

Burning Isn't the Only Way to Attack Books

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The U.S. Copyright Office is enforcing an unjust and destructive law merely because it is there.

Selectively enforcing.

Valancourt Books prints books on demand. It keeps no stocks of books in a warehouse in between orders. Even so, the Copyright Office is demanding to be supplied with physical copies of each of the 400+ books in Valancourt's catalog.

Failure to comply means crippling fines.

Why the harassment?

Well, once upon a time the Copyright Office required publishers to submit physical copies

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of books in order to receive copyrights for them. Yet the work of authors is now *automatically* copyrighted as soon as they create it.



Of course, the government doesn't demand printed copies of their titles from every small publisher in the country. The Copyright Office just happens to have noticed and targeted Valancourt Books.

The Institute for Justice, which is representing the publisher in court, argues that this requirement unconstitutionally forces people to give up property without compensation, violating the takings clause of the First Amendment.

IJ also argues that the law violates the right of freedom of speech protected by that amendment. "People have a right to speak and to publish without notifying the government that they are doing so or incurring significant expenses," IJ's Jeffrey Redfern concludes.

"Because it's there" may be a good reason to climb a mountain. It is a very poor reason to use an old — and outdated — law to destroy the livelihood of innocent people.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.