

former title 17] marked the first recognition in American copyright law of sound recordings as copyrightable works. As defined in section 101, copyrightable “sound recordings” are original works of authorship comprising an aggregate of musical, spoken, or other sounds that have been fixed in tangible form. The copyrightable work comprises the aggregation of sounds and not the tangible medium of fixation. Thus, “sound recordings” as copyrightable subject matter are distinguished from “phonorecords,” the latter being physical objects in which sounds are fixed. They are also distinguished from any copyrighted literary, dramatic, or musical works that may be reproduced on a “phonorecord.”

As a class of subject matter, sound recordings are clearly within the scope of the “writings of an author” capable of protection under the Constitution [Const. Art. I, §8, cl. 8], and the extension of limited statutory protection to them was too long delayed. Aside from cases in which sounds are fixed by some purely mechanical means without originality of any kind, the copyright protection that would prevent the reproduction and distribution of unauthorized phonorecords of sound recordings is clearly justified.

The copyrightable elements in a sound recording will usually, though not always, involve “authorship” both on the part of the performers whose performance is captured and on the part of the record producer responsible for setting up the recording session, capturing and electronically processing the sounds, and compiling and editing them to make the final sound recording. There may, however, be cases where the record producer’s contribution is so minimal that the performance is the only copyrightable element in the work, and there may be cases (for example, recordings of bird-calls, sounds of racing cars, et cetera) where only the record producer’s contribution is copyrightable.

Sound tracks of motion pictures, long a nebulous area in American copyright law, are specifically included in the definition of “motion pictures,” and excluded in the definition of “sound recordings.” To be a “motion picture,” as defined, requires three elements: (1) a series of images, (2) the capability of showing the images in certain successive order, and (3) an impression of motion when the images are thus shown. Coupled with the basic requirements of original authorship and fixation in tangible form, this definition encompasses a wide range of cinematographic works embodied in films, tapes, video disks, and other media. However, it would not include: (1) unauthorized fixations of live performances or telecasts, (2) live telecasts that are not fixed simultaneously with their transmission, or (3) filmstrips and slide sets which, although consisting of a series of images intended to be shown in succession, are not capable of conveying an impression of motion.

On the other hand, the bill equates audiovisual materials such as filmstrips, slide sets, and sets of transparencies with “motion pictures” rather than with “pictorial, graphic, and sculptural works.” Their sequential showing is closer to a “performance” than to a “display,” and the definition of “audiovisual works,” which applies also to “motion pictures,” embraces works consisting of a series of related images that are by their nature, intended for showing by means of projectors or other devices.

Nature of Copyright. Copyright does not preclude others from using the ideas or information revealed by the author’s work. It pertains to the literary, musical, graphic, or artistic form in which the author expressed intellectual concepts. Section 102(b) makes clear that copyright protection does not extend to any idea, procedure, process, system, method of operation, concept, principle, or discovery, regardless of the form in which it is described, explained, illustrated, or embodied in such work.

Some concern has been expressed lest copyright in computer programs should extend protection to the methodology or processes adopted by the programmer, rather than merely to the “writing” expressing his

ideas. Section 102(b) is intended, among other things, to make clear that the expression adopted by the programmer is the copyrightable element in a computer program, and that the actual processes or methods embodied in the program are not within the scope of the copyright law.

Section 102(b) in no way enlarges or contracts the scope of copyright protection under the present law. Its purpose is to restate, in the context of the new single Federal system of copyright, that the basic dichotomy between expression and idea remains unchanged.

Editorial Notes

AMENDMENTS

1990—Subsec. (a)(8). Pub. L. 101-650 added par. (8).

Statutory Notes and Related Subsidiaries

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.

§ 103. Subject matter of copyright: Compilations and derivative works

(a) The subject matter of copyright as specified by section 102 includes compilations and derivative works, but protection for a work employing preexisting material in which copyright subsists does not extend to any part of the work in which such material has been used unlawfully.

(b) The copyright in a compilation or derivative work extends only to the material contributed by the author of such work, as distinguished from the preexisting material employed in the work, and does not imply any exclusive right in the preexisting material. The copyright in such work is independent of, and does not affect or enlarge the scope, duration, ownership, or subsistence of, any copyright protection in the preexisting material.

(Pub. L. 94-553, title I, § 101, Oct. 19, 1976, 90 Stat. 2545.)

HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

HOUSE REPORT NO. 94-1476

Section 103 complements section 102: A compilation or derivative work is copyrightable if it represents an “original work of authorship” and falls within one or more of the categories listed in section 102. Read together, the two sections make plain that the criteria of copyrightable subject matter stated in section 102 apply with full force to works that are entirely original and to those containing preexisting material. Section 103(b) is also intended to define, more sharply and clearly than does section 7 of the present law [section 7 of former title 17], the important interrelationship and correlation between protection of preexisting and of “new” material in a particular work. The most important point here is one that is commonly misunderstood today: copyright in a “new version” covers only the material added by the later author, and has no effect one way or the other on the copyright or public domain status of the preexisting material.

