

**Evaluating eCO - Electronic Copyright Registration**  
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*The [U.S. Copyright Office](#) recently began beta testing for its new "eCO" ([electronic Copyright Office](#)) web-based registration system. [Joseph J. Delconzo](#), a professional news photographer signed up for the testing.*

It took many years before I understood the importance of registering my images with the U.S. Copyright Office. My blood began to boil as I came across one of my pictures being used without my permission on a newspaper's website. I remembered the time, expense, and energy it took to make the image in a Guatemalan jail. Watching the big guy in the yard smacking a little guy in the head every few minutes reminded me that, regardless of the gun-toting guards, we were all fair game. And yes, I wanted to be paid for everything it took for me to make the image. But without registration, I didn't have much in the way of a legal action.

Fortunately, I learned a few valuable lessons from this situation. First and foremost, register your images with the Copyright Office as soon as possible. Second, create a usage/licensing agreement and have it signed by both parties. Third, register your images before they are published - registering published images is a lot more work. Itemizing each image on the Application and creating hard copies of identifying material for each image can comprise countless hours of agonizing preparation.

I recently started Beta Testing for the Electronic Copyright Office (eCO) and am thrilled with the service. I submitted the "Beta Tester" request on the site, was approved about a week later, registered a username/password, and was good to go. The introduction of [PhotoShelter's "Collection"](#) and promo of 85% photographer's profit from image sales induced me to get my images submitted before the November 5, 2007, deadline. Since images submitted for sale on PhotoShelter are considered published and copyright registration is effective when the application is received by the Copyright Office, I was pleased to be able to use the eCO system so that could register my images quickly and submit them to PhotoShelter in time.

After logging on to the [eCO website for the first time](#), you must answer a series of questions, such as: what is your browser choice; whether you will file hard copy, electronic registrations, or both; and how many registrations per year do you expect to submit. After answering these profile questions, click on "Register New Claim" and follow the bouncing ball. The next stage is similar to preparing the old registration forms.

You then are required to pay the \$35.00 fee (which now is \$10 less than the fee to register using hard copies). Again, follow the bouncing ball to a secure site for payment, including by checking account or credit card.

The next step, and probably the one that caused me the most concern, was the process of uploading the images. I found out the hard way that there is a time limit for uploading. They consider an 80 MB file huge. You have the option to upload single files or zipped files. When uploading 1000+ images, zips are the obvious choice. The eCO system uses an upload browser with no drag and drop feature like Fetch or other FTPs, which usually are easier to manage. Instead, you must browse for each file, title the file, and repeat that process until you're ready to submit the entire image deposit.

I first created a dated folder, dropped several titled sub-folders into it, and zipped the file. It was well over 100 MB. I timed-out half way through the upload (about 30 minutes) and had to start over. I didn't lose my application, which was still in the pending stage. I changed my approach and made 5-6 zips, uploading two files at a time without closing the browser (which causes you to lose everything). The new approach was successful and I got a receipt for each individual zipped file. The entire upload took around 15-20 minutes.

When your application and deposit are received successfully, you will be assigned an identification number and your application will be located in "open cases." If they are not successful, your application will be "pending" with a flag icon stating that "further action is required."

The eCO system is beneficial and relatively easy, especially for an inherent procrastinator like me. Further, we now have the ability to register our images while out of state or abroad as long as we have an Internet connection. Given that eCO saves time, gives an immediate confirmation of receipt, is cheaper, and saves shipping charges, it's an easy choice over the former way of registering.

*Adapted with permission from the online blogs at [www.photoattorney.com](http://www.photoattorney.com).*



Joseph J. Delconzo, a professional news photographer since 1994 won Best of Show and 1st place for Spot News in the New Jersey Press Photographers Association 2003 Pictures of the Year. To see more of his work, please visit his [online gallery of images](#).

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