

To the Productivity Commission:

Your suggestion of limiting the life of copyright of artistic works is deeply worrying to me, an author of fiction.

It seems to me that the system you've considered in order to come to your conclusions in the realm of book publishing (which is my area of expertise and the area I am concerned with) is very much the historic way of doing business, not the new.

Since 2011, but really gaining traction in 2012 and beyond, the introduction by Amazon of Kindle Direct Publishing and the Amazon Kindle electronic reading device has changed the way in which books are published and accessed dramatically. The move by Amazon was subsequently matched by Apple, Kobo and Barnes & Noble, and more recently Google Play, and it has opened up a new world for authors.

No longer reliant on publishing houses and literary agencies to get their work into readers hands, authors can publish their works without needing a publisher other than themselves and directly access their readers. With no reliance on the printing of paper works and the distribution of these works to bookstores, which was the traditional purvey of publishers and over which they had a monopoly, authors have a low barrier to entry for the first time. They can bring their work to market faster, and with no middleman taking the lion's share of the profit (and by lion's share, I mean most book contracts leave the author with 14% or less of the net profit made on their work, and the publisher gets the rest).

Not only are authors taking advantage of this new paradigm to price their work lower, because they are now getting a far greater share of the net profit, but they are able to keep their books available for longer. As the ebook publishing pundit JA Konrath notes, ebooks are forever.

This flies in the face of your assertion that the life of a creative work is five years. I would say that is probably correct in the case of print works through a publishing house, but it is not the case for electronic books. Electronic ways of accessing books means they are available for the life of the author and beyond, are cheaper (especially when the author is also the publisher, as they are able to offer the work at a lower price because they are getting more of the profit on their own work) and I can only see the publishing industry having less to do with paper in the future, not more, so the number of works with a five year lifespan will become vanishingly small.

There are many statistics available on how little money authors make from their work. I think a recent Australian study mentioned the figure of \$13,000 per year on average. The advent of ebooks and the subsequent opportunities it offers to authors to actually make a living from their work is an exciting development, and one which your suggestion of limiting the life of copyright as dramatically as you have would jeopardise.

Because electronic books do not rely on shelf space in bookstores or warehouses, and are therefore subject to being destroyed to free up space if they do not sell enough, the argument that they are not available to the public is incorrect, and given the average cost of an ebook is less than a cup of coffee, the price argument you've advanced is also wrong. To give a personal example, while the four books I published through my publisher are between \$15 - \$20 for a print copy and \$10 for the ebook, my self-published works are priced at \$4.99, \$3.99 and \$0.99. I do not think I'm disadvantaging the public with that pricing structure, and I am very much running with the majority of self-published authors at that price point.

Authors who self-publish their works electronically have started seeing a phenomenon known as the

long tail. It means whenever they produce a new book, there is renewed interest in their electronic backlist (previous works they have published) and it allows their overall income to rise in more of a simmer, rather than the sharp spike and fall previously the case with print works. This more even income generation gives authors more security in focusing on their writing, and would be put in serious jeopardy by your suggestion of limiting life of copyright by such an extraordinary degree.

I appreciate your time in considering my submission, and respectfully request that you look at what publishing is like now, and will be going forward, rather than backward to the old way of doing things, when you consider life of copyright and the massive impact taking away the rights to their own works would have on authors' ability to make a longterm living and pass on the efforts of their hard work to their children.

Self-publishing has gained a great deal of momentum in the last five years, and is now a very real and credible choice for all authors. But having control over our work, rather than having to sign away our rights to publishers in order to get our work in the hands of readers, will be less meaningful if we are to have the kind of limit to our copyright you are suggesting.