

Copyright Stamp: An Efficient Internet Copyright Circulation Tool for Postprints

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Abstract

To address the current challenges of inefficient copyright circulation and inadequate copyright protection in the digital and networked era, this work innovatively proposes the “Copyright Stamp,” an internet-based rapid licensing service platform that integrates services including copyright protection, rapid authorization, copyright monitoring, rights protection, and dispute resolution, thereby achieving the concurrent circulation of content and copyright, and realizing the application effect of “what you see is ready to use, with authorization upon use.”

Full Text

Preamble

Copyright Seal: An Efficient Internet Copyright Circulation Tool

Abstract: In response to the current challenges of inefficient copyright circulation and inadequate copyright protection in the digital and networked era, this paper proposes the innovative concept of “Copyright Seal”—an internet-based rapid authorization service platform that integrates copyright protection, fast licensing, copyright monitoring, and rights protection settlement. This platform enables the simultaneous circulation of content and its associated copyrights, achieving a practical effect of “see-and-use, use-and-authorize.”

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1. Background

China is currently transitioning from a manufacturing powerhouse to an intellectual property powerhouse. On December 18, 2015, the State Council issued “Several Opinions on Accelerating the Construction of an Intellectual Property Powerhouse Under New Circumstances,” explicitly calling for substantial improvements in the creation, utilization, protection, management, and service capabilities of intellectual property rights. The document further emphasized the need to perfect the IP authorization and rights protection systems, accelerate the construction of an interconnected intellectual property information public service platform, and strengthen the development of intellectual property trading platforms while improving the information filing and announcement systems for copyright licensing. These policy directives underscore that strengthening the utilization, circulation, and protection of intellectual property is fundamental to China’s ambition of becoming an IP powerhouse.

As China’s cultural and creative industries flourish, vast amounts of copyrighted content are being produced, yet the resulting copyright revenues for creators remain disappointingly low. Statistics from countries with mature cultural and creative industries indicate that copyright income should account for 30%-40% of total revenue for cultural and creative enterprises. In China, however, this proportion is currently less than 10%, with two major contributing factors being inefficient copyright circulation and inadequate copyright protection. The rapid development of internet and digital technologies has led to an explosion of digital content characterized by socialized production, fragmented dissemination, and personalized consumption. Digital content can be easily copied and distributed across new media platforms including the internet, web broadcasting, internet television, mobile TV, IPTV, digital magazines, digital newspapers, digital radio, and mobile television. These new media have become the primary forms of information dissemination and sharing, posing enormous challenges for digital copyright protection and dispute resolution. Piracy is difficult to detect and evidence, while litigation yields far less compensation than legal costs, rendering traditional legal remedies largely ineffective for digital copyright enforcement. Consequently, solving copyright circulation and protection issues through internet-native methods has become a critical concern for the copyright industry’s development.

The principle of “authorization before use” is fundamental to China’s Copyright Law and must be upheld for all online uses of copyrighted content. To this end, the National Copyright Administration issued the “Notice on Regulating Online Reproduction Copyright Order” on April 22, 2015, explicitly stating that “internet media reproducing others’ works must comply with copyright laws and regulations, obtain permission from copyright holders and pay remuneration, and must indicate the author’s name, work title, and source.” Furthermore, the “Notice on Launching the ‘Sword Net 2016’ Special Campaign Against Online Infringement and Piracy” highlighted the need to crack down on unauthorized dissemination of online works, including literature, news, and film and television

content, to protect the legitimate rights and interests of rights holders.

2. Characteristics of an Efficient Internet Copyright Circulation Environment

In the digital and networked environment, the traditional “one-to-one” copyright licensing model faces severe challenges. With massive volumes of works being produced and disseminated, obtaining prior authorization for every work’s online distribution is practically impossible. The conventional one-to-one authorization model can no longer meet the development demands for efficient circulation of copyrighted works in new media networks. The copyright industry in the new media environment urgently requires a systematic, standardized, diversified, rapid, and efficient copyright licensing mechanism that fulfills the development needs of use-and-authorize, authorize-and-transact. We believe an efficient copyright circulation environment should possess the following characteristics.