Between them the terms “compilations” and “derivative works” which are defined in section 101 com-

prehend every copyrightable work that employs preexisting material or data of any kind. There is necessarily some overlapping between the two, but they basically represent different concepts. A “compilation” results from a process of selecting, bringing together, organizing, and arranging previously existing material of all kinds, regardless of whether the individual items in the material have been or ever could have been subject to copyright. A “derivative work,” on the other hand, requires a process of recasting, transforming, or adapting “one or more preexisting works”; the “preexisting work” must come within the general subject matter of copyright set forth in section 102, regardless of whether it is or was ever copyrighted.

The second part of the sentence that makes up section 103(a) deals with the status of a compilation or derivative work unlawfully employing preexisting copyrighted material. In providing that protection does not extend to “any part of the work in which such material has been used unlawfully,” the bill prevents an infringer from benefiting, through copyright protection, from committing an unlawful act, but preserves protection for those parts of the work that do not employ the preexisting work. Thus, an unauthorized translation of a novel could not be copyrighted at all, but the owner of copyright in an anthology of poetry could sue someone who infringed the whole anthology, even though the infringer proves that publication of one of the poems was unauthorized. Under this provision, copyright could be obtained as long as the use of the preexisting work was not “unlawful,” even though the consent of the copyright owner had not been obtained. For instance, the unauthorized reproduction of a work might be “lawful” under the doctrine of fair use or an applicable foreign law, and if so the work incorporating it could be copyrighted.

§ 104. Subject matter of copyright: National origin

(a) UNPUBLISHED WORKS.—The works specified by sections 102 and 103, while unpublished, are subject to protection under this title without regard to the nationality or domicile of the author.

(b) PUBLISHED WORKS.—The works specified by sections 102 and 103, when published, are subject to protection under this title if—

(1) on the date of first publication, one or more of the authors is a national or domiciliary of the United States, or is a national, domiciliary, or sovereign authority of a treaty party, or is a stateless person, wherever that person may be domiciled; or

(2) the work is first published in the United States or in a foreign nation that, on the date of first publication, is a treaty party; or

(3) the work is a sound recording that was first fixed in a treaty party; or

(4) the work is a pictorial, graphic, or sculptural work that is incorporated in a building or other structure, or an architectural work that is embodied in a building and the building or structure is located in the United States or a treaty party; or

(5) the work is first published by the United Nations or any of its specialized agencies, or by the Organization of American States; or

(6) the work comes within the scope of a Presidential proclamation. Whenever the President finds that a particular foreign nation extends, to works by authors who are nationals or domiciliaries of the United States or to works that are first published in the United States, copyright protection on substantially the same basis as that on which the

foreign nation extends protection to works of its own nationals and domiciliaries and works first published in that nation, the President may by proclamation extend protection under this title to works of which one or more of the authors is, on the date of first publication, a national, domiciliary, or sovereign authority of that nation, or which was first published in that nation. The President may revise, suspend, or revoke any such proclamation or impose any conditions or limitations on protection under a proclamation.

For purposes of paragraph (2), a work that is published in the United States or a treaty party within 30 days after publication in a foreign nation that is not a treaty party shall be considered to be first published in the United States or such treaty party, as the case may be.

(c) EFFECT OF BERNE CONVENTION.—No right or interest in a work eligible for protection under this title may be claimed by virtue of, or in reliance upon, the provisions of the Berne Convention, or the adherence of the United States thereto. Any rights in a work eligible for protection under this title that derive from this title, other Federal or State statutes, or the common law, shall not be expanded or reduced by virtue of, or in reliance upon, the provisions of the Berne Convention, or the adherence of the United States thereto.

(d) EFFECT OF PHONOGRAMS TREATIES.—Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (b), no works other than sound recordings shall be eligible for protection under this title solely by virtue of the adherence of the United States to the Geneva Phonograms Convention or the WIPO Performances and Phonograms Treaty.

(Pub. L. 94-553, title I, § 101, Oct. 19, 1976, 90 Stat. 2545; Pub. L. 100-568, § 4(a)(2), (3), Oct. 31, 1988, 102 Stat. 2855; Pub. L. 105-304, title I, § 102(b), Oct. 28, 1998, 112 Stat. 2862.)

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Section 104 of the bill [this section], which sets forth the basic criteria under which works of foreign origin can be protected under the U.S. copyright law, divides all works coming within the scope of sections 102 and 103 into two categories: unpublished and published. Subsection (a) imposes no qualifications of nationality and domicile with respect to unpublished works. Subsection (b) would make published works subject to protection under any one of four conditions:

(1) The author is a national or domiciliary of the United States or of a country with which the United States has copyright relations under a treaty, or is a stateless person;

(2) The work is first published in the United States or in a country that is a party to the Universal Copyright Convention;

(3) The work is first published by the United Nations, by any of its specialized agencies, or by the Organization of American States; or

(4) The work is covered by a Presidential proclamation extending protection to works originating in a specified country which extends protection to U.S. works “on substantially the same basis” as to its own works.

The third of these conditions represents a treaty obligation of the United States. Under the Second Protocol of the Universal Copyright Convention, protection under U.S. Copyright law is expressly required for works published by the United Nations, by U.N. special-