Copyright law, as it is currently written, is baffling. As an artist and author, I've made it my business to try and understand copyright and intellectual property. Even after intense study--I don't have even a basic understanding.

From this I see three things that happen. One is current copyright law stifles the very creativity it is trying to protect. Honest people have no idea how, and in what ways, they can use material they come across. Those are the people who just simply stop creating out of fear of being penalized for breaking some law they didn't know existed. Number two is that dishonest people simply disregard the law all together, figuring it is so convoluted the chances of them being caught and brought to bear on it are slim. The third is that honest people observe what dishonest people are doing and cause harm without understanding that they are doing anything wrong.

Intellectual property protection needs to be much clearer and easier to understand.

The other side of it is that copyright holders need to have an easier avenue to pursue protection. At the moment ,even though the creator holds the copyright to a work the moment it is created, the creator still can't bring legal action against a violator without financial and effort costs. To bring legal action for infringement against a work of visual art, I have to first file a representation of that work with the copyright office, which last time I checked cost $45 per filing. Only then, can I make a claim against infringement. In the fast pace of the internet--the damage caused by infringement can be done long before the first steps are accomplished. Much infringement goes on without penalty, because for the small players, it is more hardship on them to bring about an infringement case.

It needs to be easier for an individual artist to bring a case against intellectual property infringement.

Sincerely,
Heather Hanlin