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GENERAL GUIDE TO THE ©OPYRIGHT ACT OF 1976



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INTRODUCTION

The Copyright Act of 1976, Public Law 94-553 (90 Stat. 2541), is a general revision of the copyright law, Title 17, United States Code; it becomes fully effective on January 1, 1978. The new law supersedes the Copyright Act of 1909, as amended, and is the first extensive revision of the 1909 law.

Early in 1977 the Register of Copyrights established in the Copyright Office a Revision Coordinating Committee, chaired by the Register, to oversee the development and coordination of plans for implementation of the new law. The Committee recognized that an important part of this initial preparation was staff training and it asked Marybeth Peters, Senior Attorney-Adviser, to plan, organize, and conduct all internal training on the new law as well as to coordinate all training activities outside of the Copyright Office. As a result of her successful execution of the first part of this assignment, 260 staff members, in 15 sessions of one and one-half hours each, completed an intensive study of the new law; 125 other staff members participated a "mini-course". Ms. Peters, who has a teaching as well as a legal background, prepared all instructional materials and designed the format for both the short- and long-term courses.

Because Ms. Peters' instruction was basic and her "lesson plans" comprehensive, the Copyright Office received repeated requests for wider dissemination of her instructional materials. The Revision Coordinating Committee is responding to this demand by publishing Ms. Peters' guide. This general guide to the Copyright Act of 1976 is not an official summary of the law. It does not attempt to deal with all of the issues raised by the revision legislation nor to provide answers to legal questions. It is, however, an extensive training tool, the text of which follows the language used by Ms. Peters, with only a change in tense to avoid an appearance of obsolescence on January 1, 1978.

In developing the lectures and lesson plans, Ms. Peters relied heavily on the language of the law itself, the legislative reports, and the various statements of the Register of Copyrights to the Congress, i.e., the 1961 Report of the Register, 1965 Supplemental Report, and the 1975 Second Supplemental Report. Copies of these documents may be obtained by writing to the Copyright Office, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20559. The fee for the 1961 Report of the Register is $.45 while the fee for the 1965 Supplementary Report is $1.00; there is no charge for the rest of the material.

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