

Managing Joint Authorship and Joint Ownership of Copyrighted Works

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Introduction

An important task of university technology transfer offices is managing certain copyrights that may be owned by a university. Joint authorship and joint ownership of a work creates issues not present when a work has a single author and owner. A copyrighted work may have many contributors, but not all contributors are authors of the work. Determining who the authors are requires a fact-specific analysis of the extent of each contribution and the intent of the contributors. Joint ownership of a work often arises out of joint authorship, but may result from other circumstances as well. In addition, joint ownership creates unique issues in the licensing and transferring of ownership in copyrights. The ability of a technology transfer office to effectively manage copyrights hinges on effectively addressing all of these issues.