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Why file a copyright with the United States Copyright Office?

It is true that a creative work is considered copyrighted as soon as it is in a concrete format such as being written down, recorded or filmed. Knowing this is the case you might be asking yourself, “Well if my work is protected without the formal filing of a copyright, why should I bother filing a copyright with the US Copyright Office (USCO). Does it provide any extra benefits over simply documenting the work?”

The answer is. Yes, it does.

Filing a formal copyright with the USCO provides legal documentation of your work being attributed to you. Being able to produce a copy of the legally filed copyright can save you a lot of time and money should you need to provide proof of your copyright ownership. Also, since copyrights are good for 70 years following the death of the original creator, the registration can help provide evidence of your heirs’ right to ownership of your work.

If someone does attempt to steal your work or uses it in an unauthorized way, you will not be able to bring a copyright infringement lawsuit without a formal copyright registration. Having the registration filed before the infringement will allow you to not only file the copyright infringement lawsuit but should you win, you’ll be entitled to collect the maximum amount of damages.

Finally, it is beneficial to file a copyright as soon as possible after the work is created. If you registered your copyright within five years of the work’s creation the court will accept it as prima facie, meaning the registration is taken at face value by the court until proven otherwise.

As you can see there are several benefits to registering your work with the US Copyright Office. It protects your work for your lifetime and beyond and offers some peace of mind when it comes to the worry of how to protect your work.

You can read more at the USCO website: <http://www.copyright.gov/help/faq/>

