

My first book was published in 1962 and I have been a full-time writer since 1972. My ability to continue making a modest income, to survive as a free-lance writer, has always depended on retaining copyright in my created works in order to receive royalties and other rights payments. Copyright in a novel, for example, is just as valid as patent rights in an invented manufactured or medical product or process.

The development of a New Zealand literature, of New Zealand culture as a whole - because most other art forms depend on some kind of literary input - depends on this country's copyright laws supporting and protecting its creation and use. In the new wild west of the internet this has never been more necessary. A recent example affecting me has been the digitalisation of one of my books for use in the US-based 'Open Library' without even the courtesy of seeking my permission, let alone offering payment.

A recent survey shows that NZ authors earn on average just \$15200 per annum from the sale of their copyright work - about a third of the minimum wage. Authors survive by undertaking ancillary work or through spouse support. Every effort must be made to strengthen and extend copyright protection of their work if there is to be any chance of improving that statistic.

Dr Philip Temple ONZM, LittD (Otago)