



## Copyright Basics

Adapted and summarized from the U.S.  
Copyright Office, May 2007

### Why do we have copyright?

*It's in The Constitution!* Article I, Section 8, instructs Congress to "secure for limited times to authors and inventors the exclusive right to their respective writings and discoveries."

### Copyright law provides the following exclusive rights to the copyright owner:

- The right to allow reproduction
- The right to allow distribution
- The right to allow a public performance
- The right to allow a public display
- The right to allow derivative works based upon the work
- For art works, moral rights apply

### How do you get copyright?

*Copyright is secured automatically upon creation!* All you need to do is satisfy two conditions:

1. It has to be an "original work of authorship"
2. It has to be "fixed in a tangible form of expression"

Of course, it is always a good thing to pay your \$45 to the U.S. Copyright Office and fill out their form for an official copyright registration.

### What kinds of works are protected?

- Literary works
- Musical works, including any accompanying words
- Dramatic works, including any accompanying music
- Pantomimes and choreographic works
- Pictorial, graphic and sculptural works
- Motion pictures and other audiovisual works
- Sound recordings
- Architectural works

### How long is copyright?

*Life of the author plus 70 years!* In the case of an anonymous work, a pseudonymous work or a work made for hire, the copyright endures for a term of 95 years from the year of its first publication, or a term of 120 years from the year of its creation, whichever expires first.