Economics tells us that incentives matter Copyright is one such incentive. Copyright was originally envisioned as a way of rewarding creators for their creations while ensuring that society as a whole was able to benefit from those creations. Originally set at a term of 14 years starting at the date of creation after which the copyright could be renewed. The 14 year term worked well ensuring that you could not, for example, write one song and then retire on the royalties for the rest of your life, the 14 year term ensured that after the set copyright term the whole of society got to enjoy the creation, be it a book, a song, or entertainment media.