2.1 Credit Certification-Supported Rapid Authorization Foundation

The foundation of rapid copyright authorization lies in trust, eliminating the need for time-consuming and costly credit verification processes. Therefore, a sound copyright circulation environment should be supported by credit certification mechanisms, including ownership certification, usage certification, and settlement certification. Ownership certification, as part of transaction credit certification, provides accurate information about rights ownership to both parties, reducing risks in copyright utilization. Usage certification enables licensors to monitor licensees’ use of copyrighted content to prevent unauthorized usage. Settlement certification ensures fair distribution of benefits among different stakeholders in the copyright industry chain based on monitoring data regarding usage frequency, scope, and other relevant factors.

2.2 Building Rapid Authorization Environment Through End-to-End, Dynamic, Intelligent Supply Chains

In an efficient copyright circulation environment, rapid copyright authorization is achieved through a series of flexible copyright circulation chains that can meet enterprise needs. Specifically, an efficient copyright circulation environment manifests as an end-to-end, dynamic, and intelligent copyright supply chain cluster. These copyright supply chains can automatically match copyright content resources with usage channels to facilitate instant transactions, complete online payments, and enable real-time delivery of copyrighted content—essentially real-time capital flow and content “logistics.” Cultural enterprises can either utilize established supply chains within the copyright circulation environment or independently, flexibly, and efficiently build their own copyright supply chains according to their specific needs.

[Figure 1: see original paper] “Copyright Seal” Business Model

2.3 New Interest Distribution Mechanisms and Dispute Resolution Methods

First, an interest distribution mechanism characterized by revenue sharing. In an efficient copyright circulation environment, acquisition of copyright resources no longer relies on bidding transactions. By moving beyond traditional resource buyout transactions and implementing revenue sharing across the entire chain through the new copyright circulation environment, enterprises can reduce operational costs, improve transaction efficiency, and achieve rapid transactions. Second, a dispute resolution method characterized by settlement. In the digital and networked environment, copyright dispute resolution can no longer depend on traditional litigation. Instead, it should address the characteristics of digital copyright by encouraging rights holders and users to resolve infringement disputes through settlement under the principle of benefit sharing—transforming a “blocking” approach into a “channeling” approach that converts piracy into a dispute resolution mechanism that generates benefits for rights holders, thereby suppressing piracy, encouraging copyright utilization, and improving copyright circulation efficiency.

3. Copyright Seal

To build an efficient internet copyright circulation environment, we have proposed and developed “Copyright Seal,” an internet-oriented rapid copyright authorization service platform. Employing an innovative “distributed” copyright transaction model, it embeds the authorization transaction entry point into media users’ own internet publishing channels (media websites, Weibo accounts, WeChat official accounts, etc.), enabling original media to license content externally simultaneously with publication. This achieves the practical effect of “see-and-use, use-and-authorize.”

The Copyright Seal project primarily comprises four subsystems and one open platform: the copyright protection subsystem, rapid authorization subsystem, copyright monitoring subsystem, rights protection and settlement subsystem, and the Copyright Seal open platform.

Copyright Seal has three major characteristics: First, it uses internet-native methods to solve internet copyright circulation problems, featuring typical internet product characteristics that are simple, user-friendly, and offer excellent user experience. Second, the dissemination channel is the authorization channel, breaking the traditional centralized marketplace e-commerce model by integrating copyright authorization transactions with content display, making copyright authorization transactions easier to conclude. Third, it achieves see-and-use, use-and-authorize functionality, allowing content to be used immediately upon viewing and authorized with a single click when needed.

As shown in Figure 1, copyright holders use the platform’s Copyright Seal generation and publishing tools to add Copyright Seal when publishing works, simultaneously recording relevant copyright information in the platform’s copyright

resource center. When users view the work, they can click on the Copyright Seal to clearly and conveniently access the work's copyright information, including copyright statements, licensing rules, rights status, and authorization records. Additionally, through Copyright Seal, users can access a series of copyright services provided by the platform.

3.1 Copyright Protection Subsystem

This subsystem includes functional modules for automatic inclusion, electronic certificates, and infringement evidence collection.

Automatic Inclusion: Media using Copyright Seal embed Copyright Seal code into their content, after which the Copyright Seal platform automatically includes the content without requiring users to upload works individually. Works synchronized to Copyright Seal with free certification automatically undergo copyright certification and generate copyright registration certificates. Currently, Copyright Seal's copyright certification service is free. Copyright Seal supports three registration methods: the DCI certification system from the China Copyright Protection Center, the trusted timestamp system from United Trust, and the worry-free preservation system from Ancun.

Electronic Certificates: Certified works receive a copyright certification electronic certificate supported by third-party technology companies and endorsed by the International Copyright Trading Center, possessing legal effect and usable for copyright protection.

