

Copyright Office Work Continues; Workforce Changes

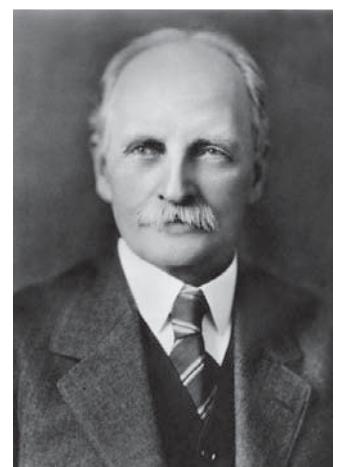
JUDITH NIERMAN

A 1902 record of Copyright Office employees was recently discovered in the Office archives. A glance at the record, which gives nothing more than the employee's name and residential street address, discloses changes in the Copyright Office workforce from 1902 to 2007.

Sixty persons, plus Register of Copyrights Thorvald Solberg, formed the Office staff 105 years ago. Most employees lived near enough to walk to work. One lived in faraway

Kensington, Maryland. In 1902, 37 staffers were men, 24 were women. According to the list, 11 women were single (Miss) and 13 were married or widowed (Mrs.). The Office was ahead of the nation in employing women, who accounted for 39 percent of the 1902 Office workforce. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, women constituted about 19 percent of the American workforce in 1900. In June 2007, the Copyright Office workforce was 57 percent female.

Register of Copyrights Thorvald Solberg (right) served from 1897 to 1930. His Copyright Office in 1902 occupied a suite of three rooms on the south side of the first floor of the Jefferson Building as well as additional space in the cellar and on the ground floor. Room Q2 of the cellar is depicted here. Note the bare wood floors, the single telephone on the wall, and the presence of women employees. Some employees had typewriters at their desks.



In 1902, the average annual earnings of a full-time federal government worker was \$967. But the turn-of-the-century Copyright Office paid well. The average annual pay for an Office staffer in 1903 was \$1,111. The Register of Copyrights received \$3,000 per year, the messenger boy, \$360. The appropriations request for 1902–1903 included funding for jobs that are no more: porter, messenger boy, chief clerk, chief of bookkeeping division, chief of application division. ©