



Copyright Registration Rule Change Allows Flat Fee Registration of Short Textual Works Published Online

Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America (SFWA) is extremely pleased that the U.S. Copyright Office has issued a new copyright registration rule that will allow authors to register up to fifty short textual works published online for a single flat fee.

SFWA, along with the National Writers Union, Horror Writers Association, and American Society of Journalists and Authors, first requested the creation of such a group registration option in January 2017. In 2018, a productive round table between authors' groups and the Copyright Office was held, and subsequent comments from SFWA and other groups were fully integrated into the final rule.

The rule, which takes effect on August 17, 2020, specifies that each work must be between fifty and 17,500 words in length, must have been published in the same 90-day period, and be written by the same single author or collaboration. For works that qualify, a single fee of \$65 will cover the registration of up to fifty individual works.

SFWA thanks the Office for its exemplary responsiveness. While this new registration category is significant, and will potentially lower the costs of registering individual works up to fifty-fold, SFWA has nonetheless argued for and will continue to press for a consolidation of the several types of group registration now available, including for works published in periodicals and unpublished works, as well as short works published in physical collections, anthologies, and the like which do not appear online.

While the new rule is a major improvement for writers who have published significant numbers of works online, it only makes sense to allow other writers who have published fewer works or in a variety of formats and media to register all of their works as part of the same group, as well.

Separately, the Copyright Office has recently begun the process of defining the meaning of "publication" as it relates to the Internet. While SFWA and many other author groups have recommended that any material appearing on the Internet should be considered published—even if it is behind a paywall or offered for sale—the Office has not yet made its determination. Meanwhile, the current rulemaking guidance says it "will accept the applicant's representation that website content is published or unpublished, unless that statement is implausible or is contradicted by information provided elsewhere in the registration materials or in the Office's records or by information that is known to the registration specialist."

Further definition may require an action by Congress to incorporate an actual criteria for online publication.

SFWA extends its thanks to Michael Capobianco and SFWA's Legal Affairs Committee for their diligence in representing SFWA during this long process.

A complete explanation of the rule can be read [online here](#).

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