0-9999999-0-9
G 1. Business of publishing—Cultural aspects. 2. Entrepreneurship —book publishing. I. Doe, Joan. 1951–. II. Title. **H**
I HF5599.A2 A46 2010
J 299.333 22--dc22 2010999999 **K**

A Alerts the librarian the CIP was prepared by or for the Publisher.

B The main entry under which the book is cataloged, always the author's name.

C The title, followed by a statement of responsibility, in this case assigning authorship to John and Joan Doe.

D Physical description of the book, almost always blank since the books are usually not yet published.

E Notes whether an index or other bibliographical entries are in the book.

F ISBN

G Subject headings, conforming to Library of Congress usage. Here's an important note from Lisa Shiel, an experienced CIP cataloger: "The subject headings . . . MUST be authorized Library of Congress subject headings or it isn't really CIP—and it isn't properly cataloged. . . . Unless you are experienced with choosing subject headings you may misunderstand the intricacies of cataloging or inadvertently choose a heading that has fallen out of favor."

H Indicates other ways the book will be cataloged, here by title as well as by author.

I Library of Congress classification number.

J Dewey Decimal classification number.

K Library of Congress PCN. Note the year the number was issued is in the first four digits.

(Editor's Note: Since this article was published I have incorporated the information generously provided by Lisa Shiel, an experienced CIP cataloger.)

Resources

So there you have it. Here are some resources for going further into the CIP area:

- Library of Congress [PCN program](#) information
- Quality Books [P-CIP Program](#)
- Adrienne Ehlert Bashista, a freelance [Cataloger-At-Large](#) who prepares P-CIP data blocks for publishers
- Five Rainbows [CIP Cataloging service](#)

Although participation in the Library of Congress CIP program is closed to self-publishers, understanding this data block and how it's used by librarians will tell you whether to go to the time and trouble to acquire your own.

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