To the Copyright Office, Members of Congress, and other interested parties:

I am a self-published author and illustrator who also spent many years in the newspaper business. My concerns about the proposed changes in copyright law are as follows:

- Freedom of expression, our constitutional right, is diminished by a system that mandates authors and artists to register either with a government agency or private or nonprofit registry in order to maintain exclusive control of what they create. Individual rights should never be overlooked for corporate or even public convenience.

- From a practical standpoint, many independent authors and artists are making so little money, and/or producing so many products, that it would be a financial and administrative hardship to register each product. Independent creators without deep pockets would be put at a competitive disadvantage against authors and artists who either have the resources of large corporations behind them, or are well-to-do individuals with their own administrative and legal resources. Small publishers might also have difficulty dealing with a complex new bureaucracy. The end result could be independent creators and small publishers producing less material. A free society needs to hear all voices, not only those with resources.

- Creative works are often more valuable after passage of time. Their value does not cease on publication, as some have argued. Van Gogh's paintings didn't provide him much income when they were originally produced, but they became quite valuable later. It may take an author or artist years to reach the point where his or her published work becomes valuable. In the meantime, most authors or artists are probably trying to sell the already published work in a different format, for example turning a comic book series into a graphic novel.

- While bringing out of print books into wider circulation is laudable, it is upsetting to think that others may be able to use my work, and possibly edit it, as may happen with mass digitization, without my having any say in the matter. If I didn't agree with how my work was used or changed, I would want to be able to bring legal action under the current law, which in my view is stronger, rather than the modified law.

Thank you for allowing me to share my comments on an issue that is likely to affect the earning capability of many artists, authors and small publishers.

Sincerely,

J. C. Stevens
Author/Illustrator