Infringement Evidence Collection: The Copyright Seal platform conducts network-wide usage monitoring for certified works and provides infringement evidence collection services for suspected infringing content detected. Currently, infringement evidence collection is automatically performed by the Copyright Seal backend based on rights protection actions.

3.2 Rapid Authorization Subsystem

Media users can complete Copyright Seal authorization settings for designated media platforms (websites, WeChat official accounts, Sina Weibo, Sina blogs) in just three steps, with one-time setup enabling continuous authorization that remains permanently valid. This subsystem includes functional modules for automatic authorization, online payment, authorization letters, and settlement supervision.

Automatic Authorization: After completing Copyright Seal settings, media users embed Copyright Seal code into content on designated platforms. Once published, the content displays authorization links, enabling users to obtain authorization online instantly—see-and-use, use-and-authorize.

Online Payment: The rapid authorization settings support both free and paid authorization models. For paid authorization, users must pay authorization fees online, currently supporting Alipay and WeChat Pay.

Authorization Letters: Upon completing an authorization, the Copyright Seal platform issues a transaction authorization letter endorsed by the International Copyright Trading Center, which files and preserves evidence for the transaction.

Settlement Supervision: Authorization fees paid by users are held in the Copyright Seal platform's supervision account to ensure transaction security. After the transaction publicity period, the funds are settled to the rights holder by the Copyright Seal platform. Invoices for copyright procurement expenses are issued by the Copyright Seal platform on behalf of users.

3.3 Copyright Monitoring Subsystem

This subsystem includes functional modules for network-wide monitoring, whitelists, blacklists, and statistical reports.

Network-Wide Monitoring: Copyright Seal collaborates with search engines to conduct network-wide copyright usage monitoring for certified works, providing monitoring results to users through whitelist and blacklist formats.

Whitelist: Usage records that have obtained legal authorization from network-wide monitoring results are placed in an authorized whitelist.

Blacklist: Usage records that have not obtained legal authorization from network-wide monitoring results are placed in an unauthorized blacklist, from which media users can initiate rights protection actions.

Statistical Reports: The copyright monitoring module provides media users with detailed content usage monitoring reports to help them clearly understand how their copyrighted content is being used across the internet.

3.4 Rights Protection and Settlement Subsystem

This subsystem includes functional modules for automatic rights protection, settlement transactions, and offline rights protection.

Automatic Rights Protection: If the “automatic rights protection” switch is enabled in the copyright monitoring module, data within the copyright usage monitoring blacklist is automatically submitted for copyright protection application without manual operation by media users. After review and approval by the Copyright Seal platform, the platform acts on behalf of users to conduct rights protection services.

Settlement Transactions: Copyright Seal's rights protection services are divided into online and offline components. The primary online rights protection method involves sending settlement transaction invitations to infringing parties. Infringing parties who receive and accept settlement invitations are considered successful rights protection cases, with their records moved from the blacklist to the whitelist. Unsuccessful online cases are transferred to offline rights protection.

Offline Rights Protection: Offline rights protection services have three possible options, with the Copyright Seal platform's professional legal team selecting relevant combinations based on circumstances. The three options are copyright mediation, copyright arbitration, and copyright litigation.

3.5 Copyright Seal Open Platform

This platform provides open programming interfaces (Open API) and SDKs for third-party developers, allowing them to leverage platform data and services combined with their own capabilities to create various new Copyright Seal applications serving all users. Through the platform's REST API, third-party applications can access copyright information on the platform and invoke various copyright services after authentication. Additionally, the platform provides an application hosting environment where third-party developers' products can be hosted on the Copyright Seal platform after review, with service revenues shared between both parties.

4. Conclusion

By constructing this new copyright circulation environment through Copyright Seal, we integrate dispersed copyright resources and professional services using advanced technological means to establish a flexible, standardized, and open rapid copyright circulation method serving the entire cultural and creative industry. This fills the gap in China's digital new media copyright transaction field, which lacks core support and operation platforms, enabling all cultural enterprises to conveniently, cost-effectively, and compliantly utilize various copyright resources and access diverse copyright services. This streamlines copyright circulation channels, encourages copyright utilization, improves copyright circulation efficiency, reduces copyright circulation costs, strengthens legitimate copyright forces on the internet, and vigorously promotes the prosperity of the cultural and creative industries.

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Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

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