

What to DO if your Book gets Stolen

by Chazda Albright -

<http://greatstorybook.com/book-gets-stolen/>

This entry is part 24 of 24 in the series [Publishing Biz](#)

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If your book gets stolen you might not know what to do about it. Find out here.

I've recently gotten several emails about this, so I thought I'd better write something about it. Many writers have had their books stolen from them. In other words, someone has gotten the product and is now reselling it at a profit, without permission from the writer and without financially compensating the

writer. It's illegal, but is there really anything a writer can do about it?

It's probably every writer's nightmare, really. You write a story, it's on the market, and then you discover it's been pirated.

What can you do if your book gets stolen? I'll tell you.

How does a writer protect their work – or more precisely, how do you regain its protection after it has already been stolen?

Do you call the police? *No*. Do you call the local mob and ask them to “take care of it?” *No*.

What You'll Get Here:

- Explanation of what you really own when you write a story
- 9 types of copyrights
- aside from copyright, 3 ways to protect your work
- how to get stolen work back and maybe catch the bad guys

There are some things you need to know about copyright infringement and the protection of intellectual property. **First and foremost, if you created it, it belongs to you.**

But is that all you need to know? Well, no – it's a little more complicated than that.

What You Really Own

When you write and/or illustrate a story, a lot of work goes into it. It's all copyrighted, but there are aspects that aren't as protected as you might think. So let's talk about that.

What about Characters?

You have ownership to the characters you created. However, you cannot prevent someone from using the names of your characters unless you have Trademarked that name.

What about Story?

You have ownership of the story you created, but you cannot copyright a theme or even a basic plot progression. For example, if I write a story about a man with a family and aliens attack earth and it's up to my main character to save the world but only after he saved the family cat – that is a basic plot that *cannot* be copyrighted.

You and anyone else could also write a story where all those basics are involved and it will not be considered an infringement.

What about Words?

If someone steals a sentence from you, it's very difficult to prove. But a page or two? That's plagiarism. If they did not ask your permission to re-use your words, then that is a copyright infringement.

What about Images?

If your story is illustrated, the images are also protected in the same way the text is protected. However, if you create a pig in a tutu who likes sticky foods, it would not be illegal for someone else to create a pig in a tutu who likes a certain type of food... especially if the illustration style is completely different.

What if the artistic style is the same? If there are enough similarities in terms of the character's behavior and also the look of the character, then you might have a case. But you cannot own an artistic style. For example, if I decide to paint like Dali (as if, *ahem*), that would not be illegal. Unlikely, yes. But not illegal.

Is it possible to *think* you own a title when really you don't? Well, yes. It is.

The ownership of your creation only changes if you trade your ownership in exchange for some sort of (typically) financial compensation. But it is absolutely possible that you could conceivably sign a contract that legally enables someone to sell your story without your involvement, without your further consent, or any compensation to you.

It is even possible for someone to *legally* write a sequel to your story without ever asking your permission or ever financially compensating you for it in any way. It gets down to what kinds of copyrights you grant. The contract terms aren't incidental. They're all very specific.

Many writers have been unknowingly cheated out of their copyrights because they signed a contract they didn't fully understand. It's really heartbreaking, because if they had been able to hire an attorney, they wouldn't have been tricked out of their copyright.

To avoid that from happening to you, I've created a complete run-down on the different types of copyright terms and what they really mean. Get that here:

[9 Types of Copyrights: including what All Rights really means!](#)

How else do I protect my work?

1. Track Down Plagiarists. You can use a plagiarism finding program to see if your work has been stolen. Try [Plagiarisma](#), which is a completely free source.
2. Get Help. If you can get an attorney, do that - but be sure to hire one that specializes in copyright infringement. It should be their focus. (For more information on [attorneys and agents for writers, Go Here](#).)

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3. **FBI Badge**. If you have a website, you can also place an FBI badge there. If your work has been stolen from you, you might want to do this. It will make frauds think twice about stealing from you. You can get that here:

[FBI Anti-Piracy Badge](#)

What if my book is being sold without permission?

That is fraud. Chances are good that if they're doing it to you, they're doing it to other authors as well. There are all kinds of lame scams where criminals trick people out of their money. Using pirated ebooks is an easy scam.

You can report this kind of crime to the FBI's IC3 (Internet Crime Complaint Center). Here's where you go to do that:

[FBI IC3 Fraud Complaint Form](#)

The IC3 deals with international fraud because the Internet is essentially borderless, but if you are not a US citizen and wish to file a report with an agency in your country, type the words, "report copyright infringement" in any search engine. Almost every country has an official government department that provides this kind of protection.

There are also many private companies that make it their business to attack Internet fraud. You can hire a company to protect your work, but I would only advise that if you have several titles being pirated and it's costing you regular monthly income. Most provide this kind of protection for a monthly fee.

To find those companies, simply type, "report piracy" in any search engine. You'll get a healthy list of options.

Was your book stolen?

What did you do about it? Sadly, I've heard many stories about story piracy. I myself am not a stranger to it.

Share below, let everyone know – or, as ever, send me an email. Just don't let the fear of piracy stop you from writing your next book!

Keep creating, no matter what.

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