§ 106. Exclusive rights in copyrighted works

Subject to sections 107 through 122, the owner of a copyright under this title has the exclusive rights to do and to authorize any of the following:

1. to reproduce the copyrighted work in copies or phonorecords;
2. to prepare derivative works based upon the copyrighted work;
3. to distribute copies or phonorecords of the copyrighted work to the public by sale or other transfer of ownership, or by rental, lease, or lending;
4. in the case of literary, musical, dramatic, and choreographic works, pantomimes, and motion pictures and other audiovisual works, to perform the copyrighted work publicly;
5. in the case of literary, musical, dramatic, and choreographic works, pantomimes, and pictorial, graphic, or sculptural works, including the individual images of a motion picture or other audiovisual work, to display the copyrighted work publicly;
6. in the case of sound recordings, to perform the copyrighted work publicly by means of a digital audio transmission.

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2009—Pub. L. 111–315 substituted “copies or phonorecords” for “copies or phonorecords or similar物件” in (a)(1), (a)(2), and (b) and struck out “or photographs” after “and display” in (b).

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Title 17—Copyrights

Chapter 1—General Rules and Definitions

§ 106. Exclusive rights in copyrighted works

The five fundamental rights that the bill gives to copyright owners—the exclusive rights of reproduction, adaptation, publication, performance, and display—are stated generally in section 106. These exclusive rights, which comprise the so-called “bundle of rights” that is a copyright, are cumulative and may overlap in some cases. Each of the five enumerated rights may be subdivided indefinitely and, as discussed below in connection with section 201, each subdivision of an exclusive right may be owned and enforced separately.

The approach of the bill is to set forth the copyright owner’s exclusive rights in broad terms in section 106, and then to provide various limitations, qualifications, or exemptions in the 12 sections that follow. Thus, everything in section 106 is made “subject to sections 107 through 118”, and must be read in conjunction with those provisions.

The exclusive rights accorded to a copyright owner under section 106 are “to do and to authorize” any of the activities specified in the five numbered rights. Use of the phrase “to authorize” is intended to avoid any questions as to the liability of contributory infringers. For example, a person who lawfully acquires a printed copy of a book and lends it to a fringer if he or she engages in the business of renting it to others for purposes of unauthorized public performance.

Rights of Reproduction, Adaptation, and Publication

The first three clauses of section 106, which cover all areas under a copyright except those of performance and display, extend to every kind of copyrighted work. The exclusive rights encompassed by these clauses, though closely related, are independent; they can generally be characterized as rights of copying, recording, adaptation, and publishing. A single act of infringement may violate all of these rights at once, as where a publisher reproduces, adapts, and sells copies of a person’s copyrighted work as part of a publishing venture. Infringement takes place when any one of the rights is violated: where, for example, a printer reproduces copies without selling them or a retailer sells copies without having anything to do with their reproduction. The references to “copies or phonorecords,” although in the plural, are intended here and throughout the bill to include the singular (1 U.S.C. § 1).

Reproduction.—Read together with the relevant definitions in section 101, the right “to reproduce the copyrighted work in copies or phonorecords” means the right to produce a material object in which the work is duplicated, transcribed, imitated, or simulated in a fixed form from which it can be “perceived, reproduced, or otherwise communicated, either directly or with the aid of a machine or device.” As under the present law, a copyrighted work would be infringed by reproducing it in whole or in any substantial part, and by duplicating it exactly or by imitation or simulation. Wide departures or variations from the copyrighted work would still be an infringement as long as the author’s “expression” rather than merely the author’s “ideas” are taken. An exception to this general principle, applicable to the reproduction of copyrighted sound recordings, is specified in section 114.

Reproduction—under clause (1) of section 106 is to be distinguished from “display” under clause (5). For a work to be “reproduced,” its fixation in tangible form must be “sufficiently permanent or stable to permit it to be perceived, reproduced, or otherwise communicated for a period of more than transitory duration.” Thus, the showing of images on a screen or tube would not be a violation of clause (1), although it might come within the scope of clause (5).

Preparation of Derivative Works.—The exclusive right to prepare derivative works, specified separately in clause (2) of section 106, overlaps the exclusive right of reproduction to some extent. It is broader than that right, however, in the sense that reproduction requires fixation in copies or phonorecords, whereas the preparation of a derivative work, such as a ballet, pantomime, or improvised performance, may be an infringement even though nothing is ever fixed in tangible form.

