

## **The Illustrated Story of Copyright**

Written By Edward Samuels

Reviewed By Stephen R. Wilson

What happens when pop culture mingles with long standing legal principles? The result is a wonderful book entitled *The Illustrated Story of Copyright*. Penned by copyright guru Professor Edward Samuels, this 294 page hard-cover book belongs on every artist's and attorney's bookshelf. Samuels has effectively achieved the rare balance of explaining esoteric legal principles in a succinct yet meaningful and comprehensive manner.

*The Illustrated Story of Copyright* should be a mandatory companion with all copyright law casebooks. Samuels covers virtually every case assigned in a copyright course.

At the outset, Samuels suggests that his book may be read from cover to cover or alternatively, by jumping from section to section. Samuels logically categorizes his book into two major halves with *Copyright and Technology* covering the first half and *Copyright Basics* covering the second.

Professor Samuels artfully illustrates that the clash between progressive technology and copyright law is not an uncharted phenomenon. The first half of the book takes the reader through a historic montage of technological advancements using illustrations and anecdotes. Interestingly, Samuels organized the historically significant technological advances while simultaneously addressing five different subject areas of copyright law. Starting with the printing press and ending with the Internet, Samuels guides you through an historical journey of the development of "copy rights" and the various technologies employed by the creative community.

Law students interested in copyright law will especially appreciate the second half of the book. Samuels provides a review of landmark cases along with accompanying photos and drawings. The old adage, "a picture is worth a thousand words" speaks volumes when discerning substantial similarity for artwork and photography. By including images along with summarized case law, Samuels helps bridge the gap between obscurity and clarity. Did you ever

wonder about how similar Sid & Marty Kroft's characters were to McDonaldland's characters? You may judge for yourself because Samuels provides side by side comparative illustrations. Simply stated, Samuels picks up where casebooks falter.

Actually, Samuels book should coexist with copyright casebooks because *The Illustrated Story of Copyright* does not contain verbatim court decisions. Instead, Samuels summarizes the applicable case to effectively explain a particular legal concept. (In a perfect world, *The Illustrated Story of Copyright* would include an appendix that referenced page number in the most popular copyright casebooks).

Samuels includes photos, artwork and illustrations from a myriad of cases. Not only has he effectively compiled copyright law related public domain images in this single source, but Samuels has scoured the country in an effort to also include illustrative photos, drawings and images. Compiling all the included images took a considerable amount of resourcefulness.

Another fantastic feature of the book is Samuels use of sidebar information. Samuels includes anecdotal tidbits to effectively assist the reader in understanding the discussed concept or by simply providing background information for a particular case. For example, Samuels includes still frames from the famous Zapruder film depicting the assassination of President Kennedy. After providing an overview of the case in the text, Samuels gives the reader background material in the sidebar that does not appear in the decision surrounding the use of the still frames.

While contextually related to the surrounding section, the sidebar information stands on its own. In fact, you will thoroughly enjoy flipping through the book reading the whimsical tales before embarking on a page to page reading. You'll find yourself smiling, shaking your head and saying, "hmmm."

Samuels designed the book adopting similar techniques employed by most web site developers. He uses multiple cross-references to guide the reader to other relevant pages covering the same or similar topics or concepts. I liken his inclusion of cross-references to "manual links."

Suffice it to say, Samuels is a staunch proponent of copyright protection for creators of original works of art. Nevertheless, his commentary adopts an unbiased tone that allows readers to openly embrace his sound legal analysis. Samuels' admiration for the historical developments of copyright law and its influence on society appears apparent from page one.

Professor Samuels has crafted a marvelous combination of history and law with comic book appeal. Samuels is blessed with a knack for dissecting legal principles and restating it in a concise and deliberate fashion. A skill not lost on this reviewer.

Law students and lawyers with a mere incidental interest in copyright should have this book at their disposal. Additionally, *The Illustrated Story of Copyright* appeals to a diverse non-legal audience primarily because of its historical content and pure entertainment value. Thus I would not hesitate recommending this book to a 13 year old artist or a 65 year old musician.

The only neutral comment I can muster is that I wished that illustrations, artwork and photos were displayed in color. The black and white images are more than adequate with the exception of substantial similarity comparisons. In fairness to Samuels, I suspect that the book publisher made an economic decision to print images in black and white. Professor Samuels effectively addressed my sole criticism, however, by providing a URL to his web site where he displays, among other things, color images where applicable.

Please, do yourself, your students or your clients a favor and purchase a copy of *The Illustrated Story of Copyright*. A paperback version of *The Illustrated Story of Copyright* will be in bookstores in March 2002. Hopefully, Professor Samuels will explore branching out into other legal subject matters...I'll keep a look out for *The Illustrated Story of Trademarks*....