



Copyright Registration Alert - SFWA

Alert from the SFWA Legal Affairs Committee:

The Committee has been alerted to potential problems for some writers when they register their copyright(s) with the US Copyright Office. The information authors must include when registering a copyright is considered public, and will become visible to anyone searching the Copyright Office's records, either in person or online at <https://cocatalog.loc.gov/>. The Personally Identifiable Information ("PII") in copyright records could be or become confidential; for example, it might be used by a potential stalker to locate a person. There is, however, no legal requirement that the author be identified by any particular name on the application form. Registrants may use a pseudonym or pen name if they do not want to reveal their identity. In addition, although by law an address must be included, it does not have to be the author's home address. The committee recommends the use of a post office box or third-party address as their address of record for anyone concerned about their privacy.

For an additional fee, the Copyright Office will, under some circumstances, remove Personally Identifiable Information from the online records. The record maintained in the office's physical records will not be changed, though; the original PII would still be discoverable by anyone willing to travel to the Copyright Office in Washington DC to look at the records there. Changing many registrations could be expensive. The best way to ensure that PII is not made public is to not include it in the original application.

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