

# Next Librarian of Congress could remake copyright law

By Thomas Lee, San Francisco Chronicle

Say the word “librarian” to anyone born before 1980 and they’ll conjure up images of card catalogs, dimly lit study rooms and Encyclopedia Britannicas. Hardly the stuff of the 21st century.

In fact, thanks to the Internet, plenty of millennials have probably never set foot in a library or spoken to someone who works for one.

Yet the person who holds enormous power over both Silicon Valley and Hollywood happens to be a librarian. The Librarian of Congress may be an obscure office, but the person in the job not only oversees the U.S. Copyright Office but also decides what content – music, software, film, etc. – deserves copyright protection.

The position is currently vacant. James Billington, who served as Librarian of Congress for nearly three decades, said in June that he will retire in January, and President Obama has yet to name a permanent replacement. The vacancy has created enormous opportunity for firms ranging from YouTube and Hulu to Netflix and Amazon to not only influence Obama’s eventual choice but also to push through much-needed reforms to the outdated Digital Millennium Copyright Act.

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