

Copyright Guidance for SOAS Library Users: Summary of the Duration of Copyright for Major Categories of UK-created Works

Type of work	Published/unpublished	Author known/unknown	Duration of copyright	Exceptions that permit copying (even if the work is in copyright)
Literary, dramatic or musical	Published	Author known	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 70 years from the end of the year in which the author died; or 50 years from the end of the year in which the work was first made available to the public, if the following conditions are met: (1) the work was published before 1 August 1989; and (2) the author died more than 20 years before publication. 	
Literary, dramatic or musical	Published	Author unknown	70 years from end of the year in which the work was first made available to the public.	<p>An anonymous literary, dramatic, musical or artistic work (other than a photograph), published or unpublished, may be copied without infringement if:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The author cannot be identified after reasonable enquiry; and 2. It is reasonable to assume that copyright has expired; or <p>It is reasonable to assume that the author has been dead for over 70 years.</p>

Type of work	Published/unpublished	Author known/unknown	Duration of copyright	Exceptions that permit copying (even if the work is in copyright)
Literary, dramatic or musical	Unpublished	Author known	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work was created after 1 August 1989: 70 years from the end of the year in which the author died. • Work was created before 1 August 1989: copyright expires on 31 December 2039 if the author died before 1 January 1969; otherwise, copyright expires 70 years from the end of the year in which the author died. 	<p>An unpublished literary, dramatic or musical work may be copied without infringement if:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is available for public inspection in a library or archive; and 2. It was created before 1 August 1989; and 3. It is over 100 years old; and 4. The author has been dead for over 50 years; and 5. The identity of the copyright owner is unknown.
Literary, dramatic or musical	Unpublished	Author unknown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work was created after 1 August 1989: 70 years from the end of the year in which the work was created. • Work was created before 1 August 1989: copyright expires on 31 December 2039 if the work was created before 1 January 1969; otherwise, copyright expires 70 years from the end of the year in which the work was created. 	<p>An anonymous literary, dramatic, musical or artistic work (other than a photograph), published or unpublished, may be copied without infringement if:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The author cannot be identified after reasonable enquiry; and 2. It is reasonable to

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				<p>assume that copyright has expired; or</p> <p>3. It is reasonable to assume that the author has been dead for over 70 years.</p>
Artistic (excluding photographs and engravings)	Published or unpublished	Author known	70 years from the end of the year in which the author died.	
Artistic (excluding photographs and engravings)	Published	Author unknown	70 years from end of the year in which the work was first made available to the public.	<p>An anonymous literary, dramatic, musical or artistic work (other than a photograph), published or unpublished, may be copied without infringement if:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The author cannot be identified after reasonable enquiry; and 2. It is reasonable to assume that copyright has expired; or 3. It is reasonable to assume that the author has been dead for over 70 years.

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Photographs	Published	Author known	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taken after 1 August 1989: 70 years from the end of the year in which the author died. Taken after 1 June 1957 and published before 1 August 1989: 50 years from the end of the year in which the work was first made available to the public, if the author died more than 20 years before publication; otherwise, copyright expires 70 years from the end of the year in which the author died. Taken before 1 June 1957: 70 years from the end of the year in which the author died. 	

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Photographs	Published	Author unknown	70 years from the end of the year in which the work was first made available to the public.	<p>An anonymous photograph, published or unpublished, may be copied without infringement if:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The author cannot be identified after reasonable enquiry, and; 2. It is reasonable to assume that the author has been dead for over 70 years.
Photographs	Unpublished	Author known	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taken after 1 August 1989: 70 years from the end of the year in which the author died. • Taken between 1 June 1957 and 1 August 1989: copyright expires on 31 December 2039 if the author died before 1 January 1969; otherwise, copyright expires 70 years from the end of the year in which the author died. • Taken before 1 June 1957: 70 years from the end of the year in which the author died. 	
Photographs	Unpublished	Author unknown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taken after 1 August 1989: 70 years from the end of the year in which taken. • Taken between 1 June 1957 and 1 August 1989: copyright expires on 31 December 2039 if the photograph was taken before 1 January 1969; otherwise, copyright expires 70 years from the end 	

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			of the year in which it was taken. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taken before 1 June 1957: 70 years from the end of the year in which taken. 	
Sound recordings (other than film sound tracks) [see note 1]	Published	Author known/unknown	50 years from the end of the year in which the sound recording was released/published.	
Sound recordings (other than film sound tracks) [see note 1]	Unpublished	Author known/unknown	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Made before 1 June 1957 or after 1 August 1989: 50 years from the end of the year in which made. Made between 1 June 1957 and 31 July 1989: copyright expires on 31 December 2039. 	

1. Duration of copyright in sound recordings: this relates solely to copyright in the *recording* itself. Sound recordings may also have other copyrights: e.g. a sound recording of a musician performing a piece of music will include copyrights in the sound recording, copyright in the performance (duration: 50 years from the end of the year in which the performance took place, or if it was released to the public, from the end of the year in which it was first released), and copyright in the musical work being performed.

2. Duration of copyright in works created or published outside the UK: the UK is a signatory to various international copyright conventions, which extend copyright protection in the UK to works published or created in other countries which are parties to the conventions (in practice, virtually all of the world). However, the duration of copyright in works published outside the UK or created outside the UK (in the case of unpublished works) is determined by the law in the country of origin. A work will not be protected for any longer in the UK than in its country of origin, so it may go "out of copyright" sooner than a UK work.

The standard duration of copyright in the European Economic Area (the EU plus Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein) has now been harmonised to 70 years from the death of the author. Other countries may apply different periods (e.g. 50 years), and determining the duration of copyright for ex-UK works may not be straightforward. If you are unsure how long a work would be protected in the country of origin, the safe course is to treat it as if it was a UK work, as the duration of copyright in the country of origin is likely to be less. A [report](#) which summarises the duration of copyright and other aspects of copyright law in certain countries is available on the website on the [Zwolle Group](#).