To be an infringement the “derivative work” must be “based upon the copyrighted work,” and the definition in section 101 refers to “a translation, musical arrangement, dramatization, fictionalization, motion picture version, sound recording, or any other form in which a work may be recast, transformed, or adapted.” Thus, to constitute a violation of section 106(2), the infringing work must incorporate a portion of the copyrighted work in some form; for example, a detailed commentary on a work or a programmatic musical composition inspired...
by a novel would not normally constitute infringements under this clause.

**Use in Information Storage and Retrieval Systems.**—As section 117 declares explicitly, the bill is not intended to alter the present law with respect to the use of copyrighted works in computer systems.

**Distribution.**—Clause (3) of section 106 establishes the exclusive right of publication: The right “to distribute copies or phonorecords of the copyrighted work to the public by sale or other transfer of ownership, or by rental, lease, or lending.” Under this provision the copyright owner would have the right to control the first public distribution of an authorized copy or phonorecord of his work, whether by sale, gift, loan, or some rental or lease arrangement. Likewise, any unauthorized public distribution of copies or phonorecords that were unlawfully made would be an infringement. As section 108 makes clear, however, the copyright owner’s rights under section 106(3) cease with respect to a particular copy or phonorecord once he has parted with ownership of it.

**Rights of Public Performance and Display.**

**Performing Rights and the “For Profit” Limitation.**—The right of public performance under section 106(4) extends to “literary, musical, dramatic, and choreographic works, pantomimes, and motion pictures and other audiovisual works and sound recordings” and, unlike the equivalent provisions now in effect, is not limited by any “for profit” requirement. The approach of the bill, as in many foreign laws, is first to state the public performance right in broad terms and then to provide specific exemptions for educational and other nonprofit uses. This approach is more reasonable than the outright exemption of the 1909 statute. The line between commercial and “nonprofit” organizations is increasingly difficult to draw. Many “nonprofit” organizations are highly subsidized and capable of paying royalties, and the widespread public exploitation of copyrighted works by public broadcasters and other noncommercial organizations is likely to grow. In addition to these trends, it is worth noting that performances and displays are continuing to supplant markets for printed copies and that in the future a broad “not for profit” exemption could not only hurt authors but could dry up their incentive to write.

The exclusive right of public performance is expanded to include not only motion pictures, including works recorded on film, video tape, and video disks, but also audiovisual works such as filmstrips and sets of slides. This provision of section 106(4), which is consistent with the assimilation of motion pictures to audiovisual works throughout the bill, is also related to amendments of the definitions of “display” and “perform” discussed below. The important issue of performing rights in sound recordings is discussed in connection with section 114.

**Right of Public Display.**—Clause (5) of section 106 represents the first explicit statutory recognition in American copyright law of an exclusive right to show a copyrighted work, or an image of it, to the public. The existence or extent of this right under the present statute is uncertain and subject to challenge. The bill would give the owners of copyright in “literary, musical, dramatic, and choreographic works, pantomimes, and pictorial, graphic, or sculptural works,” including the individual images of a motion picture or other audiovisual work, the exclusive right “to display the copyrighted work publicly.”

**Definitions.** Under the definitions of “perform,” “display,” “publicly,” and “transmit” in section 101, the concepts of public performance and public display cover not only the initial rendition or showing, but also any further act by which that rendition or showing is transmitted, repeated, or communicated to the public. Thus, for example: a singer is performing when he or she sings a song; a broadcasting network is performing when it transmits or reradiates her performance (whether simultaneous or from records); a local broadcaster is performing when it transmits the network broadcast; a cable television system is performing when it retransmits the broadcast to its subscribers; and any individual is performing whenever he or she plays a phonorecord embodying the performance by playing the phonorecord by turning on a receiving set. Although any act by which the initial performance or display is transmitted, repeated, or made to recur would itself be a “performance” or “display” under the bill, it would not be actionable as an infringement unless it were done “publicly,” as defined in section 101. Certain other performances and displays, in addition to those that are “private,” are exempted or given qualified copyright control under sections 107 through 118.

To “perform” a work, under the definition in section 101, includes reading a literary work aloud, singing or playing music, dancing a ballet or other choreographic work, and acting out a dramatic work or pantomime. A performance may be accomplished “either directly or by means of any device or process,” including all kinds of equipment for reproducing or amplifying sounds or visual images, any sort of transmitting apparatus, any type of electronic retrieval system, and any other techniques and systems not yet in use or even invented.

