January 30, 2017

AALL Response to Survey: Librarian of Congress Seeks Input on Register of Copyrights

Submitted via SurveyMonkey at https://www.research.net/r/RegisterOfCopyrightsNR

1. What are the knowledge, skills, and abilities you believe are the most important for the Register of Copyrights?

We believe that the next Register should possess these three qualities:

1. An approach to copyright policy that is balanced and respected. Although, as outlined below, we believe that copyright policy studies and recommendations should not be a high priority for the next Register, when Congress calls upon the Register for that type of advice it should be clear that policy advice is impartial and takes seriously input from all sides. Past Registers have been knowledgeable about historically-significant copyright industries, such as book publishing and film production, while often taking less account of the needs of other groups such as libraries, consumer groups, the technology industry, and even government.

2. Demonstrated managerial experience and knowledge of information systems to maintain and improve the core operations of the Office, including updating and improving the registration and recordation systems.

3. Experience working with both public and private sectors and a willingness to develop consensus and work with individuals outside the Office—e.g., by developing an advisory board with diverse perspectives—on how copyright policy and registration practice affect user groups in addition to content industries.

2. What should be the top three priorities for the Register of Copyrights?

1. The next Register should make updating the registration and recordation system a top priority. The current system is woefully out of date, expensive for registrants, and difficult to search for users. Fast, reliable access to information about who owns what works and how they may be licensed is critical for facilitating online information flows to systems that will ultimately benefit both users and creators by creating more opportunities for legitimate use of copyrighted works and more licensing revenue opportunities for creators.

2. Improving access to historical copyright registration and recordation information should also be a high priority. The current system of access to historical copyright documentation is inefficient and stifles uses of works produced before 1978. The Register should make as a priority either digitizing these works themselves to create a free, searchable database of all pre-1978 records, or it should open up these records to other interested third-parties who would be willing to digitize and create such a database for free public access. If the latter, the Copyright Office should maintain control of the records. We believe that the Copyright Office should work with and look to the Library of Congress for its expertise in order to facilitate access to both historical and current registration.

3. The next Register should seek to restore public confidence in the Office's decision-making by taking explicit steps to demonstrate balance in its approach to policy issues. One way to achieve this is to explicitly seek out advice from groups such as consumers, libraries, and others who routinely interact with copyrighted works

as users. Another way to demonstrate this balanced approach is to seek and demonstrate respect for input from other federal agencies when appropriate, such as from the Federal Communications Commission, the Federal Trade Commission, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, and others.