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Copyright Review Management System - IMLS National Leadership Grant



In 2008, the University of Michigan Library was awarded a National Leadership Grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services to create a Copyright Review Management System (CRMS). The purpose of the project is to increase the reliability of copyright status determinations of books published in the United States from 1923 to 1963, and to help create a point of collaboration with other institutions. Hundreds of thousands of books were published in the United States between 1923 and 1963, and although many of these are likely to be in the public domain, individuals must manually check their copyright status to make a determination. If a work is not in the public domain, it cannot be made accessible online. The system will aid in the process of making vast numbers of books from this period available online to the general public.

The University of Michigan devotes staff in its Technical Services Division to determining the copyright status of works typically presumed to be in copyright (books published in the United States between 1923 and 1963). As of July 1, 2009, Electronic Access Unit staff had "manually" reviewed almost 63,000 volumes in the HathiTrust repository, 36,000 of which have been determined to be in the public domain. The texts of those 36,000 volumes are now publicly accessible via Mirlyn (Michigan's OPAC) as well as the HathiTrust catalog.

The CRMS will build on that experience by increasing the reliability of copyright status determinations, creating a point of collaboration for other institutions, and aiding in the process of making vast numbers of additional books available online to the general public.

Time frame

The 3-year project began in December 2008 and run through November 2011. During this period, the University of Michigan will develop the necessary software to perform the work, will conduct tens of thousands of copyright determinations, and will work to engage other institutions through a process of training and coordination. We will be aided in our development and testing by working with our permanently funded copyright review team, and will use an iterative process to refine the functionality of the system to improve workflow and accuracy.

Current Status

The project is currently in Phase Three, which is scheduled to run from June 2010 through May 2011.

Version 1.0 of the CRMS was released in July of 2009. Two reviewers now review each volume. If their reviews match, the determination becomes final; if the two reviews conflict, it is queued up for a third review by the "expert arbitrator." Final determinations are exported on a nightly basis to update the HathiTrust rights database. Any volumes that staff determine are out-of-copyright are then made available as full-text.

Over the past year we have put in place enhancements to the system and revised our guidelines and processes in hopes of improving efficiency in our copyright determination work. We released Version 2.0 of the CRMS in June, which includes enhanced interface, navigation and documentation, and incorporates functionality intended to assist us as we train and integrate reviewers from outside institutions.

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