

1 **Protecting intellectual property**

2 *(Original at*
3 *http://www.economist.com/opinion/displaystory.cfm?story_id=15868004)*

4 When Parliament decided, in 1709, to create a law that would protect
5 books from piracy, the London-based publishers and booksellers who had
6 been pushing for such protection were very happy. When Queen Anne
7 gave her assent on April 10th the following year—300 years ago this
8 week—to “An act for the encouragement of learning” they were less
9 pleased. Parliament had given them rights, but it had set a time limit on
10 them: 21 years for books already in print and 14 years for new ones, with
11 an additional 14 years if the author was still alive when the first term ran
12 out. After that, the material would enter the public domain so that anyone
13 could reproduce it. The lawmakers intended thus to balance the incentive
14 to create with the interest that society has in free access to knowledge
15 and art. The Statute of Anne thus promoted innovation in Enlightenment
16 society and its successors.

17 Over the past 50 years, however, that balance has shifted. Largely thanks
18 to the entertainment industry’s lawyers and lobbyists, copyright’s scope
19 and duration have vastly increased. In America, copyright holders get 95
20 years’ protection as a result of an extension granted in 1998. They are
21 now calling for even greater protection, and there have been efforts to
22 introduce similar terms in Europe.

23 The notion that lengthening copyright increases creativity is questionable.
24 Authors and artists do not generally look at the legislation in place before
25 deciding whether or not to pick up pen or paintbrush. And overlong
26 copyrights often limit, rather than encourage, a work’s dissemination,
27 impact and influence. It can be difficult to locate copyright holders to
28 obtain the rights to reuse old material. Therefore, arguments to increase
29 legal protection for copyright should be resisted: it is time to tip the
30 balance back.

Questions

- 1) Is the article arguing for or against an extension of copyright? Which parts of the text tell you the answer?
- 2) What are the arguments that the article gives to support the opinion it promotes?
- 3) What were the reasons for joy and sorrow on part of the English publishers during the reign of Queen Anne mentioned in the article?
- 4) The text uses a fair number of *synonyms* (words having roughly the same meaning) for legislation (or pieces of it). How many can you find?
- 5) 'Incentive' (line 13) – explain the meaning of the word in the given context and give its synonyms.
- 6) 'Enlightenment society' (line 15-16) – which part of European history does the term Enlightenment refer to? (Note that the word *society* is normally used **without** an article to refer to the body of human beings, while the article **is** used if *society* refers to the wealthy class.)
- 7) What is the main change in copyright today as against the situation of copyright at the beginning of the 18th century?
- 8) What reasons for this change does the text give?
- 9) What is your opinion on copyright? Do you think it should be extended or reduced? Why?

Vocabulary

push for (line 6) – to press or urge to some action or course

set a limit on (line 9) – establish, put, place, impose a boundary

run out (line 11 to 12) – to expire, to terminate

in place (line 24) – effective, valid

You can find additional explanation and more examples to help you understand and use English words and phrases at <http://dictionary.reference.com>, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>, or <http://www.merriam-webster.com/>

Přejeme Vám mnoho studijních úspěchů.

Tým jazykové skupiny Spěváček: