

Librarian of Congress appoints new Register of Copyrights

On March 27, Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden appointed Karyn Temple the new Register of Copyrights. “Karyn has done a superb job as acting register for the last two-and-a-half years, leveraging her skills as both a copyright lawyer and accomplished manager to provide excellent leadership for the Copyright Office,” said Hayden. “Of the 13 Registers of Copyright in U.S. history, Temple will be the first person of color to hold this position.”

Both rights holders and librarians are pleased with the selection. The Library Copyright Alliance (LCA) praised Temple’s collaboration with the Library of Congress on modernization efforts for the U.S. Copyright Office. “Register Temple has provided a vision for the Office as a digitally sophisticated agency that meets the needs of authors, creators, and the publishing and entertainment industries, as well as the needs of the public to find and locate rights holders and determine the copyright status of works.”

Temple, who had been acting register since the departure of former Register Maria Pallante in October 2016, announced that information technology (IT) modernization would be her number one focus. A March 2015 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report identified “significant weaknesses across several areas” of the Library’s information infrastructure, including the Copyright Office’s registration and recordation systems. GAO reported that a lack of leadership and collaboration, mismanaged funds, and historical neglect of the importance of IT led to serious infrastructure problems.

Carrie Russell is senior program director and copyright specialist, ALA Public Policy and Advocacy Unit, at ALA’s Washington Office, email: crussell@alawash.org

Though Temple’s career at the Copyright Office since 2011 would make her a natural successor to Pallante, some were concerned that Hayden would hire a register who favored library interests. Others were simply upset that Hayden had reassigned Pallante, who subsequently resigned. Temple’s appointment was on “pause” after legislation was introduced in 2017 to transfer the hiring authority over the register from the Librarian of Congress to the President. The Register of Copyrights Selection and Accountability Act of 2017 passed the House of Representatives in April 2017 but couldn’t get enough support to pass in the Senate.

LCA welcomed Temple’s appointment, saying, “Under her leadership, the Office is transforming into a user-centered enterprise that will serve all stakeholders in the copyright ecosystem by streamlining processes, including the digitization of copyright registrations and renewal records that will be searchable, secure, authoritative, and easy to access.”

Prior to her appointment as acting register, Temple had served since 2013 as associate register of copyrights and director of policy and international affairs for the U.S. Copyright Office. In that role, she oversaw the office’s domestic and international policy analyses, legislative support, and international negotiations.

Before joining the Copyright Office in 2011, Temple served as senior counsel to the deputy attorney general of the United States, where she helped formulate Department of Justice policy on legal issues and helped manage the Department of Justice’s Task Force on Intellectual Property. She also spent several years in the private sector as vice president, litigation and legal affairs for the Recording Industry Association of America and at the law firm Williams & Connolly, LLP. *WR*