

The Copyright Office in the Library of Congress

THE COPYRIGHT OFFICE ADMINISTERS and sustains an effective national copyright system. The Office's work includes the registration of works, the deposit of copies of copyrighted works published in the U.S., and the recordation of documents concerning copyrighted works. Registration, deposit, and recordation have served two important purposes: to create a public record of copyright registration and transfers of ownership and other documents, and to enrich the collections of the Library of Congress for the benefit of society.

"To promote the progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writing and Discoveries..."

U.S. Constitution, Article I, Section 8

Congress enacted the first copyright law in May 1790. In 1870, Congress centralized the national copyright function in the Library of Congress to meet the requirement to create and maintain records and to receive deposit copies of copyrighted works.

Under current copyright law, copyright registrants and publishers of works published in the U.S. generally send two copies of their work to the Copyright Office, and those copies are made avail-

able to the Library for its collections and exchange programs.

The collections of the Library of Congress, particularly works of American authors, have been sustained largely through the copyright deposit system. The Copyright Office annually transfers to the Library nearly one million copies of works, including books, serials, computer-related works, motion pictures, music, sound recordings, maps, prints, dramatic works, and other types of work.