

## U.S. Government Mulls Changes to Copyrights Rules

Written by Shumaya

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**New radical proposals that may shape the future of media include a small claims court for copyright disputes, new registration methods for blogs and crowdsourcing a digitization of the current card catalogue system.**

The U.S. Copyright Office this week quietly announced its priorities for the coming months, and some of the issues it's studying could bring path-breaking changes to both intellectual property law as well as the entertainment and media industries. The priorities range from the possible establishment of a new small claims circuit to a way that websites and blogs can register continually changing material for copyright protection.

Some of the priorities outlined on Tuesday by Maria Pallante, the Register of Copyrights, stem from much-discussed controversies in recent years, such as Google's efforts to digitize the book collections of libraries, disputes between broadcasters and cable and satellite carriers over retransmission of television signals, and procedures that allow authors to terminate certain copyright grants to publishers.

The Copyright Office's work on these subjects has already attracted some insider interest. For example, [a proposed rule-making](http://www.copyright.gov/docs/termination/comments/2011/) to address a "gap in termination provisions" has attracted commentary from the RIAA, the Author's Guild, the Future of Music Coalition, and others.

Pallante's office is also doing studies on subjects like illegal streaming and a public performance right in sound recordings. Some of the topics may have seemed esoteric not too long ago, but these days, small proposals sometimes become viral worries over [whether Justin Bieber is going to wind up in prison](http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/thr-esq/justin-bieber-chris-brown-copyright-lawsuit-252436).

The Copyright Office is also bringing forward new ideas that haven't gotten much circulation, but could have major impact. Here's some highlights from the [full list of priorities](http://www.copyright.gov/docs/priorities.pdf) for the coming year:

At the request of Congress, the Copyright Office is conducting a study regarding alternative means of resolving copyright infringement claims when such claims are likely to involve limited amounts of monetary relief. Today, the Office introduced a [new](#)

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<http://www.copyright.gov/fedreg/2011/76fr66758.pdf> Notice of Inquiry" about the subject, hinting about a proposal which could aid individuals in bringing claims without going through the federal circuit and without the necessary evil of expensive lawyers.

The Copyright Office also announced it is about to do a new study next year concerning the registration of content disseminated online. According to Pallente's latest document: "When a website contains a great number of contributions from many authors, and changes daily or even several times a day, what is the appropriate unit of registration? How can an accurate, informative record of copyright ownership be created? What is the appropriate deposit? Should a group registration scheme be implemented that would permit a single registration to cover content disseminated over a period of many days or weeks?"

The Copyright Office also says it's redesigning its website, and one of the features may be to make 70 million historical copyright records dating back to 1870 searchable and available online. (The office is way behind its sisters at the Patent & Trademark Office.) One of the more innovative [digitization](http://www.copyright.gov/digitization/) methods currently under examination is "crowdsourcing" the indexing and capture of copyright records, some of which are [hand-written](http://www.copyright.gov/digitization/gallery.html). Any librarians out there willing to step up to revolutionize the current card catalog system?

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