

# A history of copyright

## The origination of copyright

- The Statute of Anne, 1709, is regarded as the world's first copyright law. It was enacted in the UK, where the printing press had been in operation since the 15<sup>th</sup> Century and brought with it mass production of printed books.
- The new law gave a term of 14 years during which only the author and the printers to whom the authors chose to license their works could publish. For the first time the power was in the hands of the creators.
- The Berne Convention of 1886 was the first international agreement involving copyright. The original agreement included only 10 states but by formulating international agreements and creating new, minimum standards for dealing with copyright, the ability of 'Pirate Publishers' was diminished.
- Now the number of states signed up to the Berne Convention is 176; however these laws only determine base features of copyright laws. Copyright laws are, for the most part, siloed in individual states' sovereignty.
- Did you know? Some very famous figures have had a great contribution to the changes to copyright law over time and the rights of the author. Victor Hugo's campaigning was a driving force behind the creation of the Berne Convention and Charles Dickens' American tour in the mid 1800s, led him to lobby American congress to change their laws because of the proliferation of unauthorised copies of his books he discovered for which he received no income

## Changes to European copyright law, 9 July 2019

- The EU Copyright Directive came into force 7 June 2019. Member states will then have two years to either implement the reforms within the framework of their existing laws, or to simply adopt the directive as law.
- The reforms particularly target the internet giants, such as Facebook, Google and YouTube, forcing them to take stricter measures to manage online content and prevent copyright breaches.
- In essence, platforms will be required to ensure the correct copyright agreements are in place for any third-party content shared. There are fears the broad nature of the reforms will negatively impact online content as content will just be taken down or given restricted access meaning huge amounts of valuable information will be lost.

- Exceptions were agreed regarding Text and Data Mining (TDM) – the use of software to analyse huge volumes of text or data. This is a progressive exception that will help the development of technologies such as Artificial Intelligence.
- In addition, the controversial Article 15 will require online platforms to pay newspapers for extracts of their content, even small ‘news clippings’ used in links. The so-called ‘snippet tax’ does not apply to hyperlinks themselves but does apply if they are accompanied by ‘individual words or very short extracts’. *Directive (EU) 2019/790 of the European Parliament of the Council*
- Educational institutions benefit from a cross boarder teaching exception, which permits the copying of material for teaching purposes in different countries. Previously only UK copyright law allowed this.
- A preservation exception is included. Organisations like museums may make copies of material in order to preserve it. However these copies can be used for no other purpose and so may never be visible to the public.

## References

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