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Memorial Day

“Tip of the Month”

You’re a Writer and You Want to Publish Your Manuscript. How Do You Begin?

One option is to publish the book yourself. The process begins by applying for an ISBN; an International Standard Book Number. The ISBN is placed on the copyright page and is encoded on a bar code (which must also be obtained). The ISBN/bar code is placed on the back cover of the book.

Don’t confuse the ISBN with a Library of Congress catalog number, which is called a Library of Congress Control Number (LCCN). LCCNs are assigned by the Library of Congress and require a separate application. The LCCN is the number associated with the bibliographic record created by the Library of Congress or another library for a given book. Strictly speaking, the LCCN is the control number for the bibliographic record, not the book. The most popular format for displaying and distributing bibliographic records is now the online automated system. It is more accurate to use the term "Library of Congress Control Number" rather than "Library of Congress Card Number" or the “Library of Congress Catalog Number.”

A Preassigned Control Number (PCN) is a LCCN which has been "preassigned" to a given work prior to the work's publication. The publisher of an eligible work may obtain a PCN by way of the EPCN program, assuming, of course, that the work has not yet been published. Published works are otherwise assigned a LCCN during the cataloging process, if they have been selected for addition to the Library of Congress' collections.

Many PCN books receive such cataloging but it is not automatic. First, the book is reviewed by Library of Congress selection librarians. If the book is selected for retention in the Library's collections, then a bibliographic record will be created and this record will appear in the Library’s online catalog. If the book is not selected for retention, the Library of Congress will not create a catalog record for the book.

It is important to note that there is no relationship between the PCN program and Copyright registration. The principal purpose of copyright records is to document the intellectual or creative ownership of a work. The principal purpose of the PCN program is to assign LCCNs in advance of publication to those titles that the Library may add to its collections. When printed in the book, the LCCN facilitates access to the bibliographic record for that book and thereby expedites book processing by libraries and book dealers who obtain copies of the book.

There is no charge for a PCN. Participating publishers, however, are obligated to send a complimentary copy of all books immediately upon publication for which a PCN was provided. Publishers failing to meet this obligation may be suspended from the program.

If you need help with this process, please feel free to give us a call at 603-668-1971 or contact us by email at mailbox@biz-patlaw.com. We are happy to help.

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