The definition of “perform” in relation to “a motion picture or other audiovisual work” is “to show its images in any sequence or to make the sounds accompanying it audible.” The corresponding definition of “display” covers any “showing of a copy or phonorecord of the work, either directly or by means of any device or process.” Since “copies” are defined as including the material object “in which the work is fixed,” the right of public display applies to original works of art as well as to reproductions of them. With respect to motion pictures and other audiovisual works, it is a “display” (rather than a “performance”) to show their “individual images nonsequentially.” In addition to the direct showings of a copy of a work, “display” would include the projection of an image on a screen or other surface by any method, the transmission of an image by electronic or other means, and the showing of an image on a cathode ray tube, or similar type of electronic retrieval system, and any other technique and apparatus used together with any such system or any other technique and apparatus used to transmit or otherwise communicate a performance or display of the work to the public by means of any device or process. The definition of
§ 106A. Rights of certain authors to attribution and integrity

(a) RIGHTS OF ATTRIBUTION AND INTEGRITY.—Subject to section 107 and independent of the exclusive rights provided in section 106, the author of a work of visual art—

(1) shall have the right—

(A) to claim authorship of that work, and

(B) to prevent the use of his or her name as the author of any work of visual art which he or she did not create;

(2) shall have the right to prevent the use of his or her name as the author of the work of visual art in the event of a distortion, mutilation, or other modification of the work which would be prejudicial to his or her honor or reputation; and

(3) subject to the limitations set forth in section 113(d), shall have the right—

(A) to prevent any intentional distortion, mutilation, or other modification of that work which would be prejudicial to his or her honor or reputation, and any intentional distortion, mutilation, or modification of that work is a violation of that right, and

(f) (A) to claim authorship of that work, and

(B) to prevent the use of his or her name as the author of any work of visual art which he or she did not create;

(2) shall have the right to prevent the use of his or her name as the author of the work of visual art in the event of a distortion, mutilation, or other modification of the work which would be prejudicial to his or her honor or reputation; and

(3) subject to the limitations set forth in section 113(d), shall have the right—

(A) to prevent any intentional distortion, mutilation, or other modification of that work which would be prejudicial to his or her honor or reputation, and any intentional distortion, mutilation, or modification of that work is a violation of that right, and

Editorial Notes

AMENDMENTS


Statutory Notes and Related Subsidiaries

EFFECTIVE DATe OF 1995 AMENDMENT


EFFECTIVE DATe OF 1990 AMENDMENT

Amendment by Pub. L. 101–650 applicable to any architectural work created on or after Dec. 1, 1990, and any architectural work that, on Dec. 1, 1990, is unconstructed and embodied in unpublished plans or drawings, except that protection for such architectural work under this title terminates on Dec. 31, 2002, unless the work is constructed by that date, see section 706 of Pub. L. 101–650, set out as a note under section 101 of this title.


PERFORMING RIGHTS SOCIETY CONSENT DECREES

Pub. L. 115–264, title I, §105, Oct. 11, 2018, 132 Stat. 3726, provided that:

“(a) DEFINITION.—In this section, the term ‘performing rights society’ has the meaning given the term in section 101 of title 17, United States Code.

“(b) NOTIFICATION OF REVIEW.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—The Department of Justice shall provide timely briefings upon request of any Member of the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate and the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives regarding the status of a review in progress of a consent decree between the United States and a performing rights society.

“(2) CONFIDENTIALITY AND DELIBERATIVE PROCESS.—In accordance with applicable rules relating to confidentiality and agency deliberative process, the Department of Justice shall share with such Members of Congress detailed and timely information and pertinent documents related to the consent decree review.

“(c) ACTION BEFORE MOTION TO TERMINATE.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Before filing with the appropriate district court of the United States a motion to terminate a consent decree between the United States and a performing rights society, including a motion to terminate a consent decree after the passage of a specified period of time, the Department of Justice shall—

“(A) notify Members of Congress and committees of Congress described in subsection (b); and

“(B) provide to such Members of Congress and committees information regarding the impact of the proposed termination on the market for licensing the public performance of musical works should the motion be granted.

“(2) NOTIFICATION.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—During the notification described in paragraph (1), and not later than a reasonable time before the date on which the Department of Justice files with the appropriate district court of the United States a motion to terminate a consent decree between the United States and a performing rights society, the Department of Justice should submit to the chairmen and ranking members of the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate and the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives a written notification of the extent of the Department of Justice to file the motion.

“(B) CONTENTS.—The notification provided in subparagraph (A) shall include a written report to the chairmen and ranking members of the Committee on the Judiciary of [the] Senate and the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives setting forth—

“(i) an explanation of the process used by the Department of Justice to review the consent decree;

“(ii) a summary of the public comments received by the Department of Justice during the review by the Department; and

“(iii) other information provided to Congress under paragraph (1)(B).

“(d) SCOPE.—This section applies only to a consent decree between the United States and a performing rights society.”