

## War Effort Affects Copyright Office Workload and Staffing

JUDITH NIERMAN

During World War II, the U.S. government exercised its rights under the first War Powers Act of December 18, 1941, and assumed control of the copyrights of alien combatant nationals. Citizens of Germany, Italy, and other countries at war against the United States lost their intellectual property rights in the United States. Created by Executive Order 9095, the Office of the Alien Property Custodian (APC) became the de facto owner of these copyrights.

Many APC activities required cooperation with the Copyright Office, and the impact on the workload of the Copyright Office was great. Foremost was recording the vesting orders issued by the APC by which alien copyrights were taken over by the government. Some 10,000 titles of copyrighted works, mostly scientific works and music, were recorded in 1943 alone. At first, claimant, title, and author as well as series and contents title cards were made. Due to the amount of work—vesting orders 730 and 1174 together included 25,539 titles—the Mails, Files, and Search Section recommended limiting cards to claimants and titles only. When cards for these works already existed in the card catalog, notations were made on the cards, although the Office had no statutory obligation to record licenses issued for these works. But the Office knew that notations made in the indexes would facilitate searching ownership in these foreign works after the war.

In addition, the APC required applicants for registration of foreign works and recordation of assignments related to these works to file supporting documents that showed how the copyrights were obtained and exactly what interests were involved. The Office processed these papers and forwarded them to the APC.

Finally, the Office performed innumerable searches that included preparation of extensive lists of foreign-owned copyrights. This work necessitated much correspondence between the Office and the APC as well as with the public.

While dealing with a greatly increased workload, the Office was feeling the impact of the war on its staffing. In fiscal 1943, there was a 46 percent turnover in personnel because men were enlisting and being drafted into the military. In one year, every member of the legal staff left. The Office resorted to recalling retired staff back to service. Higher-level clerks were replaced by promotions from within the remaining staff. Replacing lower-level clerks required extensive training. But the 1943 annual report states that the standard of quality in the work performed was upheld because staffers took over tasks outside their normal assignments. "In all cases, they have been cheerfully performed," said the report. ©

It took approximately 5611 full working hours to index and search 30,000 titles. Based on this record I make the following estimate:  
It would take one clerk 11 years to do all of the searching & indexing

EI Jones, Chief  
Mails, Files and Search Section.